

First Session - Thirty-Ninth 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-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
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.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
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SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 6, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 217—The Winter Spreading of Manure and Biosolids Prohibition Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 217, The Winter Spreading of Manure and Biosolids Prohibition Act; Loi interdisant l'épandage hivernal de déjections et de biosolides, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this measure would extend the current ban for large livestock operations in terms of winter spreading of manure to all operations and to municipalities like the City of Winnipeg. It would also provide an exemption where a farmer or operator is able to demonstrate that they are able to spread manure but keep the phosphorous levels in the stream coming off the land at very, very low levels.

It's a sensible bill, and we put it forward today.

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

PETITIONS

Retired Teachers' Cost of Living Adjustment

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Since 1977, Manitoba teachers have made contributions to the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Pension Adjustment Account, PAA, to finance a Cost of Living Adjustment, COLA, to their base pension once they retire.

Despite this significant funding, 11,000 retired teachers and 15,000 active teachers currently find themselves facing the future with little hope of a meaningful COLA.

For 2007, a COLA of only 0.63 percent was paid to retired teachers.

The COLA paid in recent years has eroded the purchasing power of teachers' pension dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider adequate funding for the PAA on a long-term basis to ensure that the current retired teachers, as well as all future retirees, receive a fair COLA.

Signed by Peter Saniwkoff, Elizabeth Ruby, Irene Lyon and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The seven-kilometre stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway passing through Headingley is an extremely busy stretch of road, averaging 18,000 vehicles daily.

This section of the Trans-Canada Highway is one of the few remaining stretches of undivided highway in Manitoba, and it has seen more than 100 accidents in the last two years, some of them fatal.

Manitoba's Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation told a Winnipeg radio station on October 16, 2007, that when it comes to highways' projects the provincial government has a flexible response program, and we have a couple of opportunities to advance these projects in our five-year plan.

In the interests of protecting motorist safety, it is critical that the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is completed as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider making the completion of the dividing of the Trans-Canada

Highway in Headingley in 2008 an urgent provincial government priority.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider evaluating whether any other steps can be taken to improve motorist safety while the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is being completed.

This is signed by Dan Schaefer, Darrell Honks, Andrew Badgell and many, many other Manitobans.

The Child and Family Services Act

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial government has a responsibility to protect children from exploitation.

Canada's laws recognize those less than 18 years of age as deserving of certain legal protection. Under law, children cannot drive until they are 16, and cannot smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol until 18 years of age. Yet, the current age of consent under Canada's Criminal Code is 14 years of age.

Families, communities and law enforcement authorities recognize that young Canadians between the ages of 14 and 16 years of age are especially vulnerable to this legal loophole. They are frustrated with the lack of tools available to protect them from exploitation by adult predators at least three years older whose intent is to sexually exploit these children.

Predators are increasingly using nefarious means such as drugs, alcohol, gifts and false promises to lure at-risk victims. In addition to sexual abuse, these victims are sometimes coerced and misled into criminal activity, drug use and gang recruitment.

The consequences of any type of exploitation are devastating. While any child may become a victim of exploitation, at-risk children are particularly vulnerable and targeted. Many of these children are in the care or have previously had contact with Child and Family Services.

While the age of protection is within federal jurisdiction, there are actions that could be taken by the provincial government to protect young people in the care of the Department of Family Services and Housing. Section 52 of The Child and Family Services Act could be strengthened to better safeguard minors in care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider amending and strengthening section 52 of The Child and Family Services Act to allow for the greater protection of children in care from exploitation.

To request the Premier to consider urging the federal government to raise the age of protection to a minimum of 16 years of age.

This petition signed by Donna Morrisseau, Tamara Morrisseau, Destiny Raven and many, many others.

Personal Care Homes—Virden

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The reasons for this petition are as follows:

Manitoba's provincial government has a responsibility to provide quality long-term care for qualifying Manitobans.

Personal care homes in the town of Virden currently have a significant number of empty beds that cannot be filled because of a critical nursing shortage in these facilities.

In 2006, a municipally formed retention committee was promised that the Virden nursing shortage would be resolved by the fall of 2006.

Virtually all personal care homes in southwestern Manitoba are full, yet as of early October 2007, the nursing shortage in Virden is so severe that more than one-quarter of the beds at Westman Nursing Home are sitting empty.

Seniors, many of whom are war veterans, are therefore being transported to other communities for care. These communities are often a long distance from Virden and family members are forced to travel for more than two hours round trip to visit their loved ones, creating significant financial and emotional hardship for these families.

Those seniors that have been moved out of Virden have not received assurance that they will be moved back to Virden when these beds become available.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider taking serious action to fill the nursing

vacancies at personal care homes in the town of Virden and to consider reopening the beds that have been closed as the result of this nursing shortage.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider prioritizing the needs of those citizens that have been moved out of their community by committing to move those individuals back into Virden as soon as the beds become available.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by Rita Suddaby, Ferne Good, Keith Johnston and many others.

*(13:40)

Crocus Investment Fund—Public Inquiry

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

The background to the petition is as follows;

The 2007 provincial election did not clear the NDP government of any negligence with regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

The government needs to uncover the whole truth as to what ultimately led to over 33,000 Crocus shareholders to lose tens of millions of dollars.

The provincial auditor's report, the Manitoba Securities Commission's investigation, the RCMP investigation, the involvement of revenue Canada and our courts, collectively, will not answer the questions that must be answered in regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Manitobans need to know why the government ignored the many warnings that could have saved the Crocus Investment Fund.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his NDP government to co-operate in uncovering the truth in why the government did not act on what it knew and to consider calling a public inquiry on the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by Ronald Maxwell, Joan Maxwell, Kenneth Maxwell and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Neepawa, Minnedosa and Areas—Local Hospitals

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Residents of Neepawa, Minnedosa, and the surrounding areas are concerned about the long-term viability of their respective local hospitals. Impending retirements, physician shortages, and the closure of many other rural emergency rooms have caused residents to fear that their health-care facilities may also face closure in the future.

Local physicians and many residents have expressed their support for a proposed regional health centre to service both communities.

It is believed that a new regional health centre would help secure and maintain physicians and would therefore better serve the health care needs of the region.

The success of the other regional hospitals, such as Boundary Trails Health Centre, has set the precedent for the viability and success of a similar health-care centre for the Neepawa and Minnedosa area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), to consider the feasibility of a joint health centre, including an emergency room, to service Neepawa and Minnedosa and the surrounding area.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider sustaining health-care services in this area by working with local physicians and the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority on this initiative.

This petition is signed by W. K. Sunley, Clayton Poirier, Phil Syntak and many, many others.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2006-2007 Annual Report for the Economic Innovation and Technology Council.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Dr. D.W. Penner School 28 grades 5 and 6 students under the direction of Mr. Harry Bell. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Power Line Consultations for Location

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier, in his interference with Manitoba Hydro, has set them on a course toward making every Manitoba family thousands of dollars poorer, contributing to the burning of more coal outside of the province of Manitoba, millions of dollars of losses with respect to added line loss, delays in terms of the completion of Manitoba Hydro's next major transmission line and compromises of the security and reliability of power as a result of the decision to follow the long western route as opposed to the recommended eastern route, Mr. Speaker. Now he has raised the concern of opposition to the eastern route as a rationale for that decision. That opposition could have impacts, he says, on sales and on approval.

So, Mr. Speaker, there has been a very sound recommendation made by former Premier Schreyer. I raised the question yesterday and didn't get a response to it. But it's an important recommendation that we believe could deal with the deadlock, deal with the issues of opposition in a fair way and move Manitoba forward toward the right decision for Manitoba families and future generations who are needlessly being left with an albatross of debt by this Premier because of his mismanagement of Manitoba Hydro.

Former Premier Schreyer has recommended that following a process of meaningful consultation that there be a mechanism to deal with protracted delays and arrive at a rational and reasonable basis for making decisions to move projects forward. He made the point, Mr. Speaker, of course, that any major project is going to face some opposition. That has been the case throughout history. Any major project has faced opposition. The issue is: How do you arrive at a reasonable resolution of those concerns? How do you meet the constitutional obligations? Former Premier Schreyer, in his support for an east-side line, has recommended a mechanism for doing just that.

So I want to ask the Premier: Will he step back from this disastrous decision that will leave hundreds of millions in needless debt to future generations, take a hard look at what is being recommended by his predecessors and make the right decision for future generations of Manitobans?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Again, Mr. Speaker, the member is cherry-picking various items out of different views.

I would point out, yesterday he was lauding the Northern Flood Agreement, a document that former Premier Schreyer did not sign, as he pointed out correctly, and that was a policy decision he made.

Mr. Speaker, I would also point out that under his four and a half hours of cross-examination of the CEO of Manitoba Hydro, which I presume was a logical exercise in deliberate debate, the CEO of Manitoba Hydro made it very clear that the east side would be, quote, much more controversial, which, of course, a few years ago was not the case. Times have changed in terms of the east side and its potential cause célèbre, what that will mean for the whole issue of delays, potential delays and potential no licensing of that project ever.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about costs and debt. I would point out that former Premier Schreyer was against the debt that was incurred by the purchase of the Centra Gas company, and he was against the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System without any rational debate.

Mr. Brennan then goes on to say in committee and outside of committee: in the media he says the line will produce a considerable amount of revenues and we will make money; make money on the transmission line and the issue of the increased sales. So many of those arguments, again, are just Tory assertions.

I would point out that I don't believe Centra Gas has ever made money since we've owned it, since the public had it. We had to put the debt on the books, Mr. Speaker, because the members opposite didn't. They hid it from the public in terms of the Public Accounts.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there will be a rational third-party body responsible for the licensing of the bipole. The proposal will go to the Clean Environment Commission.

In the case of Wuskwatim, the Clean Environment Commission and the PUB had representatives on that body. That is something that didn't happen in the '60s, with the Grand Rapids flooding that took place before we were in office. Even the '70s didn't have Clean Environment Commission licensing requirements and, so yes, there will be a deliberate rational exercise with cross-examination in a Clean Environment

Commission. This government is not licensing the transmission line. It is merely supporting the fact that Hydro is proposing to build the line, and it will require licensing by a deliberate rational body.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has talked about the potential cause célèbre. The problem with that, of course, is that virtually every leader from the east side of the lake has spoken up in favour of an east-side transmission line. So, as the Premier, you know, we talk about the submissions made last week by Dr. Sydney Garrioch, on behalf of the northern chiefs, representing 11 of the 16 communities. We saw the correspondence on the weekend representing four of the communities, representing a significant amount of the population, incidentally, four of the largest communities on the east side, the leadership there, expressing strong support, the leadership at Berens River expressing strong support.

And so these visions of buses filled with protestors, other than Robert Kennedy Jr., the Premier and the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), we haven't been able to find anybody who is going to ride the bus to the United States to undertake these massive protests that he seems to be concerned about.

On the other hand, the buses of Manitobans in favour of the east-side line seem to be getting more and more crowded with every passing day. Former Premier Schreyer has now joined that side of the debate.

So, I want to ask the Premier, given all of the history, the history of the fact that his government was in power when the last major transmission line to the United States, the MANDAN line, was cancelled because they couldn't get the deal done, Mr. Speaker: Is he not concerned that the failure to move forward on that project, which was cancelled while he was in Cabinet, that the same thing could happen by virtue of the fact that he's proposed a route that is almost universally opposed by Manitobans? He's taken the route that has more opposition. It's more expensive. It's more environmentally damaging. It reduces the opportunities for economic development on the east side.

Why wouldn't he step back from that, choose the rational recommended route, put it in front of the Clean Environment Commission, resolve the issues in a rational way as recommended by Mr. Schreyer and, in the process, save Manitobans a billion dollars?

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Sophia Rabliauskas, Mr. Speaker, the well-respected elder on the east side in Poplar River, who has won the Goldman international award for protecting the boreal forest, is not somebody that, obviously, the member opposite respects. I heard that she gave an excellent speech last week at the Chamber of Commerce climate change summit where she said that we don't want short-term jobs of clearing brush. We would prefer long-term ecotourism jobs. That was her view of the long-term economic vision which I respect.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite talk about economic development on the east side. In the committee, Mr. Brennan said there would be a separation between the Hydro transmission line in a remote area and the road. So he is misleading people on the east side by perpetuating an urban myth. The bottom line is that if the people on the east side are going to get a road, they're going to get it with an introduction of the Rice River road and an extension of the Rice River road which we've committed to, which he committed to remove and put more money in southwest Manitoba. So, in terms of economic development, he brings false promises to the people on the east side.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite were talking about the proposed Limestone project. I would quote their former Energy critic, one Harry Enns, quote: The NDP is only eyeing the short-term benefits of Limestone. They're playing politics in the short-term fix that Manitobans—here you can listen to the Leader of the Opposition if you close your eyes—will have to pay higher Hydro rates for decades.

Well, we built Limestone, Mr. Speaker. The Tory critic was wrong, and we have the lowest rates in North America.

Mr. McFadyen: He is wrong. The vast majority of the building of the Limestone project took place under the former Progressive Conservative government. It was opened four years into office, Mr. Speaker, ahead of schedule and a billion dollars under budget because the people of Manitoba kicked out the previous NDP government before they had a chance to finish the project.

Mr. Speaker, we have to listen to those people who are raising arguments and issues out of all sides of this issue. We respect those who have concerns about the location of the power line, the 16 First Nations on the west side of Manitoba who have yet

to be consulted, who are having this decision rammed down their throats by this Premier without any prior consultation.

I would just say to the Premier that in the same response as he talks about somebody's concern for the boreal forest, he goes on to brag about the fact that he's going to plough a highway through the very same boreal forest, in the same response. He can't have it both ways. He's either worried about the boreal forest or he's not. If he's worried, then he can't build a highway. If he isn't worried, then go ahead and build the highway.

We support the highway. We support the power line. We support tourism for eastern Manitoba. We can do them all, Mr. Speaker. Why won't he listen to Manitobans who are saying we can have it all? We can have the power line and the opportunities that come with it. We can have a road. We can protect 99.9 percent of the boreal forest. We can leave it for future generations, and in the process let's save ourselves a billion dollars. Why won't he do it?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the exaggerations double and quadruple every day from the Leader of the Opposition.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Yes, the good thing about *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, is there is a record of debate. There's a record of debate on the Conservatives cancelling Limestone and the NDP building it with opposition from the Conservative Party. There's wind and rabbit tracks, as they say, in *Hansard* of Tories opposing Limestone. I was in the House when they were asking questions and opposing Limestone. It's clearly on the record.

You know, if this is the kind of veracity we have from the Leader of the Opposition on the exaggerations he's been making over and over again, his revisionist history on Limestone is so false that nobody should treat him with any degree of credence on this project.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that his proposal is to reduce the UNESCO World Heritage site proposals by 80 percent of the boreal forest. That's his proposal. It's clearly on the record.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the UNESCO criteria is very clear on local economic development in terms

of roads and ecotourism. We feel it's very consistent with our election promise a year ago.

I would point out that most of us know that in Arthur-Virden, in the last election campaign, he promised to reallocate money from remote and northern highway construction over to southwest Manitoba. He wanted to cater—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: You know, Mr. Speaker, he believes you can say one thing in one part of the province and another thing in another part of the province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: That's why, Mr. Speaker, in Thompson, Manitoba, they got it right. They said he was not fit to be premier.

Winnipeg Community Hospital ERs Doctor Shortage

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, according to a letter from the Minister of Health dated October 1, the Winnipeg ER doctor shortage in community hospitals got worse after the election, which means, according to the minister's letter, that Winnipeg community hospital ERs are short 50 percent of their doctors.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us if the Winnipeg community ERs are still half short on the number of doctors working in the ERs.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. I also invite her, yet again, to take this opportunity in having a discussion about our emergency rooms to go on the record and to apologize to the people of Winnipeg, to west Winnipeg in particular, for her fearmongering and statements about the Grace ER closing. The Grace ER was open. The Grace ER is open and the Grace ER will continue to be open.

So, I invite that member, in her supplementary question to take that opportunity to apologize for all of the fearmongering that she did during the election. I can say to the member today that, once again, the only party in Manitoba that's ever closed an ER in Winnipeg is, of course, the Conservative Party.

* (14:00)

Grace General Hospital ER Doctor Shortage

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the only reason the Grace Hospital ER remains open is probably due to the community outcry against this government.

Mr. Speaker, in March, the Grace Hospital had 4.5 doctors on staff when they should have had 9. According to the Minister of Health's own letter of October 1, they dropped down to 3.5 after the election, after the minister promised to fix it.

So I'd like her to confirm today: Are there only 3.5 ER doctors on staff at the Grace Hospital now, when there should be 9?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, again, the self-congratulatory nature of the member opposite is mind-boggling, but what I will say about the community is that they certainly did speak loudly when they elected the Member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

Second of all, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite can say all that she wants about emergency rooms and about doctors, and we have committed to work every single day to build our complement of doctors in emergency rooms and elsewhere. We know that according to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, who posted their numbers this year, that we have a record-breaking 86 more doctors in Manitoba this year than we did last year.

The most recent time that there was a record being broken in that regard, when there was a record loss of doctors, 10 years ago.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the community ER is short half of their doctors. The minister could at least answer the questions and confirm these numbers. A Grace Hospital ER nurse told me that it is rare to have more than one doctor on shift at a time; even now that the ER hallways are jam-packed full. In fact, she called it insane. The waits to see a doctor now, because there is only one doctor on shift, are 10 to 12 hours long, just to see a doctor at the Grace Hospital.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: Where is her fix? We in west Winnipeg deserve more than a Band-Aid. Where's the fix she promised in the election?

Ms. Oswald: And, once again, we have said over and over that we're committed to building our

complement of doctors. That's why we committed to add, in addition to adding our seats in the medical school that the members opposite foolishly chose to cut, we have committed to add 100 more doctors to the complement.

How many doctors did they promise? Zero. They went on record, of course, before the election as saying that health care was not a priority for them. They certainly lived up to that promise, Mr. Speaker.

Distance Education Instructors Access to Resources

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Rural and northern communities need distant learning to expand their education options. This government has put the onus on teachers to develop courses with few supports and little direction. Manitoba Teachers' Society has said that teachers are working an average of 50 hours per week. The extra hours needed to develop distance education curriculum has been labelled by some educators as a disincentive for individuals looking at this option of instruction.

Mr. Speaker, why is the Minister of Education failing students and educators by not providing the necessary resources and tools to succeed?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, once again, this is a government that believes that education is an investment, not an expenditure, as members opposite clearly saw it during the 1990s.

We continue to work with all educational partners throughout the province of Manitoba. In fact, we've recently held a forum on rural education issues because we recognize the fact that there are some challenges with the ability to deliver a sufficient number of programs and sufficient number of options to students in rural areas where remoteness is a challenge for these students.

But we continue to work with our partners. We continue to develop the curriculum. We look at a number of alternatives, whether it's on-line, whether it's distance learning, and we look at professional development opportunities for teachers, something that was cut when members opposite were in office.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, a one-page curriculum outline is what they call supports. The NDP government document on distance education says they will work with school divisions to create and sustain a co-operative distance learning model. Unfortunately, the minimal supports and tools that

this government has provided are outdated and lack clarity.

Mr. Speaker, there has been no clear direction from this minister and no sharing of best practices and support. Each school division is on their own, twisting in the wind. Why has this NDP government abandoned distant learning educators and students?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, I don't know where to begin, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about abandoning education—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, we have been working very hard to provide a variety of opportunities for all learners throughout the province of Manitoba. The member opposite talks about rural Manitoba initiatives in education. What did they promise during the election? A \$10-million fund for elite schools, schools of excellence.

We govern for all Manitobans. We produce curriculum for all Manitobans. We don't look at elitist ideas like members opposite promised during the election. The Teachers' Society who she cites in this particular line of questioning, Mr. Speaker, they talked about how out of touch that particular promise was during the election. They have no understanding of education.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, that's a non-answer, and this minister has to take these issues seriously. It's important for the survival of rural and northern communities.

The importance of distance education speaks to the survival of the schools within these communities. Students are demanding different approaches to structured learning. Teachers and educators are needing the necessary tools to develop curriculum opportunities for their students, so the minister has to be listening to this. Why has this minister relegated distance education to such a low priority within this government?

Mr. Bjornson: We recognize the challenges of distance and isolation, and we've been working to address those issues. One thing that would have been very useful is if we had a public utility that had a mandate to address connectivity for Internet access, but unfortunately we no longer have a public utility, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to invest unprecedented amounts of money into the education system, and we address all needs of students in this province. We believe in a quality educational opportunity, and we're going to continue to work to that end. We continue to increase funding to education, unlike members opposite.

Crocus Investment Fund Minister Briefed on Receiver's Report

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Finance Minister said that he has not seen the receiver's Crocus report nor has he been briefed on that report. That is totally irresponsible. Taxpayers in Manitoba are irate. The minister is the lead minister on this file and taxpayers are hung out to dry on a \$200-million lawsuit. Is the minister negligent, incompetent or does he just not care?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, with just a little bit of patience, the judge in charge of the case will decide about the disclosure of that report. I informed the House yesterday in my first question that we would instruct our counsel to disclose the report. I also made it very clear yesterday that we had not seen the report nor had we been briefed on it. We will, however, encourage the judge to make the report available to everybody so that there can be a full public debate about the contents of the report.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, that question was not about disclosure. It was about the incompetency of this minister. He is the lead minister on a file that is putting \$200 million of taxpayers' money in jeopardy. Not being briefed is simply unacceptable. It demonstrates gross mismanagement.

If the Finance Minister is not taking an interest in this file, then maybe the minister will tell me who in his government knows what is in that report.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, what can I say? I've had more interest in this file than I thought I would ever have. We have spent lots of time on this file. We have a lot of confidence in the counsel we have, and we've given them very clear instructions to let the judge know our position on disclosing that file.

The reality is that the judge has command of the public disclosure of that file and anybody that wants to see the file or the case has to sign a document to get access to it. That's available to the member if he wishes to see it.

* (14:10)

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, that's incredulous. Here's a minister who is going to go to court. He has legal counsel. There isn't a legal counsel in this world that would not approach the client and say: This is what's in the report. How do we defend that report? Not having seen that report is irresponsible.

When will he take responsibility? When will he become accountable for this gross mismanagement, and when will the buck stop at his desk?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's fairly clear that the Member for Brandon West is not familiar with the conditions that the judge laid down for access to the report by the receiver. The judge made it very clear that anybody that wishes to have access to the report would have to keep it confidential. That was one of the conditions that was laid down by the judge.

If the member would only know that, then he wouldn't have these exaggerated, incredulous questions in front of the Legislature.

Pork Producers Advance CAIS Payment

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian dollar reached \$1.08 in overseas trading this morning. The skyrocketing dollar and other factors are taking a toll on the pork producers. This industry is worth more than a billion dollars annually to Manitoba's economy and creates nearly 15,000 direct and indirect jobs. When this sector suffers, the effects are felt throughout the provincial economy. Producers' losses are running in the tens of thousands of dollars weekly.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture provide this House with an update on efforts to secure a special 2007 advance on a CAIS payment to help pork producers?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I thank the member opposite for this question because it is indeed a very important issue. Pork producers have come to talk to us. They have asked us to apply to the federal government for an advance. We have applied to the federal government for an advance for the pork producers, and we're waiting for a reply from the federal government.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, pork producers are losing \$30 to \$60 per head. There are concerns these losses could continue well into next spring. The number of market hogs in Manitoba is declining. It is feared that some producers simply won't make it.

This would be a travesty. Manitoba pig and pork exports generate more money for this provincial economy than Hydro produces, on average, through export sales of electricity.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture tell this House what plans she has to help Manitoba pork industry deal with these challenges today?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, this province is an exporting province, whether it be exporting of livestock, exporting of manufacturing goods, and because of the high dollar there is a concern for many sectors, for the livestock sector, for the manufacturing sector, for the tourism sector. These are all issues that are of great concern to us, and we are working in many aspects on this.

With regard to the livestock industry, Mr. Speaker, I will repeat again that the program that the producers are looking for an advance from is a federal-provincial program, the CAIS program, and we have written to the federal government and asked them to approve a cash advance.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the CAIS program is definitely not working and hasn't been working. It's obvious that there's no plan.

Alberta's new farm recovery program will provide transitional, short-term assistance to help livestock producers deal with difficulties caused by the rising costs of fuel, feed and fertilizer. These challenges aren't unique to Alberta, but unlike Alberta, we haven't heard anything how Manitoba government intends to help the livestock industry. Our producers aren't expecting a handout, Madam Minister, but they are expecting a plan.

Mr. Speaker, I again ask the Minister of Agriculture to step up to the plate and to outline a plan to help the livestock producers in this province weather these tremendous challenges.

Ms. Wowchuk: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I know that our producers are not expecting a handout. Our producers are very concerned about trade because we are an exporting country. Our producers are concerned that programs be green so that we do not get challenged with a countervail.

Although the member opposite says he does not like the CAIS program, the CAIS program puts a significant amount of money into the agriculture industry. The member opposite says it isn't working. I can say to them, we have been working with the industry to make changes to this program, and the

step that has to be taken is for the federal government to give approval so that a cash advance can be made to the pork sector.

Livestock Operations Policies Number of Completed Plans

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba municipalities have until January 1, 2008, to prepare and adopt development plans that include livestock operation policies. These policies will set out where livestock operations will be permitted, restricted or prohibited. Moreover, these development plans require approval of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Will the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs tell the House how many municipalities have submitted their completed development plans for final government approval?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Well, Mr. Speaker, we on this side are proud of the fact that we have indeed dramatically improved the planning process at a time when there's been a fairly significant expansion over the last year in terms of livestock. We've also understood, I think, on this side, the need to have proper planning, proper environmental protection. I realize that's something that members opposite have opposed from day one. They opposed the changes to the manure mortalities regulation. They opposed water quality management zones.

As I outlined in Estimates, there is indeed that plan for intensive livestock operations which is continuing. We've been working with the municipalities. We've indicated if there are extreme difficulties in meeting that deadline that we are flexible. I can tell the member that we have a number of municipalities that are either close to or have—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, the Neepawa and Area Planning District's plan is growing a dust bunny from sitting on the minister's desk waiting for approval.

Given that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has not even approved the Neepawa plan, how does he expect to get through dozens more before January 1, or are we going to have an extension?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I know, you know, the sort of mythology of things sitting on the minister's desk. Actually it is on my desk for my signature, will be signed this afternoon. I do want to credit the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, he might want to, if he wants further information, talk to his seatmate, because the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) led a very intense amount of discussions and consultations with the Neepawa area district. So maybe the two of them should talk to each other. If he knew about some of the background, he'd understand why it took some time to get here. There are many issues about why we are signing it. It's on my desk, will be signed. Thank you.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, I will certainly phone Merv at Neepawa and tell him the good news because he's been waiting a long time.

Mr. Speaker, January 1 deadline is fast approaching. Municipalities have their development plans finalized and on the minister's desk in time to meet his deadline. However, given the example of Neepawa, and how long it took, it's going to be difficult to meet the January 1 deadline.

Will the minister explain how he's going to get these development plans approved by January 1?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, in the time I've been fortunate to be a Cabinet minister, I don't know how many things I've been told have been sitting on my desk, which I've never seen. You know, to prove that, in fact, not only are they not going to sit on my desk for very long, I want to know, as I sit down, sign it, to prove once again that this government is committed to the planning process that we never saw from members opposite.

* (14:20)

Phosphorus Levels in Lake Winnipeg Reduction

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, on October 25, only 12 days ago, I asked the Minister of Water Stewardship about her goal for reducing phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg. I table the minister's response so she will remember. I guess she forgot this morning. She said her target was to reduce phosphorus load by 10 percent to achieve pre-1970s level, but the problem is in order to achieve this kind of level from 1973, she will need to reduce the phosphorus input from 7,900 tonnes per year down to 3,315 tonnes per year, a reduction of 58 percent.

Will the minister today acknowledge she had her facts wrong on October 25, and admit a much larger reduction than 10 percent in phosphorus load to

Lake Winnipeg is going to be necessary in order to reduce phosphorus to the level it was in 1973?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, here's one fact I have right. It's nice to see the Member for River Heights asking a question on Lake Winnipeg. He hasn't done so for almost a year. In fact, the last time he asked a question was November 21, 2006. So it's nice to see him actually following up in the House on something here.

We did, in 2003 as part of the Manitoba Water Strategy, say that we would be reducing phosphorus content by 10 percent. We're moving forward with that, Mr. Speaker. We're moving forward with reducing phosphorus in the waste water management treatment sites. We're moving forward on water quality management zones. We're moving forward on household cleaning products and that's just part of our plan. We will meet this plan because we care about the water in Manitoba and we care about our children's future.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the minister was wrong this morning. She was wrong on October 25. She is wrong now. I asked a question just a few days ago and she's forgotten already.

This minister is just trying to cover up the ineptitude of her government.

Today the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and I have tabled a bill to ban winter spreading of manure, except under circumstances where farmers have demonstrated they can act in ways that will keep the water flowing off their land very low in phosphorus content.

Will the minister put aside her rhetoric and start supporting our bills with substantial measures to reduce the load for Lake Winnipeg in phosphorus? It's badly needed. We've a conference upstream, everyone's upstream today. Let's move.

Ms. Melnick: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, we have in our water quality management zones reductions for nutrient management in zones N1, N2, N3, N4 and the nutrient buffer zones, so we're way ahead of the Member for River Heights.

I think it's important to note that Maude Barlow, the head of the Council of Canadians, said on Friday, at about 4:30 on CBC—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Melnick: —said on Friday on CBC, well, first of all, to the government of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, congratulations for having a Water Minister and having a Water Ministry. It's the first in the country, and it's certainly something we're recommending for all provinces and we would like to see the federal government develop a ministry at this level as well.

The people of Manitoba spoke on May 22.

Public Meeting Request for Attendance

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, during the last provincial election, the Premier (Mr. Doer) was more than happy to come and visit Inkster. In fact, many of the NDP MLAs had no problem in terms of coming to visit Inkster during the election. Between elections it's also important to come out for a visit.

Yesterday, the Premier's coffee went cold because he didn't have the courage to come into Concordia, Mr. Speaker.

On November 20, I am going to have yet another public meeting, and I would extend an invitation to the Premier or to any of the NDP MLAs that have the courage to come out to Inkster this time, Mr. Speaker, to debate an issue that I know is important to them.

You want to talk about resignations and resigning and stuff of that nature, I'm game. Come on out to Inkster, take the challenge, accept responsibility and accountability. Come out to Inkster November 20. I'll open my arms, and we'll have a good discussion with a good number of people. What we're looking for is accountability.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, what if the Member for Inkster took out ads, put up flyers, put out petitions, talked about a meeting for months, talked about a resignation if a hearing wasn't held, what if he called a meeting and hardly anybody came?

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's not my fault that the Premier is not that much of a draw.

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind members the purpose of points of order. Points of order and matters of privilege should be very, very serious matters, because points of order are to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a procedure of this House.

The honourable member does not have a point of order. Points of order should never be used for debates.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Attorney General, to continue.

Mr. Chomiak: Maybe for his meeting in Inkster, the member should have as the title if he wants a draw: Why I said many times I would resign if you were vindicated and now I've gone back on my word.

Maybe if he used that as the title, he'll get a better draw when he has his own meeting in Inkster, Mr. Speaker.

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

Speaker's Ruling

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

Prior to Routine Proceedings on November 1, 2007, the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) raised a point of order contending that statements made in the House by the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer) concerning an Elections Manitoba investigation into events in The Maples constituency were intentionally misleading. The honourable Deputy Government House Leader (Mr. Ashton) and the honourable Deputy Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) also spoke to the point of order. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities.

The issue of intentional misleading of the Legislature has been raised many times in this House, and the rulings of previous Speakers have been very clear and consistent. Speakers Walding, Phillips, Rocan, Dacquay, all ruled that a deliberate misleading of the House involves the intent to mislead and knowledge that the statement would mislead, and they also ruled that proof of intent to mislead must be provided.

As I advised the House on April 16, 2007, providing information that may show the facts are at variance is not the same as providing proof of intent

to mislead. As ruled by Speaker Dacquay, without a member admitting in the House that he or she had the stated goal of misleading the House when putting remarks on the record, it is virtually impossible to prove that a member had deliberately intended to mislead the House.

This finding is supported by the federal Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in its 50th report where it was stated: "intent is always a difficult element to establish in the absence of an admission or a confession."

* (14:30)

Also, as I advised the House on April 29, 2004, on May 5, 2005, on June 13, 2005, on December 6, 2005, on April 18, 2006, April 27, 2006 and April 16, 2007, it is not the role of the Speaker to decide on questions of facts. In the words of House of Commons Speaker, Peter Milliken, from April 19, 2004, he stated, "it is not the role of the Speaker to adjudicate on matters of fact, as this is something that the House itself can form an opinion on during debate."

In addition, I would like to share with the House words from a September 18, 1996, ruling from Speaker Dacquay: "All members of this Chamber are honourable members, and I, as Speaker, and indeed this House must accept the word of each honourable member. In fact, *Beauchesne* citation 494 states that it has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. On rare occasions, *Beauchesne* reminds us this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident."

In the absence of an admission from the honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer) that he was intending to deliberately mislead the House, and for the other reasons stated in the ruling, I must rule that there is no point of order.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Roland Pumpkin Refurbishment

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): The Rural Municipality of Roland is home to the world's largest pumpkin. Recently, Roland's giant pumpkin was chosen to make a makeover through the Hampton Inn & Suites' "Explore the Highway for Hampton"—by the way, Roland is southwest of Winnipeg, for those who need a map—"Save-a-Landmark" program. In the past eight years, this program has refurbished

a total of 33 landmarks. This year's theme was called "World's Largest" and Roland was ecstatic to be chosen.

Ten volunteers from the Hampton Inn & Suites in Winnipeg were sent to Roland to perform the makeover. The pumpkin received sanding and painting with anti-graffiti paint. The site itself was landscaped with trees and shrubs. It received a new stone walkway and lights were installed to illuminate the pumpkin at night. Hampton Inn & Suites donated approximately \$15,000 to make this refurbishment possible.

The citizens of Roland have such wonderful spirit and they love their pumpkins, as their town is also home to the annual Roland Pumpkin Fair held this year on October 6, 2007. Pumpkin growers from all over come to compete for a top prize of \$1,000 and the winner of this year's Giant Pumpkin-Growing Contest grew a pumpkin weighing in at 924 pounds. Although this pumpkin did not compare in size to Roland's own giant pumpkin, the town welcomed the competition.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members today to join me in congratulating the Rural Municipality of Roland for being chosen by Hampton Inn & Suites for a landmark refurbishment of their giant pumpkin.

I would also like to thank the "Explore the Highway with Hampton, Save-a-Landmark program", Hampton Inn & Suites in Winnipeg for supplying volunteers, resources and equipment that made this makeover possible.

Otto Klassen Honorary Degree

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, at this year's University of Winnipeg fall convocation, a very special person received an honorary degree. Otto Klassen, a filmmaker specializing in Mennonite history received an honorary degree.

Mr. Klassen has made over 50 documentaries and brought the experience of the Mennonites from Russia to light for many people around the world. Mr. Klassen's work has made him an internationally respected filmmaker. It was especially touching for me, as I'm a descendent from Mennonite immigrants from Russia.

Otto Klassen was born in Ukraine and saw his first film there in the 1930s. Mr. Klassen's life could be the subject of one of his own documentaries. He survived famine in Europe, a world war and took flight as a refugee to South America and eventually

came to Manitoba in 1955. He started learning about filmmaking by watching Walt Disney nature films in the 1970s and even studied with filmmakers in both Winnipeg and in California at Disney studios.

The stories of the Mennonites are both riveting and shocking, described by one person as stories of ordinary people, living ordinary lives, yet experiencing extraordinary events. The films have opened the eyes of people all over the world to the plight of Mennonites as they fled persecution from one jurisdiction to another.

Mr. Klassen's most recent film details the picture-perfect life that Mennonites had established in what is now Ukraine only to see it torn apart by the Russian Revolution. This film includes footage that has long been forgotten until discovered in an archive in Germany. I know this great Winnipeg filmmaker is putting himself and our entire province on the arts and cultural map. We should all thank Mr. Klassen for uncovering more of the rich and fascinating history of the Mennonite community.

I know I speak for all honourable members when I say that he is highly deserving of this honorary degree. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Teulon Collegiate Balanced School Day

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Students and staff at Teulon Collegiate Institute are experiencing something new at their school this year. Teulon Collegiate is the first high school in Canada to test the balanced school day. This new timetable system is widely popular in elementary schools in Ontario, and last year elementary schools in Interlake School Division adopted the practice.

Instead of the traditional five periods separated by two recesses and an extended lunch hour, the balanced school day uses three 100-minute teaching blocks divided by a 40-minute and 55-minute break for food and exercise. Physical activity is at the top of everyone's mind during the first break between 10:25 and 11:05 a.m., and the second break from 12:50 to 1:45 p.m. takes the form of a traditional lunch hour, with many students continuing their exercise before and from then.

Having students eat during each break is believed to help keep them more attentive in late afternoon and mid-morning and mid-afternoon. The later lunch also creates a shorter afternoon and makes it feel like the day goes faster in addition to getting more physical activity than the previous schedule provided opportunities for. With physical

education credits being more compulsory for grades 11 and 12 next year, this could prove to be an effective alternative for this school.

So everyone at Teulon Collegiate can see the 260 students and school staff walking, running, circuit training, playing soccer, volleyball, basketball, flag football and countless other activities to get their blood pumping and hearts racing. Staff members are keeping track of all student participation as a test, for it will become necessary next year.

Mr. Speaker, Teulon Collegiate may be at the forefront of a timetable system that could be adopted by other high schools across the country. I would like to commend the students, staff and parents for all their efforts in moving forward with the implementation of the balanced school day and for the work they are doing to ensure the new system is operating as it should, to benefit all those involved. Thank you very much.

Manitoba's Economy

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, our competitive economy, vibrant arts and culture scene and low rates of personal and business tax all combine to make the quality of life we enjoy here in Manitoba second to none.

As part of the growing number of people who've returned to Manitoba over the past number of years, I know this is an exciting place to live. There's a renewed spirit of optimism and a strong momentum for growth in all sectors. We're training and keeping more doctors and nurses, our housing values are up, our youth population is growing, and investments in infrastructure, such as highway renewal, are at historic levels.

Manitobans also benefit from lower education property taxes and have received record tax reductions. The 2007 budget was built on a strong commitment to provide tax relief for hardworking Manitobans and delivered \$297 million in new tax benefits, including personal tax cuts for all Manitobans. The budget also announced the Province of Manitoba is matching the federal pension income-splitting tax charges which will save pensioners an estimated \$11 million annually.

A further \$93 million in business tax savings was also delivered to Manitobans. The small business tax rate will be reduced to 2 percent on January 1, 2008, with a further reduction to 1 percent on January 1, 2009. This benefits 80 percent of

Manitoba businesses and makes our small business tax the lowest in Canada.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this is a good time to live and work in Manitoba. Thank you.

* (14:40)

Ron Batho

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, today, I stand to congratulate a good friend of mine, Mr. Ron Batho, as the latest Canadian Hereford Association Honour Roll Recipient.

Mr. Batho's many contributions to the local agricultural sector as well as his community have required much hard work, passion and a keen knowledge of cattle and the cattle industry. Mr. Batho began learning about cattle as a youngster growing up on his family farm north of Minnedosa. At this time, he was already a leader in the local youth cattle clubs. Mr. Batho later received a diploma in agriculture from the University of Manitoba after having moved to the community of Oak Lake and setting up his farm there, Mr. Speaker.

Following his education, he began a lifelong series of achievements in the cattle industry, both in terms of the quality of his stock and the success of his business enterprises. His early involvement in showing cattle produced many impressive awards.

In 1966, Ron married his wife Sheila and they had two children, two daughters, Michelle and Tracy. In 1982, upon her unfortunate passing, Ron married Kathy in 1985.

In his early farming years he was instrumental in supporting the start of the Douglas Bull Test Station, being the only continuous exhibitor even today. Ron's stock has garnered a reputation as among the best in Manitoba and bulls sired by his stock have dominated the Hereford market. His commitment is shown to his industry in the fact that they have established on their own Batho Farms Limited a company that he has managed over the years called the Southwest Bull Development Centre for excellence in the development of the Hereford industry.

As a cattleman, Ron's valuable contributions have not gone unnoticed. He has been the recipient of a wide array of prestigious awards, including being named the Premier Purebred Producer in 1984 by the Minister of Agriculture of Manitoba and receiving a certificate of merit from the Manitoba

Agriculture Graduates Association for outstanding accomplishments in Manitoba agriculture.

While his most recent award serves to further emphasize Mr. Batho's career within the agricultural community, he must not let it overshadow the contributions he's made to his local community at large from his involvement in the Oak Lake Curling Club, the Oak Lake Agricultural Society, United Church and as a leader of various other community organizations.

A highlight has been his help in educating youth to the livestock industries importance for youth development through the 4-H.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time. The—

An Honourable Member: Leave.

An Honourable Member: Ask for leave.

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

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As his Canadian Hereford Association Award description states, "Many of our Canadian Hereford industry leaders have been recognized nationally and internationally for their unselfish dedication to the improvement of life for their fellow man." It is quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that Ron Batho fits this bill.

I know he and Kathy are extremely proud of their daughter Michelle, her husband Albert Reimke and their grandchildren, because Albert and Michelle were recognized a few years back as the Mid-Canada Outstanding Young Farmer. I know that his dedication to 4-H is paramount in his importance of the accomplishments that he's had.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a grievance?

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a grievance.

I rise today on a grievance, regrettably. I can tell you it's an extremely important issue in this Legislature, that is, regarding the decision by this government, decision by the Premier (Mr. Doer) to overrule Manitoba Hydro's decision, specifically, that is, with regard to the transmission line that is being proposed by this Premier on the west side of Lake Winnipeg, versus the east side of Lake Winnipeg, which was, of course, recommended by Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

This is entirely a government decision, a decision by this NDP, by the Premier to take the line from a dam that's going to be located directly north of Kenora and heading in a westerly direction above Lake Winnipeg, going on the west side of Lake Winnipeg and then going near Dauphin and the Riding Mountain National Park, going down towards the Trans-Canada Highway and straight back east, all the way back to Winnipeg, perhaps, to supply hydro to hydro markets in either the United States or in Minnesota or in Ontario.

That's like myself travelling, Mr. Acting Speaker, from Winnipeg to Brandon. Now normally, and I'll give you an analogy. Normally, if I was going from Winnipeg to Brandon, I'd take the No. 1 highway, take the most direct route, the straightest route possible from here to Brandon. It would only take me a couple of hours to get to Brandon if I took that route. However, the analogy is me travelling instead on No. 6 highway through the Narrows all the way to Dauphin, then through Riding Mountain National Park and on to Brandon. That route itself would probably take four and a half to five hours and that's the effect of this decision by this government.

It's going to cost Manitobans a billion dollars. I regard that as a billion-dollar boondoggle, not only an extra \$410 million in capital costs that are going to be required to construct that additional transmission line, but we're going to see line loss of at least 40 megawatts. That's from Mr. Bob Brennan himself, the CEO of Manitoba Hydro. We're going to lose, because of that extra distance, when the line is at full capacity in terms of its transmission capability, we're going to be losing about 40 megawatts of electricity, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Certainly, all Manitobans are going to pay for that decision, not only in terms of the capital costs that are going to be involved, the extra capital costs because of the distance that the transmission line has to travel but also the line loss all the way down that transmission line. That amounts to almost a billion dollars of extra costs to Manitoba Hydro and a billion dollars to the ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro. That's all Manitobans.

This is a government decision that's overruling the decision and the recommendations of a Crown corporation, Manitoba Hydro. It's interference at its best, Mr. Acting Speaker. I know that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has used several arguments as to why he feels that he has to take the long route to southern

Manitoba, as opposed to the short route. He cites environmental concerns, but more environmental damage will occur, of course, on the west side, the route that's going to be longer, because there's going to be more damage to the environment as a result. There's going to be more boreal forest to cut down on the west side, on the longer route, and the Premier has said in this House that he's concerned about the route going down the east side of Lake Winnipeg, the shorter route, because it's going to break up the pristine boreal forest, as he calls it.

What he has to realize, what he has to understand, is that there already is an all-weather road to Bissett and Manigotagan. There already is an all-weather road that distance, and he's also proposing, in this latest budget, that the all-weather road be extended to Bloodvein First Nation, to the Bloodvein River, Mr. Acting Speaker. We already have transmission lines up the east side, and we already have winter roads up the east side, all the way to Little Grand First Nation and beyond.

I know the Premier continues to say, well, how many of you on this side of the House have been up the east side? Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I can tell you, I've been there more times than he has. I know that for a fact. I have travelled up to Bloodvein First Nation. I have been up the winter roads many times. I have seen the poverty that's on those First Nation communities, and I understand that they need access. They need access year-round. They pay up to \$10 a litre for a carton of milk, and all because of a lack of access.

We need to have access on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. I've been there. I've talked to people on the east side of Lake Winnipeg as many of my colleagues have as well, and we know what the conditions are up there. We have to do something in terms of trying to improve access to those communities.

I'm surprised to hear the member who represents that area in this Legislature; I'm surprised to hear that he is not in favour of an all-weather access road on the east side. He's not in favour of a transmission line which could bring prosperity to communities that he represents. I'm really surprised at that because, obviously, when the communities, when they get to hear about the position of the member from the east side of Lake Winnipeg, when they hear that position, certainly, that's going to make a difference to his popularity in that area.

* (14:50)

I also heard the Premier indicate that another reason why we don't want to put the transmission line on the east side of Lake Winnipeg is it'll disturb the woodland caribou on the east side. Well, we already have an all-weather road, Mr. Acting Speaker, on the east side. We have winter roads on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. We already have transmission lines on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. I've been there. I've been up the winter road. I have observed them myself. We already have transmission lines.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

It's not necessarily a pristine wilderness as the Premier (Mr. Doer) would like to have us believe, and the range of the woodland caribou, in fact, is not limited simply to northern communities. It extends as far south as Bird Lake, which is in my constituency. I've seen the woodland caribou there. They co-exist with cottagers on Bird Lake. They co-exist with fishers who go into the Bird Lake area to Flintstone Lake, to Gem Lake, to all of those lakes on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. They co-exist with development and roads, transmission lines, and with people who are there on a recreational basis, Mr. Speaker. There are lots of cottages that already exist in Bird Lake and Flanders and Booster Lake and Davidson Lake, all on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Those caribou continue to co-exist and they're thriving.

Another reason why the Premier indicates that he does not approve of the east side is because of the World Heritage Site; UNESCO's site was identified as a much smaller area and away from the lake and into Ontario, but the Premier refuses to acknowledge that. The transmission line, any transmission line on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, the shorter route, won't touch the proposed site. He knows that, but he continues to put facts on the record that are incorrect and false.

The arguments used by Manitoba Hydro are compelling arguments. They recommended the shorter route, the east-side route because, first of all, it's more direct, directly from the Hydro generating stations to the south. It's their recommended route for another reason, and that is reliability of power for all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. The Premier knows full well that if there's a ice storm on the west side of Lake Winnipeg and that transmission line is located there, it will take down all power for all of Manitoba. Certainly, if we had a transmission line on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, it would make a substantial

difference in terms of reliability. Manitoba Hydro has said that. Manitoba Hydro has recommended that, and I would hope that the Premier would follow the recommendations of his Crown corporation and the experts within Manitoba Hydro. Thank you.

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

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I, too, wanted to put a few comments on record. I guess this side of the House, we could spend hours and hours giving grievances regarding the areas of concern that we have within this province. However, we are restricted to just a few minutes, so I'd like to put a few comments on record.

Mr. Speaker, I will start off, first of all, with the NDP's failure regarding the bipole 3 transmission line that they're proposing. The fact is that this is going to cost Manitoba's families more than \$4,000 each. This would be the second largest capital project of our generation. It is four times more expensive than the floodway project and 53 times more expensive than the proposed women's hospital at the Health Sciences Centre.

By forcing Manitoba Hydro to follow a route almost 500 kilometres longer than the shorter eastern route, the NDP will waste a minimum of \$1.09 billion, a legacy of debt to be left to our children and grandchildren, and that's where the \$4,000-plus per family comes into play. This massive NDP failure will make the \$100-million loss on Crocus look peanuts by comparison, not to mention the NDP route will cause needless destruction of our environment and continued despair for many Aboriginal people on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I'm using this as a grievance but also as a segue into some of the issues that I see taking place regarding the proposed line that the NDP are looking at and the expenditure that they are looking at making. It's just a while ago that we all got our provincial electoral constituency profile and the numbers sent out, the population for 2006. The area that I represent grew by an average of 12.6 percent, and the distribution of percentage increases was consistent right through from the very early age to later on. In fact, it is so consistent that it shows that the growth in the area that I represent will continue.

Here the province is looking at wasting millions and millions, hundreds of millions of dollars, on

something which is simply to enhance, supposedly, the Premier's (Mr. Doer) profile. I wish that they would seriously look at the waste of money that's going to be taking place regarding their proposed line down the west side.

So, Mr. Speaker, I indicated at the outset I want to use this as an opportunity to talk about the Pembina constituency and the things that we need out there. In my preface I indicated that this was 53 times more expensive than the proposed women's hospital at the Health Sciences Centre. This province has huge needs when it comes to health care, when it comes to personal care homes, when it comes to assisted living accommodations, and yet we have a government in place that seems to want to close a blind eye to some of the existing needs that are out there.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I want to mention a need that we have in Morden with Tabor Home who have been working at this for years and it needs to be replaced. When you look at the magnitude of the cost that the Premier is looking at with going down the west side and the money that could be used in order to facilitate and to build a new personal care home in Winkler would greatly, greatly assist that community.

So that's but one. That same community is needing assisted living accommodations, as is the city of Winkler. As I indicated at the outset, we have a community that is growing, one of the fastest growing rural communities in all of Manitoba, and yet it seems as though this government is turning a blind eye toward them. I would encourage the minister and the Premier to look at some of these facilities and to look at the establishment and the replacing of them, because they are in fact needing replacement.

But then, Mr. Speaker, I must move on. Then I just go to the community next door, and I know that I've asked questions in the House here regarding the Garden Valley School Division and the 950 students that are in huts. Here again, this money that is going to be used simply in order to prop up a Premier and his Cabinet could be used, I believe, in a much more beneficial way by providing good respectable accommodation for these 950 students who are in huts right now. They need timely access to washrooms.

The Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) has indicated that in fact he's going to be implementing a physical education program in the very near future

where students are going to need special gym time in order to be able to meet their requirements, and yet these students do not have access to a gym because of the accommodations that they are in.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage this Premier, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), to look seriously at providing the facilities that these communities need, as they are one of the fastest growing communities in the province of Manitoba.

Then I move further west, Mr. Speaker. I know that during the campaign the Premier was out in Manitou and made a big splash and a big announcement regarding the wellness centre, but the information that I have to date is that's exactly where it stayed. It was just a momentary trip through the community with a big announcement and ultimately they have seen nothing since then. So I wish that the Premier, that the ministers would carry through on the commitments that they make.

Mr. Speaker, I also need to remember regarding the fast-growing community that I represent, Highway 32 is another one of the issues that we have within the area. The infrastructure needs continue to grow as the community grows and I know that the minister of highways has been asked numerous times, not only by myself but by the community, to give at least some sort of semblance of response toward the need that we have with Highway 32.

There are in excess of 16,000 vehicles moving down that stretch of highway every day. It is a provincial road. It's a road, it's a highway that leads to the port of entry at Walhalla. It's well travelled and there are numerous accidents taking place there. So I wish that the minister of highways would take another look at that and, again, some of the monies that are being used which they are dedicating toward the usage on the proposed line going down the west side of the province. That billion dollars, in my opinion, could be used in a much better way.

So, with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank you for this opportunity, but, again, I wish that the Premier, that the ministers would take a second look at southern Manitoba and address some of the needs that we have out there. Thank you.

* (15:00)

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

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to grieve the issue regarding the transmission line on the east versus west. I know the NDP has committed to a third bipole line on the west side of Lake Winnipegosis. We are in favour of a third bipole transmission line from the northern part of Manitoba, and it should be situated on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to increase capacity and security of the transmission system.

I know that the cost of \$500 million, the extra cost that's going to be involved in moving the line on the west side could go a long way in adding slaughter capacity, processing capacity, not only for the beef industry but the pork industry. Also, I know that the programs that have been brought forward over the past few years need some upgrading. That money would go a long way in order to make some of those do become a reality.

I know that the hospitals in rural Manitoba need upgrades. I know that the personal care homes, that was mentioned by the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), need upgrades. I know the personal care homes are in need of upgrades within the province of Manitoba. I know there're a number of other issues that are so important to Manitobans. They talk about the line being a money-maker. Yes, we understand that. We do understand the fact that Manitoba Hydro does have a significant impact upon that of the province of Manitoba, but we feel it can be done in a better way. On the east side would save our taxpayers some \$500 million. This comes back that much faster, whereby our children, our grandchildren don't have to have the burden of the extra cost that's going to be as a result of that going on the west side, Mr. Speaker.

I know the loss that is involved with the line going on the west side of 40 megawatts through the line loss is going to be substantial. I know one of the lines, the main lines, that comes down through the Interlake is very important to the economy of our area. It comes down from the north and right through the Interlake, the Interlake constituency and Lakeside. Also, there's a transfer station in the R.M. of Rosser that has a significant impact on the viability and the financial impacts within the constituency of Lakeside.

I know that those people on the east side of Manitoba would also like to have that opportunity. I know the roads and the hospitals and the businesses that would open up for those people. I think that we've had this debate in the House and it's been

brought forward by our leader in a way which is going to make Manitoba more sustainable, especially on the east side. I think we can have it all, and I think that we have an opportunity and a responsibility to look at all the options. I know the chiefs have made it very clear that the line on the east side is one of the options. They would like to have the alternative to have the discussions with the government. We certainly would encourage the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the ministers responsible to do that.

I know the claim that it is the pristine forest that's already there. There're two lines there already, and three east winter roads running through the wilderness now. I know that we can make things work, Mr. Speaker, as a result of that. All we need to do is have the fortitude and the interest to move forward on those negotiations.

We found out today that the chiefs of the Aboriginal reserves on the east side are wanting to have bipole 3 on their side. I think the government is wise to take advantage of that opportunity to meet with those people. I know that there's time for change and to make sure that we do, in fact, listen to those choices that are so important to the people both on the west side and the east side.

The NDP have made a commitment to the west side, which I think is probably not one that they thought out too awfully clearly. I know that the west side, as we talked about, was the extra costs and the line loss, and the increased costs by going this route could pay for a new Hydro office twice over. It runs into about \$30 million per year in extra carrying costs as well.

I think that the UNESCO heritage site is one that would not be hindered as well. I know that the First Nations find that they need the consultation with the Premier in those as well. I also seem to realize that the west side from Conawapa to Ontario was another one that was talked about. I know that that one is certainly another option that we need to make sure that we take advantage of as well.

I had mentioned earlier that one of the major lines runs through Lakeside, and this hasn't done any harm to wildlife in our area or our farm communities in any way. My people certainly have no problem with that line running through. In fact, when you look at the wind tower, another alternative energy source that is going to be taking place within the province of Manitoba, we need those transmission lines, and I'm sure those people on the east side would also like to have that opportunity as well. So

we need those lines. We know that we can't have the two lines left the way they are. We need to make sure that we are safe with our Hydro lines, and by adding that third line would certainly make sure that we do have that line brought forward in a timely manner.

In closing, I would suggest that our leader brought forward an alternative to the west-side plan, and we need to make sure that the government is listening and do the right thing and not waste my children's and my grandchildren's future when it comes to the extra debt that's going to be burdened upon them. We probably won't see the debt in our lifetime, but certainly they will, and I think it's the right thing to do, that the government scrap the ill-proposed west-side line and do the right thing and definitely have another look at the east side. I think that our leader is making the pitch, not only to the government to do the right thing, and I know that ministers on that side of the House have a responsibility to make sure that the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province, in fact, does do the right thing.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we stand on this grievance today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, if you could call Bill 13, and then Bill 15, Bill 11, Bill 17 and Bill 19.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The order of business today will be resumed debate on Bill 13, and if we conclude that, then we will move on to concurrence and third readings of Bills 15, 11, 17 and 19.

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 13—The Organic Agricultural Products Act

Mr. Speaker: Okay, now I'm going to call resumed debate on concurrence and third readings of Bill 13, The Organic Agricultural Products Act, and the debate remains open.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do want to speak about this bill one last time before it is taken to a vote by the House. I do strongly feel that we've brought forward some amendments on this bill that would have made the bill just that little bit better, and

it's unfortunate the minister decided not to do that. I know talking in consultation with a number of the organizations over the past week since we brought those amendments in, there's certainly a disappointment out there that the amendments didn't make it. But, having said that, they do feel that the bill is one that does need to go forward.

We also know that bill needs to go forward, and in order to see that happen, Mr. Speaker, the bill would have definitely been better in my opinion and caucus on our side of the House, and I also have had two or three other calls that are organic producers that are within the province of Manitoba, even though we only had one presentation at the committee level, and we do know for a fact that now there are other people that are coming forward that weren't involved with the organic business of being certified. They are now very concerned about their future, about what's going to happen with their businesses, and we certainly hope that the minister has done her homework. We've done ours, and I know that it's so important whenever we make legislation that we cover off those that are going to be impacted in a way that's going to be sustainable for them and for the next generation to come.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So, with those few things, Mr. Acting Speaker, we'll look forward to moving the bill forward, and at that onset we'll certainly see that the bill passes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Acting Speaker, I'll be very brief in my comments. I did have the opportunity to speak to this bill previously. I still share the concerns; the minister has not been able to convince me in any way in terms of that this whole exclusive use of the word "organic" is in the industry's best interests, and I'm somewhat disappointed that the minister didn't see fit to throw in the word "certified" organic. I do believe that it is ultimately a mistake, given the responses that we've been given from the government.

* (15:10)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Altemeyer): Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Altemeyer): The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 13, The Organic Agricultural Products Act.

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

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 15—The Biofuels Amendment Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Altemeyer): Up next is Bill 15, The Biofuels Amendment Act.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux), that The Biofuels Amendment Act, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Altemeyer): It has been moved by the honourable Minister for Agriculture and Food, seconded by the Minister for Transportation, that Bill 15, The Biofuels Amendment Act, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion—oh, the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure just to talk a few minutes on this particular bill. It's certainly encouraging that this particular bill did come from committee and has been brought back to the House. There were a number of presenters on this particular bill. It appears most of those presenters spoke in favour of this particular legislation, and in favour of this particular legislation going forward.

There were some comments at committee and it's kind of an ongoing debate that we're having now in society in terms of the food versus fuel debate because a lot of the biofuels currently are coming from food products and we're talking primarily about wheat, corn and Canola. In particular in Manitoba we're looking at the wheat and Canola, which provides a tremendous opportunity for economic growth and diversity here in Manitoba. But that's a debate I think that will rage for some time. But with the relatively cheap food policy we've had here across our country, obviously producers are looking for an opportunity to enhance the value of their particular production.

Obviously, it's a tremendous economic opportunity for producers. We've seen corn prices really increase in the United States, I think primarily as a result of ethanol production escalating in size. Those kinds of commodity prices have basically crossed the border so we've seen corn and feed prices increase here in Canada as well. We've seen the wheat and Canola markets increase substantially as well. Clearly, Canadians aren't really looking to pay a lot of money for their food, but we're forced into the economy where we're basically forced to pay a substantial dollar for our fuel. As we see the cost of fossil fuels go up, certainly the benefits of the biofuels production looks more economical to us in Manitoba.

I think the other thing we should mention, and this particular bill does talk a little bit about it, is the future and future technology of how we're going to produce biofuels not only in Manitoba but across the country, and is being produced in some countries around the world. It is something that is addressed in this particular legislation. There is an amendment that has been brought forward at committee to recognize a change in terms of the definition of biofuels. It is fairly wide encompassing, so it will allow some of the new technologies that we think will come forward the opportunity to fall under this particular legislation.

Certainly, we look forward to having some of that new technology brought forward in Manitoba. We do know, for instance, in terms of the biomass energy, there is tremendous opportunity here. We do have a tremendous amount of residue produced every year in cereal production that could be used in biomass production. We think there are also lots of opportunities for development of other species which could be used in biomass production and in terms of producing biofuels.

So I think part of the role of government should be to facilitate some of that technology in terms of bringing it from other countries to Manitoba and allowing investors and allowing private enterprise to develop and foster some of those initiatives so that we have the opportunity for economic development across our great province.

I think it's important, though, to reflect a little bit on the history of this particular legislation. The original Biofuels Act goes back to the year 2003. Mr. Acting Speaker. That was before my time here at the Legislature, but in doing some historical review, the government of the day seemed intent on pressing

this particular legislation through for passage. The intent was that this particular bill had to be passed before we could develop an ethanol strategy here in Manitoba. *[interjection]* It was November of '03, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) points out. So we on this side of the House obviously agreed with the concept of ethanol production. We thought it would be a tremendous opportunity for companies to get on board and enhance some economic opportunities for us. So the bill was passed in the Legislature. The unfortunate part, and the interesting part of this whole situation, is that a very small percentage of that bill was actually proclaimed. In fact, at this point in time, probably in essence of 20 percent of that particular legislation has actually been proclaimed. So we have a bill sitting out there that really has no meat attached to it, and I think that's part of the concern going forward.

Now, here we are, we're almost four years later. We have an amendment to a skeleton of a bill, a skeleton of legislation, that we're going to amend that particular legislation. Certainly, we on this side of the House are interested in having the biofuel industry move on. We think there is tremendous opportunity there, but it's going to take the will of this government to make sure that that happens.

So we certainly agree with the principle of this particular legislation moving forward. We hope that this will enable the biofuel industry in Manitoba to really take off and to foster, but I think the message that we on this side of the House would like to leave with the government: It's going to take the will of this government to make it happen and just having legislation, or at least the framework for the legislation in place, isn't going to necessarily make that happen.

So it will be up to this government to fill in the gap, if you will, make sure that the legislation that's being brought forward will actually be proclaimed in the very near future and that we have the opportunity to move forward. It certainly does allow the opportunity for the government to say that they're doing things in the biofuel industry, and I think maybe that's a part of some of the legislation I know I've seen in the past. There is a lot of housekeeping-type legislation that's been brought forward. There's a lot of legislation that looks good in title, but in fact the reality is it doesn't really enhance the economic activity of Manitoba.

* (15:20)

What it does, this legislation certainly provides the opportunity for the government to say that they're enhancing biofuel in Manitoba, but nothing can be further from the truth, Mr. Acting Speaker. Actions speak louder than words and, to date, all we've seen in terms of biofuel production is a lot of talk.

In fact, just reading in last week's paper here, in the *Free Press*, I see the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau) had a letter in there, an editorial, if you will, talking about the new era for Manitoba with the government's ethanol mandate coming into effect. Well, here we are four years later and he had the opportunity to bring the ethanol mandate into effect four years ago. We really don't have any concrete evidence that he is going to be bringing this forward in the very near future. Obviously, this particular mandate seems to be connected with the development of ethanol in Manitoba.

We are fortunate in Manitoba that we do have the Husky plant in Minnedosa getting very close to up and running. Certainly, they, on their own initiative, have increased the size of their facility there. We're certainly looking forward to having them up and running.

I do want to talk about some of the other companies that are actively seeking both ethanol and biodiesel production here in Manitoba. Unfortunately, at this particular point in time, those particular companies have not had a real positive feedback from this provincial government. We hope that, if this particular piece of legislation has been holding the government back from allowing those companies to move forward, by passing this legislation, the government will now get off their hands and start moving the industry forward.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, that, I think, is the message that we, on this side of the House, want to leave. We know our neighbours in Saskatchewan are certainly moving ahead. They're over the 300 million litres in terms ethanol production. We, in Manitoba, once the Mohawk or Husky plant is up and running, will be in about the 130 to 140 litres. We do believe there's opportunity in other provinces in terms of marketing ethanol and biodiesel outside of Manitoba.

Clearly, the subsidies associated with this particular legislation are only restricted to ethanol produced and sold within Manitoba. We recognize that. But, at the same time, I believe the role of this government should be to foster development of the

biofuels industry so that those individual companies will have the opportunity to market their product throughout Canada and into the United States as well. So that's really the role that this government should be playing.

I think it's important to recognize that in rural Manitoba, not just the agriculture producers, but a lot of the rural communities are looking for ways to enhance the economic activities around the various communities. They feel that the biofuel industry is a very positive way for them to do that. We looked at some of the business plans around the ethanol and the biodiesel production. Those particular business plans look very good. There is some money being put together by private investors into these companies. There's a lot of research going on. There's a lot of work being done in terms of assessing sites and also assessing some of the commodities that are required to go into these plants, and also looking at the water that's required to go into these sorts of plants.

That's again where the government can play an important role in terms of facilitating the development of those sort of issues around water, around infrastructure issues, such as roads, highways leading into these facilities. The other thing, obviously, that's going to be required is some energy in terms of running the actual plant. So we think it's very important that both the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro are involved in the grassroots to make sure that that particular energy source, whatever energy source is going to be required, is going to be made available, hopefully, at a reasonable cost to those producers.

Again, the role of the government should be there to facilitate development of those biofuels. We hope that the various departments that could be involved in the biofuel industries will take an active role in facilitating the development of those respective companies that are actually seeking to develop the biofuel industry.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think that's it. We certainly have discussed this particular legislation before. There's absolutely nothing holding the government back from enhancing the biofuel industry in Manitoba. We hope that they will move the initiative forward. Certainly, once this particular legislation is passed, there should be no more hang-ups in terms of the legislative process, unless the government decides that there are more amendments required.

We introduced the bill in 2003. Basically, it sits on the shelf for four years. We come here again. It was introduced last spring; it didn't go anywhere. It was re-introduced this fall. We finally got it to the process of third reading, and along the way in committee, there were three amendments that were brought forward at that particular time. So, Mr. Acting Speaker, we sometimes wonder about the process that this particular government follows just to get it right.

But, anyway, I just wanted to close on that and hope the government will be there to work with the companies that want to move the biofuel industry ahead in Manitoba. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Altemeyer): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Altemeyer): The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 15, The Biofuels Amendment Act.

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

Bill 11—The Children's Advocate's Enhanced Mandate Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Acting Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, rural development, Rural Initiatives, and various other activities that bring prosperity and development to all Manitobans, that Bill 11, The Children's Advocate's Enhanced Mandate Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur l'élargissement du mandat du protecteur des enfants (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Altemeyer): It has been moved by the Government House Leader, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk), that Bill 11, The Children's Advocate's Enhanced Mandate Act (Various Acts Amended), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I would like to speak to Bill 11, The Children's Advocate's Enhanced Mandate Act, which was first introduced about this

time last year. I'd just like to go through some of the things that have led up to actually the formulation of this act because this came out of tragedy, Mr. Acting Speaker, tragedies in the welfare system, in the child welfare system, which have grown to horrendous proportions under this NDP government.

We do know that there has been a tragic history of mismanagement by this government within the child welfare system evidenced by the fact that 31 children died while in care or within a year of receiving care, and now I think we have to add another child to that. So, we'd have to up that number, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Back in 2003, when devolution was proposed, we supported devolution in spirit and in principle and still do, Mr. Acting Speaker, but we did say at that time, and we cautioned the government to go slow, to go slow on this. When you're doing a massive change to any kind of way of doing business or in any organization, it has to be done in a measured way in terms of examining what is working and what isn't working, evaluating as you go along, and certainly correcting things that you may see that aren't going particularly correctly.

* (15:30)

I think the government was remiss in this in that they went ahead too quickly, full bore ahead, and brought in a process that was major, Mr. Acting Speaker, and caused a lot of upheaval within the child welfare system and within the ranks of the front-line workers, who had to not only deal with looking after the children that they were charged to look after and care for, but having to deal with the actual change process itself which meant a lot of administrative work. We heard from many of them during that time that their focus was on doing administrative work and therefore, not—the time was being taken away from focus on providing care and services to the children that they are charged to protect.

What happened is, you take a system that already has problems, as we knew it did in 2003, and go through a chaotic upheaval and pass this system along. We certainly saw the results of that and saw many more deaths, many more children in care, many more deaths. Certainly, we passed along some of the things that were wrong in the system. I believe that we should have looked very carefully, or the government should have looked very carefully at what was wrong in the system, try to address those problems before they passed it on to a brand-new

structure that brought in a lot of new people and, in fact, lost a lot of the institutional knowledge of those people that had many, many years of service in child protection.

I think what happened speaks for itself, Mr. Acting Speaker. We saw that the government has failed with the child welfare system and has failed to make sure that the best interests of the child are always first. These instances are always special when you're talking about most vulnerable children. Every child's circumstances are different and have to be assessed individually. It's not a one-size-fits-all program. When you're talking about children that come into care, many of them come into care at birth. Many of them come into care and experience four, five and I've heard as high as 17 different placements in foster families throughout their time that they spend in the child welfare system. It's just not fair to take lightly any legislation that affects these children.

We know that this Bill 11 was the result of many, many, many reviews that were done following the death of Phoenix Sinclair, that horrific case where a child was dead and not even missed for almost nine months. I mean, that is such a tragedy. The people of Manitoba would not put up with that kind of thing happening in the child welfare system and cried loudly to the government to do something about this. Many reviews were done, Mr. Acting Speaker. As a result of this, there were reviews called by the four authorities to account for all the children in the child welfare system. I might point out at this time that the Minister of Family Services, the then-Minister of Family Services, refused to do that, but the authorities stepped up to the plate and decided, yes, we do need to reassure the people in the province that the children are accounted for in the child welfare system.

So that review was undertaken. There was a review undertaken led by the Children's Advocate. There was a review also led by the Ombudsman. Since that time, we also saw an Auditor General's report which outlined some of the pre-devolution concerns and instances within child welfare.

So this bill is the result of several reviews, and it is one of the recommendations put forward by the Children's Advocate. Of all the reviews, there were well over 200 recommendations put forward by the Children's Advocate. Certainly, the recommendations brought forward are worthwhile looking at and taking under consideration, all of them, especially

the ones that are preventative and look to protection of children, and look to standards and practices within the province, and look to standard risk-assessment tools, and look to prevention of instances that lead to the deaths of children, that look to supports for families and children within the system, look to caseloads for workers in the system, Mr. Acting Speaker.

All of these recommendations have full merit. I think that what we can't do is ignore some of the recommendations that are there and cherry-pick the ones that we decide we want to go forward with. That's just not right. I mean, certainly some have to go forward before others, but I think the focus should be on the ones that I mentioned, about prevention, looking at the protection of children that have been taken into care and I think, more importantly, prevention and putting supports in place that would prevent children from having to be taken into care, supports for families and supports for children and certainly supports to help the people, the front-line workers that put so much time into their jobs.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

What I'd like to just talk a little bit about is the process of what happens here. We get a bill introduced in the Legislature, and, when that happens, we on this side of the House take a very keen eye to that and look at it to see what the intent of the bill is and to be sure that it is in the best interests of those that will be affected by the bill and that there has been a proper consultation done with people, stakeholders and people that would be affected by the legislation.

So, when this bill was brought forward, we did have a look at it and we examined it. A couple of red flags popped up, one being a potential conflict of interest, Mr. Speaker. Another thing that occurred, that we noticed, was there would be some reporting accountability with having this go through the Ombudsman's office as well and thought that to be a rather good thing. But I think the process then is we spoke to some people that may have been affected by this, and at that time I think there was a bit of a reluctance to speak up, to speak against the bill. Certainly, I think these things sometimes take time to sink in to people's awareness of what the legislation would do. Sometimes these things do take some time.

This bill was debated last year in the spring. At that time we looked at it and we said, well, we have consulted with the stakeholders. People did not

specifically at that point come up to us and say we don't like the bill. However, the process of going through second reading and then going to committee is very, very important. I think in this instance with this bill it shows the power of committee and the ability of the people of Manitoba to come forward and make presentations at committee so that there can be some persuasion to the government with the legislation.

I think this particular bill has demonstrated that very well, that at committee stage we did have people come forward who did bring some new information to the table, and who did speak against this legislation and did urge the government to have another look at it. I think that it's very important to recognize that this action, this process, has worked in this case because here we have more and new information about this bill which we didn't have previously, with presentations at committee.

* (15:40)

I think, you know, when people come forward at committee, they have to be recognized for the ideas that they bring to the committee. The government cannot think that they have a monopoly on what is right and what is the best idea. I think they have to listen to people from the province, from Manitoba, the Manitobans that come out to speak at committee and say and give their opinions.

We on this side of the House give our opinions to the government. They tend to just brush our ideas off as if they're not important, but certainly, they are important because we do bring some good ideas to this House, and we certainly support those who bring good ideas to committee. So I want to urge the government to listen to the presenters that brought forward some thoughts to the committee.

I want to just mention Dr. Peter Markesteyn, who was the former chief medical examiner for the Province of Manitoba. In fact, I knew Dr. Markesteyn when he was at Health Sciences Centre. As a former chief medical examiner, he, later in the process, I guess, became involved in this bill and did write and did come to committee and make a presentation. He did say, and I would like to just say this again, that he had concerns about transferring the investigation of child deaths to the Children's Advocate's office because he said there could be a potential conflict of interest.

I can see how that could arise when the Children's Advocate is dealing with a family as an

advocate, or a foster family, or a child in care. The office is dealing with that family, and if some tragedy were to occur in that family and a child died, she might find herself, then, in the position of having to investigate that death and, in effect, would be in the position of having to investigate herself, which would constitute a conflict of interest. As Dr. Markesteyn said, an investigator should not be an advocate, and an advocate should not be an investigator.

The two are not the same. The two are different functions. The Children's Advocate is there to advocate for children, for children who are in care, for children who are in need of protection, and for children that can't speak for themselves. She's not there to determine the causes of death or the circumstances around the death of a child. If that would be the focus of her department, how could she then focus on what she should be doing, or the Office of the Children's Advocate should be doing, and that would be protection of children?

The idea of looking at expanding the role of the investigation to include some of the publicly funded bodies like mental health services and education and the circumstances that would surround the death of a child, I think that, again, there's no clear understanding of how the reporting would go and who these publicly funded agencies are, specifically, and what is the reporting structure. Would they necessarily find themselves having to report to the Children's Advocate, or would they be willing to report to the Children's Advocate? Certainly, it's recognized that the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has long been the person who does the investigations around a child in care, and it's well-recognized within the province with agencies that this is the line of reporting and how things would work.

I think there's a lack of resources within the Chief Medical Examiner's office which has been identified. Certainly, if that's the case, perhaps more resources could be allocated to the Chief Medical Examiner, rather than resources allocated to the Children's Advocate. If the issue is resources, then resources can be allocated to any particular area that's necessary. It doesn't necessarily have to be the Children's Advocate, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I think when we look at this, I know that the government might say, oh, well, at one point you were for it; now you're against it. I want to say that certainly I think that, when new information comes

forward, you have to look at that information. If you take one position and new information comes to you, then you have to view that information, absorb that information, and be willing to admit that you didn't make the right decision, and take that information and look at it and be willing to go back to the legislation and say perhaps we did not think this through; perhaps we should take under advisement the information that's been brought forward to us and listen to the people that came to committee and take some more time to get this right. When you're talking about children in care, you want to make sure that you do not do anything to further jeopardize the already chaotic child-welfare system. You want to make sure that you're going to do what's right to make sure that you're going to protect the children in care and no further incidents will occur because of hasty and ill-thought-through legislation.

So I think that what should occur here, as I said, with this new information that's brought forward to committee, I would urge the government to look at it, listen to experts in the field; listen to experts like a former chief medical examiner who has been an expert across the country and has done numerous consultations across the country in terms of child death. When a person of this calibre comes and says, you know, I think you may not have this right, I think it is incumbent on the government to listen to the concerns raised here. I think it should be an opportunity for the government to say, okay, yes, we can—I think it's an opportunity to say, okay, maybe we made a mistake, maybe we can look at this again. And I think that that's perhaps what they should do.

* (15:50)

I think that priorities here, with the recommendations coming forward from the Children's Advocate, from the Ombudsman, and from all of the reviews that took place, priorities in looking at some of the things that need to be corrected within this system, again, focussing on prevention, focussing on help for families, focussing on supports for families, focussing on casework and caseloads. All of these things—focussing on provincial-wide standards, risk-assessment tools, to be able to allow the people that work in the child welfare system to do the job that they need to do. That should be the priority of this government, to look at the recommendations and prioritize which are the ones that are going to protect the living children in this province who, unfortunately, are in the child welfare system, the most vulnerable of the children in our province.

The focus should be on protecting them if they're in the system and secondly, to be looking at the prevention and supports that could be provided which would alleviate children being brought into the system, Mr. Speaker. But instead they've focussed on, they've sort of honed in on, one of the recommendations and that being to move resources and enhance the role of the Children's Advocate so that she would be responsible or—I shouldn't be saying she, but the Office of the Children's Advocate would be responsible for investigating deaths. I don't think that that should be a priority. I think we should be focussing on living children and helping those children and leaving it up to the Chief Medical Examiner to look at what occurred in most unfortunate circumstances where children die.

As I said earlier, the process, I think, has worked here because we had a bill come forward. We had second reading. We spoke to the bill with the information that we had available at the time. We may have had an eye to be supportive of the legislation at that time, but with new information which has come forward at the committee level, which is the process, which is very democratic process here in the province where people can come to the committee and say what they need to say, then I think we need to, because we've allowed people to have their say, we should never ignore what they have to say. We should take that new information that we have. We should look at it and we should certainly incorporate that into this legislation and look very closely at amending the legislation or withholding, withdrawing the legislation or, certainly, getting it right because once it's in legislation, it's there. We've seen it in the past where this NDP government has rushed into things, where they've rushed into the devolution process and we see the result of that, Mr. Speaker.

We've seen terrible things happen in the child welfare system. Children falling through the cracks because the cracks just got bigger and bigger because the system was broken in the first place. It was turned over prematurely and it just got that much worse, Mr. Speaker. Too many children died and we certainly don't want that to keep occurring. So I believe that we need to rethink this legislation and listen to the experts, as I said, people like Dr. Markesteyn who have seen this not only in our province but in other provinces and I believe has a lot to say on the topic.

Certainly, I know that at one point the Minister responsible for Family Services, well, they'd listen to

the current medical examiner, not the former medical examiner, and I think that that's disrespectful. I think that we do need to listen to the former chief medical examiner as he's in a position now to speak very freely, and he has. To say that you wouldn't be wanting to listen to a former chief medical examiner is just disrespectful, and disrespectful to the process of Manitobans coming forward to committee to have their say and to try and influence the legislation that is occurring in this province. It's just wrong to say that, and we certainly think that, if the NDP is trying to discourage people from coming to committee to make presentation, that's just wrong because that is the process in our province, the democratic process.

So, to sum up my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I think, with the enhanced mandate proposed for the Children's Advocate, that needs to have—definitely needs to—this government needs to rethink that, with the new information that's come forward. I think the focus always has to be on the best interests of the child. How do we protect the child? How do we support families? How do we have happy and healthy front-line workers who have adequate and manageable caseloads and supports in place for them? How do we ensure that the terrible deaths of children in care are not repeated?

Certainly, we would never want to see another tragedy like the one regarding the Phoenix Sinclair case and certainly, the Gage Guimond case. When you hear about these things, you really feel that it's really, really important, when you're bringing in legislation, to not rush it, to get it right. I urge the government to listen and take a second look at Bill 11 and put the best interests of living children first.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I am pleased to put some comments on the record about Bill 11, The Children's Advocate's Enhanced Mandate Act, and, Mr. Speaker, indicate that we've extreme concerns about this legislation. We aren't the only ones in opposition in this House that have concerns. We've heard from experts within the field. We heard from Dr. Peter Markesteyn, who is a forensic pathologist and certainly has had experience in this area. He made a very thoughtful presentation at committee.

I know that, when government brings in a piece of legislation, they have reasons for doing that, Mr. Speaker. I think they've tried to fool us somehow as Manitobans by talking about the enhanced mandate of the Children's Advocate, because really what

they're doing with this enhanced mandate is just taking that very same mandate away from another independent office and moving it from one place to the other. So they've diminished the role of the Chief Medical Examiner and they've enhanced the role of the Children's Advocate, indicating that it was the Children's Advocate and the Ombudsman that had recommended this in many, many recommendations. I know there are over 200 recommendations that were brought forward as a result of tragedies and complete chaos within our child-welfare system. As a result of that, they hand-picked or cherry-picked this one recommendation, thinking that they would be able to sell it to the public as making things better for children in care.

Mr. Speaker, this does absolutely nothing for children in care. Because children in care are alive, they're at risk and they're needing the very best support that society can offer to them in the way of placement, in the way of treatment. I always felt that the Child Advocate's role was a very important one, and we support the office of the Child Advocate. We support the role of that office in reviewing and ensuring and holding the child welfare system to account should there be need to make changes; to make sure that the workers within the system are supported and that they have caseloads that are manageable; to make sure that children are placed when they're removed from a family in a safe situation; to make sure that the proper checks and balances are in place that ensure that workers are trained to the standards that they are to be trained to and that those standards are uniform across the province, no matter where a child may be residing or where they may be placed.

* (16:00)

It's the role of the Child Advocate to be there to advocate on behalf of those children that are sometimes disenfranchised and can't advocate on behalf of themselves. It's not, in my opinion, the role of the Child Advocate to have to deal with after-the-fact issues when a child has been killed in care.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke pretty passionately about this on second reading, and I continue to feel the way I do. Dr. Markesteyn and others that have written about this have convinced me more that this is a wrong-headed decision, that it is going to prove down the road to be a wrong-headed decision and that this decision being made with this legislation is going to do absolutely nothing to ensure that children

that are alive, that are at risk, that are within the child welfare system have a voice.

There's going to be no added resource for those children in the system with this legislation, because the new money that's going to be put into the Child Advocate's office could have very easily been put into the Chief Medical Examiner's office, and that role would have been able to be accomplished in a more timely fashion.

I would think that it would be the role of the Child Advocate's office to take the recommendations that came from section 10 and ensure and monitor the child welfare system to make sure that the recommendations that were made were followed up on and were implemented, Mr. Speaker. That would be a very legitimate role for the Child Advocate, and I'm not sure when the recommendations came forward in the reviews that were done that the Child Advocate really thought through the whole issue of conflict and what position that office or that advocate might be put in.

I'd be very interested to know whether the minister or anyone on the government side took the time, after Dr. Markesteyn put his comments on the record at committee, to go to the Children's Advocate, to go to her office and say to her, look, there's an expert, Dr. Markesteyn, whom we all respect, that has raised some very serious issues about conflict. Have you had a chance to look at it or would you look at his comments and make comment to me and to us before we move ahead with this legislation on whether you think his comments have any merits or any value?

I would be interested and I haven't heard from the minister yet. I haven't heard him indicate whether he did talk to the Child Advocate, whether he did ask her whether, in fact, she agreed with Dr. Markesteyn's comments or whether she had other issues that she might bring forward that would indicate that Dr. Markesteyn was off-base.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether that happened, but I believe that government never went to the Child Advocate and asked for that opinion. I'm wondering whether the minister or anyone in government or in his office went to the Ombudsman's office and said, was this the intent of the recommendation that you made in your report? Did you look at this issue and would you still agree that this is the direction we should go with legislation?

Have we got anything from the Ombudsman that would indicate that he may have some reservations or some concerns as a result of Dr. Markesteyn's presentation at committee? We haven't heard that, and I would venture to guess, again, that the government didn't do its due diligence, didn't take seriously the presentation that was made and didn't share it with those that made recommendations, saying, was this your intent when you made the recommendations, or did you look at the conflict issue that might arise, and is it something we should rethink? I'd be very interested to know, and I probably will take some time to call the Child Advocate myself, maybe call the Ombudsman's office and see whether, in fact, they do share any of these concerns or whether they feel this is the right way to go.

So we will find out, but I guess, Mr. Speaker, my main concern is the children that so desperately need, many of them, to be rescued from a situation and a whole child welfare system that's in chaos. Time and time again, we hear and see the results of a very poorly managed child welfare system. We see workers that have far too high caseloads to be able to deal adequately with the children that they are supposed to serve. We have seen a system that's been dramatically changed and turned upside down through the devolution process which was rushed through without having the proper checks and balances and training for people. We know that cases were closed and children fell by the wayside as a result of this government's ideological rush to move in a certain direction, without making sure that the proper checks and balances were in place and that children were put first. I think children were put last in many instances in their desire to move this forward. We've seen already some of the results and some of the deaths of that decision, and I am sure we haven't seen the last of them.

Mr. Speaker, we would all want the devolution process to work and to work properly, but when you have a government that doesn't seem to understand that you've got to get it right before you do it because the lives of children are at risk. We have seen all too often the disaster and the chaos and the tragedy as the result of decisions that have been made. I think this is, again, one decision, in Bill 11, that hasn't been thought through properly, and this bill is going to come back to haunt this government and this minister in the years to come.

Mr. Speaker, this is bad legislation. If we just look to the article by Lindor Reynolds in the *Free*

Press this week, and I think she says it all, it's just rearranging the deck of the chairs on the *Titanic*, and that they, this government, have made a significant mistake in going down this route and that this decision will, very definitely, come back to haunt this government. It says that we've got a government that's been in power for almost a decade now, and that, instead of properly funding the Chief Medical Examiner's Office that already has the expertise to do these kinds of reviews, they are moving it over to the Child Advocate's office, making the Child Advocate become an investigator when the two roles shouldn't be mixed. An investigator can't be an advocate and an advocate can't be an investigator. That's what Dr. Markesteyn stated and I agree with his comments, but it seems to me that we have a government that just doesn't understand.

We've seen many instances where this government has been conflicted on many, many different issues right across government. They just don't seem to get it and they don't understand. They don't have the ability to distinguish between those roles. Mr. Speaker, who are the losers in this? The losers are the children. The children that desperately need a government that cares about putting their interests first, their interests before a system to serve children. The interests of the child, the children must come first and this bill does nothing to put the interests of the child first because if the interests of the child were first, we wouldn't need a CME review. We wouldn't need section 10 because we wouldn't see children dying in the child welfare system.

* (16:10)

Mr. Speaker, we have a system that's been created, and mark my words, and I'm not the only one that believes this, and I know for a fact that we are going to see more children fall through the cracks as a result of decisions that this government has made. We are not going to see less children fall through the cracks because of Bill 11 because those children will have fallen through completely, and they will no longer be a statistic in the child welfare system because they'll be six feet under.

Mr. Speaker, we, on this side of the House, cannot support a piece of legislation that puts moving one function of review of child deaths from one place to another when it does absolutely nothing to put more money in the hands of the Child Advocate's office to advocate on behalf of those children that are in the system or will come into the system that need the support and help before they get

to any type of Chief Medical Examiner review or any section 10 review.

Mr. Speaker, this is bad legislation. This is not legislation that we can support. I would hope that members on the government's side of the House think very carefully, think carefully about what they could do by putting that \$380,000 that they're going to put into transferring a function from one office to another, what that could do for children that are alive today, for children that are part of a chaotic system that needs to be fixed, and to put those resources into helping those children get the care and the support that they need so that they don't end up as a death statistic having to undergo a Chief Medical Examiner's review.

Mr. Speaker, this is wrong-headed. In order to get the reviews done on a timely basis, the money should have been put into the system in the Chief Medical Examiner's Office that was in place, and additional resources should have been provided to the Children's Advocate on top of that to ensure that she had the ability through that office to do her job.

Mr. Speaker, we will not be supporting this legislation. I know that history will tell all Manitobans that this is the wrong way to go, that we have a government that has its priorities all mixed up, that we, as a party want to see children cared for within a system that puts them first before they become a statistic. I would hope that members on the government's side of the House think very seriously about this and realize that it is not—it's smoke and mirrors talking about an enhanced mandate for the Child Advocate's office and more money, more resources. Those resources aren't going to help children in need as the need is over for those that need a section 10 review. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we in the Liberal Party have been consistent in our opposition to the approach that's been taken by the government. I would say it's strange that the government has focussed on their efforts in improving the child welfare system by changing the mandate for the Child Advocate. It's strange that primarily what this involves is shuffling responsibility from the Medical Examiner's office to the Child Advocate and really doesn't gain a whole lot. In fact, it loses a whole lot as I have already talked about and will discuss briefly.

The primary problem in terms of time lines in the Medical Examiner's office should be addressed by appropriate resources, not by this sort of change.

The Children's Advocate certainly should be given adequate resources to do her job, which is to act as an advocate for children to intervene, to act, to be very vigorous in her efforts to promote the well-being of children, to make sure that everything is done up front, to work with parents, families, children in every effort that can be taken to improve the well-being of children. But I'm afraid it is a big mistake to have the Child Advocate become an investigator.

One of the fundamental problems that we have had in the child welfare system is that under this government, and it was true in the previous government, that what was happening all too often was that social workers who were supposed to be helping families were being charged with enforcing the Child and Family Services Act and social assistance programs and, in a sense, social workers were asked to be policemen as well as be promoters of the health of children. It created a conflicting situation where you would have families who were having trouble afraid of coming forward because they were concerned about their kids taken away because the Child and Family Services worker was acting as a policeman and was having a club held over their heads. The last thing we want is to have the Child Advocate an investigator and holding a club over the heads of people that she is working with. The Child Advocate needs to be an advocate, not a policeman or an investigator. The Medical Examiner needs to be an investigator and do his job very well.

There is, as we all know, a huge conflict here. That conflict is that the Child Advocate is or should be dealing with many of the same cases: children, families, extended families where in fact there has to be an investigation afterwards. It is not enough to have the Child Advocate not be involved where the Child Advocate has been involved. You need to have the Child Advocate not involved where the Child Advocate should have been involved. As I see it, that would apply to virtually every case. So, I mean, the case is open and shut. This is a mistake. The government should withdraw this bill. We will oppose it and we do oppose it because it's a bad move. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): It's certainly a privilege to talk a few minutes on this particular Bill 11 as it relates to the role of the Children's Advocate.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of the legislation we talk about is a lot of words and at the end of the day we as society, we need action. Just by changing legislation doesn't necessarily mean that we're going to get the positive outcomes that we need, in particular in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this really is a very important aspect of what we do as legislators in terms of looking after children in care. So it's very important that we take our time to thoroughly analyze what legislation we bring forward and if at the end of the day it really is going to be of benefit for the children of Manitoba. We certainly heard other members of the House talk against this particular piece of legislation. I believe in committee we've heard from Manitobans, some fairly well-respected Manitobans, who have spoken out against this particular legislation that is being brought forward by this government.

* (16:20)

My understanding is not one of the government members is actually speaking to this particular legislation, either. We would certainly welcome their thoughts on this particular piece of legislation to see if they actually think Bill 11 will take us in the right direction in terms of dealing with children in care.

Certainly, over the last few years it's become quite evident that our system of child and family services is in chaos here in Manitoba. We have had a number of fatalities within the province. The list continues to grow. The other thing that we do have on a fairly regular basis is different reviews being done and being conducted within the department on any given situation, and we also have reviews of the department as a whole.

So, when we have these reviews and these recommendations brought forward, we hope that the government would take notice and act in a positive way. I just noticed here, as a result of Phoenix Sinclair, the government was faced with more than 289 recommendations to try to improve the system. Clearly, there's a lot of work to do here in the province of Manitoba in terms of child and family services and how we deal with our children at risk.

Mr. Speaker, this particular bill really talks about the roles and responsibilities of various departments within and outside of government. I think it's important that we have a fairly clear understanding of which department and which agency will be doing what. This speaks to the whole idea of when a review

is required, especially in the very important part, where we do have a loss of one of our children in care in Manitoba. It should be fairly clear who has what responsibility, and we should be very clear in terms of providing direction for those respective agencies. Those respective agencies should have a very clear mandate in terms of what they want to accomplish and then at the end of the day what the recommendations should be. Then once we have a clear understanding of what the recommendations will be, there should be a clear path in terms of how we as a society will achieve those recommendations going forward.

We have to have some way to evaluate the entire process and try to determine which is in the best needs of the children in care. I think, Mr. Speaker, that sometimes we lose sight of that, who we are dealing with, why we're dealing with those particular individuals and how we can best help them. Sometimes, as politicians, we get caught up in the political rhetoric and don't always understand the issues as it relates to the families themselves.

So, Mr. Speaker, clearly we've heard from our side of the House that we're not in favour of this particular legislation going forward. Sometimes it's incumbent on the government to take a sober second look at legislation that they do bring forward to see if there are alternatives that might be in the best interests of the children of Manitoba.

In terms of some of the comments that came forward from some of the, I would call them fairly well respected individuals that understand the system to a greater extent than some of us as legislators would, Mr. Speaker, I note here, Dr. Peter Markesteyn, who is a former chief medical examiner, who, I believe, spoke in committee and certainly had some very strong views in terms of how the process should go forward into the future. He clearly does not support this particular piece of legislation and he has a number of reasons why he does not support this legislation.

What Bill 11 does, it gives the Children's Advocate's office some interesting powers, and by giving the Children's Advocate's office those powers, different powers, it would put the office of the Children's Advocate actually in a conflict of interest situation. It's something that I think the government should take notice of, that there can be a very serious conflict there. Obviously, we feel, and I think up until this point in time the office of the Children's Advocate has been to advocate on behalf of all

children and families in Manitoba, and we think that should probably maintain, continue to be her role as an advocate for children in Manitoba. If she's brought into a—or the office of the Children's Advocate is brought into a situation where she's also investigating various departments, various situations, it can put her, that office, into a very interesting situation where it could be in conflict of itself.

The other interesting issue that Dr. Markesteyn brought forward was the fact that it's a resource issue, Mr. Speaker. This is the role of the government, to make sure that there are resources available for the respective departments within its mandate and also the external departments, agencies that have to deal with Child and Family Services. Quite clearly, what he is saying and what we on this side of the House are saying, if the agencies are set up and established to have a certain mandate, they should have the resources to effectively deliver that particular mandate. I think that's the essence of the Child and Family Services situation that we have in Manitoba over the last few years. This government hasn't allocated the resources to make sure that the people dealing within the Child and Family Services department actually have the resources to adequately do the job that they're supposed to do.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, if the resources were available, if the rules and responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities for those individuals were clearly laid out, and those particular individuals had reasonable working conditions and a reasonable workload, there is a pretty good chance that we wouldn't be here today discussing Bill 11. That's really where the onus on the government lies, to make sure that the resources are available there so that staff can adequately deal with the children of Manitoba. What we have here is another bill by this government in an attempt to put on a public image spin that they're actually doing something to enhance the care of children in their care here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it's all about responsibility, and this government has not been at the plate taking their responsibility for the care of children across Manitoba. It's all about smoke and mirrors with this government, and we've seen it in other bills. In fact, I'll reference the previous bill I talked about. In the biofuels industry, we bring forward a bill four years ago; the government says this is what they're doing in the biofuels industry. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. All it provided was an opportunity for the government to put out some news

releases and say they were doing something in that particular industry.

* (16:30)

Well, Mr. Speaker, it goes back to actions, and it's about time this government stepped up to the plate and got something done. It's quite clear—the doctor brought it forward—some of the situations that developed in the past in terms of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and he pointed it directly back to this government. Some of the reasons that they're unable to complete reports in a timely manner was due to funding and staffing problems only. This lays the issue right at the hands, right at the feet of this government, and it's time they stepped up and did the right thing.

This government should be there to facilitate the training of individuals involved in Child and Family Services. The government should be there to make sure that there are the resources to provide for the staff to make sure that they can address the individual issues that come forward. Simply by bringing in legislation that shifts responsibilities from one department to another is not going to address the fundamental needs of the entire system. We should be looking at the root cause of these situations, Mr. Speaker. What we're doing here is we're dealing with a bill that is actually a reactionary situation that's developed because the fundamental department is not doing what it's supposed to do.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Acting Speaker, that really is the essence of this particular legislation. Again, we can quote Lindor Reynolds from the *Free Press* here just this past weekend. She indicates all we're doing is rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*. So we have to get back to fundamentals; we have to get back to the fundamentals and deal with those particular issues. If we were to deal with the fundamental issues, the fundamental inadequacies that we find within Child and Family Services we would probably not be here dealing with Bill 11 today. So it's certainly a very important piece of legislation. We don't think this particular legislation is heading in the right direction.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we certainly appreciate the role that the Children's Advocate plays in Manitoba. We appreciate the role that the office of the Chief Medical Examiner plays in Manitoba. They all have important roles to play. We certainly feel that there should be the financial resources available for those

respective departments to carry out their workload, but by trying to mix different responsibilities we're not really achieving what we want to achieve in terms of looking after children in the care of Child and Family Services throughout Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Acting Speaker, I do have a number of concerns that I would like to be able to express in regard to Bill 11.

Maybe I'll start off, Mr. Acting Speaker, with a question. What do you do when the government has made such a mistake that it's put itself in a corner in order to allow the government maybe to save the embarrassment or the humiliation in terms of being able to get out of that corner? I would suggest to you that we really need to look at Bill 11 as one of those bills that the government needs to swallow its pride on. The government needs to recognize that Bill 11 is not a good bill.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would suggest that members of the New Democratic caucus need to come to grips in terms of what Bill 11 is actually doing. I'll say right from the start when this bill first came before the Legislature and I had opportunity to kind of go through it initially and have an initial discussion, my leader had raised some concerns in regard to it. I didn't have a problem with the bill going to committee. Between that second reading and at this point in time I've come to the conclusion that this is a bad bill. I look to the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) and I try to understand why it is that we've got this legislation before us. I can talk about the experiences that I've had with this particular minister when he was the Minister of Justice. When he was the Minister of Justice he had no hesitation in bringing forward legislation in order to try to make it look as if he's doing something.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Then what we have now is that this minister is in a very important portfolio, Family Services, dealing with a very important issue, and once again he's brought forward legislation. He's had relatively favourable spin on the issue, but, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, if this bill passes, it will be to the detriment of the children of our province, more specifically to those vulnerable children that we have a responsibility to protect their interests. It's going to be to their detriment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the NDP caucus, and I say this with all seriousness, will likely

vote as a block on the passage of this bill. None of them have really addressed the bill to stand up—we're voting against this bill, and I would suggest to the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) that the Government House Leader really needs to understand what it is that this bill is doing. I think that, if we had a free vote on this bill and there was an obligation on the government members to understand what is being talked about here, I like to think that this bill would not pass. It's too easy to say I'm not responsible because I'm just a New Democratic MLA and I will follow the lead of the minister. It's too easy to say that. What we're talking about is the vulnerability of children that need to be protected, and each and every NDP MLA has a responsibility that goes beyond their political party, goes beyond the leadership within the New Democratic Party.

This is one of those bills that each NDP MLA, and I suspect and I hope that there will be an opportunity for all MLAs to be able to vote on this bill, to stand up and to be counted. Are you going to take the side of political spin to try to give the appearance that you're buying into what it is that the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) is saying, or are you going to take the side of the most vulnerable in our society?

Mr. Speaker, you know, it was very interesting: two things that come to mind, and other speakers before me have commented on it. One was the presentation that was made in the committee. A very well-respected Manitoban, a former director, a chief medical examiner, Peter Markesteyn, and the comments, very candid, and I quote: An investigator should not be an advocate. An advocate should not be an investigator. These functions are intrinsically conflicting in scope and purpose.

Mr. Speaker, this is an individual Manitoban that has, and has garnered, a tremendous amount of respect for the efforts that he has put in to our province. I believe this is an appeal to MLAs to take action from an incredible individual that has put some very wise words on the record in committee. I will applaud the *Winnipeg Free Press*, in particular, Lindor Reynolds. I was provided an article that appeared in the Saturday, November 3rd edition of the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, through you and this Legislature, and hopefully there are some media members that are listening in, that members of the media would serve Manitobans well if we were able

to try to generate more attention on this bill. We need to prevent this bill from passing. This bill should not be proclaimed.

*(16:40)

Mr. Speaker, I won't say this on every bill. There are lots of bills that I disagree with. There are lots of actions that I have stood up on and disagreed with. You know, I could go on for a great length with the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) on the number of issues that we disagree with. But, having said that, I will agree to disagree on many, many different things. But I would appeal to all MLAs to try to rise above political parties, to rise above political discipline, political party discipline, and to understand what it is that this bill is purporting to do. I would ask and I would appeal to all members to appreciate the significant impact that this bill is going to have on our children. Read the article that Lindor Reynolds has written in the *Free Press*. Listen to what the presenters had said in committee. I think sometimes governments genuinely make a mistake that even the government will recognize if you afford them the opportunity to recognize it.

The issue is what does the government do. Government, I will acknowledge, is in a very awkward position on this particular bill. If we as legislators are here to, in part, protect the vulnerable of our society, Mr. Speaker, if that's what we're here, this bill does not do that. We're making it more difficult. We are not making the system better; we are making the system worse.

I would not have felt this brave in second reading in being able to say what I've just said in regard to this bill because I was not confident enough, didn't feel knowledgeable enough about the legislation. Today I stand appealing to members because I have taken the time and I have listened to what others have told me in regard to what this bill is purporting to do, Mr. Speaker.

Far too often, as you represent North End constituency yourself, Mr. Speaker, we drive in North End Winnipeg, and we see so many vulnerable children. It's not just unique to North End Winnipeg; it's many areas of the province. But every day, every other day I'm driving in North End Winnipeg and I'm seeing children that I believe are in vulnerable positions. I want to see government do the right thing. There will be a time in which we can have the

fights of a very highly political partisan nature and I've been known to participate in those.

But I would suggest to you that we need to raise the profile of this particular bill. We need, Mr. Speaker, to do the right thing. I have seen too many children, and observed too many children, over the years that have been abused in many ways. Politicians in general, I believe, have not acted in the child's best interests far too often because they were more concerned about being politically correct. I don't want to be politically correct on this bill. I don't want this bill to pass, and NDP MLAs, Conservative MLAs, or even within the Liberal Party, not recognize the impact that this bill is going to have on the children's advocacy office.

If you believe in the need for an advocacy office, you will recognize the need to kill this bill. If you believe in the need for the Chief Medical Examiner's Office in being able to deal with these investigations, then, as opposed to creating this office and providing the additional resources, provide those resources to the current Chief Medical Examiner's Office. That will help us deal with some of those issues.

Mr. Speaker, because I am running out of time, I want to conclude my comments on Phoenix Sinclair, a child who, we all know, was killed, and it took a great deal of time before we even discovered it. Things happen in society, and there are opportunities at times in which politicians at different levels can actually have an impact on the outcome. We might not be able to bring back baby Phoenix, but I believe that, if we do what we can as legislators in regard to issues like this, we can make a difference. We can have a positive impact.

I appeal to members of this Chamber; I appeal to the media and, through the media, to the public. This is a bill that should not pass. I hope the government will recognize the plea that I'm putting before them. I recognize that it means that there is an issue of pride. Put our children first, and that is the appeal I would give to the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) and to all of the NDP MLAs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), that debate on Bill 11 be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 17—The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour, that Bill 17, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act; Loi sur les fondations à la mémoire des pompiers, des agents de la paix et des travailleurs, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Government House Leader, seconded by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), that Bill 17, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act, as amended and reported to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to put some words on the record, I believe, in second reading in regard to Bill 17, and nothing much has changed. It's the principle of the legislation that is something which we favour; we don't have a problem in terms of supporting.

Over the years I think we've seen a heightened level of interest in our emergency personnel, in whether it's fire, ultimately, I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, paramedics, our police officers and ambulatory care individuals. A lot of that interest I found, or that really heightened sense of interest, really came about, I believe, after the 9/11 tragedy a number of years ago, and it's good to see that Manitobans, and in fact people around the world, have recognized the valuable contributions that our emergency personnel play. I suspect that there are a number of jurisdictions that are doing things of a similar nature as to what it is that we're hoping to be able to pass today.

* (16:50)

I wanted to be able to take this opportunity to say a few words, primarily because I do acknowledge the value of those workers, and it's especially rewarding to see that we're going beyond that in recognizing individuals in other occupations. The infrastructure, you know, I've had discussions with this with other constituents. Our infrastructures that we have today, whether it was the railways or the bridges that were built, there was a time in which

we saw a great loss of life as people built our infrastructure across the country and the sacrifices that these workers back then had made. I'd like to believe that all jobs are important jobs. Every job contributes to our economy. There are some jobs in which we see there's a higher risk factor, and some jobs seem to get a bit more appreciation at times from the public. We see our police officers or the people that run our fire trucks get fairly high on public appreciation. One might say politicians and lawyers might be at the other end of that appreciation, but we all try to work our ways to try to ensure that all jobs are appreciated and valued.

Suffice to say, we in the Liberal Party acknowledge the importance of Bill 17, and want to see it passed and ultimately receive Royal Assent. We applaud the government in bringing it forward. It would have been appropriate if we, maybe, would have done something in regard to the paramedics. We'll have to wait and see, but I think the foundations are a positive step forward and look forward to the passage of the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It's my privilege to speak to The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act, Bill 17, here in the House today.

I just wanted to reiterate that this is a great commemoration to people who have given their lives in the daily routine of their normal jobs so that the rest of us can have the opportunity to live, Mr. Speaker. This is greatly epitomized in the situations that firefighters, peace officers and many of the workers' memorials, other workers, put themselves in on a daily basis. Our side of the House felt that it was very, very important to include paramedics as the third plank of an essential services area in this bill. We vociferated that at many occasions in this House in regard to speaking to the bill. We carried it to the committee where two presentations came forward from Mr. Alex Forrest from the firefighters' association here in Manitoba and Mr. Eric Glass from the Paramedic Association of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I commend them both for the presentations that they made and the input that they have had in to the bill, particularly Mr. Forrest; the firefighters have done a lot of work in regard to getting this forward. There have been many, many

firefighters lose their lives in their line of work in regard to saving others. While there have not been nearly as many, I believe only two paramedics in Manitoba lost their lives in the line of duty when working in Manitoba. We need to acknowledge those lives as well and be very cognizant of the lives that have been lost. This type of a memorials foundation act will acknowledge those lives and be there so that their families will know, as will all Manitobans and anyone visiting Manitoba, the dedication and commitment that they made to their occupation.

Mr. Speaker, this act, of course, allows for a memorial foundation to be established by each of these areas. It will allow funds to be raised by those groups, then, to build a monument dedicated to each of these specific three foundations and three areas of workers. Due to the work coming forward where Mr. Glass certainly indicated, as we felt on our side of the House, that paramedics play a very important role in accidents that take place in Manitoba as well—they, the police and, in most cases, the firefighters as well are there when an accident occurs, so we felt that they needed to be acknowledged as well. Mr. Glass's presentation indicated that and it could be done in many ways in a few different areas. One would be a specific monument dedicated to themselves, a fourth plank in a fourth foundation, if you will, in this particular bill with their name added in to the bill. It was chosen by the minister to move in a different manner. Our side of the House, in committee, after hearing the presentations, was very clear that we wanted to see the paramedics involved in this process.

The minister early in the evening indicated that he would be bringing forward amendment to his own bill that would allow others to come forward and put on the record or at least apply to have a specific memorial to themselves as well. At a very late moment in the committee before it was brought in, he indicated that the holdup would be the fact that the government had a bit of a transition, translation glitch—pardon me, Mr. Speaker—in regard to the amendment that he had proposed virtually two hours before that to come forward with. So, while we waited for it, I put on the record that there would be other opportunities to bring amendments forward in the House in report stage to this bill. Of course, the minister assured us that his amendment would be available very shortly, and within 10 or 15 minutes it was available. But it wasn't just a translation; it had been changed to include the words "paramedic" in it.

So that was a pretty major change in what the government had planned on doing. I'm very proud of the fact that my colleagues in the committee that evening, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou), the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) and others put on the record that this needed to be dealt with in a forthright manner, and I very much appreciated their efforts and the government listening to the fact that we needed to include paramedics in this area as well. So, Mr. Speaker, that was done.

We also had the opportunity then to try and improve that, Mr. Speaker, by some amendments I brought forward in the House subsequent to the committee meeting, whereby we were looking at trying to build a specific paramedics memorial foundation in that area, and also put a time frame on it so that it could come in to being earlier than was otherwise being indicated, and put some specificity to it, I guess, if I could—I'll get that word out—but, anyway, the government didn't see fit. The government saw fit to defeat all of the amendments that we brought forward in this area in trying to make it a little bit more clear as to how we could improve on the existing bill. I feel some concern about that lack of dedication toward making it happen, but we will be supporting this bill.

Our side of the House supports this bill, and we want to see these memorials dedicated to these individuals and their associations. We want to be very clear about that. I want to be clear as well that the bill does allow these memorials to be built on the legislative grounds or grounds nearby. As I said in second reading in this House in closing the debate on this bill, I would just like to make it known that I felt a prime location for these memorials would be on Memorial Boulevard. You can't get any closer to the legislative grounds than that, Mr. Speaker, and I feel it would be very fitting to have these memorial foundations dedicated to these workers in that particular location in our city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that I would just like to say of a personal nature on this particular bill, it was as I've stated before as well, our leader and myself had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Harold Lessard, Captain Lessard, and Captain Nichols at the Peace Garden service back in the fall of 2006. So it brings this bill very close to home.

With that, I will close the debate and move it on.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House, concurrence and third reading of Bill 17, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act.

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

House Business

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you would please canvass the House to see if there's leave for a standing committee to sit concurrent with the House on Wednesday afternoon at 3 o'clock to consider private members' public bills.

Would you also please canvass the House to see if there's leave for no quorum calls or recorded votes while the committee is sitting?

If there is leave, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet concurrently with the House at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, November 7, to consider the following bills: Bill 202, The Apology Act, and Bill 209, The Historic Trans-Canada Highway Act.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is there leave for a standing committee to sit concurrent with the House on Wednesday afternoon at 3 p.m. to consider private members' public bills? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Also, for no quorum calls or recorded votes while the committee is sitting. *Agreed? [Agreed]*

It's also announced that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet concurrently with the House at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, November 7, to consider the following bills: Bill 202, The Apology Act; and Bill 209, The Historic Trans-Canada Highway Act.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 6, 2007

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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