

Fourth Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

Vol. LXVII No. 46B - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, June 11, 2015

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 11, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 39—The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act (Enhancing Local Transparency and Accountability)

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Municipal Government): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Bill 39, City of Winnipeg Charter amendment and public interest disclosure—where is it? There it is—act.

I move, seconded by the member of Agriculture and Food and Rural Development, that Bill 39, The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act (Enhancing Local Transparency and Accountability); Loi modifiant la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg et la Loi sur les divulgations faites dans l'intérêt public (protection des divulgateurs d'actes répréhensibles) (transparence et responsabilité accrues au niveau local), be read now a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Caldwell: This bill is a bill in the public interest to provide for disclosure and enhance local transparency and accountability in the City of Winnipeg.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Bill 214—The School Bus Driver Day Act

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I move, seconded by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), that Bill 214, The School Bus Driver Day Act; Loi sur la Journée des conducteurs d'autobus scolaires, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides us and everybody the awareness of all those fantastic bus drivers that have driven us to and from school: first

ones to pick us up in the morning and then drop us off at the end of the day and deliver us safely to and from school, great role models. So I do look forward to bringing this forward in second reading. Thank you.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Bill 40—The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), that Bill 40, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed will strengthen the protection of the identity of whistle-blowers, clarify and strengthen the roles and procedures for investigations of alleged wrongdoing and enhance legislative provisions for protection from reprisal. The new provisions will clarify the roles of the designated officers and the Ombudsman, strengthen the investigatory powers of designated officers, enhance the powers of the Ombudsman to receive and investigate reprisal complaints and make recommendations to address acts or threats of reprisal by employers, strengthen the requirements to protect the identity of whistle-blowers and require review of the act every five years. Thank you.

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

Bill 41—The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2015

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (Mr. Kostyshyn), that Bill 41, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2015; Loi corrective de 2015, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: As always, Mr. Speaker, the bill primarily corrects typographical numbering and addresses minor drafting and translation errors. Part 1 of the bill contains minor amendments to a variety of acts and repeals a private act and an unproclaimed amending act. Part 2 of the bill amends several acts that establishes government boards and agencies. These amendments enable appointments to be made for staggered terms, which implements a recommendation made by our Auditor General.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles that have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for the safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by K. Coe, T. Moreton, R. Gridley and many other fine Manitobans.

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

Province-Wide Long-Term Care— Review Need and Increase Spaces

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) There are currently 125 licensed personal-care homes, PCHs, across Manitoba, consisting of less than 10,000 beds.

(2) All trends point to an increasingly aging population who will require additional personal-care-home facilities.

(3) By some estimates, Manitoba will require an increase of more than 5,100 personal-care-home beds by 2036.

(4) The number of Manitobans with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia-related illness who will require personal-care-home services are steadily increasing and are threatening to double within the current generation.

(5) The last personal-care-home review in many areas, including the Swan River area currently under the administration of Prairie Mountain regional health authority, was conducted in 2008.

(6) Average occupancy rates for personal-care homes across the province are exceeding 97 per cent, with some regions, such as Swan River Valley, witnessing 100 per cent occupancy rates.

(7) These high occupancy rates are creating the conditions where many individuals requiring long-term care are being displaced far away from their families and their home communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to consider immediately enacting a province-wide review of the long-term-care needs of residents of Manitoba.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to recognize the stresses placed upon the health-care system by the current and continuous aging population and consider increasing the availability of

long-term-care spaces, PCH beds, in communities across the province.

And this petition is signed by J. Maynard, E. Mellor and J. McNaughton and many, many more fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

**Proposed Lac du Bonnet Marina—
Request for Research into Benefits and Costs**

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Lac du Bonnet is a recreational area with great natural beauty.

(2) The Winnipeg River is one of the greatest distinguishing cultural and recreational resources in that area.

(3) Manitoba marinas increase recreational access and increase the desirability of properties in their host communities.

(4) The people of Lac du Bonnet overwhelmingly support a public harbour front marina in Lac du Bonnet.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider collaborating with other levels of government to research the economic benefits and construction costs of a marina in Lac du Bonnet.

This petition is signed by F. Loreth, D. Bruce, L. Loreth and many, many more fine Manitobans.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs
Third Report**

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): I wish to present the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions:

- *July 10, 2013 at 11:00 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building*
- *June 1, 2015 at 12:15 p.m. in Room 255 (partly in camera)*

Matters under Consideration

- *Recommendation for the appointment of the Auditor General*

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the July 10, 2013 meeting:

- *Ms. BRAUN*
- *Mr. CULLEN*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Mr. EICHLER*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Hon. Ms. HOWARD*
- *Hon. Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)*
- *Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park) (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Hon. Mr. SWAN*
- *Ms. WIGHT (Chairperson)*

Committee Membership for the June 1, 2015 meeting:

- *Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. ALTEMEYER*
- *Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK*
- *Mr. EWASKO*
- *Mr. EICHLER*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Mr. HELWER*
- *Mr. JHA*
- *Mr. RONDEAU*
- *Mr. WIEBE*
- *Hon. Ms. WIGHT*

Your Committee elected Mr. WIEBE as the Vice-Chairperson at the June 1, 2015 meeting.

Motions agreed to at the July 10, 2013 Standing Committee meeting:

- *THAT a sub-committee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs be struck to manage the process of hiring a new Auditor General and a new Ombudsman for the Province*

of Manitoba, under the terms and conditions as follows:

(a) the subcommittee may only report back to the committee with a recommendation that has received a general level of acceptance by all members;

(b) the subcommittee consist of four government members, two official opposition members and one independent member;

(c) the subcommittee have the authority to call their own meetings, the ability to meet in camera, and be able to undertake duties it deems necessary in order to fulfil its responsibilities in the hiring process;

(d) the subcommittee appoint an expert advisory panel of three members to assist in the hiring process and ultimately provide the subcommittee with a prioritized list of candidates;

(e) the subcommittee establish the terms of reference for the expert advisory panel, and that Legislative Assembly staff may be authorized by the Chair to attend all meetings of the subcommittee and the expert advisory panel.

Motions agreed to at the June 1, 2015 Standing Committee meeting:

- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs now meet in camera.
- THAT the report and recommendations of the Sub-Committee be received. (in camera)
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Mr. Norman Ricard be appointed as the Auditor General. (in camera)

Sub-Committee Report

At the June 1, 2015 meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, the Sub-Committee presented its second report.

Meetings:

Your Sub-Committee met on the following occasions:

- January 20, 2014 at 12:30 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building
- February 20, 2014 at 11:30 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building
- April 28, 2014 at 5:15 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building

- May 20, 2014 at 5:15 in Room 255 of the Legislative Building
- June 12, 2014 at 5:45 in Room 255 of the Legislative Building
- March 10, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building
- April 9, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building
- April 21, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building
- May 21, 2015 at 8:00 a.m. in room 1530 – 405 Broadway (Woodsworth Building)

Matters under Consideration:

- Recruitment and Selection of the Auditor General

Sub-Committee Membership:

Sub-Committee Membership for the January 20, 2014 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN
- Hon. Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DEWAR
- Mr. EWASKO
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER
- Hon. Mr. SWAN

Your Sub-Committee elected Ms. ALLAN as the Chairperson and Mr. DEWAR as the Vice-Chairperson during the meeting on January 20, 2014.

Sub-Committee Membership for the February 20, 2014 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. EWASKO
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER
- Hon. Mr. SWAN

Sub-Committee Membership for the April 28, 2014 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. EWASKO
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER
- Hon. Mr. SWAN

Sub-Committee Membership for the May 20, 2014 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. EWASKO
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER
- Hon. Mr. SWAN

Sub-Committee Membership for the June 12, 2014 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. EWASKO
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER
- Hon. Mr. SWAN

Sub-Committee Membership for the March 10, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Ms. BRAUN
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. EWASKO
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER
- Mr. WIEBE

Your Sub-Committee elected Mr. WIEBE as the Vice-Chairperson during the meeting on March 10, 2015.

Sub-Committee Membership for the April 9, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Ms. BRAUN
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. EWASKO
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chairperson)

Sub-Committee Membership for the April 21, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Ms. BRAUN
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. EWASKO
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD

- Mr. HELWER
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chairperson)

Sub-Committee Membership for the May 21, 2015 meeting:

- Ms. ALLAN (Chairperson)
- Hon. Mr. CALDWELL
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. EWASKO
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HELWER
- Mr. WIEBE (Vice-Chairperson)

Staff present for Sub-Committee and Panel meetings:

- Judy Wegner, Executive Director, Legislative Assembly Administration and Finance
- Deanna Wilson, Director, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services
- Andrea Signorelli, Clerk Assistant/Committee Clerk

Sub-Committee Agreements:

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreement during the meeting on March 10, 2015:

- THAT the Sub-Committee continue the process of hiring a new Auditor General, undertaking all duties it deems necessary to fulfil its responsibilities in the hiring process.

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreement during the meeting on June 1, 2015:

- It was agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that Norman Ricard be appointed as the Auditor General.

Sub-Committee Activities:

The Sub-Committee considered applications for the position of the Auditor General as follows:

- Twenty-eight applications were received for the position.
- Two individuals were interviewed for the position on May 21, 2015.

Expert Advisory Panel Activities:

As agreed to by the Sub-Committee on January 20, 2014, the following individuals served as members of the Expert Advisory Panel:

- Tannis Mindell
- Allan Fineblit
- James Wilson

The Expert Advisory Panel met on the following occasions:

- February 12, 2014
- March 25, 2014
- April 9, 2014
- April 10, 2014
- April 11, 2014

All meetings were held in camera on the 10th Floor of the Woodsworth Building (1035 – 405 Broadway).

The Expert Advisory Panel considered applications for the position of the Auditor General as follows:

- *Twenty-three applications were received for the position.*
- *Three individuals were interviewed for the position on April 9, 2014.*
- *One individual was interviewed for the position on April 10, 2014.*

Ms. Allan: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Any further committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I'll table the MPI's 2014 Annual Report and financial statements and Provincial Court of Manitoba '12-13 annual report.

Mr. Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister charged with the administration of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2014 Annual Report of the Crown Corporations Council.

Mr. Speaker: Further tablings of reports?

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2013-2014 annual reports of the Manitoba Adult Literacy Strategy, including a summary of the Manitoba Adult Literacy Program, and Manitoba's Adult Learning Centres.

Mr. Speaker: Further tablings?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I'm pleased to table the 2014 Annual Report for the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none, we'll move on to ministerial statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I have some guests that I would like to introduce.

We have with us this afternoon in the public gallery, we have Reverend Kyrillos Younan, Reverend Farg, Stephany Younan and her family, all of whom are the guests of the honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler).

And also seated in the public gallery this afternoon we have with us from École Lacerte, we have 43 grade 4 students under the direction of Carole Danneels, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha).

And also seated in the public gallery we have from HBNI-ITV System out of Fairholme school, we have 21 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Evelyn Maendel, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome all of you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Children's Advocate Act Hughes Inquiry Recommendations

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister responsible for Child and Family Services finally tabled The Children's Advocate Act, an act that was one of the primary recommendations coming out of the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

There was to be recommendations that were to expand the mandate to cover children impacted by other departments and to expand the mandate for transparency and reporting. Imagine our surprise when none of these were present in the act.

Manitobans have been very clear that they want action and they are getting obstruction.

Just whom does the minister think she was misleading with this act?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): We took the recommendations of Commissioner Hughes very seriously. I can report to this House that we have action plans around all 62 of those recommendations, and 31 of them have been either—are under progress or implemented. That is an accomplishment by the department as well as the authorities and the agencies. We're going to continue to work with them and have these accomplishments.

What we delivered yesterday was The Children's Advocate Act. It's stand-alone legislation, the first time in this province, is making sure that there is more public disclosure that's allowed. They were extending the term of the Children's Advocate. We're making those changes. We worked in consultation with them. AMR tasked us with coming up with a made-in-Manitoba solution.

We're going to work with all of our partners, and we're going to come in with that solution that addresses the Hughes inquiry as well as making sure that we're protecting Manitoba children.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, their own action plan didn't recommend any further consultation.

The minister has publicly stated she accepts Judge Hughes' recommendations, but she has repeatedly moved to thwart action: last-minute changes in her department to make the enactment of The Social Work Profession Act ineffective; still years away from an effective, centralized information system; action on taking children out of hotels only when driven to it and then only halfway measures. It is now obvious delaying tactics regarding the Children's Advocate recommendations.

This minister has done all she can to continue to leave children at risk. Is she not ashamed of her actions?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I will never apologize to this House for consulting with Manitobans, with the service providers as well as the indigenous leadership around what is in their best interests, what do we need to do to work with families to ensure that we're providing them with the services that they require while protecting their children, and also what's fundamental is their privacy in finding that balance.

We are doing what we had set out to: strengthening the Children's Advocate office. I would like to refer the members to an article which is in the paper where the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson)—and the headline reads: Tories trying to dump me, the advocate says.

Mr. Wishart: Well, I would like to remind the minister that it was in 2005 that this little girl died, and still nothing is done.

This minister has done little to inspire the confidence of Manitobans in her ability. She was not aware of the lack of supervision in kids in the hotels. She did not take action to remove kids in hotels, and more children came to harm because of that. She interfered with the enactment of the social workers profession act. And now she is obstructing the plan to broaden the mandate of the Children's Advocate to provide more protection for vulnerable children.

First she didn't know, then she wouldn't act, and now she stands in the way.

Why should Manitobans trust this minister with the care of nearly 11,000 children?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: This side of the House has worked diligently with all of our community partners to strengthen the system, to provide better supports for families, to invest in prevention, which we know is the most important part of reducing the number of children in care. We are committed to that. We've increased the amount of funding. We did not slash it like the members opposite.

We are working with the Children's Advocate. She was pleased with the amendments that we made. We work alongside of her.

I ask the members opposite: I will continue with the Children's Advocate saying that he was going to be dumped; well, on March 3rd, 1999, Children's Advocate loses his job. I'd like to table this for the House.

Children's Advocate Act Hughes Inquiry Recommendations

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): We have a minister and a government that is all talk and no action.

Mr. Speaker, in January of 2014, after spending \$14 million on the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry and then having the government put in place an implementation team at the cost of another \$350,000 to implement those recommendations, fast-forward to 18 months later, and now they're going to consult for another 21 months on one of the key recommendations: to expand the role of the Children's Advocate's office.

* (13:50)

How many more vulnerable children are going to have to fall through the cracks before this dysfunctional government takes real action to protect children?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): We take action every day to protect children with the investments that we make within our education system, within our child-care system, our poverty reduction in social inclusion strategy. The creation of jobs, that makes a difference for Manitoba families.

We're going to continue to work with Commissioner Hughes and all of our community partners to implement the 62 recommendations. The members opposite know these are complex recommendations; they're going to take time to implement. We're working with our partners to make sure that as we move forward we're going on the right path to support all of Manitoba's children.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But, again, more rhetoric and no action. Mr. Speaker, 18 months after they spent \$350,000 to implement the recommendations from the Hughes inquiry, they're going to be consulting again for another 21 months.

Mr. Speaker, I ask again: When is this government going to take some concrete action rather than the rhetoric? Why are they so dysfunctional and so bent on not supporting and protecting the children under their watch?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We've taken action. We've tripled the funding for the child-welfare system; we've hired 400 more staff; we've created 5,000-plus more placements. When we made a commitment to end hotel usage, we put our money where our words were. We've hired more staff to provide the support. We've created more emergency placements. We're taking those actions, but we're not stopping there. We expanded Families First. We expanded COACH. We are committed to making a stronger system with our financial support as well as our collaboration.

We are not going to slash and we are not going to threaten to fire anyone.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It's clear that the more this government spends, the less the kids get the support that they need within our system.

Mr. Speaker, I ask again: While this minister and this government continue to twiddle their thumbs and do absolutely nothing except talk, how many more children are going to fall through the

cracks as a result of this incompetent, dysfunctional government?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Every day in the front lines there are workers that are going into family homes, that are supporting children in the community, that are doing a good job. We are going to continue to support them. We're making investments within Families First, within our COACH program, reducing poverty using Rent Assist. We are making root—we are addressing the issues of root causes. We're working with families every day. We're working with the authorities and the agencies to address these issues and we are seeing progress that's happening.

We know we have much more work to do. We're committed to do that with all of our partners, and I believe that as we implement the Hughes inquiry we're going to continue to see that progress for all of Manitoba.

Winnipeg ER Services Patient Wait Times

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, there's another scathing indictment of NDP failure that came out yesterday. CIHI reports that, once again, Winnipeg hospital ER waits are the worst in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Health if she will admit that her happy-thought plan has failed Manitoba patients.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question.

And what I do want to assure Manitobans of is that if you are an urgent patient, you will be seen urgently in a Manitoba ER.

And I agree that the wait time for non-urgent patients is far too high, but, Mr. Speaker, that's why we're building alternatives to emergency rooms for non-urgent patients, for example, our QuickCare clinics which have already seen over 130,000 patients.

So I can assure Manitobans that we are working co-operatively and collaboratively to make sure they get the ER care they need, especially if they're an urgent patient.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, it is distressing to hear, for a second time in a row, that Winnipeg ER waits are the worst in Canada and that the ER wait at the

Grace Hospital is the very worst in all of Canada. This is bad news for patients.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to finally admit that NDP mismanagement and broken promises is hurting essential front-line services.

Ms. Blady: Again, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

I again want to assure Manitobans that if you are an urgent patient in an emergency room, you will receive urgent care, you will be seen quickly. I also want to say that I do agree that the wait time for non-urgent patients could be improved.

As to the Grace, there are phenomenal things happening at the Grace. We are now going to be the first community hospital—the Grace will be the first community hospital to have an MRI that will serve those patients, not only coming to the emergency department but for other services throughout the hospital. It's also the reason why we're investing in a new emergency department.

It's investing and working with front-line providers that will ensure that our beloved Grace will be everything we in west Winnipeg want it to be.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has failed to end hallway medicine as promised. Instead, they have now allowed Winnipeg ERs to have the longest waits in all of Canada. The loser in all of these are the patients who are stuck in waiting rooms fearful and frustrated.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health to tell Manitobans: Why is she failing them at such a vulnerable time and putting patients at risk with these long waiting lists?

Ms. Blady: I want to thank the member for the question and, again, want to assure Manitobans, if you are an urgent patient in an emergency department, you will be seen right away, and we are working with our partners at the Grace and throughout the RHAs to ensure that non-urgent patients get looked after promptly.

What I would like to remind Manitobans of, the Grace Hospital, the only time it was ever closed was under members opposite. What kind of a wait time is there when the doors are locked and the lights are out? The members opposite are the greatest risk to ER wait times.

NDP Political Staff Severance Packages

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, it's time to give the Premier one more chance on an integrity quiz, Mr. Speaker. It's—I know it's been a struggle for him, but this is his chance, and he doesn't want to repeat this year, that's for sure.

Now, the departure-tax bonuses of two thirds of a million dollars, negotiations were delayed so that the public wouldn't know what had happened until after the next provincial election.

Was this because (a) the Premier had a laser-like focus on budget preparation; (b) the New Democratic Party was giving serious consideration to actually paying the costs instead of the taxpayers of Manitoba; or (c) the staff were all over in Alberta and it was just tough to get together and negotiate?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I didn't know this was recycling day, but clearly it is.

The member opposite practises the double standards. He said there was no severance packages made available to staff leaving his office; in fact there was. He's been offered 18 opportunities to correct the record; he has refused to do that, Mr. Speaker, no surprise there. One set of rules for everybody else, a different set of rules for him.

He's practising the old double-standard game all over again. We're not surprised by that. It's only shocking that he doesn't change his act.

NDP Leadership Campaign Employment of Secretary

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, we're not off to a great start; that'd be oh for one. The right answer was his staff was all over in Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

Now, in terms of broken promises, the Premier is the master at that, so I'll accept those comments from the source.

On the second question: The Premier did not have a principal secretary before the NDP leadership campaign. He does not have a principal secretary now. But throughout the NDP leadership campaign, he did employ one, Heather Grant-Jury, in that role and she signed a six-figure taxpayer-paid contract with him.

This was because (a) he was just tired of walking all the way over to the UFCW office for advice;

(b) everyone else had left his office to campaign for the member from Seine River; or (c) there was just so much more work because of the leadership revolt.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, again, another sterling example of a double standard.

When he was in office, their chief of staff who was involved in the largest vote-rigging scandal in the province of Manitoba received a severance payment, wasn't disclosed until we discovered it this year. Mr. Speaker, 16 years of cover-up, severance for vote rigging, that's the standard of the Leader of the Opposition.

We take a different approach, Mr. Speaker. People come here to work for the people of Manitoba.

* (14:00)

Swan River Ballots

Mr. Pallister: Now, the kids in the gallery should realize that when they're asked a question on the test, they shouldn't do what the Premier's doing and just answer what they want, they should pay attention to the question.

Speaking of vote rigging, the Premier's election campaign co-chair for the next campaign is former NDP Cabinet minister Ms. Rosann Wowchuk, and she, during the leadership race, helped to fill out some ballots for Swan River delegates without their knowledge, Mr. Speaker.

Now, this was because (a) she's really, really smart and knows a lot more than the delegates do; (b) she has excellent pensmanship; or (c) she simply disrespects democracy and the secret ballot.

Mr. Selinger: Always appreciate the aim-higher approach of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, always appreciate that.

What we have now is the third example of a double standard. It's okay for certain senators to work on his campaign on the public taxpayers' dollars potentially. It's okay for senators to work on it. He can criticize everybody else, but when it comes to being accountable for people that are in the backrooms in his campaign, hasn't got a word to say.

Double standard No. 3, strikeout No. 3, Mr. Speaker. Even in this House, that's a complete strikeout.

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

NDP Caucus Solidarity Pledge

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): –gets when he doesn't like the questions that are asked of him, but that's oh for three. Let's see if we can get him a batting average this time.

No. 4 question: The NDP solidarity pledge drive, one of—in a series of amazing ideas from the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) and the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), never got off the ground because (a) well, when you've broken so many promises, why bother making another one; (b) the rebels were leaving anyway; (c) the monastic retreat solved everything anyway; or (d) Rosann Wowchuk just wasn't available to fill out all the ballots for everybody.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, again another classic of the double standard. I do hope the member opposite will award himself the wooden buffalo this week. I think he richly deserves it. I think he richly deserves the wooden buffalo for that very shabby performance.

Double standards on everything: severance, one rule for him, one rule for somebody else; hirings, one rule for him, one rule for somebody else; election rigging, one rule for him, one rule for somebody else; recognizing poor performance, one rule for him, one rule for something else.

Mr. Speaker, if he's not able to give himself a wooden buffalo, perhaps we can accommodate him in the future.

NDP Leadership Campaign Leadership Choices

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier's just jealous because our buffalo's for excellent achievement, and he'd never get it. He would never get it.

Let's try No. 5. The person who really, really has the ear of the Premier is: the MLA for Interlake who made the Premier his third choice during the leadership race; the head of the firefighters' union who made the Premier his third choice during the leadership race and then switched to second at the last minute, saving his skin; or no one at all.

According to the MLA for Fort Rouge, he stopped listening to anybody a long, long time ago.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Here we have the fifth example of a double standard. This is a gentleman that acceded to the Leader of the Opposition without any race whatsoever. It was strictly manufactured in the backrooms, Mr. Speaker, no accountability for that. One standard for him, no democracy, no accountability, no disclosure of who orchestrated it.

We have a democratic party. They have no party at all; they have a one-person dictatorship.

Social Impact Bonds Social Service Program

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, the advantage of that is I don't owe Alex Forrest or CUPE anything at all, Mr. Speaker. No, I sure don't. No, I don't.

The Premier instantly dismissed our innovative approach to advocating for social impact bonds this week because (a) when he's first out of 10 provinces in kids in care and youth using food banks, there's absolutely no point whatsoever in looking for new approaches; (b) the Minister of Family Services, Deputy Premier (Ms. Irvin-Ross) sitting next to him, along with the Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Mr. Chief) had both endorsed the idea, so obviously the Premier assumes it's a bad idea coming from them; or (c) he just stopped listening a long time ago.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Another classic example of double standard from the Leader of the Opposition. What's his approach to public policy? Reward the private investors: privatize the telephone system, give low share prices, allow them to buy those shares, sell them off high. That's rewarding his cronies, same thing he wants to do now with social impact bonds, same thing he wants to do with child care in Manitoba.

His approach to public policy is you privatize it, you reward your friends, less wages for the working people, less services for families.

That's his approach: less for the many, more for the few.

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

Economic Growth Rate Fiscal Forecast

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, everything he said, he was actually arguing against his Deputy Premier and the

minister two over from him, because they both advocate for the same idea. So we'll leave it there. I sense another rebellion in the works here.

Since becoming Premier, Manitoba has unfortunately endured this Premier's lack of economic leadership. We're ninth in economic growth, and last year Manitoba's real rate of growth was actually half what the NDP predicted it would be and lagged the national average yet again.

This year the Premier is running an expensive, taxpayer-paid pre-election ad campaign to promote a rosy forecast because (a) promoting a bad forecast would obviously be a waste of money; (b) you would never run an ad campaign saying you're ninth, that would just be dumb; and (c) an election is actually coming.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, here is yet again another example of the double standard. When they were running for election, what was their ad campaign? Snitch lines to report the people on welfare. That was their approach to treating the public: dividing the public, creating new victims. That was their public advertising approach.

We're running a campaign to show people how they can get the good jobs that are available in Manitoba as we build infrastructure, as we build schools, as we build personal-care homes and as we build hospitals.

Our campaign is for all Manitobans. Their campaign was to divide Manitobans and perpetrate hate and disrespect for people in Manitoba.

ER Services and Costs Patient Wait Times

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier has so much respect for the people in Manitoba, he goes to their doors, promises them that he won't raise their taxes and then whacks them with the biggest tax hike in a quarter of a century. That's not respect.

The Premier admits it's an ad campaign, he just said so. It's an ad campaign paid for by taxpayers to promote a rosy forecast because he can't run on his record.

Now, the Canadian Institute for Health Information just this week said that Manitoba unfortunately has the longest wait times in Canada for the second year in a row, and the Premier's most recent Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) has suggested which of the following solutions to this problem:

(a) attack the opposition Health critic's Twitter account; (b) wave a magic wand; (c) think happy thoughts; or (d) all of the above?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Another—just another example of the double standards. Let's compare the approaches. Mr. Speaker, let's compare the approaches.

They wanted to shut down the Grace Hospital. We are actually building an ACCESS centre there. We're training more nurses to work there. We're training more doctors to work there.

And the point that the members opposite are missing, Mr. Speaker, the point that the opposite—members opposite are missing: the lowest rate of readmissions in the country. The Grace Hospital does a good job when they treat people. There's very few of them coming back compared to every other facility of a similar size.

I only wish the Leader of the Opposition would take the time to go beyond the headline and read the entire article. He might learn something.

Tax Increases Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): If the Premier would learn something about listening, he might have more than half his caucus supporting him.

Tax freedom day, Mr. Speaker, tax freedom day, the day when Manitobans can begin to work for the benefit of their own families as opposed to supporting governments and paying taxes is today, June 11. This year Manitobans have to work two weeks longer to pay for this Premier's massive, record-high tax hikes than they did for Gary Doer.

What do they want in return for that considerably onerous additional sacrifice: (a) a faster drive so they can shop in Saskatchewan or North Dakota where PST is much lower; (b) a letter of appreciation from NDP caucus members, including a free pen; (c) another replacement Finance minister; or (d) a shot, finally, at real change with a new government?

* (14:10)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the contrast, the double standard continues. The contrast couldn't be larger.

When they were in office, what did they do for seniors when it came to education taxes and property

taxes? They actually cut the education property tax credit. We have increased it by four times what they had in office, and every single day we make Manitoba life more affordable.

When it comes to afford—when it comes to retail sales, Mr. Speaker, in the Winnipeg Free Press, on May 23rd, 2015, Manitoba posted the biggest percentage increase in retail sales in the country in March. Why is that? Because unlike them, more people are working in Manitoba. The wages have gone up for people in Manitoba. The unemployment rate is lower in Manitoba.

When they were in office, people lost their jobs, people did not have an opportunity to work, their disposable income went down. Retail sales are up. People are getting better wages. More people are working in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and members are voting against every single initiative that helps Manitobans go towards prosperity.

Winnipeg ER Services Patient Wait Times

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my questions today are on wait times, because Manitoba today could be called a province which waits and waits.

Winnipeg hospital emergency rooms have among the longest waiting times in Canada, with the Grace Hospital being the longest. At the same time, the cost of a standard hospital stay in Manitoba is well above the Canadian average and considerably higher than Vancouver and Toronto.

After years and years of reports, most recently the Brian Sinclair inquest, why do today's NDP continue the legacy of the longest ER waits and the most costly services?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I want to thank the member for a policy question. I think that's extremely helpful and does actually give us a chance to discuss important issues relevant to Manitobans.

The ER wait times, Mr. Speaker, at the Grace Hospital have declined from 2012 and '13 to 2013 and '14 from 9.1 hours to 7.9 hours. The same report indicated that that hospital and the hospitals in Manitoba had among the lowest readmission rates for patients that went through the ERs. They went through the ERs, they did not come back. There is not the same revolving door we'd see in other jurisdictions where they have lower wait times. They're giving a good quality service and they're

reducing the amount of time it takes to get that service.

That is moving in the right direction, and we have plans to move even further in that direction on which I will elaborate on the next question.

Children's Advocacy Equal Access to Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in this province children suffer incalculable waits under today's NDP.

The Children's Advocate has voiced extreme disappointment in today's NDP government, much of it stemming from the long delays and waits in implementing the recommendation of the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry. To allow the Children's Advocate to actually speak up for all Manitoba's children, The Children's Advocate Act, introduced near the end of the—near the end of this sitting, leaves out any child not receiving CFS services.

How much longer will all of Manitoba's children have to wait before today's NDP recognizes they all need a voice?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I think, again, that is a very important public policy question, which is why the legislation was introduced to expand the role of the Children's Advocate. It will now—we first—we were the first government to make it a member reporting to the Legislature, that office. Now we're going to make it a completely independent office. That's an important step forward in the ability of the Children's Advocate to speak without fear or favour on issues affecting children in Manitoba. We've also given the ability to look into any tragic child death in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and resources to do that.

We are going to continue to expand the role of that office to protect children in Manitoba. Making it an independent office is an important first step.

I thank the member for the question.

Marriage Licence Registration Wait Time for Recognition

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Speaking of long waits, Rich North and Chris Vogel have been waiting for 41 years to get just and fair treatment to have their marriage recognized. Even in Pride week, the Premier can't seem to find a way to recognize their marriage of 1974.

The Vital Statistics Act provides a simple approach for registering marriages which are not

registered within one year of the day of the marriage, and yet the Premier has made Rich and Chris wait and wait and wait for 41 years.

I ask the Premier: Why under his watch has Manitoba become the waiting capital of Canada?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we support very much that that marriage be solemnly recognized in law in this province and we're moving on action to do that.

I just remind the member opposite, that law—the limits on our capacity to do that are proscribed by federal law. The member was a member of the federal Cabinet. He had ample opportunity to bring a law forward at the federal level which would have made it very easy to recognize that marriage. His failure to do that leaves it up to us to find a solution. We will.

NewLeaf Airline Winnipeg Headquarters

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's a world-class destination whether you're coming for business or entertainment.

Today, just over the lunch hour, I spoke to a family from Florida just outside the Legislature here who were saying how fantastic Manitoba has treated them when they came to see the FIFA World Cup.

Manitoba's also one of the top economies in this country right now, performing in the top two across the country. It has a talented and in-demand workforce that is among one of the fastest growing in the country.

Can the Minister of Jobs and the Economy please tell the House about the wonderful announcement made this week for more jobs in our economy?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): I was glad to join Jim Young, the president and CEO of NewLeaf Travel, Barry Rempel of the airport authority and Mayor Bowman.

NewLeaf could have chose anywhere in the country, Mr. Speaker, but they chose Winnipeg for an ultra-low-cost airline, easier, faster and more affordable flights for families here but also to welcome the rest of the world to our amazing city and province, world-class events and entertainment, world-class facilities with world-class people.

Mr. Speaker, here's what Jim Young had to say: Manitoba's friendly, can-do spirit made this an ideal

place to build and grow the NewLeaf brand. NewLeaf expects to create in excess of 750 jobs. We're proud to welcome NewLeaf. We're proud to work with NewLeaf. And we're proud to welcome the world together.

Elder Abuse Reporting Annual Numbers

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, today the NDP had the opportunity to support Bill 213, meant to protect seniors, and they failed to do so.

Can the Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors tell this House today: How many instances of elder abuse are reported annually for the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): Thank you to the member for the question.

We know that any Manitoban that experiences physical, financial or psychological abuse is unacceptable, and in the case of older Manitobans who experience this, they often don't talk about it because they're afraid or embarrassed or don't know where to get help.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are working to prevent this from happening. And in 2002, in fact, we established a comprehensive Provincial Elder Abuse Strategy that helps support seniors through a Seniors Abuse Support Line; it's a 24-hour line for information and counselling about elder abuse. We also have the Safe Suite Program, which provides emergency accommodations to older adults who are experiencing abuse, and we know that it is used. Prevent Elder Abuse Manitoba is a provincial network that promotes information and awareness on how to prevent elder abuse.

This is an issue that we're very aware of—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed for this question.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, that's a—that's shameful that the minister cannot provide an answer to a simple question in her department.

We know that only one in five instances of elder abuse are reported. According to the government seniors secretary, quote, it is estimated that between 6,000 and 16,000 seniors in Manitoba are victims of elder abuse each year, end quote.

Will the minister tell this House today: How many instances of elder abuse are reported annually

for the province of Manitoba, or does she not track the instances of elder abuse?

Ms. Crothers: I appreciate the concern that the member has for this issue. It's something we're all concerned about. But I'm a little puzzled as to why he does not understand that we are addressing this by providing these programs and services for elderly.

And these programs and services are not just for the elderly, but they're for friends and neighbours of the elderly or other family members who detect that these things are happening. By having the Seniors Abuse Support Line, by having the Safe Suite Program, by having Prevent Elder Abuse Manitoba's network in place, we know that we are reaching people that need these supports and they are benefiting from them.

* (14:20)

Zebra Mussel Infestation Decontamination Units

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Approximately two weeks ago, the president of the Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement group had launched a boat at Selkirk Park. There he saw Conservation staff with one of the new decontamination units. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, when they got out of the water at 4 p.m., the decontamination unit was no longer there.

Can the minister explain how closing the decontamination units at 4 p.m. is part of his zebra mussel containment strategy?

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I want to thank the member opposite for the question. It gives me an opportunity to elaborate somewhat on the program this government has in place to address the zebra mussel issue.

But first of all, I would like to acknowledge the work of the previous minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship. I would have to describe it as unprecedented action last year to try and control the spread of these mussels in, I think, four harbours in Lake Winnipeg, something that was unprecedented, much appreciated.

And we are continuing on, Mr. Speaker, this year with phase 2 because, yes, unfortunately, another zebra mussel was discovered on a dock on a tributary adjacent to the Red River, and it's important that this zebra mussel—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the only thing unprecedented is this minister's incompetence and that of his government when it comes to dealing with the zebra mussel infestation.

Mr. Speaker, the fishers in question said, and I quote, they were surprised and disappointed that those people, those Conservation staff attending the decontamination unit, were no longer there at 4 p.m. when the majority of fishers were still out on the water.

Again I ask the minister: Is—how is the removal of decontamination units at 4 p.m. part of his containment strategy?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: I just wanted to continue on the theme that I was going down before my time ran out last time, and that was on the issue of public awareness. Mr. Speaker, this is what is fundamental when it comes to the control of zebra mussels. It's making Manitobans—and not just Manitobans but all the people who come to our beautiful province to visit and enjoy our lakes and our fishing and all our recreational activities, it's important that they understand each and every one of us has a role to play in controlling zebra mussels.

The fact that this individual discovered this zebra mussel on his dock, was aware of the programs, brought it to our attention proves that our program is working.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Martin: The only thing not working is the minister.

I would like to table the article in question, Mr. Speaker, and note that, according to the article, the president of the Swan Valley Sport Fishing Enhancement group, whose boat was not decontaminated, although he would have appreciated that opportunity, said, and I quote: This will not help stop the spread of zebra mussels.

Mr. Speaker, why was that opportunity not made available? How is removing the decontamination unit at 4 p.m. when the majority of fishers are still out on the water part of this government's decontamination strategy?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: If the member opposite wants to know who is the problem, he should look in the mirror, because we have a bill. Mr. Speaker, we have

a bill before this Legislature, Bill 12, designed specifically to deal with aquatic invasive species. This bill has been on the books for—well, until last Christmas, I think, or before. We're still waiting.

Will the members opposite co-operate with us and try and expedite the passage of Bill 12 as quickly as possible so that our people, our Conservation officers, have the enforcement powers to put our programs into effect? I ask that of members opposite.

Thank you.

Tax Freedom Day Manitoba Tax Rates

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, today, June 11th, is tax freedom day in Manitoba. It's the day the average family has finally earned enough money to pay to all the levels of government for the year. Today is the day that they stop working for the government and start working for themselves.

But, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba tax freedom day comes later than the rest of the country. In fact, it comes almost a week later than just three years ago in this province.

Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Because Manitobans pay more taxes than almost anywhere in Canada. In fact, since 2011 the NDP now makes \$500 million a year more in taxes each year.

Why—my question for the Finance Minister: Why does this NDP government make Manitobans pay more?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, the—just the other day this member got up in the House and he voted against a tax cut for seniors. He stood up in this House and he voted against a tax cut for volunteer firefighters. This member got up in the House the other day and he stood up and he voted against a tax cut for small business. He stood up in the House the other day and he voted against a tax cut for research and development credits. He got up in the House the other day and he voted against a tax rebate for aviation fuels. He got up here in the House the other day and he voted against the tax cuts for film and video production credits.

He got up in the House the other day and he voted against the Green Energy Equipment Tax Credit, Mr. Speaker. He got up in the House the other day and he voted against the Cultural Industries Printing Tax Credit. He got up in the House the other

day and he voted against our Rental Housing Construction Tax Credit—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Finance's time on this question has elapsed.

Order, please. Time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

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

Following the daily prayer on Monday, June the 8th, 2015, the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) rose on a matter of privilege regarding remarks made by the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) on Thursday, June the 4th, while commenting on a point of order.

The honourable member for River Heights contended that remarks made by the honourable minister calling the Legislature dysfunctional were derogatory and were a slur on the Assembly. He requested that the honourable minister withdraw his remarks. The honourable member for River Heights concluded his remarks by moving, in quotations, that this matter be referred to a legislative committee for further action, end of quotations.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation also offered advice to the Chair. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult with the procedural authorities.

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

The honourable member for River Heights advised that he was raising the matter at the earliest available opportunity, as he wanted to first verify the remarks in Hansard before raising the issue in the House, and I accept the word of the honourable member that he was raising the issue at the earliest opportunity.

On the issue of whether a prima facie case has been demonstrated, Joseph Maingot advises on pages 254 and 255 of the second edition of

Parliamentary Privilege in Canada that, in quotations, language spoken during a parliamentary proceeding that impugns the integrity of members would be unparliamentary and a breach of order contrary to the standing orders, but not a breach of privilege, end of quotations.

I am not suggesting that the words complained of did impugn the integrity of members. I am pointing out that the procedural authorities offer advice stating this type of claim cannot be made as a breach of privilege. In reviewing the advice given to the Chair, it is clear that there are sufficient differences—significant differences of opinion as to how this Legislature conducts its business. Although we may not all agree or see eye to eye on how business proceeds, the fact that there is a difference of opinion does not mean that a breach of privilege has occurred.

As Beuchesne citation 31(1) advises, in quotations, a dispute between two members as to allegations of facts does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege, end of quotation. In addition, Maingot advises on page 14 of the aforementioned Parliamentary Privilege in Canada that to constitute privilege, there must be some improper obstruction to the member in performing his or her parliamentary work in either a direct or a constructive way as opposed to a mere expression of public opinion or criticism of the activities of the member.

* (14:30)

The honourable member for River Heights did not identify if an improper obstruction took place nor did he identify any specific privileges of the House or of members that were breached.

I must, therefore, rule with the greatest of respect that a prima facie case of privilege has not been demonstrated and the matter is out of order as a matter of privilege.

With that being said, I also wish to remind the House of comments I made on the record in 2013. At that time I said, in quotations: I am aware that there are currently many important issues before this Assembly, issues on which members hold strong and divergent views—or opinions, pardon me. It is entirely appropriate for members to hold these strong and divergent opinions on these issues. One of the basic principles of our democracy is the fact that elected representatives can disagree in a place like this. Despite these disagreements, though, members

should still conduct themselves in an orderly manner and show respect for one another and for the institution they serve.

I believe these comments to still be valid.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Coptic Christian Martyrs

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, on February 15th, 2015, the world stopped for a moment when 21 Coptic Christians were murdered on the shores of a beach in Tripoli by ISIL, Islamic State Iraq and the Levant.

In an attempt to punish the Western world with fear and discord, each of those Christians went to their death for claiming their devotion to Jesus Christ and their Christian beliefs.

After the murders, the Coptic Orthodox Church released the victims' names, but only 20 were released. The 21st was originally a non-Christian from Chad, who saw the immense faith of his friends, and when the ISIL asked him if he rejected Jesus, he reportedly said, their God is my God, knowing that he would be killed.

On February 21st, 2015, the head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Pope Tawadros II, announced that the 21 murdered Copts would be commemorated as martyred saints on the 8th Amshir of the Coptic calendar, which is February 15th of the Gregorian calendar. The commemoration falls on the feast day of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple.

On February 20th I attended a memorial service for the 21 Coptic Christians martyred, where a poem by Stephanie Younan was read. Stephanie joins us today in the Manitoba Legislature and I'd like to read her poem, Martyrs of this Day:

We hear stories of martyrs and how they let their lives away / And we think, wow but, how could that happen these days? / We hear of how to God their blood was shed / And keeping faith in their hearts, they ended up dead / A crown they recovered though, after their sad leave / And in heaven they stayed because of their belief / What if I told you, that it's almost the same case / Only, the single choice they had was to hold on to their faith / On the 15th of February 21 new martyrs / 21 brave men and they made us all shed tears / What we see from this act is that we need to keep hope / We don't get stronger—we don't get weaker but stronger, when they say deny, we say nope / The slaughter they committed wasn't even for a reason / Simply for

pleasure and agonizing treason / Yes we are all sad, we lost 21 of our men / Still we are glad for they watch from heaven / They were taken from their families as it is shown / But they were chosen by God to stand by his throne / How much survival can cost, well, in this case a life / And while cries arose by this tendentious act / All over the world, everyone in fact / But once again did the brave men whimper or cry / Saying oh Lord Jesus Christ help me over again / Truly their faithfulness was not a lie / And truly they are patriotic men / 21 crowns were given that day / And the faith in our heart will forever stay.

Mr. Speaker, I ask leave for a moment of silence in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to observe a moment of silence? [*Agreed*]

Members, please rise.

A moment of silence was observed.

Global Awareness Group

Hon. Mohinder Saran (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Mr. Speaker, joining us in the gallery today is the Global Awareness Group from Meadows West School, whose passion is inspiring others to make change in the world around them.

The group is currently made up of 28 Meadows West students from grade 5 to 8. Their teachers saw that many of the students were interested in fundraising and helping people around the world and had a keen interest in learning about human rights issues.

The Global Awareness Group was formed to help the students of Meadows West learn about the local and global issues and what they can do to help. The teachers work with the students to help them become aware of many issues here in Manitoba and around the world.

This March, they hosted a conference called Be the Change to educate students on human rights issues and inspire them to take action. The conference had Cat Ross, the founder of KIDS initiative, as a keynote speaker. They also had smaller sessions where they discussed human rights issues like poverty, child labour, the environment, right to education, racism, access to water, freedom of speech, freedom of beliefs and gender equality.

The group has also hosted a number of fundraisers. Last year, the group raised funds to help build a school in Kenya through Free The Children and held fundraising events to raise money for disaster relief in the Philippines. They also did fundraising for Nepal after their devastating earthquakes.

Thank you to all the students and teachers of the Global Awareness Group for working to build strong, bright leaders of tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, to close, I ask leave to table the names of the members of the Global Awareness Group so that they appear in Hansard.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to include the names that the honourable member has referenced in his statement? *[Agreed]*

The names will be included in today's Hansard.

Meadows West School Global Awareness Group Students: Miranda Asham, Alia Yorski, Kathleen Prasmo, Kiara Hare, Tamana Kang, Ryan Marcelino, David Yazon, Morgan Tutkaluke, Duanyell Saranillo-Lopez, Chayenne Santos, Christine Casiano, Kayla Umali, Francheska Matias, Sofia Francisco, Lovely Pascual, Kira Dubyts, Lyric Trojillo, Owen Miller, Logan Tomanek, Tiffany Bautista, Carter McMullin, Gurveen Chahal, Komalpreet Sangha, Anmol Sandhu, Manpreet Kainth, Marco Mancusi, Nicco Mancusi, Riley Kraeker

Teachers: Eric Sagenes, Laura Jack, Thisaru Nilmalgoda, Sandie Zinn, Diane Rutherford

Tax Freedom Day

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, today is tax freedom day in Manitoba. Today is the day that Manitobans stop working for the government, start working for themselves.

The average Canadian celebrated tax freedom day yesterday, but in Manitoba we are a day behind the rest of the country. Part of the reason that we are a day behind in Manitoba is the high provincial taxes that families pay here. The average Manitoba family pays the second highest provincial taxes in the country. The average Manitoba family has also seen the second highest year-over-year increase in their tax bill. Those tax increases have resulted in tax freedom day being pushed further and further back. In 2012, tax freedom day in Manitoba fell almost an entire week earlier, on June the 5th, and tax freedom

day has grown later and later every year since, and Manitoba has fallen behind the Canadian average.

However, we have yet to reach budget balanced tax freedom day in Manitoba. Today's deficits must one day be paid for in taxes. Deficits should therefore be considered as deferred taxation. This NDP government has run six consecutive budget deficits forcing Manitobans to pay more and get less. Budgeted-balanced budget tax freedom day in Manitoba falls this Sunday, June the 14th. That is the true tax freedom day in Manitoba.

The higher taxes imposed by this NDP government are putting the squeeze on the budgets of Manitoba families. Higher taxes limit the amount of income that families have left over. Less income means less to spend on groceries, less for retirement, less for children's education, less for hockey practice, less for gymnastics club, less for mortgages, car payments and piano lessons. Mr. Speaker, it means that Manitobans are working more and more for the government and getting less and less for themselves. The average Manitoba family's taxes paid to government is up 3.8 per cent higher this year over last, and tax freedom day coming later in Manitoba illustrates that this NDP government has failed to provide in their budget relief for hard-working Manitoba families.

Abigail Calcutt

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, today we are joined in the gallery by a bright, motivated young woman who, at an early age, has already developed a deep understanding of what community commitment means.

Abigail Calcutt recently received a Youth Role Model Award. This award honours young people who are role models for the contributions they make to their communities, and I was very proud to nominate her as the junior achiever in the performing arts category.

Abigail is currently attending Sturgeon Heights Collegiate and will be graduating with honours this year. She's an individual who has spent an immense number of hours giving back to her school and her community. Throughout high school, Abigail was active in many different extracurricular activities. She was a member of photography and yearbook programs, and for the last three years, she's served as the president of Best Buddies at her school.

* (14:40)

Best Buddies is a program that connects students living with a disability with peer students to help them build friendships, often opening doors to new opportunities and experiences for both participants.

In her spare time, Abigail also volunteers for the Variety children's charity and the Special Olympics. Both of these organizations have given her the opportunity to do what she loves most, take photographs, some of which were used by Variety children's charity on their web page. She also has started her own photography business, has developed a website for it and established herself with clients.

In the fall, Abigail will continue to follow her passion and will attend the Prairieview school of photography. She will no doubt continue to find ways to volunteer and maintain her commitment to enhancing the experience of others.

Congratulations, Abigail, for receiving a Youth Role Model Award, and thank you for demonstrating so consistently to the rest of us that time dedicated to increasing the positive experiences of others is vital for a healthy community.

Mr. Speaker: Sorry, the honourable member for Riel (Ms. Melnick).

Highbury Day Care Centre

Ms. Theresa Oswald (Seine River): Seine River, but who's counting.

Okay, it is my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to rise in the House today to celebrate the opening of a brand new daycare in the constituency of Seine River.

The Highbury daycare officially opened on June the 1st, and youngsters should be fully in place by June the 15th. We've invested \$2.2 million to create 64 new spaces, 16 of which are dedicated for infants and 48 for preschool children.

I would like to congratulate and offer my best wishes to the excellent professionals from the YMCA-YWCA who will run the daycare and provide their love and expertise in caring for the children of our community.

Our government has always understood the importance of providing high-quality, licensed early learning and child-care centres throughout Manitoba. These centres provide young families with excellent care for their children. By providing access to high-quality early learning and child-care spaces, parents have the option to return to work or school and contribute to our growing economy. Enabling

our workforce to develop and grow by providing access to daycare is, simply put, a smart economic decision.

In addition, the provision of high-quality early learning and child care helps our youngsters get a strong start in life and thrive once they reach their school years. Helping parents provide an excellent start for their children in turn helps to build the next generation of parents, community leaders and to shape a positive future for Manitoba.

When I speak to young families in my community, it is clear that access to high-quality daycare is a top priority. My constituents know well that our government has this priority in mind. We've invested heavily in expanding child-care spaces. We've increased wages and we are providing a first ever pension plan for the exceptional workers who dedicate their lives to caring for our young ones.

My constituents know that Manitoba has maintained the lowest child-care fees outside of Quebec, and they want it to stay that way. They are not impressed in the least at the opposition's foray into privatizing daycare, because they understand that this is a clear path to reducing access and affordability for families, reducing quality and reducing wages for critically needed staff.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I once again would like to congratulate the Highbury daycare on its opening and wish the early learning specialists, the families, and most importantly, the children, all the best in the years ahead.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances, we'll move on to orders of the day, government business.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, will you please canvass the House to see if there's leave to withdraw the government motion on the Order Paper dealing with sessional sitting dates and to bring forward a whole new motion on this topic without the required notice.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to withdraw the government motion on the Order Paper dealing with the sessional sitting dates and to bring—and allowing—or permitting that a whole new motion

be brought forward on this topic without the required notice? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier (Mr. Selinger),

THAT this House rescind the previous agreement of June 4th, 2015, to sit during the months of July, August, September, October, November and December, and despite rule 2(1), sit during the following periods:

- (a) adjourn June 11, 2015, in accordance with the rules;
- (b) reconvene on June 16th, 2015, and meet until July 30th, 2015—

Some Honourable Members: June.

Mr. Chomiak: Oh, June, thank you—Julian calendar—June 30th, 2015, with the understanding that if this motion is not concluded on June 11th, the House will be recalled by the government for June 16th under the emergency recall provisions;

- (c) reconvene on October 20th, 2015, and meet until November 5th, 2015;
- (d) reconvene on November 16th, 2015, and meet until December 3rd, 2015; and
- (e) reconvene the current session or commence the Fifth Session of the 40th Legislature on February 24th, 2016, and meet until March 16th, 2016—aw, geez—and meet until March 15th, 2016.

Est-ce que je parle le français ou anglais? Non.

Translation

Am I speaking French or English? No.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), seconded by the honourable First Minister,

THAT this House rescind the previous agreement of June 4th, 2015, to sit during the months of July, August, September, October, November and December, and despite rule 2(1), sit during the following periods:

- (a) adjourn June 11th, 2015, in accordance with the rules;
- (b) reconvene on June 16th, 2015, and meet until June 30th, 2015, with the understanding that if this motion is not concluded on June 11th, the

House can be recalled by the government for June 16th under the emergency recall provisions;

(c) reconvene on October 20th, 2015, and meet until November 5th, 2015;

(d) reconvene on November 16th, 2015, and meet until December 3rd, 2015; and

(e) reconvene the current session or commence the Fifth Session of the 40th Legislature on February 24th, 2016, and meet until March 15th, 2016.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): I move that debate on this motion now be adjourned, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader that debate on this motion be adjourned. Seconded? Who was the seconder?

An Honourable Member: By the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen).

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, seconded by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler, that debate on this matter be adjourned. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Official Opposition House Leader on—

House Business

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I seek leave to make a statement regarding House business.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the honourable Official Opposition House Leader to make a statement to the House? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House on behalf of our leader and members of the official opposition caucus that we are committing to bring the just announced motion to a vote on—by no later than June 30th, 2015, and have signed a memorandum of understanding to this effect providing that the changes occur in House rules and legislation by June 30th, 2015, that enable the following changes to House activity and the handling of independent officers:

- (1) petitions will be read following question period, not before;
- (2) members' statements will be read before question period, not following;

(3) the current practice regarding time for questions to be asked and answered during question period will form part of the new rules;

(4) the current practice regarding the announcement of private members' resolutions will become the exclusive rule of announcing PMRs;

(5) points of order and matters of privilege will not be heard during question period; points of order will be deferred until after question period, matters of privilege can occur prior to question period or be to—deferred to after question period;

(6) challenges to the Speaker's ruling on points of order will no longer be allowed;

(7) public presenters to committee will no longer, without leave, present past midnight during committees;

(8) the consideration of clause by clause of bills may be held on separate days from public presentations at committee;

(9) there will be a minimum of nine Public Accounts Committee meetings held per calendar year;

* (14:50)

(10) In the event of an independent officer providing their resignation, a hiring committee to find a replacement will meet one month after the notice that's been provided, and a recommendation on the replacement will be provided six months after that notice.

(11) Question and answer time during Estimates Committee will be reduced to five minutes each.

(12) Questions taken under advisement during Estimates must be answered in writing within 45 days of the question being taken under advisement.

(13) Estimates committee will sit Friday mornings with the written leave of the House leaders of recognized political parties if given by 5 p.m. on the Wednesday before the Friday morning sitting.

(14) Each government and opposition caucus will be able to select three private members' bills to come to a vote at second reading each session.

Independent members can select one private members' bill and will not be required to have a second or to introduce one private members' bill per session.

(15) Each [*inaudible*] per session and the ministers responsible for the question must respond with an answer in writing within 30 days of the question appearing on the order paper.

(16) There will be a—there will be 10 minutes set aside for each private member's resolution and private member's bill for questions from the opposition critic or their designate with one question per independent member.

(17) There will be 15 minutes set aside during second reading of bills following the ministers' second reading address for the opposition critic to ask the minister responsible questions about the bill. Independent members will be able to ask one question.

(18) Opposition Day motions, if filed by 5 p.m. with the Clerk, will proceed the day following—proceed the day following the filing with normal House adjournment times being suspended on the day the motion is heard.

(19) There will be a mandatory number of sitting days in a sessional calendar within the rules with the general effect being that the House will sit from about the beginning of March until the first Friday in June, with two scheduled constituency work weeks during that time. The House will also sit from the beginning of October to the first Thursday of December, with two scheduled constituency work weeks. One constituency work week will occur during the week of Remembrance Day generally. A new session will begin following the Remembrance Day break week. It is understood that the mandatory number of sitting days calendar will begin following the 2016 general election according to the rules established.

(20) Government bills that are introduced by a designated day will be scheduled for a vote prior to the spring sitting ending with the exception of up to five bills that the opposition may select to hold over until the fall sitting. If there are two recognized opposition parties, the official opposition may select four bills and the second opposition one.

There will be no intersessional committees held without the consent of all recognized House leaders that involve public presenters during the months of June, July, and August.

There is agreement the House leaders and the independent member for River Heights will consider and work in good faith to bring forward rule changes on the operation of standing committees prior to December 31st, 2015, of this year, with the general intent of making these committees more stable in their—in terms of their membership, more relevant in terms of their roles, and with the ability to develop reports and study issues of concern to the province.

By agreement, there may be additional rule changes enacted prior to June 30th, 2015, but these represent those intentions to be fulfilled in rules and legislation to ensure that the just-announced motion comes to a vote in this House by June 30th, 2015.

I would conclude by saying that I believe that the discussions between all parties to come to this point had proceeded in good faith and with the best interests of the Legislature and the democratic role in mind, and we commit ourselves to ensuring that they are finalized as soon as possible because we believe it to be in the best interests of this democratic body and those that it serves.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I want to rise. If I need leave, I need to ask leave, but I want to comment on the matter which is before the House.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to speak to the statement that was just made by the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen)? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that—first, thank you to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), because I think that we have, after some considerable discussion, a proposal for sitting dates for the rest of this calendar year and for the beginning of next year. And I think after discussion back and forth, we have a responsible set of sitting dates.

I want to thank the MLA for Steinbach for all the work that he has done on the rules issues. It's been clear for quite a while that we need some improvement in the rules, and the MLA for Steinbach has given this a tremendous amount of

thought and effort, and I think that's a major contribution. I'm certainly ready to support both the motion put forward by the MLA for Kildonan and the rules concept that we've provided, the steps 1 to 22 as they're outlined here. For a variety of reasons, we still have some work to finalize some of the details, and I look forward to working with the other House leaders to complete the finalized rules document that we can present to this House before June the 30th.

So I want to thank both government House leaders for all the work and effort that they've put in as well as others who contributed and look forward to a conclusion of both the motion and the rules changes by June the 30th.

Thank you.

Mr. Chomiak: Do I require leave to—may I have leave to speak to this?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) have leave to speak to the statement made by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, this particular measure illustrates probably the best form of democracy in action. Not only do I want to thank the Opposition House Leader and the leader of the Liberal Party, but I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition and our own leader for their involvement as well as the team of people who've worked on this for some time. In the 25 years that I've been in this Chamber, we have tried to achieve these measures on numerous occasions. This is the closest we've ever come.

I think with the intentions and with the hard work that's been put in, I think it's quite conceivable that this Chamber will adopt these rules and will adopt the motion so that the way this place works will be more efficient, more representative and more effective. And so I'm—my heartfelt thanks to the trust that's been shown to all of us to allow us to do the many hours of work we've done, to other House leaders and to all those who contributed. This is, in my view, a historical day for this Chamber.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I thank all honourable members for their work on this matter.

The Official Opposition House Leader, on continuing House business.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes. A little bit less dramatically, Mr. Speaker, but in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered on the next sitting Thursday is the resolution on the provincial government's failure to proactively address Canada's microbead issues, sponsored by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer).

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on provincial government's failure to proactively address Canada's microbead issues, sponsored by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer).

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, can you please call for debate, second readings of the following bills: Bill 12, The Water Protection Amendment Act (Aquatic Invasive Species); Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act; The Red River College Act; The Children's Advocate Act; Bill 17, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act; Bill 34, The Safer Roads Act (Drivers and Vehicles Act and Highway Traffic Act Amended); Bill 14, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Home Improvement Contracts); Bill 27, The Veterinary Medical Amendment Act; and Bill 35, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Presumption re Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Other Amendments).

*(15:00)

Mr. Speaker: We'll be calling bills in the following order for second reading: Bill 12, The Water Protection Amendment Act (Aquatic Invasive Species); followed by Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act; followed by Bill 22, The Red River College Act; followed by Bill 25, The Children's Advocate Act; Bill 17, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act; Bill 34, The Safer Roads Act (Drivers and Vehicles Act and Highway Traffic Act Amended); Bill 14, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Home Improvement Contracts); Bill 27, The Veterinary Medical Amendment Act; and Bill 35, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Presumption re Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Other Amendments).

SECOND READINGS

Bill 12—The Water Protection Amendment Act (Aquatic Invasive Species)

Mr. Speaker: We'll commence now under second readings of bill—calling Bill 12, The Water Protection Amendment Act (Aquatic Invasive Species).

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 12, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill and I table the message.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Conservation, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 12, The Water Protection Amendment Act (Aquatic Invasive Species), be now read for a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: This legislation supports actions already taken by the Province to prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species into Manitoba and contain the spread of aquatic invasive species like zebra mussels.

Efforts have included the continuing, Don't Move a Mussel, public education campaign and the deployment of the watercraft inspection program, armed with decontamination units stationed at major boat launches and border crossings.

Mr. Speaker, last summer over 2,800 inspections and 136 decontaminations were conducted. The 2015 watercraft inspection program is now in full swing and has already inspected over 300 watercraft since mid-May.

Bill 12 allows for the—for enhancement efforts that move beyond voluntary compliance, to direct powers for watercraft inspectors and officers to protect Manitoba's water resources and aquatic ecosystems from aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels.

It is among the most comprehensive legislation of its kind in North America.

Mr. Speaker, an uncontrolled zebra mussel invasion has the potential to foul Manitoba's pristine beaches, parks and marinas, and negatively impact

hydro-power generation, waterfront property values, water-diversion intakes, drinking-water systems, and our valuable commercial and recreational fisheries.

The new legislation includes a number of measures specifically aimed at preventing the spread of zebra mussels beyond where they have already been discovered.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 12 will enable the Province to take necessary measures and precautions to help protect Manitoba's annual \$510 million water-based recreational tourism sector that includes activities such as: fishing, watercraft use, provincial and federal parks, and families visiting our beaches.

Bill 12 will enable the Province to designate aquatic invasive species, implement measures and take strong actions to prevent their introduction or spread.

Mr. Speaker, highlights of Bill 12 include prohibiting the possession, transportation and release of aquatic invasive species, except in specified circumstances; requirements for trailered watercraft to stop and allow an inspection of the watercraft and water-based equipment at water-inspection stations; and designation of control zones, where restrictions and prohibitions can be established in specific areas to prevent the introduction or control the spread of aquatic invasive species.

This bill explicitly sets out the powers that inspectors and officers have to enforce the act. Enforcement officers and watercraft inspectors will be able to take measures to detect, control and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. This includes the ability to conduct surveys, to stop and inspect vehicles transporting watercraft or water-related equipment, and the ability to issue decontamination and control orders.

The bill also puts Manitoba in a better position to defend against new threats such as the introduction of Asian carp, quagga mussels and fish diseases.

Manitoba's water resources and aquatic ecosystems need to be protected. This bill provides the regulatory authority to take the necessary precautions and actions to help counter the threat posed by aquatic invasive species.

Legislation is only part of the solution, Mr. Speaker. This is a long-term fight requiring due diligence and commitment by all water users. All water users must do their part to stop the spread of

aquatic invasive species. Manitobans and visitors are reminded to use always the proper four-step cleaning process: clean, drain, dry and dispose when leaving the water to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels to other lakes, rivers and wetlands.

We ask everyone to do their part, and I hope that all members of the House support the speedy passage of Bill 12.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I rise to put a few comments on the record with regard to Bill 12. This is an important bill, a badly needed bill to do what we can, make the best effort we can to keep as many lakes as possible in Manitoba free of zebra mussels and to do what we can to contain the spread of this particular invasive species, as well as give us tools that will help to decrease and stop the spread the other invasive species at the same time.

It probably optimally could have been brought in in about 2010 after the zebra mussels had first appeared in the Red River. And we could have, I believe, at that point, reacted more strongly and done more in the way of protecting our waters from the zebra mussels and, of course, from other invasive species at the same time.

In this respect, I recall a meeting last year at which Robert Kristjanson got up and said look, there are other species. I believed he was talking about mussels, about four of them which are also a threat which we also have to be concerned about and they are further examples of why we need and have needed this legislation.

Now, of course, last year—in fact, I think it was in late 2013 that the zebra mussels were first discovered in Lake Winnipeg and the government developed a plan to put a lot of potash in four harbours in Lake Winnipeg in the hopes that that might exterminate the zebra mussels and end the contamination of Lake Winnipeg with zebra mussels. Now, sadly, that didn't work, and, of course, there's differing opinions on the likelihood of whether that would work. I think most people thought that the chances were pretty small, but, nevertheless, the attempt was made.

But it was clear as early as about the middle of July last year that the zebra mussels had not been contained into the four harbours, and it was also clear last July that it was imperative that there be

legislation in order to provide the strongest possible effort at containing the zebra mussels and preventing their spread.

* (15:10)

And, clearly, it was also very apparent that having got into Lake Winnipeg, that Manitoba has a very large number of lakes and rivers which are a threat or to which zebra mussels are in fact a very serious threat and that—with great urgency in the need to address this issue and to act swiftly so that measures could be put in place as quickly as absolutely possible to stop the spread from Lake Winnipeg to other lakes. And that, of course, as it gets toward fall, people are taking their boats out, they're moving them around a lot more, that it would've been highly desirable to have everything in place by September of last year and this bill passed.

And, as a result, having looked at this situation and realized the critical need for the passage of this bill as soon as it was, Manitoba Liberals last—the end of July, I believe it was, called for the Legislature to come back earlier last fall and to address this bill and to have it passed and—but, you know, sadly that didn't happen. The NDP didn't bring the Legislature back in late August or September in order to address this, but instead the issue waited until December—actually, November, I think is—or December when it was the bill came in, but we waited until November to have the session. And, you know, so we lost several critical months of having the bill and having as vigorous an effort last fall as we could've had in preventing the spread and containing the zebra mussels.

We were—Manitoba Liberals were very disappointed that last fall, even though the bill was brought in, that the NDP didn't provide enough time in the session to get this bill dealt with and through or didn't extend the session, even in an emergency session, to get it through quickly last fall so that the preparation could go full speed ahead to have everything in place for this spring.

It—the NDP had a choice to bring in the session and us into the Legislature in January or February or March so that we would be ready as soon as the ice broke up and people were ready to put crafts into the water to make sure that we were well positioned to do the very best possible in terms of containing the zebra mussels.

Unfortunately, we weren't recalled until the end of April, and the NDP, of course, control the agenda,

which bills are coming forward. And, you know, certainly Manitoba Liberals expected that this would come forward on a very urgent basis at the beginning of the session so we could deal with it. But, you know, we finally have this bill come forward on June the 11th, the middle of June, on what was scheduled, up until we had this agreement, to be the end of the sitting. In fact, it really is the end of the sitting, because I believe we will have another session, an emergency session, as per the agreement starting next Tuesday.

And so I'm very pleased that the minister has finally brought this forward. Clearly, we should deal with this expeditiously. We should look carefully at the terms and give people an opportunity to present at committee stage because they may have, you know, ideas that need to be presented.

You know, I note, for example, that one of the things which should be better considered in this bill is the situation of float planes—float planes which are flying all over Manitoba and landing in many of Manitoba's lakes and waters. And when we look at, for example, the definition of watercraft, it means a motorboat, a sailboat, personal watercraft, canoe or other thing designed to 'transport'—transport a person on water. Well, a float plane, while it will be on water, is really designed to transport people or goods in the air and not on the water. And so technically it wouldn't really be included in what the minister has described in watercraft, and so I believe the minister should address this.

You know, there is a—water-related equipment: a dock, a boatlift or trailer for watercraft; items and equipment used for fishing like fishing rods, nets and bait containers; recreational equipment used in water, such as water skis, wakeboards and water tubes, scuba gear, wetsuits, waders; and other equipment designed to be worn in water, water tanks, water-hauling equipment and irrigation equipment and any other prescribed items.

Well, you might be able to say that float planes are water-related equipment, but I think it would have been really good to make sure that float planes are not only mentioned here, but there is a real effective plan to address the issue of float planes and to make sure that when float planes are going from one water body to another that, you know, the float planes are clean. There are, you know, a few major places where float planes fly out of, and maybe there needs to be some consideration given to the presence of decontamination units that can make sure that

float planes are free of zebra mussels at at least the major places where float planes fly out of, you know, Selkirk, there's a few northern bases and so on, Thompson. And so I would, you know, suggest to the minister that he takes a—quite a careful look at this issue of float planes to make sure that they're adequately covered in this legislation and also to make sure that from a practical point of view, measures are taken to, you know, eliminate the spread of zebra mussels through the flying of float planes to many, many lakes all over the province.

This, you know, clearly is just one example of one of the things that needs, in my view, to be more carefully addressed. The—another aspect which I believe is really important that the minister consider—and I hope that the minister will, you know, provide us in more detail some of the actual plan. And the reason that there's a number of us who are skeptical is that when we look at the conservation natural resource officers getting more powers in this bill, but at the same time, the budget has actually decreased for the natural resource officers. And, as a result, you know, there's a little bit of concern about whether what is in the act can actually be delivered adequately in terms of enforcement. There's been quite a bit of discussion already earlier today when we had a resolution about the number of decontamination units that are needed. And I suspect that six for the thousands and thousands of lakes that we have in Manitoba is probably not nearly enough. Furthermore, I think that, you know, one needs to have an accurate idea of the plan in which the sniffer dogs, which the minister introduced the first one of two or three weeks ago, I believe, and, you know, how they're going to be deployed. And we also should have some idea of, you know—people who are out and boating don't often follow, you know, the normal office hours for—so that, you know, you really need to be able to be able to cover the waterfront at the time that people are moving boats in and out of the water. And this needs to be addressed, I suggest to the minister, in some fashion, so that there really will be an adequate plan.

Mr. Speaker, there are clearly, you know, some, you know, water bodies which should have special consideration. I would suggest that the minister, as he looks at the Lake Winnipeg and the lakes around Lake Winnipeg and the rivers coming into and out of Lake Winnipeg, that it clearly would be a big problem if this zebra mussels got into Lake Manitoba.

* (15:20)

And there's a couple of rivers, and Lake St. Martin and Lake Pineimuta which separate the two big lakes. And, clearly, there should be some sort of a plan to try and limit and make sure to the extent that is possible, the movement of zebra mussels from Lake Winnipeg to Lake Manitoba because once it's in Lake Manitoba, the problems then multiply again.

And, similarly, there is a concern about the spread of zebra mussels downstream in the Nelson River, and that concern, of course, is for the communities downstream, but it's also because downstream we have quite a number of dams, and the potential for zebra mussels to lock onto, you know, important equipment at the dam site and interfere with the generation of hydroelectricity is potentially quite significant. So a plan to address and to limit, if at all possible, the spread of zebra mussels from Lake Winnipeg downstream would be another important consideration.

And a third consideration would clearly be the Winnipeg River and the Saskatchewan River, and to what extent it is possible to limit the spread of zebra mussels up these important waterways and into the many lakes along the Winnipeg River and into—along the Saskatchewan River, Cedar Lake, Moose Lake—whole area around The Pas, et cetera. So one would hope that the minister would have, as soon as possible, you know, a clear plan and the appropriate resources to make sure that Manitoba is protected as much as we possibly can be and that the spread of zebra mussels is contained.

This is a very, very important, you know, area, a very, very concerning area. As the minister himself has said, this is a crisis. We had a member up earlier on, ready to fight and fight, but you need to have a good plan and you need to have the resources and I would urge the minister to pay a great deal of attention to this because it's important to all Manitobans. It is—affects all those who like to get out to our lakes and rivers. It affects tourism in this province, and it is a big factor if we have zebra mussels widespread in this province, and we need to do everything that can be done.

I'm pleased that aspects of this bill are modelled after what has been done in Minnesota. My understanding is that although Minnesota has thousands of lakes, that they have at least contained it at this point to about 113. Now, we would like to contain it to a lot fewer than 113 lakes. We'd like to contain it to Lake Winnipeg and the Red River, but, clearly, we will have to act forcefully and well.

This bill is part of that effort but, you know, we need to act with urgency and, you know, to the best of effect that we can. I mean, it has been demonstrated, as Minnesota as an example, has been able to significantly decrease what could have been a much wider spread of zebra mussels and it really is important that we get on top of this and that we don't relax, that we take this forward as fast as we possibly can and that we have in place, as quickly as possible, the resources, the people, the dogs—everything that we need to make sure that we have as an effective plan as we possibly can.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few comments, I will close. I'm ready to support this bill as quickly as it will move on. I am ready to listen carefully to people at the committee stage so we can gather any additional ideas and I hope that we can pass it as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 24—The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act.

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 24, The Wildlife Amendment and Fisheries Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Bill 24 will make a number of amendments to wildlife and fisheries legislation. It enhances enforcement provisions by clarifying particular enforcement sections. It extends the statute of limitations from one year to two years, and maximum fines under the act will now be doubled. Maximum fines that were \$50,000 are now \$100,000, and maximum fines of \$10,000 are now moved to \$25,000.

A new offence for obstructing conservation officers is created. Amendments also include creating the ability to a person—to prevent a person from obtaining a hunting licence if they have outstanding fines. The intent of this section is to

place this restriction on those with outstanding hunting violations. However, this provision allows it to be expanded to other fines at a later date through regulation if required.

Bill 24 will allow the department to authorize a third party to issue particular types of licences and oversee particular functions of the licence administration. This amendment will allow for us to enter into an agreement with representative hunting organizations to carry out routine functions on behalf of the department. This approach acknowledges that representative organizations can benefit from a stronger relationship with their members and our department.

Bill 24 will also enable the Province to enter into reciprocal enforcement agreements with other jurisdictions to share information on persons who have been convicted of wildlife violations and subsequently had hunting licence privileges suspended. This will prohibit anyone from purchasing a licence in Manitoba when suspended from hunting in another jurisdiction and vice versa.

The bill also includes amendments to remove the requirement to pay royalties on fur-bearing animals, which are small, on a per—on a per-animal basis and administratively cumbersome. However, this section will not be proclaimed until 2016 to allow for additional consultation and internal review regarding the actual rollout. Trappers will be advised of the timing and details through public release at that time.

Bill 24 will list snapping turtles and painted turtles as protected wild animals here in our province, joining other Canadian jurisdictions in protecting our most vulnerable species. Ring-neck pheasants will no longer be listed as game birds in Manitoba through this bill. These birds have not established successful breeding populations in this province and, therefore, cannot be considered a viable game species.

Finally, amendments to both the wildlife act and the fisheries act will enable the issuance of licences and permits over the Internet through an electronic licensing system.

I look forward to the support of this House for passage of Bill 24. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:30)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk briefly about this bill, which brings

forward a number of measures which addresses the harvest of wildlife and fisheries in Manitoba.

While I'm in general agreement with the—this legislation, I'm certainly ready to listen to presenters who come forward at the committee stage, and look for their ideas. I believe it is smart to have the capacity, as is provided for here, to co-operate with other jurisdictions, to be able to share information on individuals who have been—in particular individuals who've been convicted of other wildlife and wildlife related offences in other jurisdictions.

And I think this is an approach which makes eminent sense, and it is important as we, you know, proceed in Manitoba, that we are working co-operatively from a jurisdictional point of view, from a point of view of how we, you know, operate and police and be on top of what's happening with wildlife, that we're able to work closely with individuals in other jurisdictions, both so that we can do a better job of stewardship, monitoring of wildlife, but also so that we can do a better job of making sure that people who are harvesting fish and wildlife are doing so appropriately and according to the procedures which are outlined under the fisheries and wildlife protocols and rules.

Also agree with the minister in moving a number of items onto the Internet so that individuals would be able to get licences and permits over the Internet, and that this certainly is a useful step, it saves time and makes sure that things can work smoothly, and certainly is a step forward in terms of convenience for people, as well I believe it will be more efficient for government in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the inclusion of the painted and snapping turtles. I think these are important species, they should get some significant attention, being appropriately protected, and I believe that, you know, they are two species which we certainly could be more aware of and know more about in our province.

From my knowledge of this area, I believe it's also timely to take away the royalties for harvesting of furbearing animals. Again, look forward to what may happen in the committee stage or other consultations, but I think this is a reasonable step. The cost of doing this was probably more than the revenue that it brought in, and so it makes sense from what I can see in this area.

I believe that the bill could have discussed a little bit more issues related to, for example, the

individuals who are hunting with Metis harvester cards, and to have an agreement with the Manitoba Metis Federation to enable a better integration of efforts to preserve and monitor and look after various fisheries, fish and wildlife species. I know that this government has had a lot of difficulty over many years in working with Metis people on harvesting wildlife and that there have been, you know, battles between this government and the Metis people in this respect, but I suggest that—to the minister that it's time to start and work a little bit more co-operatively with Metis people in Manitoba, and have discussions about how we move forward because my understanding that in many cases the limits imposed on the Metis harvester cards are sometimes not even as large as the limits placed on a regular hunting licence, but they are meant, as I have heard many times from people in the Metis community, to make sure that we're showing good stewardship of the fish and the wildlife in our province.

And I would suggest just as the minister is looking at more co-operation with people in other provinces that he also look at co-operation with people inside our province, like Metis people, because this is after all the homeland of the Metis people, and it's about time that we had a more positive working relationship between the government and the Metis people.

I believe that there are two issues which I would like to address in particular. One is the minister is getting into areas which in some circumstance will need more resources and perhaps in others and the Internet, if permits and so on are handed on the Internet, it may actually be more efficient and not require as many resources. I guess we will wait and see. But we want to be certain that the resources and the personnel and the other aspects are there to be able to efficiently and effectively enforce The Wildlife Act and the fisheries rules and so on so that the minister is not just passing a piece of paper and really won't have the wherewithal in terms of personnel and other resources to make sure that the rules and the laws that we're putting here are actually being enforced appropriately and properly.

The other aspect which I suggest is particularly important is when we're looking at wildlife species and fish that it's really important that we have monitoring approaches which are going to work and be effective. We saw over the last 15 years a problem in adequate monitoring of moose populations and all of a sudden moose populations plummeted and there had to be moratoriums, and so on, on moose hunting

for certain parts of the province. And while, you know, this may be in some occasions and in some locations an appropriate management tool, it would be much better to have a closer monitoring of the population so that you can fine tune the hunting regulations and the hunting rules.

And certainly with what's happening in terms of technology there's some, for example, interesting, surprising and looks like quite effective ways of monitoring caribou populations using DNA and DNA on fecal samples to be able to identify the numbers of animals in a herd and to be able to determine the size of a caribou population.

There are now interestingly enough in a number of areas people are increasingly using drones to monitor wildlife populations, and this is, you know, in certain areas. I was talking with an individual not long ago monitoring wild fowl, grebe and duck populations in a lake in Alberta, and I'm not sure if they're already doing it or if they were just in the pilot phase of doing it but it was proving to be much more effective and easier to monitor by drones than in other ways.

*(15:40)

So certainly there are some new and effective tools that can be used to monitor wildlife populations and, you know, increasingly approaches to monitoring and looking at and understanding what fish populations are, and these are all areas which are going to be very important.

So, Mr. Speaker, having the resources to be able to monitor populations effectively, having the—what the minister talks about, sharing of information with other jurisdictions so that, in fact, we're using the most up-to-date and the most effective way and cost-effective ways of monitoring populations is also really important. So I—although this is not really part of this bill, it really is part of the effort that has to be taken if, in fact, we're going to have a good stewardship of the wildlife in our province and make sure that things are going well with wildlife and with the fish in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there have been too many occasions in the past where things have not been monitored or the stewardship hasn't been adequate. Lake Winnipegosis is a good example and the pickerel fishery there, because the—it was the second largest pickerel fishery in North America, no, third largest after Lake Erie and Lake Winnipeg and then Lake Winnipegosis. It was the third largest pickerel

fishery historically, and then about 1960, for a variety of reasons, the pickerel numbers on Lake Winnipegosis plummeted and they've never returned to the numbers that they once were. I believe that they're a little bit better than they were for a while, but there were in the mid-'90s, the numbers were about one fortieth the population that there had been in the 1950s, and so a good example that we need to remember when we're looking at what is the optimum way of looking after fish species both in terms of monitoring populations and in terms of how we do in making sure that once the populations start decreasing, we're on top of that very quickly and we have measures which will make sure that the populations, whether it be pickerel in Lake Winnipegosis or moose in a number of areas in Manitoba, that these populations are looked after well and appropriately.

So, Mr. Speaker, with just those few words, I look forward to this moving on to a committee and then moving on to third reading and becoming law. But, as I said, I think it is going to be very important that we're listening very carefully at the committee stage, because I expect there will be some valuable input there.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for La Verendrye, that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 22—The Red River College Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 22, The Red River College Act.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 22, The Red River College Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Education, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services, that Bill 22, The Red River College Act, be now read for a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, better training and education opportunities are the key to keeping Manitoba on the right track. We want students to have no wrong doors in their education and to have access to high-quality programming that gives them the training they need to get a good job right here in Manitoba.

Red River College has long been providing students with some of the best training possible and helping position graduates to join a workforce that takes advantage of the opportunities that our growing economy provides.

Graduates of Red River College know that the training they receive is second to none. In fact, over 92 per cent of students say they would recommend the program they took at Red River to a friend, and in many programs virtually all graduates find employment within their chosen field after graduating. Facts like this highlight just how strong Red River is and the importance it plays in our province.

Red River College is an essential part of our plan to grow the economy and create opportunities for young people to get the skills they need to get a good job here in Manitoba. In order for our economy to continue to grow, we need more trained workers to meet the demands of employers. This legislation 'strengchens' the college's financial oversight and governance structure so that it can continue to meet the needs of students and industry. And a stronger Red River College means a stronger post-secondary education system for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, our plan focuses on improving the quality of education in Manitoba, helping young people get good jobs and keeping education affordable for parents and students. We want our universities and colleges to remain strong. That's why we're not cutting post-secondary education funding, as we have seen in other provinces. Instead, in Manitoba, funding for universities and colleges has more than doubled since 1999, increasing by more than \$335 million. This investment is paying off. Our college tuition fees are the second lowest in the country, and we've seen a 52 per cent increase in college enrolment. And by offering zero-interest student loans, removing barriers for rural and northern students, and investing in grants, scholarships and bursaries, we will see more students taking advantage of post-secondary education and more young people getting the skills they need to get a good job.

But, while we continue to invest and we continue to see our colleges and universities thrive, there is another plan for our post-secondary system out there that would undo all of the growth and destroy all of the opportunities we are creating. The last time the Leader of the Opposition was in government, tuition fees skyrocketed by 132 per cent and enrolment actually decreased by 8 per cent. And this approach today is the same as it was then. He wants to cut \$550 million across the board. This would mean rising tuition, outdated equipment and fewer students having the opportunity to get good training and a good job.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want a government that will continue to invest in education and continue to provide opportunities for young people to further their education. Parents want their children to be able to take advantage of opportunities and live happy, productive lives. This is why we are working together with our colleges, universities and public schools to create more options to get ahead while still in high school and to make sure there are no wrong doors once a student goes to post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation will help ensure that Red River College can continue to deliver high-quality education and training. We are looking forward to a Red River College that can respond to the needs of employers, train our young people and help grow our economy so that all Manitobans can prosper. Our government knows that the key to a strong economy is better training and education opportunities for Manitobans. We want more people to have better access to education so that they can be part of a workforce that is ready for the jobs of tomorrow. Red River College has a key role to play in our plan to train workers and grow the economy. This legislation makes sure Red River College will continue to meet the needs of students and industry in Manitoba for generations to come.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk briefly about this piece of legislation. Also, to begin, I want to say a few words of praise to the Red River College and the efforts that have been taken at Red River College.

There are some really wonderful programs, and students who come through these programs at Red River College have done very well. One of the examples, for example, would be the creative communications program, and I've certainly had a

number of people working with me who have been through the creative communications program, and they have had excellent training in communications in a variety of different media. They have shown that what they have learned there has been extraordinarily useful, and they have—those—some of them have worked for a while in my office and then gone on to take jobs which paid more than I can afford to pay them in my office, but I'm pleased that they are doing so well and that they are so much in demand that they can hold down jobs that are very high paying.

* (15:50)

And sometimes—one of them had to go to Alberta to find as high-paying job as he wanted, but that's okay. If—we need to do a little better in terms of raising the pay scales for some people here in communications so that we can keep people here. But he's doing very well in Alberta and I wish him very well.

I also want to speak to the fact that a very high proportion of the students who go to Red River College, independent of which program, end up with jobs and doing well. And I think that this is also a credit to the work that is done by so many of the teachers at Red River College and the quality of the work and the environment—the learning environment that is there. So, that I wanted to put on the record because the Red River College has a good long-run record. It has had very many highly qualified and very good people working there, and this issue certainly needs to be mentioned.

One of the concerns that Liberals have had over the years of the NDP government is that there are often been, for some of the courses, very long wait times.

You know, I was talking earlier today about the fact that we have a province under the NDP which waits and waits and waits. And it's whether it's in health care, long wait times in emergency rooms, or whether it is waiting for until the Children's Advocate can actually look after and help all children in the province and not just some of them, whether it is waiting for one of many, many things that we have to wait for here.

But one of the aspects of waiting, clearly at Red River College, has been waiting to get into programs. And I've had a fair number of people who have come to me and say, well, look, we can't get in for a year, a year and a half, we're going to go to another province where we can get in sooner. And I

believe we could address the wait times in education and that this would be a very positive area to address and to address it well. Because it would help to keep people here. It would probably also attract some people from other provinces to come here and then they might stay here and work here. But there is an opportunity here to address this and address it in ways that would be helpful and provide the skilled workforce that we need to help young people with opportunities. And, in some cases, were talking older people who are going back and getting a post-secondary education and improving their lives and their skills. And in some cases, retraining, and in some cases, people who have waited a while before they get into post-secondary education, and their experiencing it and having success, and then moving forward with their lives, being employed and doing well.

Now it's apparent from the nature of this bill that a significant reason for this bill is the scandal which occurred at the Red River College under the NDP. That the operation of the president's office for awhile was done in a way that wasn't befitting of the office of a president. And in a way that clearly should have been improved. It demonstrates, sadly, the, you know, poor oversight by the NDP, a government by today's NDP in matters of education, that a scandal like this could have happened on their watch.

And, certainly, we're ready to support the measures here but as, you know, Lloyd Axworthy once told me many, many years ago, that, you know, ethics isn't just about putting tighter rules, it isn't just about putting, you know, harder punishments. A lot of it is about, you know, who you are and who you hire and what—how you operate, and that having people who are ethical in the way they approach matters like the administration at the Red River College is extraordinarily important and is something which is not all that easy, necessarily, to write into law, but nevertheless is tremendously important if we're going to move forward in a positive direction and avoid the problems that there have been, because, you know, when there are problems like that, it affects the reputation of an organization like the Red River College. And Red River College should not have had their reputation affected in this way.

There should have been, you know, better stewardship by this government to make sure that things were going in a positive direction and that the messages that I understand the government was hearing early on from a variety of people should've

been listened to instead of letting it get to the point where it was and it became a problem. I called it a scandal; I think that's really the appropriate word. So that, you know, is something that we need to pay attention to, and I think it's important that as we look at the changes that are being proposed that we look very carefully to ensure that these are, in fact, going to work.

I hope we have a variety of people coming to present and to talk about these changes who have worked at the Red River College and can provide us the best possible advice as we move forward and look at—toward adopting the measures that are being proposed.

I think one has to be a little bit careful of the size of boards, because, you know, many organizations have reduced their boards from larger boards to boards which are most around 11 or so. So a board of 17 is getting to be on the large side, but we will listen to further comments, further rationale for this size of a board as we move forward. And I look forward to the minister making that case clearly as we go to committee, and others to make that case as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are my remarks on this bill, and I look forward to it going to committee and moving forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I move, seconded by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), that we adjourn debate.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 25—The Children's Advocate Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 25, The Children's Advocate Act.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 25, The Children's Advocate Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

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

Seconded by the Minister of Justice.

Some Honourable Members: Education.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Education, yes.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Family Services, seconded by the

honourable Minister of Education, that Bill 25, The Children's Advocate Act, be now read for a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, I stand here before my honourable colleagues to speak about Bill 25.

In Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, and, for many years, the Children's Advocate's powers and duties have been embedded within The Child and Family Services Act. I am proud to state, for the first time, this bill establishes independent, stand-alone legislation for the Children's Advocate. In doing so, government is responding to a key recommendation made by both the current Children's Advocate, Darlene MacDonald, and the commissioner of the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, the Honourable Ted Hughes.

Children are society's most precious resource. Collectively, we have a legal and moral obligation to promote their safety and well-being, and, as recipients of social services, it is important that their rights and voices be respected.

* (16:00)

The proposed act requires that the best interests of children continue to be the paramount consideration for the Children's Advocate when fulfilling her or his responsibilities. This bill supports a strong and independent Children's Advocate by extending the term of the office from three to five years. In doing so, the advocate will have more time to become acquainted with her or his role and more effectively fulfill their duties and mandate.

As with other independent offices of the Legislature such as the Ombudsman, this bill gives the Children's Advocate the discretionary power—decide not to investigate complaints or to stop investigating complaints that are frivolous. After careful consideration, they do not require an investigation. The implications of this amendment are that staff working in the Office of the Children's Advocate will have more time to spend on the investigation of serious and legitimate complaints and matters, including child death reviews.

Bill 25 also enhances the public reporting abilities of the Children's Advocate. For one, the bill requires the Office of the Children's Advocate to report to the public every year on its work with

indigenous children and their families. It is my belief that this new reporting responsibility will raise the profile of the systemic issues that indigenous children and families face in Manitoba.

This bill also requires the Children's Advocate to table an annual report with the Legislature by the end of November every year. This report is always made available to the public.

In addition to the existing requirement that the Children's Advocate prepare an annual report that includes a summary of her or his recommendations with this bill, we are increasing the ability of the Children's Advocate to provide Manitobans with more contextual information in order to better understand the grounds or reasons for the advocate's conclusions and recommendations.

Bill 25 explicitly grants the Children's Advocate the ability to prepare and release special reports to the public. These documents may include information pertaining to all of the advocate's investigations, including child death reviews. The special reports will play a critical role in identifying and analyzing circumstances and trends of which the public needs to be aware. The reports will also help strengthen our ability to develop the services and supports that will keep vulnerable children safe and allow them to thrive.

As many of you know, the Office the Children's Advocate conducts a review of the services that were provided to a child who died and who was receiving or whose parents or guardians were receiving child and family services in the year preceding their death. This bill grants the Children's Advocate the discretionary ability to release to the public important information gleaned from the child death reviews in order to identify concrete ways in which services may be improved to enhance the safety and well-being of children and to prevent deaths in similar circumstances.

Any time a child dies, it is a profound tragedy for society. When news of a child death emerges, it is understandable that members of the public want information about the situation. The reports from child death reviews that are conducted by the Office of the Children's Advocate contain very personal information, and releasing them to the public can compromise the well-being of persons affected by the death of the child, such as surviving siblings and parents. Sharing sensitive details about a family with the public has the potential to result in increased risk

for young Manitobans and their families. This is why, when writing and disseminating annual reports and special reports, the Children's Advocate will only be able to disclose names and identifying information of a child, parent, or guardian of a child, a care provider or a complainant if these persons consent to the disclosure. When a child has died or does not understand the nature and consequences of the disclosure, a parent or guardian may consent on behalf of the child. Furthermore, with this bill, the advocate will be able to disclose the names and identifying information of a child that information has already been made public.

With these new and amended public reporting provisions we have found the balance between protecting the privacy and well-being of those affected by the death of a child while also making sure that critical information regarding child death is shared with Manitobans at large.

I wish to emphasize that the passage of this bill is only the first step of this important legislative endeavour. One of Commissioner Hughes's recommendations is that the Children's Advocate be able to advocate for all children in the province who are receiving or eligible to receive any publicly funded service. In order to effectively broaden the advocate's mandate, further strengthen her powers, and develop legislation that will work for Manitoba, it is vital for government to have time to adequately consult with the Children's Advocate, the Manitoba Ombudsman and the Chief Medical Examiner and other provincial departments and identified stakeholders.

The government of Manitoba is committed to strengthening the powers and the independence of the Children's Advocate. Mr. Speaker, this is why we are entrenching in law the requirement to initiate consultations no later than six months after this bill comes into force. We will consult with the departments of Justice, Health and Education and other key stakeholders regarding the implementation of Commissioner Hughes remaining recommendations that relate to the Children's Advocate. You will also note that within 15 months after the act comes into the force, the minister responsible for The Child and Family Services Act will be required to table a report to the Speaker that will included a made-in-Manitoba recommendations for further amendments to the proposed act.

As the Minister of Family Services, I would like to acknowledge the critical and dedicated work

carried out by Commissioner Hughes and the current Children's Advocate, Darlene MacDonald. I'm in regular contact with both of them and am confident that we will continue to have a close, candid and collaborative working relationship.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 25 strengthens the public reporting abilities of the Children's Advocate and establishes independent, stand-alone legislation for the Manitoba Children's Advocate. With this bill we lay a very strong foundation for expanding—expanding the Children's Advocate's mandate beyond the child-welfare system, and the consultation that will take place within the six months of the passage of this proposed act we will carefully consider and report on how all recommendations made by Commissioner Hughes pertaining to the Children's Advocate may—can be implemented within the unique context of Manitoba.

Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer Howard, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to talk to this bill which deals with the Children's Advocate. It's a pretty important position. We have at this juncture around 11,000 children in care, and this is an extraordinarily large number by international standards. As Marni Brownell—Dr. Marni Brownell—said the other day when she was releasing her report on what's happening with children in care in Manitoba, she said that Manitoba has one of the highest rates in the world of children in care, and she should know because she's been involved in an international study which looked very carefully at a number of different jurisdictions.

And she found, for example, that Manitoba had approximately 10 times the number of children in care as they do in Western Australia, and Western Australia is, you know, a significant comparative because they have a fair Aboriginal population there.

And so what we need to be doing is to make major changes to child welfare in this province so that we are not taking nearly so many kids into care, that we are providing, as numerous reports have said, much better support to families and much better opportunities for children to be with their biological parents, with their biological parents much better supported.

Madam Speaker, it was 10 years ago—in fact, I believe it was June of 2005—that Phoenix Sinclair died tragically under circumstances which are essentially unbelievable. Manitobans were

flabbergasted that this sort of treatment could happen to a child in our province.

And the result of this was a large outcry from people all over Manitoba, and that outcry led after a delay of a number of years where we finally have the full inquiry. And that inquiry was conducted by Judge Ted Hughes; he carefully listened to testimony from many, many people from, who were involved in one way or another, whether they were social workers, whether they were people who had cared for Phoenix Sinclair at one point or another, like Kim Edwards, for example, and the compiled testimony of so many people, including many experts who had experience in, not directly with Phoenix Sinclair but with many other aspects of the child-welfare system.

* (16:10)

And, out of the report which Commissioner Hughes brought forward, there was some very strong recommendations about providing better support for children. One of the individuals who presented was Felix Walker, who is the executive director at the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation wellness centre—family and wellness centre. And he has, working with others in the community and with—initially, with strong support from the then-chief and council, Jerry Primrose, there were changes made to bring a whole variety of services together for the community so that it wasn't just child and family services, it was public health; it was counselling services. They brought together a variety of mental health services and put together—them together as counselling services. And they did this, interestingly, because calling it counselling services was less of a stigma than calling it mental health services. And, at the same time, it enabled them to provide a variety of counselling for people who needed it in the community without having to diagnose somebody as having a mental illness but to be able to help families effectively and well. And they included a child-care centre and early childhood education, FASD programs.

And the remarkable thing about this effort is that, instead of having to move quickly to apprehend children when there was a family in need, they were able to provide the support to the family, so the child would not have to be apprehended. I was given an example of a mother who had walked in and said, you're going to have to take my child away because I can't even afford diapers. And they said, hold it a minute; here's some diapers. And now let's sit down and talk about your needs and how we can help you

do the budgeting, how you can make sure that you have the resources to raise your child and provide that child some opportunities. And so that was a child that could have been apprehended but wasn't, and the mother was supported, and the child and the mother were able to stay together as, indeed, they should have been, and as, indeed, with some help, so many more mothers could be looking after their children and we would not have to have 11,000 children in care in this province as we have now.

There was also a big change in the way that the social workers who were part of this effort at the wellness centre were able to work. And, interestingly, I talked with Barb Moore, who is a child-welfare worker. And she said, you know, this approach just totally dramatically changed how we approach child welfare. She said, I used to go in and—with the authority and approached the family with authority and say, look, there's a problem; I'm taking your child; there's no arguments; we're—I'm in charge, and that's the way it's going to be. And now what is happening is that, instead of going in like that, there is a problem with the family, a concern that has been raised; she's able to go in and she can say, look, we've heard that there's a little concern here—sometimes a bigger concern; can—is there a way that we can work together to solve this concern, to get beyond the concern that has been raised, to provide a safe and secure environment for the child and an environment in which the child can be nurtured and supported and grow well? And so this is a totally different approach.

And, added to this, they have used the approach that on some occasions they have taken the parents out of the home instead of the child out of the home. And, for example, if parents are found to be out drinking and get drunk on a Saturday night and there—problem, the child is not being looked after properly or children are not being looked after properly, they can say, okay, we see that there is a problem. We're going to put a grandmother, we're going to put a—somebody who's a child-welfare worker, social worker in the home and the parents are going to have to find somewhere else to stay. And, indeed, what we do is to tell the parents, look, sober up. We're going to get together on Monday morning and we're going to talk about how we approach this moving forward. And sometimes the situation can be addressed in a fairly straightforward way and the parents can be back looking after the children. Sometimes the parents have to be away for

some considerable length of time while they go through counselling, training, and have the help that they need to get their lives sorted out and to be able to once again look after the children.

And so this has proved to be a very effective way in which the children don't have to be apprehended, but the parents are the ones who are actually, you know, the ones who are at the root of a problem, and they are the ones who get the message when they're no longer able to use their own home for a while.

And so this is a very different message and happens all too often because, when a child is taken away from the home and, you know, those who are familiar with our child-welfare system, very often this occurs when you have a child-welfare worker hearing of a concern and the social worker goes with a couple of policemen to apprehend the child, and a seven- or eight-year-old, seeing the policeman coming in to take him away, has a feeling, look, I must've done something terrible wrong. I've—I'm the cause of this. And it can be a tremendous stress; it can be tremendous trauma to the child. And when you change the situation around and you take the parents out instead of the child, then the child can be supported much more easily and doesn't get this message that it's the child who's the problem. But the child can realize that the parents are having some difficulties and so, hopefully, will be back and be able to be together in the not-too-distant future. And it seems to be working much better for a whole variety of reasons.

And I mention this because the effort at Nelson House with Felix Walker and his team has resulted in the community of Nelson House, where a lot of their operation is, and a lot of the children they're looking after is right in the community, the number in the community has gone from 300 children in care down to 80, and that number keeps going down. It's a dramatic, dramatic change.

But they also have responsibility for children who are outside their community. There may be children or families from Nelson House who have moved to Winnipeg or Thompson or elsewhere, and, in taking care of that responsibility when you look at what they have achieved over the whole spectrum of children that they are looking after throughout the province, in the last year alone, the number of children that they had in care decreased by 20 per cent.

Just think what that would be if you had a 20 per cent decrease across the whole province, that we would've gone down instead of from—gone—instead of from ten to close to eleven thousand, we would've gone from 10,000 to about 8,000. And that would've been a province going in the right direction because, with better support for families, they are having now a community which functions better. They are having a community which has less crime—been cut by about half over this period. And I believe that's in fair measure because of less family disruption and a much better way of approaching difficulties within families.

* (16:20)

This approach, interestingly enough, is in a sense not completely unique to Nelson House because, interestingly enough, Westman in Brandon child and family services has an approach in which they've bundled together a whole variety of services and again are able to better provide. They have a family resource centre to better provide services to families and so that they are able to work with much less apprehension and much more support to families. And so this is an approach which can work, you know, in Aboriginal communities and non-Aboriginal communities. It's not just something which could only happen at Nelson House.

And I think that the word is getting out, and I mention this in part because of some of the recommendations that Commissioner Hughes talked about—integration of services, better approaches to supporting families and children—are very important if we're going to turn the corner and get Child and Family Services and the services looking after children all in one direction.

And I also mention this because it's quite apparent that what the commissioner recommended was that the Children's Advocate be involved not just with children in Child and Family Services but that the Children's Advocate be involved with all children and supporting all children and I would hope all families. But, certainly, all children because in supporting children as the commissioner has recommended, then we can have a situation where, hopefully, there will be a lot fewer kids who need to be in care and a lot more families who are working well together and a lot less trauma to the kids who are being apprehended and taken out of their homes.

So the reason that I talk about this is that Commissioner Hughes's recommendations were that we move away from the narrow focus of children in

care for the Children's Advocate to a broader focus of all children, and this clearly was a very significant part of the message that he wanted to put forward, that we should be preventing kids from needing to be coming into care, that we should have the support to all children with the end result that we have less need to apprehend kids and take them into care, and that there are clearly a strong message from the report that was done on the death of Phoenix Sinclair coming from Commissioner Hughes, and this strong message applies to the Children's Advocate as well as other areas of the care and the support of children in our province, and that a really essential part of this strong message was you need to have an integration of services where you are helping all children and not just completely focused on the children who are apprehended or who are in care or who are receiving services in one way or another from Child and Family Services.

I would think that this approach surely could help, and it was a sensible approach that was put forward by Commissioner Hughes and yet strikingly, almost incomprehensibly, the minister, instead of including the ability of the Children's Advocate to work with and support and help all children, the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross) has restricted—continued to restrict the Children's Advocate in a way that the Children's Advocate can only help and support children who have been involved with Child and Family Services.

So, clearly, the direction that the minister is going is totally contrary to the direction the whole theme of Commissioner Hughes's report. The direction is totally contrary to what was recommended, and from the comments that we know of the Children's Advocate who has been extremely critical of this minister and her actions in bringing forward this act without providing for the broader mandate to look after all children. That the minister has, on the other side, many, many people, and she has on her side, we don't know who is supporting her efforts to continue to have a very narrow focus before the Children's Advocate. But we hope the minister will explain why she has decided to narrow the focus of the Children's Advocate, totally contrary to the recommendation of Commissioner Hughes and totally the contrary, as we understand it, to what the Children's Advocate herself felt was needed and highly desirable.

So we look forward to more explanations from the minister. We look forward to, at committee stage, to having individuals come forward and actually tell

us, you know, why you would achieve this narrow focus instead of the larger focus, and certainly be ready to listen to those comments at committee stage, but would be very, very surprised that the minister has not moved.

I think it's worth noting that the Commissioner Hughes, in putting forward this approach to the Children's Advocate, was not only listening to people in Manitoba and experts with a variety of areas, but he was also looking very carefully at legislation in other jurisdictions. And he was looking, as I understand it, for example, at British Columbia, which may be natural because that's where he's living. But that legislation in British Columbia, as my understanding, has a Children's Advocate with a broader role here, and it seems to be working very well.

We were not told by the minister of major problems in British Columbia, with the approach that they're taking. And so we don't know why she has decided to take this very, very narrow view of the role of the Children's Advocate instead of the broader view to help all children and try and keep children out of care and provide better support to children and families who need it.

I think in this discussion of families, I think that there is an issue here which has been there from time to time and continues to be. And that is that the Children's Advocate office is set up to support children but it really is not set up necessarily to support families. And so, I have had a mother who was concerned about what was happening with her child, who went to the Children's Advocate, who said, she said to the Children's Advocate, I need some help, and the Children's Advocate said, no, I can't help you with that. And I think this is an area which needs to be looked at because we need to be supporting families and mothers.

I note, and have been a couple of times in the last few months, to the Mothering Project at Mount Carmel Clinic. And this is an example of a support for mothers and families. And they are often dealing with mothers, in this Mothering Project, who have chaotic lives. A high proportion of them have problems with substance abuse, whether it's alcohol or drugs. A high proportion of them have not very stable living arrangements. And yet, they are able to support these mothers in a way that they are able to learn during the pregnancy of what really mothering is, how you love a child, as well as how you provide the food, the breastfeeding, what have you, for a

child. And they also support the mother and the child after the child is born.

* (16:30)

And they are not under Child and Family Services or CFS. They don't have CFS workers there. They are separate, but they have got the respect of the Child and Family Services, the social workers, and because they have been so good at helping mothers. And the very positive thing is that almost all of these children, a number of years ago, would probably have had their children taken away at birth, but now they are able to support these mothers in a way that approximately half of them are able to take their children home and look after them and do well. And I think that that is a very positive, another example, but it's also another reason why, because many of these mothers may not be involved with Child and Family Services at all, but they're involved with the Mothering Project and being supported with kindness and in other ways, that if the Children's Advocate could be able to provide support in these circumstances, where needed, that this could be a very positive outcome of the broader mandate of the Children's Advocate, as was proposed by Commissioner Hughes and has been supported even by our own Children's Advocate and has been working well in other jurisdictions.

So, Madam Speaker, I have, you know, talked about the issues. I have believed that, you know, there are some positive aspects of this bill, you know, providing a stand-alone bill for Children's Advocate, but the biggest substantive thing that could not have been done—that could have been done, as unfortunately has not been done, to put all the children under the purview of the ability of the Children's Advocate to help all children.

And I think that this was and could be a very positive step, but it wasn't taken. Instead, unfortunately, what's going to happen is that we're going to have the children of this province, many of them, having to wait to be able to be helped by the Children's Advocate because there's going to be now a fairly lengthy consultation process, I understand, of 15 months and maybe some more, initially, even before we get to the 15 months. But it's a long time, and particularly when you consider that Phoenix Sinclair passed away 10 years ago, that we really should have been moving much more quickly on this whole file, making a difference for children. We shouldn't have to wait and delay and delay and make

children wait some more, as we are doing under this proposed legislation.

I hope that, as we get to committee stage and we have presenters there, that the minister may be ready to look at amendments and to consider amendments which would change this and restore what was originally suggested by Commissioner Hughes.

So we can remain optimistic that maybe the minister can undertake some fairly urgent consultations and discussions with people who've been opposed to this and persuade them that it would be a good idea to put all of children under the Children's Advocate. Really, what that means is that the Children's Advocate can help anybody. It doesn't mean that the Children's Advocate has any authority, right, over children. It just means that there is a possibility that they can be helped by the Children's Advocate, and the Children's Advocate can do reports and report on the well-being of all children, not just on those who are in Child and Family Services.

And, indeed, it becomes very important for the Children's Advocate to be able to make some of those comparisons because we saw from Dr. Brownell's presentation very recently that the ability to compare how children are doing, who are being looked after through the child and family services system, with other children in the province, is actually very important if you're going to get valuable information. And the fact is, that Dr. Brownell was able to help us understand, you know, how poorly many children in Child and Family Services' care have been doing, that they're not, many of them, more than half of them, are not ready for school at the appropriate time, that two thirds are not graduating from high school.

These are pretty telling statistics, and they come about because the—Dr. Brownell was able to do the research and make these comparisons. And, certainly, I think it would be an advantage for the Children's Advocate to be able to work and to talk to and to, you know, look at how children in care are doing compared with other children and to do this in an appropriate way and under appropriate legislation. I think there is much more that could be done here. Hopefully, the minister will take another look as this goes to committee and we get people coming forward to present and to talk about what's in this bill and what should be in this bill. So Mr.—Madam Speaker, I conclude my comments. I look forward to committee stage, and I hope that we have some

valuable presentations and that the minister may be ready to look at making some changes as this bill moves forward.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 17—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): I move, seconded by the minister of child and youth opportunities, that Bill 17, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), seconded by the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Ms. Wight), that Bill 17, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Mackintosh: The caregiver weekly indemnity will recognize those people who stay at home and look after their children. When families lose an unpaid, stay-at-home caregiver in an automobile accident, they not only suffer a huge emotional loss, they also face the prospect of having to shoulder the costs of looking after dependent family members at home. This new legislation would enhance weekly benefits of up to \$572 paid by Manitoba's public auto insurer. The legislative change would enhance existing coverage, fully recognizing the value of work done by the caregiver and compensate the family for the economic loss.

Typical examples of these caregivers include stay-at-home parents; a parent caring for an adult child with a severe lifelong mental or physical condition; a disabled adult child or spouse caring for their at-home partner with severe dementia, those

caring for an infirm spouse, for example; a husband caring for a wife with severe dementia at home is another example. If he is killed in a motor vehicle accident, MPI would pay for her support. Another example—a mother who stays at home to care for an adult child with a severe lifelong condition—mental, physical or both—for example, autism, cerebral palsy. If she passes away, MPI can pay for someone to look after the adult child.

Claims for caregiver weekly benefits will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account individual circumstances including the number of dependants. It would extend the same benefits for caregiver weekly benefits that are already available to families when an unpaid caregiver survives an accident. Weekly caregiver benefits would range from \$436 for one dependant to \$572 for four dependants. The maximum amount would be \$572 a week. Eligible survivors of fatally injured victims, then, would be entitled to \$29,744 annually based on current compensation levels.

This new legislation would allow families to continue looking after a dependant child or adult at home. This enhanced benefits demonstrates the strength of our public auto insurance program and how it continues to assist Manitobans affected by a fatal auto crash.

This idea was proposed by a member of the public coming to standing committee last year, Mr. John McDonald. Mr. McDonald is an insurance broker and understands many of the complexities of our insurance scheme, and he has to be commended. And, indeed, I think any time the public comes to our committee hearings or suggests anything to any member of this House at any time, anywhere, I think that's gold and always should be taken seriously. This was acted on, then, by one of my predecessors and the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), and I also want to commend him for listening and for taking the advice of Mr. McDonald. And so I think that this is a celebration of both the public and my predecessor.

Thank you.

* (16:40)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, just a few words on this legislation.

Let me start by talking a little bit about the importance of caregivers, and in this case we're talking about caregivers who are working without

remuneration. This is, you know, tremendously important, whether we're talking about children or dependant older adults, that people who are caregivers are—play a very vital role in our society and are to be acknowledged and supported.

You know, as a physician who has worked looking after children with blood problems and cancer, I have seen personally the devotion, the importance of individuals who have worked as caregivers and the incredible job and support that they have provided and how necessary it is, and how necessary it is not just to recognize and to support caregivers in a traditional way but to support caregivers, in particular, when there is a stress.

And there's no doubt that being in a motor vehicle accident, being injured, being hurt is a very significant additional stress for somebody who is a caregiver, and all of a sudden they have to think not only of their own healing, but they have to think what's happening to the person—the child or the adult who they're looking after.

And so being able to help and recognize the important role that caregivers play in this way, I think, is quite substantial, important, and I think that we should pay some credit and thank Mr. McDonald for his efforts in putting forward.

Madam Speaker, here in—a few months ago, I happened to be in New Zealand, and I met with a woman whose husband had been injured in a motor vehicle accident. And the interesting story that she told me has several aspects, but I think it's worth repeating here.

First of all, there were a whole variety of services that were available, but they weren't co-ordinated at that point in New Zealand, and so she had to put in an incredible effort in order to locate, find, use the services that were possible. She did that, and, in doing that, she learned two things: one, that it was possible; two, not only help the person who was injured in the motor vehicle accident, but it was also possible to do this in a way that she as the caregiver was able to have a life of her own, so that it empowered her husband to be able to be more and more responsible for his own care, but it also meant that, while she continued to be—have an extraordinarily important and major role in looking after him as he recovered—but he was still very disabled—but it enabled her to start her own business actually helping others in—where families had to—had a member who was injured in a motor vehicle accident.

And the interesting point that she raised with me that I had never appreciated before this: She told me that in New Zealand where one partner out of two is severely injured—becomes quadriplegic, paraplegic, you know, after an accident, needs prolonged care, hospitalization or other.

It's something like 98 per cent of those families break up, that it's an extraordinary high proportion of breakup of the two partners. And I believe that one of the major reasons is actually the stress on the caregiver, that the caregiver has to almost completely devote his or her life to looking after the partner. And, at some point, this becomes, you know, so much of a burden that it becomes so much of a stress, that there is a breakup. And that where you can support the person who is the caregiver—the caregiver may be an earner supported, or it may be, like in this circumstance, where you've got the caregiver who is doing this without remuneration, beforehand and continues to. But it highlighted for me how important it was to be thinking about how we support families, so families can stay together and support one another. And, in order to do this, you have to have the situation where not only is the person who is injured supported, but you have to have a situation where the partner can not only be supportive but also is enabled to have a life of their own as well.

And I think that this was an important experience for me in terms of learning about what was happening and being done in New Zealand, and stressed to me the importance of paying a lot of attention to people who are caregivers in our society. I have seen the importance of caregivers under so many different circumstances, that I didn't necessarily need to have this message put as strongly as that, but it has re-emphasized and refocused that message.

And so I am certainly in support of this measure to support caregivers. I thank the minister for bringing this forward. I look forward to it going to committee stage and moving on in our legislative process.

And I hope we will have a number of people who are ready to come forward at committee and talk to us about their experiences and also enable us to make sure that we've got it right in the way this bill is worded, and that it is effective, and that others can see why this is as important as it is.

So thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further speakers, are we ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please—the motion to move second reading of this bill and it be moved to committee, please say aye.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the MLA for Portage la Prairie, that we adjourn debate.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 34—The Safer Roads Act (Drivers and Vehicles Act and Highway Traffic Act Amended)

Madam Deputy Speaker: Calling Bill 34, The Safer Roads Act (Drivers and Vehicles Act and Highway Traffic Act Amended).

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors (Ms. Crothers), that Bill 34, The Safer Roads Act (Drivers and Vehicles Act and Highway Traffic Act Amended); Loi sur la sécurité accrue des routes (modification de la Loi sur les conducteurs et les véhicules et du Code de la route), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (16:50)

Mr. Mackintosh: Under this legislation, high-risk drivers would face different consequences for their actions. With amendments to The Highway Traffic Act and The Drivers and Vehicles Act, the introduction of The Safer Roads Act sends a strong message that dangerous and illegal driving behaviours such as driving while impaired by drugs or alcohol, or committing other serious driving-related offences that put others at risk are not acceptable and will not be tolerated. While impaired driving collisions have declined significantly over the last decade in Manitoba, the sad reality is that an average of 29 Manitobans still lose their lives annually as a result of impaired driving, and many more, of course, sustain injury. This tells us we must remain vigilant in our fight against impaired driving and those who choose to put themselves and others at risk when their ability to drive has been impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We are proposing the following amendments to The Highway Traffic Act: Increased immediate roadside driver's licence suspension for first time, low blood-alcohol concentration—that's 0.05 to 0.08, and drug-impaired offenders to three days from the current 24 hours. The first time suspension would be further increased to seven days if a person under the age of 16 is in the vehicle at the time of the offence. This recognizes not only the importance and responsibility of keeping children safe but reinforces societal views against impaired drivers.

A child in the vehicle of an impaired driver is an endangered child; it's a captured child and, in fact, in the United States, it's been discovered that 20 per cent of children killed in crashes is due to impaired drivers. It's also been discovered that when there is a child in the vehicle of an impaired driver, there's a greater likelihood that no restraints are used for the child's protection either. This is a unique approach in Canada and perhaps beyond.

The second change to The Highway Traffic Act is about participation in Manitoba's Ignition Interlock Program. It will become mandatory for all convicted impaired drivers and would take effect on driver licence reinstatement, thereby eliminating the option for impaired drivers to avoid this requirement by delaying licensing once a mandatory period of suspension has been served. This recognizes the importance of ensuring convicted impaired drivers undergo this critical behavioural modification. Financing to assist drivers with this requirement is now available through Manitoba Public Insurance.

Amendments to The Drivers and Vehicles Act would also require law enforcement officers to notify the registrar of motor vehicles whenever a driver has been charged with a serious driving-related offence, so the registrar could quickly invoke driver-improvement actions such as suspending a driver's licence. This will assist in mandating behaviour modification or other stronger actions for those who need it. This will get high-risk drivers off the road sooner. This will allow MPI to look at these drivers and put in place suspensions or other driver behaviour actions.

The bill is intended to make our roads safer, send a strong message to those high-risk drivers that their actions will not be tolerated, and they will be held accountable. We're hearing, I think, increasingly, from Manitobans a plea to those who drive impaired or stoned or drive while on the phone or while texting: stop killing us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just a few words on this bill. It is, as I see it, one in a steady, increasing approach to being more and more restrictive in terms of individuals who are driving after having consumed too much alcohol.

This, clearly, is—remains important as, even today, we still have too many injuries, too many crashes, too many people being killed as a result of driving impaired.

And so, as I would see this legislation, it is part of what's, in essence, a natural evolution in which there is increasingly restrictive, increasingly forceful approaches to modifying driver behaviour to make our roads safer.

I certainly look forward to discussion on points that are raised at the committee stage, both—whichever side they may be in terms of, you know, is it strong enough, is it too strong, but I think it is certainly a direction which is reasonable and appropriate from what I can see at this juncture. And, hopefully, it will help us to steadily decrease the number of vehicle accidents, crashes, injuries, deaths which are related to driving when people have had too much alcohol.

I—one of the questions that clearly has to be asked in relationship to this, and the minister may be able to clarify this, not only is there concern about the consumption of alcohol-containing beverages, but there is also increasing concern about the use of drugs and people driving after having taken mood-altering drugs which affect arousal or the capacity of an individual to drive.

And I know that there has been, as I said, increasing attention and interest in this area, and the minister may be able to explain at some point whether he would to take a similar approach in relationship to those individuals who have been consuming mood-altering drugs and under the same circumstances, in under what circumstances, and whether the changes that would apply in those circumstances would apply similarly here. But, that being said, is an area that warrants a closer look.

Nevertheless, what is being done here, which is to address alcohol as a significant issue when individuals are driving and continues to be, is certainly an effort which is warranted and an area which we need to be continually vigilant on and looking at how we can best improve the current situation, how we can best influence the behaviour of

people who have been found to be drinking in the past and want to be able to drive again. The ability to use and to mandate the use of the Ignition Interlock Program, even if an individual waits out the ordinary period, I think, is instructive in the approach that is being taken in terms of behaviour modification over the long term of drivers. I think we need to learn more about the effectiveness of this approach, where it has been applied elsewhere and whether it has been shown to be effective because in what we do we should make sure that we are following and monitoring what's happening.

The bill could well have included some clauses which related to what the follow-up would be to make sure whether these measures are effective or not, whether, in fact, we are changing behaviour or whether we are seeing fewer people who have been found to be drinking impaired and correct their ways or don't correct their ways. And, certainly, Mr. Speaker, it is something when you're moving forward and doing things which are innovative we need to be monitoring those and make sure that they are really effective.

And, Mr. Speaker, those would be my comments on that bill. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I move, seconded by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Just to advise the House, prior to calling for the adjournment, though, I have been advised that the House will be reconvening under the emergency recall provisions at 1:30 p.m. on the afternoon of Tuesday, June the 16th, 2015.

I just wanted to advise honourable members of that, and there will be a letter that will be sent to honourable members tomorrow to advise them in writing.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Tuesday, June 16th at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 11, 2015

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills			
Bill 39—The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act (Enhancing Local Transparency and Accountability)		Manitoba Public Insurance, Annual Financial Statements For The Fiscal Year Ended February 28, 2015 Mackintosh	1852
Caldwell	1847	The Provincial Court of Manitoba, Annual Report, 2012-2013 Mackintosh	1852
Bill 214—The School Bus Driver Day Act		Crown Corporations Council, 2014 Annual Report	
Ewasko	1847	Dewar	1852
Bill 40—The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act		Manitoba Adult Literacy Strategy and Adult Learning Centres in Manitoba, Annual Reports, 2013-2014	
Irvin-Ross	1847	F. Marcelino	1852
Bill 41—The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2015		Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund, 2014 Annual Report	
Mackintosh	1847	Allum	1852
Petitions		Oral Questions	
Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety		Children's Advocate Act	
Schuler	1848	Wishart; Irvin-Ross	1852
Province-Wide Long-Term Care—Review Need and Increase Spaces		Mitchelson; Irvin-Ross	1853
Graydon	1848	Winnipeg ER Services	
Proposed Lac du Bonnet Marina—Request for Research into Benefits and Costs		Driedger; Blady	1854
Ewasko	1849	Gerrard; Selinger	1858
Committee Reports		NDP Political Staff	
Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, Third Report		Pallister; Selinger	1855
Allan	1849	NDP Leadership Campaign	
Tabling of Reports		Pallister; Selinger	1855, 1856
Manitoba Public Insurance, 2014 Annual Report		NDP Caucus	
Mackintosh	1852	Pallister; Selinger	1856
		Social Impact Bonds	
		Pallister; Selinger	1857
		Economic Growth Rate	
		Pallister; Selinger	1857
		ER Services and Costs	
		Pallister; Selinger	1857
		Tax Increases	
		Pallister; Selinger	1858

Children's Advocacy
Gerrard; Selinger 1859

Marriage Licence Registration
Gerrard; Selinger 1859

NewLeaf Airline
Gaudreau; Chief 1859

Elder Abuse Reporting
Graydon; Crothers 1860

Zebra Mussel Infestation
Martin; Nevakshonoff 1860

Tax Freedom Day
Friesen; Dewar 1861

Speaker's Ruling

Reid 1862

Members' Statements

Coptic Christian Martyrs
Schuler 1863

Global Awareness Group
Saran 1863

Tax Freedom Day
Friesen 1864

Abigail Calcutt
Crothers 1864

Highbury Day Care Centre
Oswald 1865

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Second Readings

Bill 12—The Water Protection Amendment
Act (Aquatic Invasive Species)

Nevakshonoff 1869

Gerrard 1870

Bill 24—The Wildlife Amendment and
Fisheries Amendment Act

Nevakshonoff 1873

Gerrard 1873

Bill 22—The Red River College Act

Allum 1875

Gerrard 1876

Bill 25—The Children's Advocate Act

Irvin-Ross 1878

Gerrard 1880

Bill 17—The Manitoba Public Insurance
Corporation Amendment Act

Mackintosh 1884

Gerrard 1885

Bill 34—The Safer Roads Act (Drivers and
Vehicles Act and Highway Traffic Act
Amended)

Mackintosh 1886

Gerrard 1887

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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