

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 15, 2006

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 212—The Historic Trans-Canada Highway Act

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 212, The Historic Trans-Canada Highway Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, this bill designates Provincial Trunk Highway No. 44 as the historic Trans-Canada Highway to commemorate its historical significance to Manitobans.

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

PETITIONS

Levy on Cattle

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government intends to create a provincial check-off fee for cattle sold in Manitoba. This decision was made without consultation with Manitoba's cattle producers and representatives from agricultural groups.

This \$2-a-head increase will affect the entire cattle industry in Manitoba, which is already struggling to recover from the BSE crisis and other hardships. It would encourage fair and equitable practices if cattle producers in Manitoba had the opportunity to share in the decision-making process.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) to consider holding consultations with Manitoba's cattle producers and

representatives from agricultural groups before this levy is put in place.

Submitted on behalf of Lynne Boulton, M. Quane, Ron Banker and many, many others.

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government intends to create a provincial check-off fee for cattle sold in Manitoba. This decision was made without consultation with Manitoba's cattle producers and representatives from agricultural groups.

This \$2-a-head increase will affect the entire cattle industry in Manitoba, which is already struggling to recover from the BSE crisis and other hardships. It would encourage fair and equitable practices if cattle producers in Manitoba had the opportunity to share in the decision-making process.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) to consider holding consultations with Manitoba's cattle producers and representatives from agricultural groups before this levy is put in place.

Signed by Aaron Smith, Doug Campion, Clair Deacon and many, many others.

* (13:35)

Funding for New Cancer Drugs

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death of Manitobans.

Families are often forced to watch their loved ones suffer the devastating consequences of this disease for long periods of time.

New drugs such as Erbitux, Avastin, Zevalin, Rituxan, Herceptin and Eloxatin have been found to work well and offer new hope to those suffering from various forms of cancer.

Unfortunately, these innovative new treatments are often costly and remain unfunded under Manitoba's provincial health care system.

Consequently, patients and their families are often forced to make the difficult choice between paying for the treatment themselves or going without.

CancerCare Manitoba has asked for an additional \$12 million for its budget to help provide these leading-edge treatments and drugs for Manitobans.

Several other provinces have already approved these drugs and are providing them to their residents at present time.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba and the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) to consider providing CancerCare Manitoba with the appropriate funding necessary so they may provide leading-edge care for patients in the same manner as other provinces.

To request the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Health to consider accelerating the process by which new cancer treatment drugs are approved so that more Manitobans are able to be treated in the most effective manner possible.

This petition is signed by Jennefer Siwik, Heather Ferguson, Kerri McKinnon and many, many others.

Child Welfare Services

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and these are the reasons for this petition:

The Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) have the responsibility to provide safety, care and protection to children in care in Manitoba.

Thirty-one children have died since 2001 while in care of the Province or shortly after being released

from care. Last year nine children died, the highest number recorded.

Little Phoenix Sinclair died in June of 2005, but her death went unnoticed for nine months even though she had extensive involvement with Child and Family Services beginning at birth.

Manitobans want to know how the system could fail little Phoenix Sinclair and the other 31 children.

Manitobans want assurances that no other children will fall through the cracks of the child welfare system.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider calling a public inquiry into all aspects of the delivery of child welfare services throughout Manitoba.

This is signed by Randy Palsan, Robert Reidy, Richard Dagg and many others.

OlyWest Hog Processing Plant

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba government, along with the OlyWest consortium, promoted the development of a mega hog factory within the city of Winnipeg without proper consideration of rural alternatives for the site.

Concerns arising from the hog factory include noxious odours, traffic and road impact, water supply, waste water treatment, decline in property values, cost to taxpayers and proximity to the city's clean drinking water aqueduct.

Many Manitobans believe this decision represents poor judgment on behalf of the provincial government.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to immediately cancel its plans to support the construction of the OlyWest hog plant and rendering factory near any urban residential area.

Signed by Cassie Valmested, Noella Sparvier, Michelle Manion and many, many others.

* (13:40)

Crocus Investment Fund

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba government was made aware of serious problems involving the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

Manitoba's provincial auditor stated "We believe the department was aware of red flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way."

As a direct result of the government not acting on what it knew, over 33,000 Crocus investors have lost tens of millions of dollars.

The relationship between some union leaders, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP seems to be the primary reason as for why the government ignored the red flags.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider the need to seek clarification on why the government did not act on fixing the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

To urge the Premier and his government to co-operate in making public what really happened.

Signed by R. Stokes, G. Green, M. Lewis and many, many other Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2006-2007 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Manitoba Advanced Education and Training.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today His Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa, past President of Tanzania, and also Her Excellency Anna Mkapa and His Excellency Ombeni Sefue, Tanzania High Commissioner to Canada.

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

Also in the visitor's gallery we have Valeria Curb sheet from England.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ainsworth Lumber Status of Deal

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers). We are pleased to hear that a deal is at hand with Ainsworth. I am just wondering if the minister could update the House on the status of these negotiations and advise as to when he expects the deal to be completed.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the company issued a release, I believe, on Wednesday evening confirming out of a bid process its intent to invest capital. The process has included First Nations and it continues to include First Nations.

I would point out to members in the Chamber and to the public that the last time members opposite predicted that an investment would not go forward was the Simplot potato processing plant in Portage la Prairie. So we know there is still work to do with the First Nations people, but we are pleased that the capital intentions of the company have been declared. Just like with the potato plant, we are very optimistic about the future of this operation.

Mr. McFadyen: We are very optimistic about this deal, and we will certainly welcome that investment when it comes, given though that the minister in his answers to questions on Thursday and as he is quoted in Friday's *Free Press*, says that it is still early in the process. There is no time frame in place; no location selected; no commitment for the company and the number of jobs to be created; no final fourth management licence; no official consultations with First Nations. A *Canadian Press* story quoting the executive vice-president of the company saying, there will not be another Ainsworth Greenfield project any time soon.

Given those comments and given the fact that the Premier said in Thursday's *Free Press* that a deal was very close and that it was a done deal, who got it wrong? The minister, the company or the Premier?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raised some issues about consultations with First Nations. That has been going on for a number of months in a very positive way. The issue of location has been

discussed with the government and the company itself will make its final determination on location.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would be aware that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) deals with wood allocations which have been arrived at, but his department also deals with the licensing of the operation, so he would want to be very careful, as the member opposite would, because all of these plants cannot proceed with capital investments until the environmental licence is granted. We balance economic development with environmental stewardship. The company knows that, the First Nations know that and he should know that.

* (13:45)

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, just to be clear then, the Premier has said that consultations have been ongoing with First Nations. His minister indicated that First Nations have yet to be officially consulted. Is he calling his minister a liar?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the consultations have been going very well. In fact, we have heard from the First Nations. I would want the member opposite to be very careful about throwing around words.

On Monday of last week, only a week ago, the member opposite stated that there was only one individual reporting to the Premier. When I corrected him in the House, in Hansard three days later, he then said that the government did not correct it in the House. He was wrong. He is wrong in Hansard, he is wrong in fact, and he is wrong in fact over and over again.

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

Mr. McFadyen: Given that it appears the deal with Ainsworth is nowhere near completion and contrary to the Premier's comments in the *Free Press* that the deal is very close, I wonder if the Premier could indicate to the House, given that he has fundamentally compromised the bargaining position of the provincial government in its discussions with Ainsworth, how much money provincial taxpayers are going to have to fork out because of the panic-induced leap that his office provided to the *Free Press* last week.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, you know the member opposite, the negative nabob that is in the Chamber today, would want to know that the release was made by the company, and we go through negative

comments from members opposite all the time. I remember the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) being very, very negative about the bridging agreement we had with Motor Coach and predicting the sky would fall. Well, there are over 500 more people working at Motor Coach after the negative Conservatives.

I remember in 2001, the former member from Lakeside said the Simplot potato plant would never ever locate in Portage la Prairie, locate in Manitoba, that it would stay in Idaho. It would go to Alberta. It would go to Saskatchewan. The negative nabobs have been wrong over and over and over again, and this member will be wrong on this plant.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we very much hope this project goes ahead, just to be clear. I wish our optimism was shared by the company, Ainsworth. Let me just quote from comments made by the executive vice-president of Ainsworth: There is a lot of work yet to be done on these projects. Probably the only one that could even be acted on in the short term, right at this moment, is in New York. Ainsworth said: The way to look at this is that of a long-term inventory of projects. I do not think anyone needs to worry about something popping out of the soup here and getting us started on another Greenfield project any time soon.

So, given that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) has indicated that we are a long way off from a deal, given the number of unresolved issues and given that spokespersons for the company themselves are indicating that nothing is going to happen any time soon, I wonder if the Premier can just indicate who we are supposed to believe. The sultan of spin or these two very credible sources?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the companies work in long-term planning which includes capital investments. The release made from the company Wednesday night was not a government release. It was a release from the company. So the member opposite continues his questioning based on a false premise. His false premise is that the government itself released the information. It is the company that released the information. The member opposite should get it right.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier has indicated that they are on a long-term time horizon for planning with respect to this project, which just appears to differ from his quote in Thursday's *Free Press* where he says that it is a very, very significant investment in the eastern region of the province. Said Premier Gary

Doer, it will create hundreds of jobs and be very good for our economy. Then he says the details to the agreement are very close.

Given that his comments on Thursday were that the details were very close, and given that his comments today are that we are on a long-term horizon with a great deal of uncertainty, I wonder whether the Premier wants to retract his comments from Thursday's *Free Press*.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When making reference to other members in the House, it is by constituencies or ministers by their portfolios, not by name even when quoting from a newspaper or a letter.

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the release came out from the company based on discussions we have had. The release also includes consultations that have taken place with First Nations. It needs to get the obvious capital commitment out into the marketplace and that is why the company put their release out.

We are very optimistic about the company. I think they predicated Diageo would close down because of the discussions that took place. When I said we were close to an agreement with the railway on maintaining Diageo in Gimli, the sky was falling; the Simplot potato plant, the sky was falling; Motor Coach, the sky was falling; Flyer, the sky was falling.

Mr. Speaker, we are optimistic these projects are negotiated, they are concluded and they proceed in a very positive way for Manitoba. That is why in the 1990s, when he was working for the former government, we were losing young people. We are gaining young people today and that is the difference between them and us.

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

Mr. McFadyen: On a new question, Mr. Speaker. Because the Premier did not answer the first time it was asked, given that his office has leaked the fact that there is going to be a deal and we hope that there is, but given that they are in the midst of negotiations with this company, I wonder if the Premier can indicate how the terms of the deal have changed from prior to his leak on Thursday to today.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I will get a copy of the news release issued by the company. A news release issued by a company is not a leak from the government. Are we happy about it? Yes. Is the

member opposite disappointed in it? Yes. Is the release made by the government? No, it is made by the company.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Premier can indicate if the deal is very close. What is the timetable for closing the deal and when can we expect an announcement of the final details?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we were positive about a release issued from the company on Wednesday night. Is that not horrible that a company issues a release indicating \$250 million of investment. Oh, I guess we should be negative about it. Yes, there are consultations going on with First Nations. Those started months ago, and I understand the First Nations are very, very involved in the discussions which is positive.

If the member opposite would read Supreme Court decisions that is a condition precedent of allocation resources, so we have done that before the company issued their release. The company itself indicates the investment of \$250 million, and I think that is very positive news for Manitobans. Is there more work to do? Yes, but we feel very positive about that. I am just shocked the member opposite would be so negative.

Crocus Investment Fund Class-Action Lawsuit

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Mr. Premier, we very much hope that this investment goes ahead. I hope the taxpayers are not taken to the cleaner in light of the Premier's leak that he is committed to the project before the details are finalized.

Mr. Speaker, on the topic of financial mismanagement my question to the Premier is: Now that he has had a week to look into the details of the \$200-million lawsuit filed against the Crown, which contains serious allegations regarding three current government staff, and given that, according to the Premier, he is involved in all financial decisions and his answers to the questions on the Ainsworth deal today, I think, further supports that, what steps has he taken to determine which of the allegations are true and which are not?

* (13:55)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, I understand that he has read the Auditor General's report. If he has also read the lawsuit, I would expect him to know that his friends

in Wellington West are also in the lawsuit. He throws around, without any accountability—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Members might not like questions, might not like the answers, but all members in the House have a right to hear the questions and the answers.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is quoted as saying: I do not think the problems of Crocus have anything to do with the legislation. So that either says to me that he did not read the Auditor General's report or he does not understand it. The Auditor General stated that the conflicting roles in the legislation; the fact the Crocus act put in place by the Tories gave the board two objectives; one, the rate of return for shareholders and a second objective to pursue a social mandate. Now that bill was brought in by the Tories, the same people that he has on his advisory committee.

So the question I would ask the member opposite: Has he asked Eric Stefanson, Don Orchard and Jim Downey why they brought in that conflicting legislation in 1996?

Whistle-Blower Legislation Protection for Government Employees

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): What we need from this Minister of Finance is whistle-blower legislation that will protect employees from this NDP government. The minister's whistle-blower legislation only protects employees who go public with their concerns if there is imminent threat to public safety or to the environment. It does not protect employees who go public with accusations of government corruption.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why will he not protect employees who bring forward accusations of corruption within his government? What is he afraid of?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, what is unique about this legislation is an employee now, instead of having to go through the chain of command, has direct access to the Ombudsman on any complaint of gross misconduct or financial wrongdoing. In addition, if they think there are any reprisals against them from going to the Ombudsman with their concerns they have full access to the Labour Board.

We have also provided in this bill due process or the rules of natural justice so that if an accusation is

made against somebody, that person has the right to reply to that and to put their perspective on the record before a decision is made. We do not just allow open-ended free shots against anybody that could do irreparable damage to their reputation.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing new in this legislation. They always could go to the Ombudsman. They always could go to the Labour Board.

We need whistle-blower legislation that will protect employees who report government waste and mismanagement. What we got is legislation with loopholes that protects this NDP government. What we got is legislation that allows this NDP government to fire employees who go public with allegations of waste and mismanagement, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why did he introduce legislation that offers more protection for his ministers than protection for whistle-blowers?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member is just factually wrong. Without this bill, a civic servant does not have direct access to the Ombudsman. They would have had to report it to their supervisors in the first instance. This bill allows them to go directly to the whistle-blower without having to go to their supervisors.

Secondly, under The Civil Service Act, civil servants did not necessarily have access to the Labour Board on a complaint of reprisal. It was extremely unclear whether the Labour Board had any jurisdiction in that regard. This bill gives them absolute direct access to the Labour Board on an issue of reprisal and direct access to the Ombudsman. That has not been done before anywhere in this province in its history. The member is just simply wrong on the facts.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the employees always had access, and the minister knows that. This NDP government is fostering a "don't know, don't ask" culture in government and the whistle-blower legislation supports this culture. This government will do anything to hide from its mismanagement and its wasteful spending, including introducing legislation that will not protect employees who go public about this NDP government's corruption.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: What is he hiding from?

* (14:00)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I know the member has to follow a script even when it has been pointed out to him he is just dead wrong on the facts.

Never before in the history has an employee had the ability to go directly to the Ombudsman with full protection if any reprisal occurs by having direct access to the Labour Board. That is unprecedented. It is also unprecedented to cover the wider entities of Crown corporations and the broader entities within the public service.

The ability to go public on an imminent threat or risk to the public exists and can only be directed by a Chief Medical Officer or the appropriate law enforcement officer if they think the public disclosure will, in fact, impair the public interest. For example, if a law enforcement officer or a public health officer under The Public Health Act was going to apprehend an infectious person they may want to do that before the public disclosure was made.

Health Care System Physician Retention Strategy

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. According to information in Physician Resource Statistics document put out by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Manitoba loses approximately 150 doctors every year. This revolving-door approach to doctor recruitment is causing instability in the health care system in our province.

I want to ask the minister whether he can share with the House and with Manitoba the reasons that he can cite for this vast number of doctors leaving our province every year.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the reasons are, in fact, much the same as the reasons that draw more than that number to Manitoba every year. They range from excellent research opportunities through the research support that we have given to our universities and our medical colleges, centres like the St. Boniface cardiac Research Centre, which has allowed us to draw together a world-class team of cardiac researchers. It is things, for example, in cellular research that has allowed Dr. Sabine Mai to be a world-recognized leader in cellular research and genomics and proteomics.

Exactly the same issues draw good professional people to any jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker. We get more than we lose. That is what is different today. Under the Tories we lost more than we got. Since we

formed government, we have been getting more than we lose.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, statistics speak for themselves and since 2000, Manitoba has lost over 900 doctors. Since 2000, over 900 doctors have left Manitoba. Half of our graduating class leaves the province. These are doctors who have been paid for by the taxpayer of this province.

I want to ask the Minister of Health why he has failed to develop a retention strategy for our province which will keep these graduates and doctors within the province of Manitoba so that Manitobans can receive the services they need.

Mr. Sale: The selective use of numbers is quite astounding. We lose businesspeople every year but we gain more because our businesses are expanding, Mr. Speaker. People in Canada have the right to move where they or their families believe there is a better opportunity. Many of them choose to come to Manitoba and that is why—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers, please.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, that is why, as I said in my first answer to this question, we have gained more than we have lost every year since we formed government. Every year during the nineties, more doctors emigrated from Manitoba than immigrated to Manitoba.

That is the difference and it is because we are investing in research, we are investing in good equipment, we are investing in new facilities like the St. Boniface cardiac centralization, like Concordia's specialization, like the expansion of the medical college, like the tremendous awards doctors like Dr. Jeff Hickes have received for their work on the knock-out mouse gene and the worldwide efforts—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: What the Minister of Health is not telling us is the fact that in the nineties, no hospitals and no emergency wards in rural Manitoba closed. Today we have a litany of emergency wards and hospitals already closed, Mr. Speaker, and 900 doctors have left Manitoba.

I want to ask the Minister of Health—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, this government has created an atmosphere in Manitoba where patients are now treated in ambulances instead of emergency wards where they should be treated. A part of this is because of the 900 doctors that have left Manitoba since 2001.

I want to ask the minister why he has failed to put a retention policy in place in Manitoba so we can retain doctors who are needed so badly in many of our hospitals across the province.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that I remember being at rallies to protest the closing of Misericordia hospital, Manitoba's third-largest hospital, as an acute care hospital under the previous government. Under their time in government, as has been said in answer to many similar questions, they lost 117 net doctors. Professionals move around in countries. We attract excellent ones from the United States, like the head of our neurology program. Under our government, we have about 220 more doctors practising in this province today than we did when they were in power. That is the story; more now, less then; better.

Health Care System Physician Retention Strategy

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Imagine how many more doctors we would have if the 900 had not left in the last six years—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, in 1995, 54 percent of doctors practising in Manitoba were Manitoba grads. Today, 10 years later, it is worse. Only 51 percent of doctors practising in Manitoba are Manitoba grads. So we train them, we graduate them and they flee this province.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health tell us: Why are our Manitoba grads fleeing this province under this government?

Mr. Sale: Well, Mr. Speaker, I hardly know what to make of that question because might it just be possible that there are fewer doctors practising in Manitoba who were trained here because they cut enrolment in the medical school from 85 to 70. I mean, might that be one of the contributing factors?

You know, from 1990 to 2006, there were opportunities to have 30 more students per year if they had not cut the enrolment. Even if they had left it at 85, 15 years times 15 students, 225 doctors more would have been trained here. So the member's question makes the very point that we have been making. When you cut enrolment in the medical school you get fewer doctors trained in Manitoba. Hello?

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, under this government 900 doctors have left Manitoba. We have a revolving door. The minister can talk about adding more seats to the training program and that is wonderful. Yet, train 100 medical students and 50 leave.

So tell us: Why are half of the medical students leaving Manitoba? It costs \$1 million to train a med student, \$2 million to train a resident and \$3 million to train a super specialist. They are training them, half of them are leaving, so, yes, add more seats, but why can we not keep them in Manitoba?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member to look at the retention rates for—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member opposite to look at the retention rate of family doctors. Last year, for example, 18 out of 22 family doctors who graduated stayed in Manitoba. That is a retention rate of just under 90 percent, and I am very proud of that retention rate.

Perhaps she saw the little articles in the paper in the last couple of weeks interviewing medical students who were graduating, who were saying they were looking forward to practising in rural Manitoba. Perhaps she should do some of her own homework and find out how many medical students who are graduating now are staying in Manitoba instead of putting out false information.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I will point out to the Minister of Health that all of this information comes from the report from the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It is not my information.

In 1995, 39 percent of Manitoba medical grads stayed here to work in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, 10 years later only 29 percent of Manitoba medical grads are staying here to work in rural Manitoba, 10 percent less than when they formed government.

So I would like to ask this Minister of Health: Why are there 10 percent less Manitoba grads staying here to work in rural Manitoba today? Why are the efforts of his government, if there are any, failing so miserably to keep our students here working in rural Manitoba? It has dropped dramatically, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sale: You know, Mr. Speaker, there was a graduation last week on Friday. On Friday, Dr. Dean Sandham, who is the Dean of Medicine, said, and I hope the member is listening carefully, 57 out of 88 graduates are doing their residencies in Manitoba, 57 out of 88. Now that is between 60 and 70 percent of the medical graduates are staying here in Manitoba and doing their residencies. We have more doctors here. We have more residents doing their residency. We are retaining our family practitioners, and we have over 200 more doctors practising in Manitoba today than when they lost government, over those 10 lost years that the members of the Manitoba Medical Association themselves called the dark Tory years.

Cabinet Ministers Accountability

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, for six and half years the Premier (Mr. Doer) has done much to avoid real accountability. For months now, the Premier has been avoiding calling a badly needed public inquiry into the Crocus Investment Fund scandal. Now, in this session, the Premier and his ministers are putting forward measure after measure to protect himself and his ministers from liability, even where ministers are grossly incompetent or grossly negligent, provided that the minister has not acted in bad faith.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side believe ministers should be accountable if they are grossly incompetent or grossly negligent. Why is the Premier protecting ministers of the Crown from liability, even where there is gross negligence or gross incompetence?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the principle of ministerial accountability is well established in the practices of this type of democracy under the British system, and our bills do not provide any derogation of that responsibility. The requirements that will be made for all ministers will remain the same. All ministers are protected as we found out in the recent Crocus lawsuit. We will protect former ministers under the former government, as well as former civil servants. They will get some legal representation, as they will under

this government. The practices will be the same as before.

Mr. Gerrard: The Premier and his ministers are changing the legislation to protect themselves. The issue here is accountability. The issue is the fact that the Premier and his NDP government are going to extraordinary lengths in measure after measure being put forward by the Premier and his ministers. The responsible minister and others are to be protected from liability in certain circumstances even where there is gross incompetence or gross negligence.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: Is the Premier putting forward these measures because he is concerned that without these measures there may be more class-action lawsuits against his ministers, just like there is a class-action lawsuit against the Premier and his ministers over the Crocus Investment Fund?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, you know, the member opposite makes statements again that are not correct. The class-action lawsuit: a) has not been supported yet by the courts and, b) the date of time goes back to 1992. It may even involve the federal government who was also involved in the establishment of labour-sponsored funds in the early 1990s. So the member opposite should know it was not a "minister" that has been named; I think Wellington West, two accounting companies, the government of Manitoba, the Securities Commission. We brought in the broadest class-action suit. The member opposite may not have read that legislation but this minister brought in the most comprehensive class-action suit legislation anywhere in Canada.

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, over 33,000 Crocus investors have lost tens of millions of dollars. We all know that. We also know that it was this Premier who had the opportunity back as early as 2001 to make a difference. He could have stood up for those Crocus investors and he chose not to. As a result, \$60 million plus because of this Premier's neglect. Now we are going to see this government sacrifice its own legislative agenda because this Premier does not want to call a public inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier not believe in his own legislative agenda to see the merit in calling a public inquiry? Therefore, he will be able to

accomplish his legislative agenda; otherwise his legislative agenda has gone down the tubes.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Long before the issue of the Crocus Investment problem came on the agenda, we brought in a new Auditor General's act which gave specific powers to the Auditor General to investigate labour-sponsored venture capital. Long before the Crocus issue came on the public agenda, we brought in legislation that gave the best class-action lawsuit protection to consumers in the country. Those are proactive actions, which have resulted in the Auditor General's report, proactive actions which have given the consumers a vehicle by which they can seek to recover any damages that they can prove in court. That is proactive legislation. That is forward-looking legislation.

It is only the member opposite who woke up after the issue came on the table and, by the way, he stopped the whole House from doing all its legislative business. We have many more pieces of progressive legislation to bring forward in the House and now the member is threatening to block them up like he did in the past.

Child Poverty Rate Reduction Strategy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the lean, mean Filmon Conservative government years, the 1990s, were particularly hard on poor people. Their government clawed back the National Child Benefit, froze social assistance rates at 1993 levels, removed \$10 million from the day-care budget and eliminated all non-profit housing programs. The 1990s were a terrible time for poor people in Manitoba. With child poverty rates we are the worst, amongst the highest in Canada for the entire decade.

Given recent stories on the Statistics Canada report, labour and income dynamics, addressing, among other things, the issue of child poverty in Canada, can the Minister of Family Services and Housing tell the House what her department has done, what recent actions we have taken to reduce child poverty rates?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, based on post-tax LICO, the recently released StatsCan report, *Income in Canada*, reports that the child poverty rate in Manitoba has decreased by over 40 percent compared to 1997. In 2004, the rate was 12.8 percent. In 1997, it was 20.4 percent. I am also

pleased to inform the House that there are some 2,500 families and individuals less on income assistance in the province today than there was before 1999.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that our investments in child care, housing and ending the clawback of the NCB have helped this, and that the new Manitoba shelter benefit will go further to—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:20)

Methamphetamines Production Statistics

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, while the problems associated with methamphetamine labs are well known in Canada and the United States, the Minister of Justice has indicated that in Manitoba most of the crystal meth comes in from super labs from other provinces. Yet, this past week, RCMP officials indicated that they believe our meth labs may be operating in Steinbach, Altona and in Arborg and other areas. As well, according to the RCMP, we have information that there is widespread meth use in Portage which leads us to believe that there has to be a meth lab somewhere in the area.

Can the Minister of Justice confirm that there are increasing amounts of crystal meth being produced in meth labs here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has no credibility on public safety issues. This is the member opposite whom the chief of police and the mayor of Winnipeg have said is involved in the irresponsible smear, knowingly misrepresenting facts and involved in making cheap political hay. Perhaps the member opposite would like to, at this time, apologize to the mayor of Winnipeg and the chief of police.

Mr. Speaker, if he has other questions, I will deal with his lack of credibility specifically on the issue of meth as well.

Mr. Goertzen: We asked a question regarding meth and the minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen:—but I will for the minister's edification table a letter that came today from the Winnipeg Police Association. It says, on behalf of the more than 1,500 members in the Winnipeg Police Association, I would like to thank you for

introducing issues addressing entries of police shortages and thank you for standing up for police officers. That is from the Police Association, Mr. Speaker. Shame on the member for questioning their credibility. We will stand by the police any day.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Because issues have been raised regarding young people and meth labs or in marijuana grow ops and the dangers, can he inform the House how many children under the age of 18 have been found over the past 24 months in meth labs or in marijuana grow ops?

Mr. Mackintosh: If the member opposite chooses not to apologize for knowingly misrepresenting the facts for Winnipeg, perhaps the member would like to apologize for what he has been saying about meth. He has been out there releasing releases and speaking publicly saying that the Manitoba government should restrict access to the necessary ingredient for making meth which is a pseudoephedrine products.

I have noticed that on February 7, 2006, another member of his caucus actually took issue with that and said, no, we do not stand for that. Then yet another member of the caucus said, oh, no, those pseudoephedrine products should not be restricted like this. Perhaps the members opposite would want to get it straight. They are all over the map.

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

Speaker's Ruling

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

Order. Following Oral Questions on April 27, 2006, the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) raised a matter of privilege, contending that the honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick) had deliberately misled the House by tabling a press release when the honourable Member for River Heights had asked for the terms of reference for the external Child and Family Services review. He concluded his remarks by moving "that this matter be referred to a standing committee of this House."

The honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), the honourable Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) and the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) also offered contributions to the Chair.

I took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities. I thank all members for their advice to the Chair on this matter.

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 asserted that he was raising the issue at the earliest opportunity, and I accept the word of the honourable member.

Regarding the second issue of whether a *prima facie* case was demonstrated, it is important to determine whether parliamentary privilege has been breached in the actions complained of. I would note, in looking at pages 1679 and 1680 of Hansard, that although the honourable Member for River Heights requested that the terms of reference be tabled, the honourable Minister of Family Services did not indicate that she was tabling the terms of reference. She indicated that she was tabling the press release. Nor did she give an undertaking that she was tabling the terms of reference.

Although the Member for River Heights may be displeased that the minister did not table the document he requested, the Speaker is not in a position to force the document to be tabled based on our Manitoba rules and practices.

The procedural authorities also offer commentary on the issue of misleading the House. Joseph Maingot makes a point on page 241 of the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that allegations that a member has misled the House are in fact matters of order and not matters of privilege. In addition, when Manitoba Speakers have been asked to rule on whether matters of privilege involving the alleged misstatements by members or the provision of misinformation or inaccurate facts by ministers, Speakers Phillips, Rocan and Dacquay have ruled numerous times that such situations appear to be disputes over the facts which according to *Beauchesne* Citation 31(1) does not fulfil the criteria of a *prima facie* case of privilege.

I would therefore rule, with the greatest of respect, that the matter raised is not in order as a *prima facie* case of privilege.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): With respect, I would challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member has support.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would request Yeas and Nays, please.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

* (14:30)

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

* (15:30)

Order. Sixty minutes has expired. Please turn the bells off.

The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

Division

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

Yea

Aglugub, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Irvin-Ross,

Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Smith, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Nays

Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Gerrard, Goertzen, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Penner, Reimer, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 33, Nays 17.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

National Police Week

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, May 14-20 is National Police Week. This is a week to increase community awareness and recognition of policing services and to strengthen ties between police departments and the communities they serve. It is also a time for the public to recognize the contributions made by our police officers across Canada towards promoting peace and security in our neighbourhoods and communities.

The citizens of Manitoba are fortunate to have reliable and dedicated police officers in whom we can place our trust. Each and every day police officers across this country put their lives on the line for the citizens they serve.

Unfortunately, in the last two weeks, two Canadian police officers have made the ultimate sacrifice for their communities. On May 5, Constable John Atkinson gave up his life protecting the citizens of Windsor, Ontario. On May 14, Constable Donald Doucet was killed in a motor vehicle accident while patrolling the streets of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

I know I speak for all members of the Legislature in expressing sincere condolences to the family and friends of both of these officers.

As a government, we recognize the dangerous, difficult and sometimes thankless job our police officers have. Our government has supported our police by investing millions of dollars to fully fund dozens of additional police officer positions across Manitoba. Budget 2006 alone provides for 31 additional police positions: 23 in Winnipeg, 2 in Brandon and 6 in Aboriginal communities.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members and the public to take a moment this week to reflect on the important work that police officers do every day to promote security and safety in our communities. Thank you.

Conférence ministérielle de la Francophonie

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Il me fait grand plaisir aujourd'hui de parler de la Conférence ministérielle de la Francophonie. J'ai eu l'occasion cette fin de semaine de participer à cette conférence avec notre Premier Ministre (M. Doer), le ministre responsable de la langue française du Manitoba, M. le Ministre Peter MacKay, la Ministre Josée Verner et le Secrétaire général M. Abdou Diouf. Les 60 pays membres étaient représentés par leur ministre des Affaires étrangères ou leur ministre chargé de la Francophonie.

En 1997, j'avais eu le plaisir de participer au Sommet de Hanoï avec M. Jean Chrétien. Les pays membres avaient complété la réforme du système en adoptant la Charte révisée qui constitue désormais le fondement juridique de la Francophonie.

La conférence tenue à Saint-Boniface le 13 et le 14 mai avait pour mission de veiller à l'exécution des décisions arrêtées lors du Sommet et de préparer le prochain sommet. Elle se prononce sur les grands axes de l'action multilatérale francophone. En outre, elle recommande au sommet l'admission de nouveaux membres et de nouveaux membres associés.

La Francophonie s'appuie également sur les travaux et les recommandations de deux conférences ministérielles permanentes – la Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation nationale des pays francophones et la Conférence des ministres de la Jeunesse et des Sports des pays francophones – et de conférences ministérielles sectorielles.

Je suis certain que les délibérations et les décisions qui ont été prises à la conférence de Saint-Boniface permettront de bien préparer le prochain sommet, et je tiens à féliciter les organisateurs de cette conférence.

Merci, Monsieur le Président.

Translation

Francophone Ministerial Conference

It is with great pleasure that I stand today to talk about the Francophonie Ministerial Conference. I had the opportunity this weekend to attend this

conference with our Premier (Mr. Doer), the Minister responsible for French language services in Manitoba, Minister Peter MacKay, Minister Josée Verner and Secretary General Abdou Diouf. The 60 member states were represented by their ministers of foreign affairs or ministers for Francophone affairs.

In 1997, I had the pleasure of attending the Hanoi Summit with the Honourable Jean Chrétien. The member states had completed the reform of the system by adopting the revised Charter, which is now the legal basis of la Francophonie.

The objectives of the conference held in St. Boniface on May 13 and 14 were to ensure the implementation of decisions made during the Summit and to prepare the next summit, to comment on the highlights of the Francophone multilateral action, and to make recommendations to the summit about the admission of new members and new associate members.

La Francophonie also relies on the work and recommendations of two standing ministerial conferences—the Conference of Education Ministers of Francophone Countries and the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sport of French-Speaking Countries—as well as those of sectorial ministerial conferences.

I am sure that deliberations and decisions of the St. Boniface conference will enable a thorough preparation of the next summit, and I want to congratulate the organizers of this conference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Doors Open Winnipeg

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to inform this House about an innovative program that took place this past weekend in Winnipeg called Doors Open Winnipeg. This initiative provided Winnipeggers with the opportunity to view some of the architecture that has defined our city's landscape up close and in person.

Started in the 1980s in France, the Doors Open program encourages all citizens to join in their city's architectural heritage. With buildings sometimes difficult to access and rarely open to the public, the Doors Open initiative allows residents of that very city, free of charge, to reclaim and revisit the structures that shape their home.

Started two years ago in Winnipeg, following the lead of other Canadian cities, Doors Open Winnipeg has already attracted over 80,000 visits to

buildings and events in the downtown and St. Boniface areas.

In a unique program, nine students from Arthur A. Leach School provided some much-needed research and creative skills to the program this year. Under the direction of their teacher, Phil Reese, students Brendan Love, Ashley Mayberry, Travis Hrubeniuk, Sanaz Moayeri, Liane Carter, Andrew MacKay, Alexis Schmidt, Julie-Anne Henry, Sean Oosterveen, Danny Zimmerman, Alyssa Layte and Sarah Garland all studied in great detail Wesley Hall, the Vaughan Street Jail and the Canadian Pacific Railway Station, now known as the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg. They then designed and created banners that visually presented the history and character of these structures to the public. This partnership between Doors Open program and the students is a first, and their achievement speaks loud to the hard work put forward by everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Doors Open Winnipeg on another productive year educating Manitobans about their past. I would also like to thank all the students and teachers of Arthur A. Leach whose work this year helped make the Doors Open program such a notable success. Thank you.

Tim Dowler

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in this House today and congratulate Mr. Tim Dowler and his great achievement over the weekend at the 2006 Canadian Auctioneer Championship.

Tim Dowler grew up in the R.M. of Springfield and resided on the family farm on Hazelridge Road close to Oakbank, Manitoba, for the first 25 years of his life with his mother Gayle, father John, brothers Bradley and Todd. Unfortunately, Todd was tragically lost when hit by a drunk driver in 1983.

Tim Dowler now resides in Winnipeg with his supporting wife, Tami, and two loving children, daughter Cheyenne, aged 7, and his son, Lane, aged 5.

Tim Dowler graduated Grade 12 in 1989 from St. Owen's Academy in Beausejour, Manitoba, and also attended Living Faith Bible College in the early 1990s in Alberta. In 1995 he trained to be an auctioneer in Strathmore, Alberta, at the Auctioneering Institute of Canada. He returned to the institute in 2000 for advance training.

Tim was first drawn to auctioneering when he attended cattle auctions as a child with his father, John Dowler, who was a cattle buyer. Two and half years ago, Tim Dowler formed Lamport & Dowler Auction Service with his business partner, John Lamport, and today they continue to see the business grow, serving Manitoba's farm, antique and household auction sales.

Tim has competed in seven Manitoba-Saskatchewan auctioneering championships and two Canadian championships, often finishing in the top division. Last month on April 8, Tim Dowler won the Manitoba-Saskatchewan 2006 Championship in Melita at the Melita Auction Mart, which then qualified him to move on to the next tier. Tim competed in the 2006 Canadian Auctioneer Championships in Kamloops, British Columbia, May 12 and 13 of 2006. Although disappointed as he placed fifth, he did so despite battling a severe case of the flu. I know that next year, given his great experience that he has gained, and with good health, he will go on to win the championships.

Tim is a great Manitoban. On behalf of Springfield and all Manitobans, I wish him all the best in the future competitions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:40)

International Mother's Day Celebration

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, before proceeding I would like to ask leave to continue past my time.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave if she goes past her two minutes? [Agreed]

Ms. Brick: Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday I had the pleasure of hosting the third annual International Mother's Day Celebrations in co-operation with the Latin American Arts Council of Manitoba and the Immigrant and Refugee Outreach Facilitator. Held at Richmond Kings Community Centre, this gathering brought together Fort Richmond's ethnically diverse community in recognition of the work done by women and mothers.

Several years ago, I, along with community representatives, developed the idea of having a Mother's Day celebration with an international flavour. By welcoming newcomers to our province and introducing them to this important day, one that recognizes the invaluable contributions made by

mothers, the bonds of understanding and empathy are strengthened.

Sunday's event included performances by Columbia Tierra Querida, a Columbian dance troupe; Parc La Salle School Choir; the Summer Bear Dance Troupe; Azucar Cubana; Wuren Qipige, a Mongolian dancer; Karpal Singh, an Afghani singer; dancers and musicians from India School of Music, Theatre and Dance; traditional clothing displays by women and children from Fort Richmond; dancers from Salsa Explosion; and music by Proyecto, Latin American musicians.

The top-notch entertainment was enjoyed by over 200 attendees. This event recognized and honoured mothers. It provided an opportunity for a number of different community groups to display their unique character in a public forum.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize Canada Safeway, Richmond Kings Community Centre, the Behavioural Health Foundation, Santa Lucia Pizza Restaurant, Fort Richmond location, the Guatemalan Association and Fort Garry Florists, Fort Richmond store for their generous support. Donations from these businesses and community groups helped make this event possible, providing the fabulous food, door prizes, a great venue and a sound system.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all the organizers and residents who participated in the third annual International Mother's Day Celebration. Their commitment to recognizing the work of mothers by building bridges with all the women of Manitoba helps ensure that all newcomers to Manitoba find the place that they so richly deserve. Thank you.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, at this point in time I would like to move for a matter of urgent public importance. Therefore, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Height (Mr. Gerrard), that under Rule 36(1) the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the refusal of the Government of Canada to honour its commitment to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal peoples in Manitoba under the Kelowna Accord, as signed by Canada's First Ministers, territorial leaders and Aboriginal organizations in November 2005.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for Inkster, I believe I should remind all

members that under Rule 36(2) the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance, and one member from the other parties in the House, is allowed not more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

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

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I truly do believe that the Kelowna Accord is of critical importance to the province of Manitoba. I trust that all leaders, I know that my leader has had opportunity to discuss the issue with numerous people, representatives from the Aboriginal community to other elected officials and so forth. What we have seen, I believe, is even different members of Parliament having discussions even with local MLAs, at least I am aware of one instant. These are all fairly recent in terms of the importance of the Manitoba Legislature taking some sort of a co-operative, unanimous gesture in terms of sending to Ottawa on this issue which is so of critical importance.

Mr. Speaker, we decided not to put on paper an actual resolution only because we believe that the resolution itself should be done by representatives of all three entities inside this Chamber. In fact, what we saw in Saskatchewan was a resolution that was passed in which it had the support of all parties inside that Legislature. What I would like to be able to do is to read what it is that the Saskatchewan Legislature has suggested or had passed with the idea that all parties inside the Legislature will see the merit in coming up with a resolution, so that we, too, can join our cousins in Saskatchewan and get behind a resolution to forward to Ottawa.

I will quote the resolution that, from what I understand, was passed in the Saskatchewan Legislature. It reads as follows, quote: That this Assembly recognize the progress and good will that resulted from the action plan to improve the social-economic conditions of Aboriginal people which was advanced and achieved at the First Ministers' meeting in Kelowna; that this Assembly will act proactively with Saskatchewan's Aboriginal people to encourage the federal government to fulfil its

responsibilities to the Aboriginal people living on and off reserve; and, further, that this Assembly recognize the need for true and equal partnership of the three levels of government in the areas of housing, economy, health and social services to improve the socio-economic status of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan; and, further, that this Assembly urge the federal government to share a greater percentage of the costs associated with the investments required to improve the social and economic conditions as well as support structures to Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan; and that it begin to work on achieving the targets identified at the First Ministers' meeting in Kelowna by developing new policy and program arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, what I am hoping is that the Legislature here will recognize the value and the importance of the Kelowna Accord. As opposed, as I indicated, to coming up with our own within a Manitoba Liberal Party resolution, we felt that it would be much more appropriate that we get representatives from all three political parties to sit down and formulate a resolution that would ultimately receive the unanimous support of this Legislature.

I would suggest to you that it is well worth allowing this matter to be debated, at the very least, Mr. Speaker. I think that we owe it to our Aboriginal community, in fact to the community as a whole, to ensure that this debate proceed. I would call upon the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh), in particular, who, I know has, given some indication that he might be favourable to this.

I know that the Premier (Mr. Doer) of our province has spoken in regard to the Kelowna Accord and the positives on it. What we are asking is that this Legislature, as it has done in the past, with the consensus of those commenting on it at this point in time will allow you, Mr. Speaker, to indicate that we will debate this very important issue today.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, we in the Liberal Party feel that this is such an urgent matter that the House does need to deal with it today, as many of the discussions that we have had over the last short while have led us to the conclusion that the Manitoba Legislative Assembly needs to get involved and needs to be able to send a collective message which all MLAs can be proud of forward to Ottawa.

* (15:50)

With those few words—*[interjection]* Well, Mr. Speaker, it has been suggested that maybe I could just add a few more comments on it. I can appreciate that because I recognize that all of us want to ensure that we do the right thing on this issue. We have seen a great deal of frustration within the Aboriginal community in the province of Manitoba over the last number of years at times, whether it is federal or provincial governments that have not met the types of expectations that they have. Ultimately, it led to this conference in Kelowna where representatives from everywhere, from the different levels of government, from the Aboriginal people, came together, and I think it is worthy of note that they came together as one voice in signing an agreement ultimately, which, it seemed to me at the day, everyone was in favour of.

Well, a lot has changed since that time. I do not believe that in Manitoba we need to succumb to that change in attitude that is prevailing in Ottawa today. I believe that what we should be doing is sending a message and, I would go as far as to say, a unanimous, collective message that comes from this Legislature. The only way that that can be done is if we get representatives from the three parties inside the Legislature to sit down and come up with a resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I was very careful in terms of what sort of a resolution we could actually suggest in the discussion that I had with my leader, who had, in fact, asked me to present the MUPI because I know that my leader has had the opportunity to consult with a number of people on this critically important issue. The idea is, as opposed to, here is the resolution and here is what we think, that the Legislative Assembly make those appointments, one rep from all three entities to sit down. We would suggest that that take place right away. We want to see an all-party supported resolution passed from this Legislature before the end of the month.

We are prepared to co-operate to the fullest extent to do that as long as we are going within the rules of the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I think that we have the time to allow for a couple of hours debate. I believe that we will see reasonable support, and I look to the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) in particular to give clear indication whether or not he too sees it as being urgent.

The budget debate is over, Mr. Speaker. The Throne Speech is over. For me personally, my grievance is done, so the opportunities really are not

there for us to deal with this issue. I do believe that there are a number of members that would like to see this debate go, so ultimately I trust, at the end of the decision, if you canvassed the House, I believe that there will be support for this MUPI to be debated today.

I look to, as I say, the Government House Leader to put his comments on the record. I have been told I have run out of time so—*[interjection]* How much time do I have, Mr. Speaker?

I have five seconds to conclude.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the big finish: Is this a good idea? Let us do it for the Aboriginal people in the province of Manitoba.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, we were just wondering, on this side, if the member had come across some old back pages of a newspaper from a year or so ago. We notice that, according to his resolution, the accord was concluded in November 2005. I believe subsequently there was a federal Liberal budget which did not recognize the accord. Of course, this issue has been of primary concern to members on this side, and the most recent federal budget, I think, is going on two and a half weeks old. So it is always good to have somebody catch up with an issue and want to raise the issue in the House. After week after week after week of the member walking out of here instead of dealing with issues like the Kelowna Accord, he certainly, I would suggest, looks silly today standing up and saying this is an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, it is, however, an important issue, and perhaps if members were prepared to sit beyond the normal hour of adjournment to get some work done on legislation, that would also accommodate some brief comments on this. We are prepared to have a brief debate on it, but that would depend on the will of the House.

We are certainly prepared to sit until six o'clock, Mr. Speaker, if members are willing, and have the matter debated. You could put it to the House if you wish.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): I listened very intently to the comments put forward by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and, now, in more brief form by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), regarding this issue.

On the one hand, we have the Member for Inkster putting forward his case to you, Mr. Speaker,

trying to persuade you that this is, in fact, a matter of urgent public importance. On the other hand, the Minister of Justice is somehow trying to use this as a leverage point in terms of how the House is run. Yet I think that while both of these honourable members have tried to shoot an arrow from their quiver, they have both, in fact, I think, missed the mark, because what truly is important here when we deal with matters of urgent public importance is whether or not this is the only opportunity and the best opportunity to raise the issue or whether or not there are other places within the context of our Legislature or the procedures that we have here in the Legislature to put forward that matter of urgent public importance.

I would say to my friend from Inkster that, if he wants to raise this issue regarding the Kelowna Accord, there will be other opportunities. I certainly know the Estimates process allows for an opportunity. Soon there will be the Aboriginal Affairs Estimates which will be held here in the Legislature at some point prior to the rising of this House. I suspect that that might be a very key place where the Member for Inkster could raise concerns if he has them regarding this or any other issues regarding First Nations or Aboriginal people.

Also, of course, we have the daily Question Period, Mr. Speaker, which we concluded not long ago, where the Member for Inkster could put forward his question there. I suspect, though, most germane to the issue is the reason the Member for Inkster did not put forward the question in Question Period is because he questions whether or not, in fact, it is in the purview or whether or not it is in the jurisdiction of this provincial government or the Legislature to deal with the issue.

I have no doubt that he has put it forward in his own way with the best of intentions, but, when you look at the reading of the matter of urgent public importance, it says: "namely, the refusal of the Government of Canada."

In fact, that goes to the heart of the issue, Mr. Speaker, that this is a federal issue. The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) may at some point want to run federally. I do not know his future aspirations, whether or not he dreams of being in Ottawa and one of the 308 or 307 members of the—*[interjection]* Well, I understand maybe he did run and was not successful, but I have faith in the Member for Inkster. I have faith that if he ran again, he might, in fact, make his way to Ottawa. I am sure if he made his way to Ottawa, he would make his mark in

Ottawa as well. So I look forward to him trying to pursue that endeavour, although he would probably have to run as a Conservative these days to win. Knowing the Member for Inkster, I am sure he would fit quite nicely into those clothes as a Conservative.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think the issue, then, is regarding whether or not this should be debated here in the Legislature at all, because it does seem to me to be more of a federal issue, one that this Legislature cannot deal with specifically. So it probably would not meet the requirements of a matter of urgent public importance. If, in fact, it did, I could stand to be corrected. The Member for Inkster could correct me. Perhaps during the 1990s, he raised a matter of urgent public importance when the federal Liberals cut transfer payments here to the Province of Manitoba, and the then-government had to deal with those transfer payments. If the member wants to stand and table the matter of urgent public importance that he put forward then to deal with the federal government not leading up or going with their commitments on transfer payments, then I would stand to, in fact, be corrected, because then I might be persuaded to believe that this was an issue that falls within this provincial Legislature.

But, failing that, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to my friend from Inkster that there are other opportunities to raise this particular issue, and, in fact, there are probably more appropriate opportunities to raise the issue. But, broader than that, it is questionable whether or not this Legislature has any significant impact or influence over the issue at all.

So, while I do appreciate the comments that my friend from Inkster brings forward from time to time, I do not believe that this rises to the bar of a matter of urgent public importance, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker: Before making my ruling, I have to entertain the request by the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) to put to the House if there is a willingness to sit beyond our adjournment hour till 6 p.m. to deal with this MUPI, and also to deal with House legislation. Is there agreement?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, there is no agreement. So I will make my ruling.

I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) should be debated today. The notice required by Rule 36(1) was provided. Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward. However, I was not persuaded that the ordinary business of the House should be set aside to deal with this issue today. Additionally, I would like to note that there are other avenues for members to raise this issue including questions in Question Period, raising the item under Members' Statements, raising the item under Grievances and raising the issue during the consideration of Estimates for Executive Council or during consideration of the Estimates for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Therefore, with the greatest of respect, I rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I know this is an unusual point of order, but I am somewhat confused about the government's willingness to go ahead with the MUPI on the proviso that the House sit extended hours. I do not know how a MUPI becomes a MUPI because you sit extended hours, so I do not understand conditions when they are put to MUPIs.

Mr. Speaker: I remind all honourable members when a Speaker makes a ruling, you have two options. You accept it. Speaker's rulings should not be up for debate.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, we have just witnessed something unusual in this Chamber, but I do not understand sometimes the processes in this Chamber and so I have to seek guidance.

Mr. Speaker, when a member stands up on a MUPI and the government then says, well, if you do this and this, we will acknowledge the MUPI and allow it to go ahead, but if you do not see it our way,

then we will not acknowledge it as a MUPI, I do not know what the message in that is and what the government's response to that is, but either it is a MUPI or it is not a MUPI, in my view. There should not be any conditions placed upon a MUPI. So, although I would have enjoyed to hear some of the debate on this proposed MUPI, it is unfortunate that government has set some conditions on it.

Having said that, I now want to turn my attention to the grievance that I have stood up on against the government.

Mr. Speaker, for weeks now we have been sitting in this Chamber trying to impress upon the government that the public inquiry into the Crocus Fund was not only demanded—

An Honourable Member: How is it going?

Mr. Derkach: Oh, well, now listen to this, Mr. Speaker. From her seat, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) says, well, how is it going? Now if that is not called arrogance, I do not know what is. That arrogance is translated out there in the public. How is it going? I think it is going very well, if I can respond to the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, why it is going very well is, I think, that the public of Manitoba have had their fill of this socialist government who wants to act like a bunch of dictators. Manitobans have had their fill of this socialism and are now prepared to see a government of a different stripe, one that listens to Manitobans, one that is responsive to Manitobans, and one that does not embroil itself in the kind of scandal that this government has embroiled itself in.

Mr. Speaker, Crocus was an investment fund that many people were proud of, including members on this side of the House who actually initiated the Crocus Fund. The reason we were proud of it was because it was a labour-sponsored investment fund, allowing everyday, common workers to invest money into a labour-sponsored fund. Those monies would be used to promote businesses that could hire workers in this province.

Mr. Speaker, things went along well. Now, there will be projects that money will be lost in, but there will also be successful ones. But, when this government came along, it decided to intervene in this whole process of how Crocus was investing its

money, and they decided that they would put one Mr. Eugene Kostyra sort of as their emissary to try to twist arms of different government agencies to ensure that they would also invest money.

Now, this all happened because there were some bad investments by Crocus. Secondly, the fund was overvalued, but everybody hid the truth. The minister was told about that in 2001. Now, he knew. The Minister of Labour was given a letter by one Pat Jacobsen, indicating to her that this was a problem.

Mr. Speaker, the ministers knew. The former Minister of Industry and Mines, MaryAnn Mihychuk, knew about it, and she has gone so far as to say that she is prepared to come back, put her hand on the Bible and swear to tell what she knew about what was going on with the Crocus Fund.

Mr. Speaker, we had the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) who was minister for a short period of time, who was given information that warned him about what was coming with the Crocus Fund. Then we have the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), who took over the file and has not been able to give us a straight answer since the time we have been asking the questions. Well, he has rehearsed one answer and that is the one that he gives. No matter if you ask him the time of day or if you ask him a question about Crocus, he repeats that one answer. That is the extent of his knowledge about Crocus.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are smarter than that, and so what has happened is that we have had—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a result, what we see is a class-action lawsuit against the government, naming the government and naming Mr. Eugene Kostyra—*[interjection]* Oh, and now they are saying, no, it did not. Well, I saw his name. I know how to spell Eugene; I know how to spell Kostyra. It is there in black and white. *[interjection]* Now, you see, listen to the Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau) right now: Oh, no, he is not there. That is not him; that is a ghost. That is a ghost. That is not Eugene Kostyra.

Well, Mr. Speaker, he is a little bit more than a ghost. Mr. Eugene Kostyra is a real, live, breathing emissary of the Premier (Mr. Doer). That is who he is.

Mr. Speaker, it does not matter who it is, whether it is Eugene Kostyra or whoever. The fact is that it is this government that has got its hands in the cookie jar. This government got caught with its hands in the cookie jar. The thug approach that has been used by the government to try to manhandle the Workers Compensation Board, Manitoba Public Insurance corporation and the Teachers' Retirement Fund into putting money into a failing Crocus investment endeavour is shameful to say the least, and it is illegal. It is illegal. A government does not have the right to go to an agency like the Workers Compensation Board and demand that they use money that should be used for injured workers to invest into a failing enterprise. It is wrong for a government to go to the Teachers' Society, to the Teachers' Retirement Fund, and it is amazing the denial that goes on from even the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, who is trying to protect this government.

* (16:10)

When asked about the Teachers' Retirement Fund and how much money could have been lost, Brian Ardern, the president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, gets very offended when that question is asked, and he chastises any teacher who dare ask the question, how much of my retirement money may have been lost in the Crocus scandal.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that will all come out, eventually. It will come out in the lawsuit, unless, of course, the Premier does what he did with the Lockport investment area, where he denied, as minister, the development of land and later had to pay for it with government money—\$100,000 hush money paid by the taxpayers of Manitoba to protect the Premier. The silence just—*[interjection]* You do not know what happened, but some day we will.

The Crocus Fund is not going to go away. The Crocus scandal is not going to go away. It is going to haunt this government as long as they are in office, which will not be very long, of course. Mr. Speaker, if they do not call for the inquiry, if they try to settle the lawsuit out of court, I know somebody who is prepared to launch an inquiry to ensure that the truth is brought out about this scandalous government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the government had a responsibility. The Premier had a responsibility. If he said he had nothing to hide, it was up to him to call the public inquiry. He said he had nothing to hide. Why not call the public inquiry? I mean, he was very

quick to call an inquiry into the Morris-Macdonald School Division. He called the RCMP, and he called everybody in. Well, that was done overnight. Now, how much money was involved there? I think one and a half million dollars was the settlement in the end. Well, here we have \$66 million and the Premier says we do not need an inquiry. We do not need an inquiry; it is only 66. It is not his money; it is investors' money. So he does not have to feel any responsibility for it.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) knew about it. He knew all about it. He cannot say he did not. He talks to Mr. Eugene Kostyra on a weekly basis, and maybe a daily basis, who knows. Is he telling us that nobody warned him, as Minister of Finance, that Crocus was going down? Is he saying that nobody ever talked to him about the devaluation of Crocus shares? You can draw a long bow, but this one is beyond drawing. The Minister of Finance knew. He knew very well, but he kept it hidden. Mr. Speaker, he has a responsibility to answer the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), on a grievance?

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): On a grievance. As so many of my colleagues have indicated, so many grievances and so little time, and that is absolutely accurate. I want to thank my colleague from Russell for the comments that he has put on record regarding the Crocus. Certainly, I am sure he could have gone on for at least another hour and he still would not have covered even the preamble of it, all the issues that are out there.

Mr. Speaker, I want to grieve today, and my grievance is on what I call lost opportunities. Part of it is, of course, something that has taken place over the last number of years but was again brought to my attention this past weekend when I was looking at some of the headlines within the *Free Press*. It has to do with the fastest growing region in southern Manitoba, the Winkler-Morden area.

Now the problem is that there are so many opportunities out there and this government has lost so many of them as well. Let me just cite a number of them here. This is regarding that you get more money and you get less and that you spend more and you get last. That is exactly where we are at. The provincial government continues to spend every new dollar it receives. This year the province will receive

\$486 million in new revenue and we will spend every penny of it.

Manitobans are not and should not be satisfied with last place, so why is this government satisfied with being last? Manitobans are demanding better. When will this government deliver? The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) has called for an election. We have called for this ongoing. Absolutely, called for the election. Well, the Premier (Mr. Doer) was out stating that there is no way he is going to call for an election right now, no way. He has got to wait at least four years, he says. So we will see whether we can trust his word. This would be something totally new. We have not been able to trust his word within the Chamber here, so why would we trust it now?

But just to go on on the topic of lost opportunities, Mr. Speaker, the government has no long-term strategy for the revitalization of Manitoba's economy, and this is of tremendous concern to me. I know that the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak) is within the Chamber here and is listening to my comments, but I want to again indicate the fact that we lost another opportunity.

Three months ago, I gave him the name of a gentleman who was very, very interested in setting up biodiesel plants within this province. He had funding prepared. He had funding ready. He had investors ready who were prepared to go. Mr. Speaker, this coming Saturday I am going to be going to a farewell party for this gentleman who is moving to Grand Forks. He is going to be helping to set up four biodiesel plants along the U.S.-Manitoba border.

Mr. Speaker, this is an opportunity that we had, as a province, to get into the biodiesel industry. There are huge opportunities. It is for rural Manitobans an opportunity to be able to add value to the product that they are growing and yet we have lost it. We have lost this opportunity of having those jobs offered to people within the province, within the rural areas. If it would be in the city of Winnipeg, it would be fine. However, I believe that the most prudent place to have these biodiesel plants would be in rural Manitoba where, in fact, the raw product is easily available.

We lost on that, so these jobs are going to be going to the U.S. On the other hand, if anybody would have been watching and just observing the direction we have gone, especially with the escalation of fossil fuels, the prices, the way they

have gone up in the last number of months and years, this is a perfect opportunity for us to move in another direction, to have our products such as Canola, soybeans, get the oil from these base crops and convert that to biodiesel.

Mr. Speaker, again, just to indicate the importance of this, one unit of energy is taken in order to produce 3.86 units of energy in biodiesel. Now this is an efficient method of doing it. They have a process in place which is going to allow the aviation industry to use the product because it is now safe. They can use it to minus 70 degrees. So here are opportunities and, yet, we have missed out on them.

Again, coming back to the article that was in the *Winnipeg Free Press* talking about southern Manitoba booming, growing, I have said this time and time again, they are growing in spite of this government. They just say, we will forge ahead. They are that kind of people. They are industrious. They are hardworking, and so they will do the best they can but they do not need government standing in their way, which is taking place. Mr. Speaker, these are opportunities that we have. We are losing them on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Speaker, the government continues to spend billions of dollars with no accountability for where the money is going and what results it is getting. This government is getting tired. It is getting complacent and it is lacking vision and new ideas.

We need that. I know that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is here and she knows that rural Manitoba is floundering. They are having some real problems. Not all of it is the fault of the current government; however, there is no forward vision. There is no direction set for those who want to remain in agriculture and want to move ahead.

Mr. Speaker, there are absolutely valid concerns for the point of us missing opportunities within rural Manitoba, but I want to go further. I have been talking agriculture, the opportunities to add value to products. Well, when I look specifically at my area, yes, it is a hardworking area, they contribute to the tax base of this province. They pay huge taxes. We are not asking for all those dollars to come back to the area. However, we are asking that there be a fair share of dollars coming to assist a community that, in spite of this government, is moving ahead, is growing, is expanding and, as I have indicated at the outset, is the fastest growing area in rural Manitoba.

* (16:20)

But just to give you an example of fair share, I will give you one example. This has to do with the whole area of family services. Now there are huge discrepancies according to funding within people with the same disabilities in the rural area and then you compare that to the urban area. Now, someone who has a disability in rural Manitoba requires the same amount of care as someone within our urban jurisdiction, and yet, though, there is a huge discrepancy. I want to give you one example here. This is funding on a day program for someone with a disability. I am talking about people going to such places as Gateway Resources, but the funding for one person per day there is \$12.79. Now, what I find as an irony and find somewhat interesting is the fact that, if you are going to bring your pet to a pet shelter and it is being looked after, they get \$15 a day. So here now people with disabilities on a per day basis get \$12.79, and our pets are getting \$15 a day.

I think we have something that is basically wrong within our society. I am not saying that we should not be looking after our pets. Do not get me wrong on this, Mr. Speaker, but I just find it interesting that the people who are vulnerable in our society—and our party has always said that we have a huge responsibility to those who are less fortunate, who do not have the ability to be able to get the resources that they need for day to day living—that we do have a responsibility for them and we need to fight, and we need to continue to fight for them. But I do find it rather inconsistent that the funding that we give to people with disabilities in rural Manitoba is quite different from the funding that they receive within the city of Winnipeg.

The other example that could be given would be in health care. In personal care homes the funding that is received for someone who is panelled at a Level 3, 4, whatever the instance may be is different in rural Manitoba to what it is in Winnipeg. What we are seeing is absolutely we are prepared to pay our fair share of taxes, but I believe that the funding that follows these people, whether they are in personal care homes or have disabilities, should be consistent from rural Manitoba through the city of Winnipeg or the urban areas. So I would just like to indicate that that is a real concern.

The other area that I need to talk about is the whole area of affordable housing. Now I know that there may have been all kinds of announcements made specific to affordable housing and yet though

within areas such as the one that I represent there is a tremendous need for affordable housing and also those that they would categorize as people with assisted living.

Mr. Speaker, those are areas of concern that I had. I want to thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, on a grievance?

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Thank you—

Mr. Speaker: On a grievance?

Mr. Maguire: Yes, on a grievance.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, on a grievance.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, it is my opportunity to rise in the House today on behalf of cattle producers across the province of Manitoba to bring to the attention of the House and all Manitobans the discrepancy that has been put in place by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) in regard to the issues of the cattle tax in Manitoba, her \$2 backdoor tax that she has put on every head of livestock to be sold in Manitoba under the auspices of the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement marketing plan regulation board.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has brought this type of Order-in-Council forward under the guise of The Farm Products Marketing Act, saying that many other types of livestock in Manitoba and products under the marketing act have a checkoff. Of course, many of them do, but the opportunity here, the difference is that in this act, and I state a quote right from the order regulation here, Use of fees and levies, where she says: "The commission may make regulations providing for the use of fees and levies to initiate, encourage, support and conduct research and programs into any aspect contributing to the production, quality or market development of a regulated product."

No one has a problem with funds being used to better the production, to better the type of quality that we have in our livestock industries or any industry for that matter or the market development, but it goes on to say that this may include but is not limited to research or programs relating to financing or processing that enhance value-added marketing activities relating to cattle.

Now, Mr. Speaker, of course, this is referring to the enhancement of the slaughter facilities in Manitoba that the minister has been about three years late in coming to the table with. Of course, that is what we heard loud and clear from the farmers of Manitoba in the three district meetings that were held across this province that she would not hold, that her government would not hold, that they never gave the producers a chance to have input into in Manitoba. They just brought forward the legislation and said, this is good for you. We are going to put it upon you. We are going to charge you this \$2 tax, and, oh, by the way, it says that the commission may make regulations, as well, assessing fees and levies payable to it or on its behalf by producers of the regulated product and providing for the collection of such fees and levies.

So not only does this say that it is open-ended as far as \$2—it might be \$20 within a short while—it does not have an interest rate attached to the size of the loans that would be brought forward either.

Mr. Speaker, many farmers have told me that, if the government had \$10 million to put toward the building of a slaughter plant facility here in Manitoba, they should have brought that money forward, built the plant and been exporting beef by now. We could have been exporting beef some 18 months ago. So I believe that is a concern amongst farmers of Manitoba that the minister and the government should have listened to and taken into consideration before they brought this legislation forward.

No one is against the expansion of slaughter facilities in the province of Manitoba for the beef industry. That is a given amongst all of us that we wanted to see expansion of the slaughter facilities, but I think the concern there is the way this government is going about it. After waiting for so long and having many of the producers who felt they had waited as long as they possibly could for the government to take some action, or for other facilities to get going, they made the decision to invest in slaughter facilities outside of this province. They were forced out by this government because there was no alternative here to invest in, in order to get it going.

Many who have invested outside the province had already called for space in Ranchers Choice, and I give those people credit for the work that they have done in trying to get it off the ground and keep it going, but the situation that we are faced with today

is that many of these people decided if this government is not going to do anything then we have to take the bull by the horns, so to speak, and we have to invest in slaughter facilities for our own livestock, for the future viability of our own farmers. Many of them have. Many of them have invested in Natural Valley Beef in Wolseley, Saskatchewan. There are larger companies already purchasing slaughter plants in the United States. They are waiting for the border to open so that they can access some of those slaughter facilities in the United States, but right here at home they are forcing them to load their cattle up and haul them into Ontario, haul them into Saskatchewan, or all the way out to Alberta, for slaughter.

What is most aggravating about this kind of a regulation coming forward under The Farm Products Marketing Act, these are the same people who have taken and invested tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars each. I think the number that was mentioned in one of the meetings, I think it was Ste. Rose, is that there are 54 producers in Manitoba who invested \$2.5 million of their own money in the Natural Valley Beef plants in Saskatchewan in Wolseley. So now what the minister is forcing those same farmers to do is pay a \$2-a-head tax on their own animals that are going to go out to Wolseley to compete, you know, against their own plant by having these funds used to expand the slaughter facilities here in Manitoba. Most of them would have gladly participated in the expansion of that facility here in Manitoba if they had not been left out to dry for so long that they had to take their own future in their own hands, instead of waiting for this government to put something on the record to move forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that is certainly one of the biggest problems that we have with this. The other one is that it goes on to say here that, the fees and levies, the commission may make regulations requiring a person who receives a regulated product from a producer for marketing to deduct from the money payable by the person to the producer any fees or levies payable by the producer to the commission and to remit them to it, together with any information or record relating to such fees and levies, or to the production or marketing of the regulated product that the commission considers necessary.

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker, in other words, it became very public at the public meetings that the government had not talked to the auction marts at all in Manitoba. They are the ones who are going to have to turn in the \$2 that is collected. I mean, the government says right here that those auction marts have to collect that \$2 and turn it in to the commission, turn it in to a commission that has its own abilities to raise fees or levies as high as it wants, maybe even not just for the building of the slaughter facility, but any losses that may be attributed down the road.

It also allows the commissioners to set their own salaries and fees and that sort of thing, any of their per diems. These farmers find that completely unacceptable, that the government would enter into a commission under the auspices of a program called the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement board.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the situation with thousands and thousands of cattle that will be sold in Manitoba, I have had many of them over the weekend again tell me that this is really interfering in the marketing of livestock in Manitoba, just like this NDP government tried to do in the seventies and early eighties when they brought in the Beef Commission. They have even gone to the trouble of putting Bill Uruski in charge of this to try and bring it back and resurrect an old idea that he had when he was the Minister of Agriculture. Farmers just are not falling for it out there. They really have a hard time understanding why the government would want to bring this forward at this time with such an open-ended jurisdiction. That is the big concern.

Mr. Speaker, the livestock yards on the west side of the province have indicated to me that it will create grave difficulty in the future business opportunities for them, that they have the opportunity that half of the livestock that they sell in Manitoba are livestock that come in from Saskatchewan. The minister has indicated that those livestock will not be impacted. If livestock owned by people outside of the province will not have to pay the checkoff, what is she really doing? Telling farmers in Manitoba that they have to have a Saskatchewan partner to get around paying this \$2 fee in Manitoba? That is not good for business in Manitoba. Saskatchewan is smiling all the way to the bank on this thing. I am telling you, I cannot believe that our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), having driven youth out of the province, is now driving out the cattle as well.

Basically, this is not good for our feedlot industry. It is not good for our cow-calf industry. We have a cow-calf industry here in Manitoba that, if we had slaughter facilities, could use it. They are waiting and waiting and waiting, but we have a government that was unresponsive to their needs. That is of grave concern to every cattle producer in this province. There were 1,100 of them in Brandon the other night, and they spoke out very clearly that the minister should make this a mandatory refundable checkoff as well, a mandatory refundable levy. Yet there has been no indication as much as 10 days later from this minister that she is going to respond to the needs of those farmers and listen to what they told her at all on this particular issue.

I find it sorriily interesting that this minister is so entrenched—

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call the following bills in this order: 22, 37, 21, 35, 23, and the rest of the second readings in the order they appear.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 22—The Elections Reform Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on Bill 22, The Elections Reform Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina? [Agreed]

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It is a pleasure to rise in this House this afternoon and speak to Bill 22, The Elections Reform Act.

I have raised issues in the past in this Legislature regarding the structure and the nature of this bill and, in particular, regarding its over-sweeping omnibus nature. We had somewhat of a discussion about the nature of an omnibus bill as it relates to *Beauchesne* and relates to other rules.

Certainly, one of the concerns that I have raised regarding this legislation, not from a procedural perspective now, but purely as a matter of debate in the Legislature, is regarding the overall,

encompassing nature of this particular bill. When we as legislators are elected to come here on behalf of our constituents from the various areas, the 57 areas we represent, I think it is with the intention that we will be able to speak freely and fairly on legislation that is brought before us by the government of the day. Those in our constituencies who would see this legislation might be concerned, in fact, that it deals with a great number of areas that do not seem to have a great deal of parallel with each other. In fact, some of them are democratic reform issues in the purest sense of the word; others relate more to financing of elections; still others deal with the nature of how elections are run, and where polling stations may or may not be placed and the distance that people have to drive.

The only common thread that runs through these, Mr. Speaker, is that somehow distantly they relate to an electoral issue, but they are really quite different electoral reform issues. In terms of members' mobility within this Legislature is a topic that has been discussed, we know, throughout Canada recently, but that issue itself is quite distinct and different from a financing issue, the financing issues about how elections can be funded here in Manitoba. Certainly, I know that the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), in the past a number of times, has raised issues about electoral financing in the province. I think he has done it in the context of Question Period. I know that he has done it in the context of Estimates, and various times he has spoken about inequities, what he sees to be inequities, within the system, and the difficulty of opposition parties to raise funds, and he has put out the spectre, or the question, about whether or not this is being done specifically to punish one particular political party over another.

When the Member for Inkster raises these concerns, I think that they are worth noting, and they are worth listening to, and they are worth questioning about whether or not this government, in fact, has a true heart for democratic reform, or whether there are other issues surrounding the bill that they might have concerns about.

But, when you craft a bill, and I have only had minimal experience in the issue of bill crafting here in the Legislature, I do know that there is—*[interjection]* I appreciate the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak) for that compliment, although probably somewhat backhanded, I suspect.

The issue regarding crafting of bills here in the Legislature is important because I know department officials will gather around and look at how it is that a particular bill is going to be structured. I know that concerns have been raised at different times from departmental staff in a different context, in a different place where I was, where departmental staff would say, well, you know, is this really where we should include this particular provision or revision of legislation, or is there a better place? Is there a different place where it might fit in more logically?

That is really a fundamental issue of structure, Mr. Speaker, from good governance. We, as legislators, have to ensure that bills meet that test, so that when we go to our constituents they will say that the way a bill was crafted was done in a way that will stand the test of time because we know that all of our time here is time-limited. That we will not all be here forever will come as a shock to some members, obviously. The time does go by quickly here in the Legislature, but, at some point in history, this Legislature will be a completely different composition, and different members will come here representing either the same constituencies or differently crafted constituencies at that time, and they will have an expectation that legislation that has been brought forward would have been done so in a way that is respectful and representative of how legislation should be done. They will not be overall encompassing, and will not be so broad and sweeping that it is difficult to separate one area from another.

* (16:40)

So, when I raise these issues here in the Legislature on this May 15, Mr. Speaker, I do it with, I hope, the forethought of others who are going to come here and represent our various constituents for the various political parties that are here represented today, and perhaps others in the future. So it is not an issue of politics; it is certainly not an issue of partisanship. I think I bring this forward here with the most, least partisanship today ensuring that good legislation is brought.

So, when I raise the issue about omnibus bills and how it is that different pieces come together, this, I know, historically has been more of an issue on the federal level. We had a little bit of time to talk about federal politics with my friend from Inkster just a few minutes ago, so I will not be pretending to be aspiring to a job in Ottawa anytime soon, Mr.

Speaker. *[interjection]* Well, one never does know where our paths will take us in the future.

I do think that the debate that has happened in the House of Commons regarding omnibus bills and bills that link together seemingly unrelated issues is important to bring here, now in this context, to the floor of the Manitoba Legislature, because we, I would think, and I probably speak for all members I am sure—we just went through a weekend, and I am sure many members returned to their constituencies to speak to their residents about legislation that is being debated here on the floor of the Legislature. I am sure if they have had meetings or town halls, or just simply going into the coffee shops and talking to the people that they represent, would want to bring forward comments and concerns about legislation in a way that would be easy for them to give back feedback, and to say, I support this, or I do not support that.

I can imagine, Mr. Speaker, if I had the opportunity, and I have had the opportunity in the past to bring this legislation to those whom I think would have some interest in the legislation. They would, kind of, go through it, and they have gone through it and said, this is really a hodgepodge. It deals with so many different issues. It is a bit, you know, I like this, but I do not like that. Unfortunately, the government, I think, is looking at this particular piece of legislation as though it is a buffet somewhere down at a restaurant and you can pick this and you can pick that and you can leave out the stuff that you do not like. But in reality this is not legislation that is a buffet, or should not be a buffet legislation. You cannot take some and reject some of the other.

They are selling it as though it is all one fulsome package and you have to accept everything or you accept nothing. That, I think, is the reason why I brought forward to this Legislature at a different time about splitting up this bill and trying to bring it in different sections. It is not as though this government is dealing with a hefty legislative agenda this session. In fact, I would say it is one of the lighter legislative agendas whether in terms of just number of bills, or the substance of—*[interjection]* Thirty-eight bills, my friend from Inkster tells me, on this Legislature. He is more seasoned in this Legislature than I have been. But I am sure he would remind me that there have probably been other sessions where there were many more bills that have come forward here. *[interjection]* Seventy-five plus, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says. So we are barely at

half. They managed to skid across the halfway mark of 75.

That speaks to something different, of course, Mr. Speaker. That speaks to a government that simply is out of ideas, that simply has run out of steam and does not have anything fresh for the province. The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) might feel that it is simply good to have one's hand on the rudder and keep a straight course without any kind of innovative ideas, or any sort of new initiatives here in the province of Manitoba. *[interjection]* Well, and I would remind the Member for Selkirk who talks about the fact that perhaps I believe in small government, I think in large part he is right. But believing in small government is not the same thing as believing in small-minded government, which we have seen here, in fact, in the Manitoba Legislature because of a lack of ideas that are coming forward here in this debate in this particular session.

So it is not as though the bill could not have been split, whether it is six or eight different ways, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the individual parts that would have detractors could be looked at in that way. At some point during this legislative session, this bill is going to move to committee. Members opposite have often spoke in high-handed ways, or in high praise of the committee system that we have here in Manitoba, and I think that all members would say that it is something unique here to our province. It is something that we should defend and consider to be important.

But we devalue that system, Mr. Speaker, when we bring a bill like this to committee and ask presenters to speak on it. I am sure that, when this bill does finally arrive to committee, you will have individuals who will come and speak to specific sections of the bill, and will completely ignore or disregard other sections because they are so different from their points of interest, or they are so different from their points of expertise that it would be difficult for them to speak to the legislation.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, those who are coming to committee deserve better than that. Those Manitobans who are coming to the Legislature, probably on an evening, to debate this particular legislation deserve more respect than to have a bill that links together seemingly somewhat unrelated issues into one particular piece of legislation. It is not fair to them. So not only do I stand here today and speak on behalf of future

legislators here in this Chamber representing our constituencies or others, I also think I bring forward these concerns on behalf of all Manitobans who will want to debate this particular piece of legislation.

Again, I think the government has done this—I want to make sure that I am parliamentary in what I say, Mr. Speaker. They have done it in a crafty sort of way. They have done it in a way, I think, to try to ensure that pieces of the legislation that they feel will benefit them most will not come under the kind of scrutiny that it might otherwise had the bill been separated into its various components. At the federal legislative side, again we see this as something of a common practice, more so under the federal Liberal government, who have been put to rest, but—*[interjection]* Well, I know the federal Liberals still feel there is life in the body, and perhaps there will be at some point many days in the future. I never want to discount those who are down and out.

But I do say that at that level there were serious concerns raised regarding omnibus bills and how it is that they came to the floor of the Legislature. In fact, if I am correct, and the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) might have more information on this than I do or perhaps he could speak to his colleagues in Ottawa, I believe that is partly how the gun registry was sold because it fell under omnibus bill legislation dealing with crime. You looked at certain pieces of legislation, and you said, well, it is difficult to oppose certain crime-fighting or victim-helping measures, but then, looped on to it, kind of tagged on to it, if I am correct, Mr. Speaker, were issues related to the gun registry. It is probably timely now. We are a couple of days away from the release of the Auditor General's report in Ottawa regarding the failed long-gun registry, although I know certain parts of it have come forward already for digestion by the public. That is specifically the concern that we are dealing with here today.

Well, and I hear the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) talking about relevance, and if there was any member that would not understand relevance for certain things, I suspect he would probably be the Member for Rossmere. I appreciate the Member for Rossmere as a person, although we do not certainly always agree as legislators here together. *[interjection]* Well, now apparently the Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau) has slipped into a coma, and he does not understand. So I will try to bring him to consciousness and ensure that he understands.

The point that I was trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is that omnibus legislation has been used in Ottawa to try to sell unpopular or unwise pieces of legislation such as the gun registry. This is a parallel like that: an omnibus piece of legislation that might be used to sell certain things that the general public might say, well, we are not in agreement with that. So I hope that clarifies and lifts the cloud from the minds of the Member for Rossmere and the minister responsible for industry, and that they will certainly be with me on this now that I have been able to persuade those two members. I only have another 10 to go, and then we will have the majority on this side.

* (16:50)

But, very seriously, because I think I bring these things here in a non-partisan way, Mr. Speaker, the balanced perspective that we try to bring to these particular pieces of legislation is done so not because we see left or right, or Liberal, Conservative, New Democrat in legislation, but because we believe that all Manitobans would expect from us, regardless of the party that we represent, to act in accordance with a way that is democratic and with a way that they would find to be respectful. *[interjection]*

I know the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) still is concerned about things that happened earlier in this session, and I suspect that concern is because he is getting pressure from constituents of his own who are saying: Why did you not call that inquiry into Crocus? Why did you allow this to happen? Why are you concerned about transparency? *[interjection]* The member for Industry says, well, relevance, and I think there is a direct relevance between transparency in the issue of Crocus and transparency in the issue of an omnibus bill, because the transparency that one tries to see through a government's scandal or corruption, which may, in fact, be the case with Crocus, we would find through an inquiry, is also the principle of transparency that we would like to see brought to all legislation.

I do not think it serves any of us here in this Legislature to return home, whether we are going to Selkirk or whether we are going to Rossmere, Inkster or Minto or the other constituencies that we represent, and try to sell legislation that is oversweeping and overwhelming. *[interjection]* I would actually challenge the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). I would challenge the Member for Selkirk to return to his riding and—well, not just that, I know that seems like a challenge in and of itself for the Member for

Selkirk or perhaps the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), you know, who seems to have left the premises, Mr. Speaker. But, anyway, I return, I would challenge the Member for Selkirk or the Minister of Education to return to their constituencies with this legislation and try to go through it page by page with constituents on the different aspects of the legislation. I think they would probably have some of their own members, some of their own constituents, who would say: Well, is this not something that will be better addressed in another area, or is this really connected to this particular issue? I suspect that, when the Member for Selkirk returns to his riding at the next election or maybe sooner, he will raise this issue with his constituents and will ensure that they know that it was difficult that we had this particular omnibus legislation.

I do appreciate the offerings of support that I am getting from members opposite. I think in this short time I have been able to convince them that this is, in fact, difficult legislation to deal with in one aspect, in one particular way. You know, I say very clearly because, again, in a very non-partisan way, there may be pieces of this legislation where I am completely in agreement with. I mean, there may be pieces of this legislation where I would say, well, this is not a bad provision. I cite specifically, I think, the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) brought forward some ideas that were somehow incorporated within this legislation regarding the distance between polls. I mean, I think that I have generally been consistent in trying to support pieces of legislation that allow members to—or ideas that will allow people to vote more freely and to have accessibility to elections.

Continuing on the theme, Mr. Speaker, of a non-partisan direction, I remember the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). The Member for Inkster, a Liberal, and I do not think I have ever been accused of being a Liberal before—

An Honourable Member: We will send you a leaflet, Kelvin.

Mr. Goertzen: —and certainly I would be proud to be in the Member for Inkster's campaign literature, although I am not sure that it would be helpful for him. He called me one day, and he said, you know, Kelvin, I am going to be—

An Honourable Member: No, no, no. You cannot go by names.

Mr. Goertzen: Okay, okay. The Member for Inkster phoned me and said, you know, Member for Steinbach, I am going to be at the regional school, my alma mater actually, but I am going to be at the regional school, Steinbach Regional school, to talk about election reform, and would you like to come to that? I know, had that kind of an offer been made to any of the New Democrats, they would, of course, have quickly looked for the grassy knoll and thought some sort of suspicion was at play here and what could the Member for Inkster be plotting. But I took him at his word that he was simply outreaching to young people and wanted to talk about democratic reform and so I did. I met him at the Steinbach Regional Secondary School. We had lunch with our principal, Bernie Hiebert, also a good friend of mine, and we—*[interjection]*

Well, the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) says they are all Tories. I do not pretend to know their political affiliation, but if they are all Tories in Steinbach, well, then, I say that is great and Godspeed to them.

But, Mr. Speaker, the point that I am trying to make is that we met in a bipartisan way to talk about issues, about how to get young people more involved in the political system. So a lot of these things do transcend politics and reach beyond our individual mind frames of left or right, or Liberal or Conservative, New Democrat or Liberal. There are broader issues at play. I think that it would be quite a gesture, almost symbolic, similar to what the Member for Inkster extended, if the House Leader would stand and say, well, we actually do think that perhaps this legislation is too over-sweeping, too overwhelming and we are going to split it up into various components and take that debate into committee, or into other places throughout Manitoba. I will not speak for members of the independent party, but perhaps they would also agree, would also say that that is a more democratic way to proceed on this particular legislation.

See, the Member for Inkster, it says four bills. It is four bills. Now we are already into negotiation. I said six, he says four; this is what the democratic process should be, Mr. Speaker, where we could sit down and say, well, let us talk this out and lets find out what the best way is and determine what would be best for all Manitobans. But, instead of looking at it in that sort of a way, this government tries to politicize everything. And, if there was any sort of legislation that you would want to depoliticize, this would be the kind of legislation that you would want

to take out of that realm, because we are doing it not just for ourselves as individuals. We are, in fact, doing it for members across the public and future members of this particular Assembly.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, that, as we look at this legislation, there might be some agreement. There are parts that all of us could support here, as legislators, but there certainly would be certain parts, I suspect, that our paths might diverge and that we will not have that same level of unanimity, and that would be reflective, I think, in committee, as well, as a resident has come forward and says, well, I like this particular piece of the legislation, but I do not like that particular piece of the legislation. More so we will see that than with most other bills here in the Legislature because of the overarching nature of this particular piece of legislation. I suspect that, if we talk to residents around Manitoba, whether they are in Thompson, whether they are in Seine River, or whether or not they were in Wellington, I know that those Manitobans would say to us that there needs to be a level of fairness and there needs to be a level of co-operation here in this Legislature. The Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos) is nodding his head; he has heard this from constituents, too.

I think this is a universal principle, that we should be able to work with particular pieces of legislature, and I ask the Member for Wellington to join me, then, in this particular quest on this legislation to have the bill divided. I have not had the opportunity to work with the Member for Wellington on a number of specific situations, but this might be

one. We might forge an alliance, as it were, to try to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that this bill is reformed and that we ensure that it is done in a way that all Manitobans would see as appropriate and would see as respectful.

So I know that I have given members opposite much to think about over the course of this evening, and I know that this bill will proceed through the legislative process.

As the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) sips a drink at the Union Centre tonight, as he is thinking about broader issues, I would hope that he would reflect on this in words that I have—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have four minutes remaining. Would you like to take that time when the matter is before the House?

An Honourable Member: I will reserve that.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who has four minutes remaining, and also will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 15, 2006

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