

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 215—The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act (Drug-Endangered Children)**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 215, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Drug-Endangered Children), be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what this bill does is it recognizes that there is a need to protect our children who are put into positions where more and more often we are seeing grow-ops and other illegal drugs being produced, and quite often children are used as a shield. We find that totally unacceptable. This bill addresses that issue so that Child and Family Services and the government will have more ability to be able to ensure that the child's interests are first and foremost being taken care of.

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

PETITIONS

**Removal of Agriculture Positions from
Minnedosa**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Nine positions with the Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Crown Lands Branch are being moved out of Minnedosa.

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy.

Removal of these positions will be detrimental to revitalizing this rural agriculture community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider stopping the removal of these positions from our community, and to consider utilizing current technology in order to maintain these positions in their existing location.

This petition signed by Karen Parenteau, Benita Nylen, Kara Burton 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. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I wish to present the following petition, and these are the reasons for the petition:

Nine positions with the Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Crown Lands Branch are being moved out of Minnedosa.

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy.

Removal of these positions will be detrimental to revitalizing this rural agriculture community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider stopping the removal of these positions from our community, and to consider utilizing current technology in order to maintain these positions in their existing location.

This petition signed by Greg Bradco, Wilf Steinhilber, Greg Marchischuk and many, many others.

Child Welfare Services

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, 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 31 other 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 Jean Roy, Georgina Dayton, Betty Preusentanz and many, many others.

*(13:35)

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 Donna Guspodarchuk, Karrie Ouchas, Meagen Abraham and many, many others.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

That is signed, Mr. Speaker, L. Kirton, H. Braun, J. Erickson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Neepawa Area Collegiate 47 Grade 11 students under the direction of Mrs. Michelle Young. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Kyoto Targets

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday the Premier (Mr. Doer) indicated on the record that the Province of Manitoba will exceed its Kyoto targets. The government's own documents say they will exceed the targets and plan to reduce emissions by

up to 18 percent below 1990 levels by 2010, which is only four years away, but, in fact, the record speaks to a different story. Emissions have increased by half a megaton between 1999 and 2003 under this government's watch.

Now we are used to government spin coming from this NDP government and phoney promises, but how can the government talk about exceeding targets when our own emissions in Manitoba are continuing to climb?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member asked this question because I want the member to know a couple of facts for a change—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: The Kyoto protocol came into effect in 2005 when the Government of Canada signed on. The period under which Kyoto emission targets should be met are the years 2008 until 2012. The argument about emissions going up between 1990 and this period has happened, Mr. Speaker. The target dates are 2008 and 2012. That is when the commitments must be met. That is why Manitoba was named by the David Suzuki Foundation as having the best climate change program in Canada.

Mr. McFadyen: The minister wants to talk about facts. Yesterday, he said in this House that no defendant was allowed to file a motion to dismiss a lawsuit before the certification application went in. With the lawsuit proceeding against Crocus, the defendant, Ms. Lederman, filed her application shortly after the statement of claim was filed and had the claim against her dismissed. That is what confident defendants—[interjection]

The minister, reading from his old dusty law books, has got the facts wrong on that point. I was just pointing to a couple of members of his own caucus who are pretty good lawyers, the Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) and the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan). I would encourage him, if he wants to talk about facts, to go and speak to some other lawyers in his own caucus about what the facts are.

Now let us come back to Bill 11. Mr. Speaker, Bill 11, on the very important issue of greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba, given that this government's Bill 11 encourages the use of natural gas which adds to emissions and does not cut them,

how can they call themselves the champions of Kyoto when they are encouraging the burning of more natural gas?

* (13:40)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I choose not to question the ability of the member opposite who I think practised law, worked for Premier Filmon, helped the Mike Harris campaign and then was going to run in one riding and another riding and another riding. I do not want to question the integrity of the member opposite.

I asked a lawyer from Alberta that very point, Mr. Speaker, about the filing of a statement of defence in the \$200-million award that the member said was going to be imposed on the Government of Manitoba. After he stopped laughing, after the Conservative lawyer I asked stopped laughing, I checked with our lawyer and he had the same difficulty.

With respect to Bill 11, it does not cross-subsidize. We will ensure in our amendments that it does not cross-subsidize. The point is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: In light of this government, this NDP government's phoney promise to end hallway medicine; its phoney promise to build the floodway; phoney, phoney, phoney promise to end hallway medicine in six months; its phoney promise to build the floodway on budget; in light of the actual steps backward taken between 1999 and 2003 and in light of Bill 11, is the Premier's Kyoto promise not just another example of the NDP being all spin and no substance?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, in 1999, \$10 million of production of ethanol in Manitoba; next year, \$130 million litres of ethanol in Manitoba. In 1999, no biodiesel projects; today, two plants; four to five plants on stream in the next year.

In 1999, there was not a wind turbine within a thousand miles of Aikins, MacAulay law office; today, 99 megawatts running and providing for the rural economy of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, *BusinessWeek* rated this province as the leading jurisdiction in the world on energy and climate change. Gary Doer was named the No. 1, top 10 in the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time had expired, but I want to remind members that when making reference to other members in the House, it is members by their constituency or ministers by their titles.

Next question.

Bill 11 Withdrawal

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Former NDP Premier, Ed Schreyer, called Bill 11 perverse and he also said, I quote: It is "the most retrograde step the government could possibly take."

Mr. Speaker, we have many, many Manitobans lining up to speak in opposition to Bill 11, people who are saying it is absurd, it is unfair, it does not promote conservation, it is perverse, it is poor public policy.

Will the government and the Minister responsible for Hydro today stand up and indicate that he will withdraw Bill 11?

Hon. Dave Chomiak Minister of Energy, Science and Technology: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite forgot to tell the public, with respect to Bill 11, that it is a two-year bill. It was only designed to prevent rate shock over two years. The members forgot to tell the public that there is no cross-subsidization.

We will amend the bill to ensure that there is no cross-subsidization to deal with members opposite. The members opposite say the short-term money will help Manitobans, people on low incomes, people in the North, people in rural Manitoba, who are going to have no choice but to have high energy costs, can help use that period of time to decrease their consumption so in the long period they will not have to pay those excess costs, something that has been done in every province. We will amend the bill to make that clear so members cannot distort it.

*(13:45)

Mrs. Mitchelson: The last time the NDP brought in a Hydro bill for two years was to raid Manitoba Hydro for \$203 million, and this is just a repeat, Mr. Speaker. The minister has said that Bill 11 is needed to promote energy efficiency when many successful Power Smart programs are up and running already. Why is this bill needed now?

Mr. Chomiak: In fact, Mr. Speaker, I will speak to that. In fact, it is even more timely now. The member

may not know that the federal government has pulled out of the EnerGuide and the energy savings programs that were previously promised. The federal government has pulled out. We have had to increase the costs and subsidize the EnerGuide program \$340 to allow people to do energy audits because the federal government pulled its funding.

We have a whole period of time until the federal government comes back in. They say, in the fall and I accept them at their word, with more programs. There is more reason than ever to have some short-term relief to allow people to do conservation because the federal programs have been cut. We are waiting till the fall to see what new programs will be instituted.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, the minister has just made my case for why legislation is not needed. They have programs now. They can backfill now without legislation for the federal programs. There is no need to put in place legislation to run Power Smart programs. We have heard from many, many, over a thousand Manitoba families, that oppose Bill 11. Manitobans are sending this government a message. They do not want to see another raid on Manitoba Hydro revenues. They do not want this government to create another slush fund like they did in 2002.

I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Hydro: Will he stand up today, protect the ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro and withdraw Bill 11?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, thank you—

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, we will protect ratepayers which is why we put in place a bill like this, which is why 4,830 people in Winnipeg last year took part in the EnerGuide; 2,030 outside of Winnipeg took part in EnerGuide; 789 took part in EnerGuide. On the high-efficiency furnace replacement program, the new program, 1,599 individuals took part. The insulation program doubled or tripled because we provided a rebate on the insulation which was a new program. We have a short period of time to assist Manitobans in dealing with high energy prices.

Red River Floodway Federal Support

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): To the Minister of Water Stewardship:

Given the estimates of at least \$60 million in taxpayers' dollars that are going to be lost due to the sweetheart deal cut by this government with his friends in the unions, and in light of the Premier's (Mr. Doer) comments last week that some of the work related to the floodway may be cut out in order to bring it within the revised budget estimate, my question to the minister is how much safety for Manitobans will this government bargain away in order to put more money in the pockets of their friends?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, since the member opposite raised the issue of safety and the importance of the floodway, I am wondering if he agrees with the comments of one Brian Pallister, who apparently today has been reported as saying he wants the work halted until the overrun is explained. I want to explain to the member opposite that no thanks to the Conservative Party, we have built to 1-in-140-year protection already. We are building by next spring 1-in-300-year protection, and we will continue to target 1-in-700-year protection.

We are committed to the floodway expansion. The only issue that the Tories keep raising is this issue. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that the project management agreement was in place for phase 1 and there—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the minister has made the point both today and yesterday that we should be doing the work of talking to the federal government on this issue. The Premier (Mr. Doer) yesterday said that he is not going to raise the floodway issue with the Prime Minister, even though he is going to be sitting next to the Prime Minister tomorrow in Gimli.

So my question to the minister is: Why will the Premier not raise this very important issue for Manitobans with the Prime Minister? Is it not because your government has no credibility, zero credibility, when it comes to discussing financial issues with the federal government?

* (13:50)

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has raised this with the Prime Minister. I have raised this with Mr. Cannon, with Minister Toews, and, again, if he wonders why we might have some concerns, maybe they could talk to Brian Pallister to persuade him that it will be absolutely wrong to stop construction of the

floodway expansion. We need to protect Manitobans and we will protect Manitobans.

Mr. McFadyen: We on this side of the House will not apologize for one second because the government has zero credibility when it comes to speaking with the federal government on significant issues of public finance. Zero credibility, Mr. Speaker, which is why this issue is before us and in the media.

My question to the minister is: Will he do the right thing? Will he put the safety of Manitobans first? Will he change the rules for the second phase of floodway work so that the safety and the finances of Manitobans will not be sold down the river in order to pay back friends of the NDP?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I notice the Leader of the Opposition did not reference Brian Pallister's comments. I take by that, Mr. Speaker, he does not care that a member of the Conservative Party would suggest shutting down the project, which would be absolutely irresponsible.

I know that members opposite do not have much experience in construction. For 11 years, believe you me, the C in PC, under the Filmon government, did not stand for construction. They do not know what it is like to be dealing with a major project. They have not done one in 30 years in this province. But, Mr. Speaker, phase 1 was on time and on budget, and phase 2, we have done the prudent thing which is go back, sharpen the pencils, make sure we can arrange the construction schedule in a way that is most efficient to take into account the higher price of steel and the higher price of fuel.

But, let me put on the record again, Mr. Speaker, it has taken an NDP government to extend the floodway—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Manitoba Economy Equalization Payments

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): At the Premiers' conference in Gimli this morning, the premiers of British Columbia and Saskatchewan indicated that there was a long discussion on equalization payments between the premiers. Given that there was a long discussion, can the Minister of Finance update this House as to the nature of those discussions and what position the Premier (Mr. Doer) took with respect to equalization?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The position of Manitoba is well known. It extends across two governments, the former government of the PCs and Premier Filmon and the current government. Both governments have always said they believe in a 10-province average for equalization with all revenues included, including natural resource revenues, including user fees. That is the standard position of the government going back well over a decade.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, increases in equalization payments relative to other provinces are an indication that Manitoba's economy is not keeping pace with other provinces. It means we are falling behind. Equalization payments are up 75 percent from 1999 levels. Contrast that with Saskatchewan which will receive no equalization payments this year.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why has he failed to grow Manitoba's economy on pace with the rest of Canada? Why has even failed to keep up with Saskatchewan?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there has been nothing but good news coming out on the Manitoba economy—[interjection] I have a list here of 20 indicators, three of which, manufacturing capital investment of 61 percent versus the Canadian average of 3.4 percent; construction work up 24 percent versus the Canadian average of 7 percent; capital investment up 14.6 percent versus the Canadian average of 6.1 percent. All of those are leading indicators for the country. I hope the member gives me a chance to enumerate the rest of them.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, let me give the Finance Minister some more good news. As Gerry Price put it, a prominent Winnipeg businessman, the Finance Minister is completely naive, and he absolutely misses the point because we are failing in this province. Manitoba sticks out in western Canada like a sore thumb. It is the only have-not province in western Canada. No longer can we compare ourselves to Saskatchewan. Now Saskatchewan compares itself to Manitoba and it points to Manitoba in its latest budget as an underperformer.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why will he not spend more time growing our economy and less time begging Ottawa for more handouts?

* (13:55)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, there are 20 indicators where we exceed the

Canadian average. Now the member wants to know what kind of company we are keeping in terms of our prospective. KPMG says that we are very competitive on labour rates, we are very competitive overall. We have one of the best environments for business manufacturing in the country. That is KPMG.

C.D. Howe Institute, we have the best marginal effective tax rate west of New Brunswick. The Fraser Institute, a well-known friend of New Democratic governments everywhere in this country, ranked Manitoba as fourth-best investment climate in the country. These are C.D. Howe Institute, Fraser Institute, KPMG. That is the kind of naiveté we need, support for the economy of Manitoba.

Children in Care Minister's Awareness of Concerns

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, 31 children in care or recently released from care have died under the watch of this minister and this government. This Minister of Family Services originally refused to ask for an accounting of children in care, has refused to table terms of reference, has refused to say what concerns were coming from the review. The minister says no concerns were raised to her, but the letter she tabled last week clearly implies that concerns were being raised.

I find it incredulous that this minister would not have asked what are the nature of these concerns. Why has this minister not asked for the details regarding the concerns raised? Is she deflecting responsibility from herself and laying blame with the authorities, or does she simply not care?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no deflecting of blame here. There is respect for the front-line workers from this government and from this side of the House. Children come into care for various reasons. There are challenges for the children. There are challenges for the families. It is very important that as children come into care, receive services and hopefully overcome these challenges, that there is the support that is needed.

The letter that was tabled last week by Elsie Flette, to the acting executive director of the Child Protection Branch, was ensuring him and ensuring Manitobans that any concerns that were raised were being dealt with, Mr. Speaker. This is the message to

Manitobans, our front-line people care about the children and are working with them.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want to know what the concerns are and how this minister is addressing them. Thirty-one children have died and this minister still refuses to act in a meaningful way. The letter from the southern Aboriginal First Nations authority that this minister tabled indicates the authorities are following up on concerns that were raised. I applaud the authorities for taking that initiative to do these face-to-face meetings. This minister is on record as saying that no concerns have been raised to her. This minister has a duty to find out what the concerns are and not bury her head in the sand on this very important issue. This minister is perpetrating a culture of do not know, do not ask.

Mr. Speaker, when will this minister fulfill her duty and ask the authorities to inform her of the nature of the concerns that are being raised?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I will say that the authorities are doing work on the front lines and my duty is to work with them and to support them. That is what we are doing. The member opposite has a duty to respect the laws of this province. She knows, or she should know, perhaps she does not, but discussing individual cases across this House is inappropriate. In the past, she has brought in vulnerable people going through very difficult times in their lives and has exploited them for no purpose other than cheap political games. Shame on her. We will respect the front-line workers and the laws of Manitoba.

* (14:00)

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, as usual, when this minister is backed into a corner, she goes on the attack. She has a duty to protect children in this province.

Mr. Speaker, 31 children have died and this minister still refuses to be accountable. The letter she tabled in Estimates and in this House indicates that there are concerns that are being addressed, and, yet, she does not know what these concerns are. She has the attitude that if she does not know about concerns then there are no concerns.

It is this minister's responsibility to find out and act on these concerns. Does she not do this because she does not care or is she simply being negligent and irresponsible in performing her duties as the minister responsible for children in care?

Ms. Melnick: Well, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the record of this government, where we have increased funding for child protection, it is over \$80 million. When we look at the devolution of child welfare, which was supported unanimously including by the Member for Morris, and when you look at the Estimates process this year and the budget this year where there is some \$27 million in new monies for the Child Protection Branch, I look forward to the Member for Morris doing her duty for the children of Manitoba in supporting our budget.

Children in Care Minister's Awareness of Concerns

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): When this minister speaks about the record of this government, 31 children have lost their life because this minister has no leadership skills to address the issues. If there have been concerns raised during the current reviews of the children in care, the Minister of Family Services has a duty to apprise herself of these concerns.

Mr. Speaker, when will this minister inform Manitobans what concerns were raised, how were they dealt with and is she satisfied that the children in her care and under her watch are not at risk?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I will quote from the letter that was tabled last week, and it says: Please be advised that all our respective agencies have completed their review of current cases. Agencies were also instructed to immediately attend to any concerns about a case arising from the review, and they have assured us that they are following up on any concerns identified. We would like to assure you that any concerns that are identified about any particular case are being followed up on by the authorities. We will not be waiting for the final report to address such concerns.

These are professionals working on the front line, very delicate situations, vulnerable children, vulnerable families, and members opposite do nothing more than try to undermine their good work. Shame on members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: Shame on the minister. She is refusing to answer the question.

The letter to Jay Rodgers from the Southern First Nations Network of Care implies that there are concerns that are being dealt with, even if she said none have been brought to her attention. It is her responsibility to follow through.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister ask the authorities to brief her on the concerns raised during the review and to ensure herself that all children in her care are safe? It is simple, respond.

Ms. Melnick: Well, you talk about ministerial responses. Within a week of learning of the tragic incident, I called for an external review based on cases for an extended section 4 review.

This is in contrast to the former minister who sits in the front row of the opposition bench who, when the issue of caseloads was raised, and it was 45 to 80 caseloads, said: That is the responsibility of Winnipeg Child and Family. She refused to work with them. She refused to acknowledge that she had a responsibility of a minister. I think the Member for Minnedosa should talk to the former minister about responsibility.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, what is she hiding and what is she afraid of? The minister refuses to be accountable and responsible. The minister shows no leadership. When questions are asked, she needs to satisfy herself that the children are being taken care of that are in her care.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for children in care tell the House today what concerns authorities have brought forward, what actions she is taking and will she respond to the questions?

Ms. Melnick: This is a government that not only supports front-line workers, we also support foster families. That is in direct contrast to the former minister who cut foster family rates three times; '93, '94 and '96. She also cut all funding to the Manitoba Foster Family Network. We have increased foster family rates four times and we have restored funding to the Manitoba Foster Family Network. I am pleased to say that I have gone to many of their AGMs. We support the foster families, we support the front-line workers and this is the government that cares for the children of Manitoba.

Manitoba Housing On-site Security

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I recently met with residents at 170 Hendon, a government department building operated by the Minister of Family Services and Housing. Residents have repeatedly complained about drugs, violence and prostitution in the minister's building. The residents say complaints to Manitoba Housing are like whistling in the wind. It took some eight months to get a known drug dealer evicted as a tenant and

soon after he was back in the building peddling drugs. *The Metro* newspaper quotes Tom Moody, the minister's Director of Property Services, as saying Manitoba Housing did bar the resident after evicting him.

Can the minister today confirm that this drug dealer has in fact been barred from the building, and can she tell us what measures are being taken to make sure that he never returns?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the member has answered his own question. He has shown that when there is an issue that arises in a Manitoba Housing unit, in a Manitoba Housing complex, that the department responds. In this case, they have responded to an individual who was of concern not only through eviction but also through looking at making sure that he is not in the building.

The member also had a briefing from the department and he knows full well that there has been a security review that has been undergone under the new security and prevention officer that we hired in 2002. There have been extensive reviews, there have been security cameras put in, there has been card access put in. Again, he is not only trying to undermine child-

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: But, Mr. Speaker, residents tell me he is still coming back and the minister seems impotent to do anything.

This minister and her government are operating a den of sin and vice. There is a problem and I was shocked to learn that it is so bad at 170 Hendon that when residents even dared to complain, they are given surcharges to their rent by this government. Every resident that I met with cried for on-site security. There are many residents in the building with disabilities who receive disability assistance and their cheques will be coming in the next three days.

Will this minister take action to immediately put 24-hour on-site security in the building to protect vulnerable tenants?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I think I heard the words operating of sin. I am wondering if he is now wanting to add the MHA staff to his list of minions. That is as much respect as he has for the people in Manitoba Housing.

We have also worked with the apartment watch program that was brought in by the Professional

Property Association. Perhaps they too are minions of this government. We also work with the Winnipeg Police Service. I wonder if he is going to call them minions too.

As you can see, there is a community response when concerns are raised to the MHA, through the Winnipeg Police Service, through the property managers of Manitoba. There are no sin bins or whatever he wants to call them at MHA. There are concerned people who are working on very serious issues.

Red River Floodway Cost Overrun

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the government again, time after time, demonstrates its incompetence and mismanagement. Now all we need to do is look at the floodway, over 135 million more dollars. That is the minimum. That is \$100, whether you are nine months old or 90 years old, that this government is reaching into the pockets. Why? Because of its pure incompetence and its inability to come on budget on time on the critical issue of the floodway here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, given the single importance of this issue, my question to the Deputy Premier is: Why does the Premier (Mr. Doer) not recognize how important this issue is and that he needs to talk to the Prime Minister? He has a golden opportunity here tomorrow to talk to the Prime Minister. Why does he refuse to talk to the Prime Minister on this critically important issue?

Already, Mr. Speaker, they have an absolute disaster in protecting the taxpayers of our province. It is time that our Premier stand up and talk.

*(14:10)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Deputy Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, if the member across shouts any louder, they might hear him all the way in Gimli.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite do not support—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite, the Liberal Party, try to have it both ways. One time they speak against the floodway; next time they speak for the floodway. The project, phase 1, that has been completed, has

been on time and on budget. So let the member opposite not say that phase 1 is over budget.

What he really should say is that he is against the project, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you that our Premier supports this project. He has raised it with the federal government. He raised it with the previous Liberal government and I hope that the Conservative government—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Manitoba Economy Increased Growth

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, given the misleading information and doom-and-gloom outlook from the members opposite regarding our provincial economy, can the Minister of Industry, Economic trade and Mines update the House on how competitive Manitoba has become under this government's initiatives?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): I thank the member for the question because it is giving us a chance—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rondeau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives us some time to put some correct information on the record.

The first thing is the small business rate which was 9 percent under the members opposite, second highest in the country, has now dropped to second lowest. The Toronto-Dominion Economics says that this initiative will put Manitoba's small business income tax rate on par with Alberta's and well below the rate of its neighbours in Saskatchewan and Ontario.

As far as the corporate tax rate, members opposite, when they were in government, did nothing, absolutely nothing. This is the fourth drop of the corporate tax rate which does well.

We have increased the R and D Tax Credits and the RST on manufacturing is getting refundable. We started that last year and we are increasing that. Because of that—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Walkinshaw Place Property Taxes

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Peter Albrecht of Walkinshaw Place, a country vacation, has been assessed a property tax increase this year that is nearly double: from \$2,500 to \$5,000 in one year. The Board of Revision in Morton overwhelmingly ruled in favour of Mr. Albrecht's case last fall. The minister has directed his department to further pursue an excessive tax grab in this area. Tomorrow Mr. Albrecht has to defend himself again before the municipal appeal board.

Why is the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs not defending economic development instead of killing rural initiatives taken by this and other farm families?

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Thank you very much for the member raising the issue of farm families, and certainly on the issue of what we have done in rural Manitoba.

The members, for a number of years, through the nineties, sauntered into the coffee shops with their fingers tucked in their pockets telling farmers exactly what they were going to do for them and how they were going to reduce their taxes. What did they do? They increased the taxes on farmland. Certainly on the school side, they increased the portioning rate for farmers which drove their prices up, not to mention the sale of MTS that drove every one of their costs up. But, Mr. Speaker, we reduced that.

There is a process certainly on taxation. What we have seen in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, is we have seen an increase in values of land all across Manitoba; rural, urban and throughout this province. It is based on that.

Highway 201 Bridge Reconstruction

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Our roadways and our bridges in this province are in shambles. Yesterday the people in the municipality of Franklin, businessmen, farmers and others, met to discuss the state of the highways and the bridge on 201 highway crossing the Red River. The minister has neglected to take action and to construct a new bridge choosing only to order the installation of useless traffic lights on the current bridge.

Mr. Speaker, when can we expect that this minister will order the rebuilding of the bridge on 201 highway crossing the Red River?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): The member opposite speaks of increasing transportation budgets and all kinds of other issues which, of course, he votes against, Mr. Speaker. I have to tell you that we are working in consultation with rural municipalities to address this situation.

He talks about traffic lights on the bridge. It is addressing a safety issue currently, and we are doing the engineering, looking at enhancing this particular structure and looking at rebuilding it. It is a bridge that is 50 years old. We have had those challenges dropped on us after the 1990s which nothing was done, quite frankly. The 1999 pre-election budget, they had \$174 million in the transportation budget; now it is \$257 million more; \$83 million more per year, and yet, they still vote against budgets that we bring forward just like that.

Mr. Penner: The longer this minister will wait, the more the cost of the bridge will be on the Red River and it would be—

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Penner: It is interesting that the NDP caucus on the government side is applauding the desecration of our business community on the east side of the river. Emerson Milling, a major processor of oats on the east side of the Red River, has no access for its product to come into its mill. They have 12 people who are in jeopardy of being laid off and this minister refuses to build a bridge.

Is he waiting for unionization of the bridge project as well as the Winnipeg floodway, or is he going to tell the people of the R.M. of Franklin and the rest of southern Manitoba when he is, in fact, going to construct the bridge on 201 leading across the Red River?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): It took the Member for Emerson, who I almost miss as my critic, to get up and put on the facts that clearly, because of the construction industry that is happening right now, costs are going up whether it is bridges that the Minister of Transportation is designing right now, or whether it is for the floodway. Finally, it has taken the Member for Emerson to point out what everybody except the

Leader of the Opposition and the remaining Conservative members have not seen, that is, right now, we are in the middle of something that is unheard of certainly when the members opposite were in power. It is called a construction boom, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

* (14:20)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Pansy, Manitoba

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to point out an injustice that has been put upon the residents of a small community in the riding which I represent.

The 2005-2006 highways map, of which this government was proud of, removed from the map the southeastern hamlet of Pansy, Manitoba, which is located on Highway 403. I know that the community of Pansy may not be important to this government, but I can tell you it is a community with history and heritage and still very much with us, Mr. Speaker, despite its removal from the map.

Each year I have been fortunate to attend the Pansy Day Celebration. I would invite the minister of highways to come with me. I know they are off the map, so I will take him with me this year so he can find his way, Mr. Speaker.

Pansy has a community hall. It holds regular events. There is a poker derby every year. The community residents still get their mail in the Pansy post office. The community has two churches, one which I attended, not far in fact from where my grandfather farmed, Mr. Speaker.

I know that going south for the members opposite sometimes means walking to the fountain in the back of the Legislature because that is as far south as they get, but I can tell them that there are still important communities like Pansy in Manitoba.

I am proud to have family roots in Pansy. I believe these small hamlets still play a role in the future of our province. I want to ensure that Pansy gets back on the map for next year so that I can tell members I still believe in a place called Pansy, Mr. Speaker.

Fort Richmond Collegiate

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize an exceptional group of students from Fort Richmond Collegiate. Numerous students have displayed impressive levels of determination and study in the field of science and have distinguished themselves and their school as the leaders of tomorrow.

Ted Paranjothy, 16 years old, and Ravindi Gunasekara, 15 years old, have already set themselves apart. Ted has published a paper in a major medical journal and has patented a process that could help find the cure for some of the deadliest cancers: prostate, lung and breast cancer. Meanwhile, Ravindi has conducted research into ways to lower blood pressure and a possible correlation between yellow peas and preventing certain forms of cancer.

Recently they both made award-winning presentations at the Canada-Wide Science Fair held in Saguenay, Québec. Ravindi was the recipient of the biotechnology and pharmaceutical sciences award, while Ted was awarded a silver medal in biotechnology and pharmaceutical senior sciences award.

At the same time, a group of Grade 12 students will soon be leaving for Australia in order to participate in a Biotechnology Innovation Week at a prestigious Australian high school. Emily Blunden, Alex Wishart, Saba Naghipur, Andrea Evans, Lynda Kong, Zexi Wang and Olwyn Friesen will put their extensive scientific experience and coursework to work in an international setting exchanging expertise and knowledge about the fields of biotechnology. Mr. Speaker, I need not emphasize the extraordinary achievements made by these students.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank both the teachers and the mentors at Fort Richmond Collegiate who have nurtured many budding scientists, as well as the parents who have supported their children throughout their endeavours. I would like to congratulate the students and the school for their commitment to science and to excellence and wish them the best for the future. We will be watching them, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Viriden Regional Air Show

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to inform all Manitobans of the very successful Viriden regional air show held in Viriden this past weekend, and, as well, recognize Zone Command of the Royal Canadian Branch No. 8

of Virden for their efforts and dedication of the portion of 259 highway as Commonwealth Drive.

The air show featured none other than the Canadian Forces Snowbirds led by Major Ian McLean and the Canadian Forces team of pilots, technicians and support members of that crew. Mr. Speaker, also there were other show participants including Bill Carter Pitts Special, the Third Strike Wingwalking of Carol Pilon from Québec, Bob Mays P-51 Mustang and Peter McLeod, a young aerodynamic pilot that was taking part in his first air show.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to bring greetings on behalf of all Manitobans on Friday evening at the Grand Central Hotel where owners Darcy and Val Cockbill hosted the welcoming reception. Greetings were also offered by His Worship Mayor Stan Ward and reeve of our R.M. of Wallace, Vince Heaman.

Congratulations go to the organizing committee chaired by Brock Andrew of Virden, a former Snowbird pilot himself I might add, and exceptional work done by his brother and the whole Andrew family, as well as the town of Virden and the R.M. of Wallace for their participation in making this event so successful. The many, many volunteers including the firefighters that were on hand throughout the whole event of the two-day show were exceptional in their efforts to make this what may turn into a biannual event, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say, as well, on Sunday morning, the Royal Canadian Legion Zone Command hosted by Branch No. 8 of Virden held the Zone Decoration Day and dedication of the former Airport Road to Commonwealth Drive. This dedicated portion of No. 259 highway is from No. 1 highway north to the airport, and his Honour, the Honourable John Harvard, P.C., O.M., Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, was in attendance to cut the official ribbon and to open Commonwealth Drive. Mr. Lloyd Horn and Mr. Aubrey Paul both trained at the elementary flight training centre school in Virden at the time of the war, held the official ribbon, and acting chaplain Jaclyn Evachsen provided the prayer at both the ribbon cutting and at the dedication ceremony held earlier in the Virden auditorium, where master of ceremonies Greg Tough officiated.

The Lieutenant-Governor, Honourable John Harvard, addressed the audience and laid a wreath in honour of war veterans and fallen comrades. Wreaths were also laid by Major Ian McLean, representing the Canadian Armed Forces; Walter Murray, the

zone commander and president of Legion No. 8, Fred MacDonald. We look forward to making this air show a biannual event. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Before I recognize the honourable member, I would like to remind members that when making reference to members of the House to do so by constituencies or ministers by title.

Maples Collegiate Unity March

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight an important event which occurred today. That event was the 11th annual Maples Collegiate Unity March. I am pleased to say that I was able to welcome this nationally recognized group at the steps of the Legislative Assembly and bring greetings from the government. The march began at the Maples Collegiate and finished on the front steps of the Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the Unity March is a significant event undertaken by the students and staff of Maples Collegiate to raise awareness of racial discrimination. I am proud to say that the Maples Unity Group co-ordinates this march every year. The march reminds us legislators that we must promote the end of discrimination in our communities. The group also promotes peace through its many yearly activities. This includes food drives, bringing speakers to speak on racism, volunteering at homeless shelters and participating in Remembrance Day ceremonies. One of the biggest events planned by this Unity Group is Unity Day. This day is held in conjunction with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say several hundred students attended today's march. Participating students come from many different cultures and backgrounds and, indeed, they represent a microcosm of the diversity of our communities. Their efforts show us that people from many backgrounds can unite to promote values of mutual respect, cultural inclusion and the embracing of diversity.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the staff and students of Maples Collegiate who participated in today's march. I commend everyone for promoting peace and the elimination of racism. Thank you.

* (14:30)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to be able to add some

comments on two very important issues. The first, as the Member for Maples has made reference to the annual Unity March, being an MLA that represents a good portion of the Maples, I would like to extend, with a great deal of pride, my heartfelt congratulations to those that have participated in this year's Unity March.

I know myself and others have had the opportunity to participate and actually walk with the students, which I think is very, very important to support our students. I think it is really important that we encourage our children and young adults to be that much more aware and educated about what types of issues are very real today. You know, the issues of racism, the need for peace are critically important issues.

I just want to extend my congratulations to all those who helped or assisted in any way whatsoever in the organization of this wonderful event. We look forward to being able to participate with it in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to let all members know that in the week of June 9, the Philippine Independence Week is upon us. I would encourage members of this Chamber to participate in the many different activities of that week. What you will sense is what I have sensed for many, many years, and that is that Filipino hospitality is second to no other community. If people will take the time and attend some of these events, I am sure you will experience that hospitality in a very real and a very tangible way.

So I did also want to take this opportunity just to congratulate again those individuals within the Filipino community, primarily, that put that week together because I know it takes a great deal of energy, a great deal of resources, time and commitment and so forth in order to make it happen.

I think it is the responsibility of all of us to get a better appreciation of a wonderful community that has done so much for our province, whether it is socially or economically, whatever else it might be.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bills 22, 31, 14, 24, 25, 37 and 30.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we will resume debate on second readings of Bills 22, 31, 14, 24, 25, 37 and 30.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 22—The Elections Reform Act

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

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina. Is it the will of the House for the bill to remaining standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? It will not remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina.

It is also standing in the name of the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who has four minutes remaining.

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Steinbach?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Okay, that has also been denied. Speakers?

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I am pleased to rise today on Bill 22 to put on the record some comments from the official opposition on this important piece of legislation. It is hard to imagine legislation touching on topics and subjects that are more important to the functioning of our democracy here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and I am pleased to offer some comments on this particular piece of legislation.

There has been a long history in the evolution of election laws here in Manitoba. The traditions and rules that govern our elections are rooted in the tradition of British parliamentary democracy and have been through a process of evolution and change as we have moved along through the decades, as technology has changed, as we have learned lessons

from past experiences. As we have gained experience with changes in other jurisdictions, the process of evolution in our democracy in Manitoba has proceeded.

This bill, with considerable flaws, is the next stage in that evolution. We will be indicating our support with respect to the bill and its principles, but we will also be introducing at committee some amendments to this bill which we think will make it a better piece of legislation and will better serve the underlying objective, which is to ensure free and fair and transparent elections here in Manitoba so that Manitobans get the sort of government that they want, the sort of government they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I want to first comment on some areas in this bill that we support. It is important, in opposition, to be constructive and to indicate that there are sometimes areas of legislation and legislation that are worth supporting. We think that there are some provisions here that are good changes and a good evolution in the process of changing election laws in Manitoba.

In particular, I point to the amendment which allows for child care costs related to a candidacy to no longer be included as an election expense, although they are fully eligible for reimbursement. This is a recognition, an important recognition, Mr. Speaker, of the fact that many people running for office in our province are people with children who incur expenses related to child care as they run for office. It is a reflection of a modern process of campaigning in Manitoba, where both men and women put their names forward for office, men and women who have responsibilities for the care of their children, sometimes bringing cost with it, and we think that is a good change to the bill. We think that this is one step toward providing further support to those candidates, from whatever party, who may have children that need care in the course of an election campaign.

There are other areas that, in spirit, we support in this bill. There are changes which govern the reporting of financial transactions related to election campaigns. We will not be objecting to most of those provisions, Mr. Speaker, and we think that transparency and proper reporting, followed up by appropriate sanctions for violations, are important steps for it in the evolution of our reform of our elections rules here in Manitoba.

There are several areas, though, that we have concerns about related to Bill 22. One of those areas,

which I will touch on briefly, is the removal of the appeal regarding boundaries decisions, which exists today in law, and which this bill seeks to take away. Currently, where the commission that goes out and makes decisions on election boundaries, consults with Manitobans, does what they think makes sense with respect to ensuring the communities of interest are properly delineated and properly represented under the boundaries of the election divisions.

There is a process for appeal so that Manitobans who have concerns about that report, recognizing that the people who oversee this process are human beings, that they will make mistakes. There is a process under law today that allows Manitobans to appeal those boundaries and to have some sober second thought when it comes to boundaries decisions, so that the boundaries we end up with properly reflect true communities of interest in Manitoba and adhere to a very important principle of one person, one vote in Manitoba, to ensure that every Manitoban's vote is equally weighted, or weighted as equally as possible given the geographical realities of our province.

We worry that the removal of that appeal provision allows that commission to make decisions which may, in the end, not serve Manitobans well, and there will be no recourse available to Manitobans who may have concerns about boundary decisions. So we think that is a bad, regressive step in this piece of legislation. We think it is inappropriate and, for example, Mr. Speaker, I can think of my own riding with close to 40,000 Manitobans residing within it. It is a large population. The vote of any individual Manitoban within my own constituency is not worth the same as the vote of Manitobans in other constituencies. I recognize there are geographical realities in our province, and the large regions need to have a special consideration so that the member representing that area can properly address the concerns of their constituents. But there are situations where we see growth in population that needs to be rectified so the principle of one Manitoban, one vote, is adhered to as closely as possible.

I think of another example. The town of Pansy in the riding of my honourable friend, the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), which, I think, should be a candidate for consideration to be redistributed into the constituency of La Verendrye. I jest, Mr. Speaker, and I do not want those comments to be left on the record as anything other than a light-hearted comment about the need to consider, though, the

needs of all communities in our province and to ensure that they are well represented. I know the people of Pansy are extremely well represented, as evidenced today by the comments by the Member for Steinbach in his comments about the unfortunate omission from the map of Manitoba of that great community in the constituency of Steinbach.

But there are serious issues about boundaries and representation that need to be properly reflected in the processes we have for establishing boundaries here in the province of Manitoba. So that is one area of concern is the lack of recourse for Manitobans when bad decisions are made on boundaries.

* (14:40)

Secondly, we have significant concerns about the amendment regarding government advertising and advertising by government agencies in the course of a writ period. Notwithstanding the strenuous and unconvincing denials by the Premier (Mr. Doer) on this point when it was raised in Question Period, we are concerned when we see the existing law allowing for advertisements concerning ongoing programs, quote, unquote. Mr. Speaker, ongoing programs are the subject of advertising.

Currently, under law in the province of Manitoba during election campaigns, that provision as it stands today seems to be an appropriate limitation on advertising by Crown agencies during elections. We are concerned that the government has made an amendment to that provision, an amendment which says that government agencies' business plans can now be advertised in the course of an election campaign.

A business plan, Mr. Speaker, is something that is far broader than an ongoing program. A business plan would, for example, allow Manitoba Hydro to embark on an advertising campaign in the course of a writ advertising the grand vision that it has for the future of Manitoba. Some might say that that would stray into the realm of politics. We would be concerned that such a general and vague notion as business plans is an inappropriate limit when it comes to election advertising during a writ, using the resources of the people of Manitoba, the rates paid by ratepayers to Manitoba Hydro and the premiums paid to other corporations. Crown corporations in Manitoba should be used for the purpose of serving Manitobans. They should not be used for the self-serving purposes of re-electing this NDP government.

We are concerned that this amendment is designed in a very cynical way to allow the government to embark on major advertising campaigns in the course of a writ using the resources of Manitobans, not donated funds to the NDP, but funds that they are required to pay to Crown corporations as a matter of law, then turned around and used for slick political advertising during an election campaign. That is a concern that we have which we think is fundamental. We are concerned that that is a provision that needs to be changed and amended in the act so that we do not have Manitoba taxpayers and ratepayers have their fund subject to abuse by the current government when we get into an election campaign.

I am troubled, Mr. Speaker, by the fact that in the general description of the provisions of the amendments contained at the preamble to Bill 22, the explanatory notes, that it simply says that the provisions respecting government advertising are clarified. Well, to say that these provisions are clarified could not be further from the truth. That is simply an attempt to gloss over by attempting to characterize what is a fundamental change to the law as a mere housekeeping provision. It is sneaky. It is slick. It is cynical. We think it is wrong and we will oppose that provision in committee. We will propose amendments to ensure that Manitobans are protected from this government when it comes to advertising during an election period.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on to some other areas of concern. We also, while we are talking about election reform and the reform of our public institutions to make things more open and transparent and to make our system function better for the people of Manitoba, that it is time for a serious debate on the Public Accounts Committee of this Legislature. Now this is something that is of fundamental importance. The provincial auditor has commented on this issue. It is critical in order to hold the government to account to have an effective Public Accounts Committee with real power, real teeth, to compel witnesses, to compel people to come forward and answer questions for the people of Manitoba so they know what is happening inside their government.

Today Manitoba has one of the weakest Public Accounts committees in the country. It is one of the weakest committees in the country. Manitobans do not get answers to the questions that they need answers to, and we have seen it time and again. You know, Mr. Speaker, it would not be an issue if we

could get straight answers in Estimates and in Question Period to our questions. We have seen the Premier evade in excess of 140 questions on the matter of Crocus, 140 questions without anything even approaching a direct answer and that is unacceptable. It flies in the face of the traditions and the requirements of a well functioning parliamentary democracy.

So we need change to our institutions and it is time for a broader debate on the way democracy works in Manitoba, or does not work, as the case may be. We think it is important for a broader public debate on this very important issue of accountability to this House.

We in opposition think that it is also time while we are talking about electing senators and we support the provision in this bill, Mr. Speaker. We support the spirit of those provisions. We may have amendments on the details but we support the idea, the spirit, the concept of having an all-party discussion on the issue of electing senators to represent Manitobans in Ottawa.

We on this side of the House think that a reformed Senate is an important way of ensuring we have regional representation in Canada, to ensure that regions like the West, provinces like Manitoba have the strongest possible voice in Ottawa. We think it is time to reform the Senate. We are glad that the government agrees that it is time to reform the Senate. So we will support the provision in this bill that establishes a process to get on with this very important debate on the matter of Senate reform here in Manitoba.

But, while we are at it, Mr. Speaker, why do we not do something else? Why do we not expand the debate? Why do we not do other things to improve democracy in Manitoba and have a debate about setting election dates? Why not set election dates in a way that ensures that there is some certainty for Manitobans and for people involved in the process around when elections are going to be held, so that when parties go to the polls they win on the basis of their record, their people and their plans, and they do not win on the basis of tactical advantages arising as a result of manipulations of existing rules?

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to try to suggest that the current government is the only party or the only government that has ever been susceptible to manipulation of these rules. It cuts across party lines. It has happened. Some might say it is a time-honoured tradition. I do not know if it is an honoured

tradition, but it has been a tradition in our system for timing of elections to be used by the government to create an advantage to the incumbents and a disadvantage to the challenging parties.

We need to deal with some details on that point, Mr. Speaker. We need to iron out questions around what happens when a government loses the confidence of the House, as happened in 1986 in this Chamber when the government of the day, the NDP government, following the disastrous Kostyra budget of 1986, decided that that government, the Doer-Pawley government, no longer had the moral mandate to govern our province. *[interjection]* This House, in its wisdom, in 1988, the honourable member corrects me and I thank for that correction. It was 1988.

I will not refer to my third year at university, the good time I was spending there studying politics and how, for me, as a young Manitoban, it was more a matter of academic interest. But today as the stakes rise and as we see the ongoing mismanagement of the current government and the way in which taxpayers are being abused, we just know how very important it is that this House have the last word when it comes to bringing down a government that no longer deserves its support.

So we need to deal with that issue as we deal with the question of set election dates. We need to consider what happens as was the case in 1988 when there was the disastrous Kostyra budget of 1988 that raised taxes on Manitobans and ran a budget deficit in the range of \$350 million. I know members opposite do not think \$350 million is very much money. It does not go very far in this day and age under this government. But in 1988 it was a lot of money. There was a massive Doer-Pawley-Kostyra deficit in 1988 and this House voted to bring the government down. It was the right thing to do at that time. We need to be sure that this House maintains the authority to topple a corrupt, rotten, mismanaging government. We need to ensure that that principle of parliamentary accountability remains intact as we look at the issue of set election dates.

So we will want to explore that issue. I think, and I would submit to this House, that it is time for a debate on the issue of set election dates so that we can get rid of this idea of governments having a tactical advantage as opposed to an advantage that simply should come through good government. I know that might be something that the current government will not want to give up lightly. I expect

they will not want to give up that tactical advantage lightly, because when you do not have a record, Mr. Speaker, when you do not have the people and when you do not have the plan, it makes it pretty tough to get re-elected.

We know on this side, or we suspect, that they will want to sustain that tactical advantage. But we think, in the interests of Manitobans and in the interests of our future, that we should set aside partisan politics for the time being and we should have an all-party discussion on moving the goalposts forward, on moving the ball down the field on the issue of electoral reform for Manitobans.

So we think it is time for a debate on these important issues. We will support those provisions of this bill that move things in the right direction, including the debate on Senate reform. We look forward to going to committee and having further discussion on these important issues.

*(14:50)

We note, Mr. Speaker, on one other point that the government, in the typical way that a government that is out of steam and out of ideas does, it has picked up on an idea that was raised in the course of our party's leadership campaign to require members who want to cross the floor to sit as an independent. This was an idea that had come forward some weeks before the government's announcement that members who cross the floor would not be eligible to sit in Cabinet. That takes away the incentive to cross the floor. If somebody wants to cross the floor on a matter of principle, that is important. We think they should have the right to do that, but they should not come straight into Cabinet because that distorts the process, that allows a government to, in effect, offer inducements to a member from the opposite party to come across, with all the perks of sitting in government and all the power of sitting in government. I, as a then-candidate for the leadership of our party, thought it was important to get rid of that possibility of inducements being offered to members to cross the floor.

So some weeks later the government came out with its own slowly introduced, copycat measure in this bill, just as it has done on crystal meth and so many other areas where ideas have been brought forward by the opposition and picked up by the government. But, as I have always said, there is no property in good ideas. We will support any good idea that comes before the House, regardless of whether we are in government or in opposition.

I am going to wrap up in just a moment. We will support that provision. We note that it follows up on something that we had first introduced. We will support it because it is a good idea, notwithstanding the fact that it was introduced by this government as a copycat measure. Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about loopholes that this government has introduced in the past to tilt the balance in favour of its friends when it comes to third-party advertising and designed to punish others and restrict others who may want to have a say in an election campaign, but the bungling example where the government designed its own loophole under the last piece of legislation, they designed it for their own loophole and then ran a Mack truck through it in order to ensure that the Teamsters and the other friends of the government could continue to support them. We think that is wrong. We are going to be going through this piece of legislation with a fine-toothed comb to make sure that they can no longer abuse the electoral process to their own advantage.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, we will look forward to committee. We will look forward to introducing amendments and look forward to further discussion on the important issue of making democracy work for the benefit of all Manitobans. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Crystal City Early Years 36 Grade 3 and 4 students, under the direction of Mr. Larry Hamilton. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

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

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I am only going to take a few moments here this afternoon as we debate Bill 22. I believe our leader has put most of the pertinent information that we, as a caucus, had certain reservations to.

The reason that I want to put a few words on the record here this afternoon is because I think when congratulations are due, one individual should actually put that on the record. I will take a moment here to thank, and I want to say quite openly and personally to the Premier (Mr. Doer), because several years ago—I say several years ago when this

issue first arose in 1999, where there was some discrepancy in the number of voters required for a polling station—in the constituency of Carman, I had the misfortune of losing six polling stations because the number had gone from 250 which, traditionally, is the threshold that they were using, and it had been bumped up to 350. I was told back then by the Chief Electoral Officer this was gratis to members in this Chamber, myself included, where we had made changes that I guess kind of got slipped by, it was not noticed, whatever it was. We did not realize the impact that it was causing on, especially, the rural constituencies.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I recall during that election campaign writing a personal letter to the six communities involved, every resident in those six areas, advocating on their behalf that I would find a way, one way or another to reinstate their polling stations. Well, in the first year several discussions I had with your Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) on this issue, and he kept telling me that, yes, the Premier was considering revisiting the entire Elections Act and that we would get with it.

Another year had passed and, all of a sudden, Rory took on the challenge, and Rory was given a job to review the entire act and to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly to see what sort of a compromise we might make. Well, in my discussions with Rory, they were not getting very fruitful, I have got to tell you. We were not really moving along at that point in time. So I prepared a particular piece of legislation that would reinstate the number back down to 250.

Well, that was when things really got moving. I have got to give Rory credit also because he was trying to find out at that point in time what would be acceptable to everybody, and I recall the discussion quite clearly, that I had said to Rory that, well, the Premier had made a commitment that, if we could, we would bring it back to 250 so that we could reinstate, especially in my area, those six voting areas because, if you look at the town of Fannystelle, an individual coming from the furthest north end of Fannystelle would have to drive all the way past Fannystelle, roll by Culross, end up in Elm Creek in order to vote. Well, I have to tell you, that trip is somewhere between 35 and 40 miles, and I will venture a guess there were not an awful lot of individuals who would have spent that amount of time. So it seemed to be grossly unfair.

Mariapolis being another community, Bruxelles being another one, St. Leon being another one, and Lavenham. Now these communities all suffered that same fate. So the legislation that I had drafted up and was going to propose to the Legislature, and upon the recommendation of Rory, was that we would incorporate my bill into the Premier's bill that was going to address the issue, and I am proud to say this afternoon that I see in a particular section that they have addressed the issue, that the number will be brought back down from 350 to 250. So we in the rural area, on this one particular section, I want to tell you, we will support this section without a doubt. The other ones, there appears to be some controversy, and I understand there will probably be certain amendments that will be brought forward, and these will have to be identified and discussed more than likely in committee.

So, at this point in time I thank the Government House Leader, I thank the Premier, and indeed I thank Rory for all his hard work in making sure that my little private member's bill was incorporated into Bill 22, and with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am prepared, as my leader said, to move it forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are you ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 22, The Elections Reform Act; Loi sur la réforme électorale.

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

* (15:00)

Bill 31—The Animal Diseases Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Bill 31, The Animal Diseases Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les maladies des animaux, currently standing in the name of the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

Is there leave that it remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Inkster? *[Agreed]*

Bill 14—The Water Rights Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Bill 14, The Water Rights Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits d'utilisation de l'eau, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

Stand? Is it agreed that the bill shall remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina? *[Agreed]*

The honourable official leader of the opposition, Member for Steinbach.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Thank you. Just as a correction, though, I am not the Leader of the Opposition; I am the House leader. But I do appreciate the comments. You would not want to leave those comments on the record uncorrected, "Mr. Speaker." It could be career limiting.

But I do want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is a pleasure to speak to this legislation. When we deal with issues regarding water management, it is certainly an issue that is key in my own constituency. There are a lot of different issues that we deal with virtually every spring regarding water management.

I would say that the government opposite, while we certainly on this side of the House have supported the expansion of the Red River Floodway, we know that is only one component of managing water here in the province of Manitoba, that is only one component of a good system to ensure flood protection for the province.

In fact, I know that in my own constituency there are a number of different concerns regarding the lack of infrastructure on dikes and on waterways within the constituency. I always hear from those who are living along the Manning Canal, for example, about how every year it seems that the Manning Canal overflows its banks and those that are living near it become victims of that flood water that comes over. There are a lot of different questions and concerns about how it is that there seems to be increased flooding here in the southern part of the province. There has not been the sort of drainage work that we need in southern Manitoba.

So, when we talk about this bill as it relates to water stewardship, I think it is important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we put on the record the critical need that we have for more infrastructure in the province of Manitoba as it relates to drainage. You know, when we chat with those within the region, particularly those who live or have lived in the area for many, many years, they continually tell me we have not seen water like this in past years.

It is not because the flood events are necessarily more likely to occur now than they have in the past, but the reality is that the water is moving more quickly from different areas. So that requires that we

keep those channels, those water-controlled areas like the Manning Canal and others, clear. They need to be dredged on a regular basis. It is, in fact, critical that we have those systems in place where we have the water infrastructure ready to go when there are occurrences.

But I do not think this government has paid enough attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the need for infrastructure as it relates to water stewardship in southern Manitoba and in different areas of Manitoba. I think that when we look at the infrastructure needs of the province that we need to consider not only an important project like the Red River Floodway expansion, which is one component of flood protection, but all of the waterways and dredging that has to happen.

I have the opportunity on different occasions to talk to my friend from Emerson. He certainly is an advocate for these issues of good drainage, proper drainage, and a system for Manitobans to ensure that flooding is relieved for those farmers in his constituency and my area around Manitoba. He has done a good job of raising issues regarding the need for more drainage and for more systems, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I say to him when we look at this kind of legislation that we cannot look at it in isolation. We cannot say, well, we are just going to focus on one project. We need to look at the overall scheme of flood protection in the province of Manitoba.

We know that the budget for some of these projects has not been to the point that we would like to see. I know, talking to municipalities and municipal officials, I often feel sorry for municipal officials because they really get the brunt of these concerns. They deal with the localized flooding; they get the calls from their local residents, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On the front lines, as it were, the municipal officials are, and they have to, on a regular basis, deal with this sort of localized flooding.

So they come to me and they come to other MLAs and they say, well, how is it that we cannot get the drainage work, whether it is clearing the ditches or ensuring that the culverts are up to standards, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that the water is moving in a way that keeps it off of farmland. Still, it gets off the farmland, but still moves as it is towards the Red River.

Those are challenges. I certainly do not mean to minimize it. I would never stand here in this

Legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and say that these are easy things or that you solve these things in easy ways. I recognize from those who have been in government in past, and I have the opportunity, I should say the good fortune, to serve with members like the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), who has served notably and honourably in previous Cabinets. I know, in speaking with him, the work that he did on some of these issues. Drainage issues are not simple and they are not easy issues to deal with. But they do need resources and attention. I think that we have not seen that sort of attention paid to these issues by this current government. This government has not, in fact, paid the needed and the proper attention to the issues related to drainage in Manitoba.

So, while there are some very legitimate concerns that have been raised here in the Legislature, regarding the expansion of the floodway and being over budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is only one aspect; it is only one component of a larger picture. It is important that we, as legislators, look to the broader picture about the need for an overall and comprehensive view.

We certainly support, as Progressive Conservatives, the efforts that deal with illegal drainage, and that sort of leads into the comments that I had, but we are concerned about the approach that this government is taking. There is a sense within the bill that individuals might be presumed to be guilty at first before they are, in fact, proven innocent. That, of course, we know is contrary to all that we believe as a democracy, as a democracy that believes in the rule of law, but also believes that those individuals are considered to be innocent before they have any sort of evidence brought to bear against them.

We question some of the issues regarding compliance and the ability for landowners to be given that chance to comply with certain regulations, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We think that that needs to be looked at within the context of this law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly we understand the challenges that landowners and farmers are dealing with across Manitoba. I think that farmers have all the expectations every spring that they are going to have a tremendous crop, that this is going to be the year that they have the best crop ever. I remember my own grandfather. I had earlier in this House the opportunity to speak—the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) remembers it, and I am glad. He

remembers the community of Pansy. It is a name that sticks with you for a while, but I would say not only does the name stick with you, but for those who have roots in the community, the spirit of the people also remains strong with you, as well.

* (15:10)

I had the opportunity as a young person to often help out on the farm of my grandfather in the Pansy area, not probably as much help as I thought I was being. You know, as a young person, you think you are really contributing to some of the efforts that are going along, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Probably, in hindsight, it was more of a favour to me from my grandfather to allow me to participate in the interests of the farm.

But I do think that each farmer believes that this is always going to be the year where they have a strong crop. To have those hopes and those dreams and expectations dashed because of drainage issues, I know certainly it is a challenge. I would ask this government to look to putting in place a longer-term strategy for drainage, a longer-term strategy that would see proper drains throughout Manitoba. Again, the floodway is one aspect of it, but there are other aspects of flood protection for others in different areas.

In fact, the money that goes into drainage, I would say, should not be looked at as a cost, but it should be looked at as an investment. We saw recently, Statistics Canada released their farm income numbers last week, and again we saw the suffering of Manitoba farmers here in our province.

One way to alleviate some of the pain or stress that farmers face is through this entire issue of drainage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ensuring that those who are working on the farm have a fair chance in the spring to get that crop in, get at it in time, and to harvest a fulsome crop at the end of the year.

So those are some of the challenges that I would issue to members opposite. I know that the members, there are not an awful lot of farmers on the benches opposite. I hear a few of the members of the NDP saying that they have met a farmer once or they maybe saw one in a book, in a storybook. The Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) has seen a farmer in a book somewhere, as I understand, maybe he was read to as a child about farms. But I would certainly encourage all members, you know, we could organize a bit of a farm tour maybe to show

some of the urban members of the NDP what a real farm looks like—

An Honourable Member: To read his kids "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."

Mr. Goertzen: Well, there you go. I understand the Member for Burrows has taught the song "Old MacDonald Has a Farm" to his children, and that is a good thing. I think that is part of the way. *[interjection]* Well, the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) asks if there are farmers in Pansy. I may have wondered before how it is that Pansy got wiped off the map by this particular government. I think that the question was answered. If the Member for Selkirk does not even know there are farmers in the community of Pansy, where they have a thriving hog industry, where they have a thriving cattle industry, where they have dairy operations. When he does not even know that, it is no surprise that the government in one fell swoop would pull out their eraser and erase Pansy from the map. Well, I say to turn that pencil around next year, just sharpen up the pencil, to use the term they always use, to sharpen up the pencil, to use the terminology of the Premier, and write Pansy back into that map.

We believe you need to represent all Manitobans, not just segments of Manitobans. We are builders; we are not dividers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We believe in ensuring that there is equality for Manitobans from Thompson to Emerson, from West Hawk to Virden. That is the sort of party, that is the sort of province that we want to build, and we would certainly encourage all members to join with us in that effort.

Specifically, on the issue of drainage, again, I do think that landowners in the province have been facing increased difficulties because of a lack of investment on the infrastructure side for those who need drainage needs, and municipalities have borne the burden of some of that and some of the challenges.

Enforcement has to deal somewhat with this bill. We have concerns about how the enforcement procedure is in place. It is only one aspect. You also need to ensure that there is funding in place and maybe that would alleviate a lot of the issues. Maybe that would take a lot of the stresses off, if they truly had a long-term plan for investing into the infrastructure, the drainage infrastructure of rural Manitoba.

So, with those few words, I know that there are other members who want their words on the record regarding this particular piece of legislation. As I always do, I look forward to hearing their sage words of wisdom. Thank you very much.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have thought that a member on the government side would have wanted to engage in this debate seeing that this is legislation they brought forward. I see that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) is with us, and I know that he should have some interest in this legislation. We would certainly welcome his words of knowledge on this legislation, and also his understanding of the impact this is going to have on many of the individuals across our province in his constituency specifically as well as mine.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot help but oppose this legislation on the basis that it has been brought forward without a great deal of understanding on the part of the government with respect to the impact it is going to have on constituents of mine, constituents of the Member for Dauphin-Roblin, the constituents for the Member for Swan River, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and other rural constituencies across this province.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we sit in urban Manitoba and we talk about drainage, one would have to say that you simply want to stop this illegal drainage because it is having such a devastating impact on people downstream. If you talk to some people even in rural constituencies, who perhaps have been impacted negatively by drainage, they want all drainage stopped. We have seen some of these individuals. As a matter of fact, they are people who would like to drain their land, but do not want anybody else to drain their respective lands. These people do not speak with any credibility, and so, therefore, we need to be careful as to who we listen to when we talk about putting in laws as it pertains to drainage.

We have a mechanism in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that does handle drainage in a fairly effective way, and it was started not even under our administration, but it was a process called the establishment of conservation districts across this province who were given the mandate to look after watershed areas. In those watershed areas, they were given jurisdiction to do certain things. You do not accomplish anything by holding a big stick over people's heads. You can accomplish a great deal by

getting people together, by co-operation and by people understanding what the end goal could be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we should not be opposed to drainage simply because it is drainage. If you look at southern Manitoba, most of the Red River Valley is land that was drained. All of this land was a swamp at one time, and in order for it to become productive land, as it is, it needed to have some drainage work done. For years, we as a province decided that this was such a breadbasket in our province that we spent provincial dollars to drain the land so that crops could be grown. We have some very well-to-do entrepreneurs, farmers, and this has become a very productive area in our province.

But there are other regions of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that today have not had the benefit of having provincial dollars spent on cleaning out provincial drains, first of all, and secondly, to help individual producers with their drainage works. So along comes this whole notion that drainage is bad. Now we have people who want to preserve wetlands, and that is not a bad thing. That is a good thing. But, what we have done is we have allowed the pendulum to swing so far that now if you want to drain a pothole on your yard, someone is going to object to it, and you cannot have the authority to do that.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is irrational to begin with. Secondly, it does no one any good. If you go across the city, for example, if we have a little pothole lying anywhere, all it is is a mosquito-breeding ground, and we want to make sure that we get rid of those. It is no different in my yard; it is no different on my farm. But there is a common-sense approach to all of this as well.

*(15:20)

Now, if you vest the responsibility for drainage in the hands of local people who understand the issues—and I am talking about local people as being conservation districts—if you vest the responsibility in these people, they will work together with the producers, the landowners, the municipalities to ensure that the proper approach is taken, and you have to give them the tools to be able to do their job. We as legislators have the responsibility to give these organizations the tools to work.

But this bill takes all of that away and invests the responsibility with the minister who is going to put the police out to look after the drainage issues. If in fact it is perceived, from that bureaucrat's point of view, that this drainage is bad, then the government

has the ability to impose fines. Mr. Deputy Speaker, then this becomes nothing but a cash grab. It does not achieve anything. All it does is use a big stick over the heads of producers who are probably trying to do nothing more than improve their land so that it can be productive.

There is nobody that I know out there who is trying to drain vast amounts of water. On the west side of the province, we face a different challenge, and that is the drainage that is occurring on the Saskatchewan side. The land between the community of Churchbridge, which is midpoint between my community and Yorkton, Saskatchewan, and the border, drops about 25 feet in elevation. So any water from Churchbridge, which is about 15 the 20 miles inside the Saskatchewan border, all that water simply drains into the Assiniboine Valley.

The problem with it is it occurs at a time of the year when we have the snow melt and of course it overloads the capacity of the river. Then we have, of course, the flooding of the Assiniboine Valley and downward into Winnipeg here. When we see our walkway under water here on the Assiniboine, as we will for the next month, a lot of that is due to the fact that there is an excessive amount of water that comes down the Assiniboine on an annual basis, added to by the, I think, excessive drainage that is going on in Saskatchewan.

Quite frankly, much of that drainage is unregulated. They do not have the kinds of mechanisms in Saskatchewan that we have had in Manitoba. The conservation districts in our province have been working very diligently to ensure that there is not over-drainage, that in fact people downstream are consulted, that there is capacity built into the downstream people who are going to be receiving the water when people upstream drain as well. So it is kind of a comprehensive look on how we do drainage in a proactive and a positive way.

In this legislation, there is not anything that the government is doing to do enhance the quality, if you like, of our land, the quality of how we can better make our land more productive. Instead of incentives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is providing punitive measures to deal with landowners who perhaps try to do drainage without a licence.

Now what is a licence, and how do you achieve a licence? There are times of the year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when licences are difficult to get because, of course, once this falls into the bureaucratic hands, it takes forever and a day to do anything. It will take

months to get a licence. Conservation districts, because of their nature, because of the fact that they know the people, they know the area, they know the land, could respond far more quickly.

Sometimes, this has become a thorn in the side of the municipalities because all of a sudden the municipality finds itself, oh, all of a sudden we have more water than what we thought we used to have, and so we are going to try to blame somebody for it. So we are going to blame the upstream people for dumping water on us.

That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from all of the work over the 20 years that I have been in this Chamber, one of the most, I guess, controversial issues out there in municipalities has been the water issue. But many times when you investigate what the real problem is, you find that it is not necessarily the upstream water that is coming and causing the problem within the municipality. Ninety percent of the time it is the activities, even of municipalities, that have taken place right within that municipality that are causing a lot of the problem. So what we have witnessed time and again is that the finger is pointed at people upstream, municipalities upstream when in fact sometimes the people should look in a mirror themselves.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know how this is going to achieve anything in a positive sense. We have heard from landowners. We have heard from the organization. They are opposing this legislation. There is not anything good about it because it is a punitive way of approaching a problem. If drainage is a problem, if municipalities do not want to deal with it, then I suggest that we should do the common sense thing and allow conservation districts which have the resources, give them the resources, give them the tools to be able to manage these areas, because conservation districts are organized on watershed basins. They are not organized on municipal basins; they are organized on watershed basins. For that reason they are much better equipped to deal with these.

I can tell you some positive things that have happened as a result of conservation districts. Right on my back doorstep, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have an area that is about 600 acres in size that is largely wild meadow grass, and in that area we would get water coming down in the spring flushing through, and that land basically becomes a wasteland because it needs water to be able to grow any kind of wild hay.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

What has happened while we were in government is that a reservoir, a dam, was constructed, Mr. Speaker, and water is now held back. It is held back until, probably, June and then it is allowed to flow out of the dam. This does two things: First of all, it protects all of the crossings that are downstream from the dam from being washed out, and that is a big issue for municipalities; and then, secondly, it allows for the water to be held back and then becomes a useful tool for the production of hay land. Additionally, it provides the wetland habitat for a lot of our ducks, if you like, in the area, who nest around the edges of this water body. By the time farmers are ready to go in and take the hay crop off, the ducklings have gone, the meadowland is dry, and we have a good crop of hay. So it achieves many things.

This was done in co-operation with the conservation district in the area and the municipality. Although, Mr. Speaker, some of the municipalities or farmers, landowners in the area, have drainage ditches that actually go towards this particular holding area, it does nobody any harm. As a matter of fact, it has done an extreme amount of good in the area.

Now there are always complaints. Downstream, if you ask some people about this, they say, oh, well, my land has never been underwater as much as it is now. When you examine the area, Mr. Speaker, if people understood how an operation like this works, as a matter of fact, it helps them, both in the short term and in the long term.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does not provide anything in terms of helping the landowners and helping conservation districts or municipalities to achieve a semblance, if you like, of order when it comes to drainage. All this does is it simply halts what they call illegal draining and, then, allows the bureaucrats to enforce their laws or their stop orders, if you like, and then bring down penalties on the people who perhaps have crossed the line.

Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that we work with landowners. We need to ensure that we work with municipalities, that we work with conservation districts and together we need to come up with a mechanism that is going to put some sense into how we achieve some of these goals that are trying to be achieved by this legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, although the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) has responsibility for this, I regret to say that he has not had any experience

when it comes to rural agro-Manitoba with regard to drainage. He has no experience in that area at all. As a matter of fact, living in Thompson, where there is little drainage taking place, someone like that coming to take responsibility for Water Stewardship in agro-Manitoba is, first of all, I think, somewhat inappropriate, in terms of that minister leading the charge and enforcing rules and punitive measures like are being called for in this piece of legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, we all understand that there has to be balance between incentives and between penalties. That balance I do not see in this legislation. We do not see anything in this legislation, either, that talks about specific fines, but the minister has alluded to the fact that in the regulations they will be bringing in punitive measures, punitive fines, for people who do not comply with the orders or perhaps who go ahead and do drainage work without the proper permits in place.

* (15:30)

Mr. Speaker, this is an evolving issue, and I think we need to bring the public along with us, or maybe we need to follow the public, in that as the public become aware through an education process that there is a proper way to do drainage and that there are requirements under the law that they have to follow, people will comply. But, if you simply go out there and, for every transgression, if you like, we bring down the law on the heads of these people, I think that is going to be unnecessary. It is going to provide a lot of unrest in the rural communities, and people are going to become suspicious about the motivation the government has.

Mr. Speaker, I would favour a less heavy-handed approach to this. I would say that we need to vest the responsibility in local authorities, and, to my way of thinking, it is the conservation districts that are the local authorities that should have the responsibility here. I am a big fan of conservation districts. I think they have done some tremendous amount of work in this province and good positive work, not only just for drainage but when you talk about conservation issues and you talk about the education process that takes place with schools, with adults, with farmers, with people from towns and when you look at some of the projects that conservation districts have done and some of the benefits that have accrued to the province and to communities as a result of those projects, we should not turn a blind eye to that.

As a matter of fact, I think that by expanding the responsibilities, expanding perhaps the amount of money that we extend to conservation districts because they do such good work, this is not an expense, Mr. Speaker, it is an investment. It is a good investment, not only to make our land more productive but indeed to make our land probably more conscientious in terms of the conservation issues and the environmental issues that we have before us today and that we as a society expect.

When we talk about clean water issues, Mr. Speaker, the work that conservation districts do in that regard alone should be noteworthy. I think the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) probably understands as well as I do the good work that conservation districts do. I know when we were in government and I had responsibility for conservation districts, the minister who is responsible for conservation districts now did take advantage of many of the openings and many of the events that took place in rural Manitoba. I know that that experience and that education that he gained there is probably standing him well as a Minister of Conservation. So I look to him and I ask him to examine the elements of this bill and perhaps to offer his comments and, more importantly, offer his advice to the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), because I think he understands better some of the issues that we have outlined in our response to this bill than the Minister of Water Stewardship does.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot see how he can be a party to this bill. I honestly do not understand how the Minister of Conservation can actually say this is making Manitoba a better place, because it is not. This bill does not make rural Manitoba a better place. All it is doing is giving government more authority, a bigger stick. It does not do anything in terms of respecting the work that conservation districts have done in the past. I think, if anything, the Minister of Conservation should be talking to his colleague and telling him that this is an area of responsibility that you can assign to conservation districts and you might be surprised at the good work that conservation districts will do.

You have to empower them, yes. Municipalities do not want this responsibility because they find themselves fighting with their neighbours over this, so they are not unhappy about just handing this over to the government and let the government be the big, bad guy. But I think government needs to use its brains and it needs to use its collective head, if you like, and assign responsibility for something like this

to a body that understands what the implications are when they make decisions.

Mr. Speaker, the government can sit there very smugly and say, we are going to pass this legislation through anyway. But let me assure the minister that when his term and this government's term is done, there will be a more sensible approach to how we address some of these issues in rural Manitoba. Maybe it is because of a lack of rural members on the other side of the House, people who have any experience with agriculture. I do not know, but when you take a look at some of the measures they are coming up with today, it makes you wonder whom they are really representing, because we have seen the outcry of people in rural Manitoba to some of the steps this government has taken. I refer to the measures that they are doing with livestock in our province.

Can you imagine, when we have had 1,500 people in one building tell the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) that she is wrong and her government is wrong, they still continue to pursue that checkoff legislation, which is mandatory? Auction marts, cattle dealers have indicated to this government they are not going to collect the levy because it is offensive. It is not a productive way to use money. Yet the government continues to proceed down its path. Who is the government listening to? Are they listening to one Bill Uruski who destroyed this cattle industry back when he was Minister of Agriculture? I think they should talk and listen to the producers who understand the issues. But that is a trait of this government. They have not been listening. The arrogance has crept into this government, and they are now just moving ahead without listening to what people are saying.

So, when I appeal to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) I do this quite legitimately and quite seriously, when I say he should be advising his colleague, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) that this bill does nothing to enhance the quality of life in rural Manitoba. It does nothing to enhance the quality of land in Manitoba, and it does nothing to enhance the way that drainage is done. All it is doing is putting police in place, again another level of police in place, that are going to go around and fine producers or landowners who might want to drain a pothole or two.

Mr. Speaker, I think there is a far better approach. I think there is a far more practical

approach than what this government is doing with this legislation, and that is why I will be opposing this bill. I cannot support it on behalf of the constituents that I represent. They have given me a very loud and clear message. I ask the government whether they are listening to their constituents, whether they are listening to the people that in fact they have been elected by, and whether or not they are responding in a positive way.

So, for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to this legislation, and I will be voicing my concern, both in the newspapers and to individuals that I speak with, and the reasons why I will oppose it. I am hoping that the government will bring some amendments in that are going to make this a much more acceptable piece of legislation than it is at this point in time. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 14 and probably echo some of my colleague's sentiments. I hope that I will be allowed a few more minutes than I was this morning when I went up to speak to a piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this particular bill is very similar to other legislation that this government has brought forward in this session. What it is, it is a reactionary piece of legislation. In reactionary I mean in this particular bill they want to bring forward more rules and regulations, and basically they are bringing this forward because they have not done their job in the past.

We have seen other legislation brought forward, and I am talking about whistle-blower legislation. Now, quite clearly, we know that bill was strictly damage control, and I think they are going down the same road with Bill 14. It is more damage control because they have not done their job.

Also, we have seen, of course as a result of the Crocus fiasco, the government has brought forward changes to the labour-sponsored regulations and legislation there. So, obviously, this government, as we know they have done in the past, they are completely reactionary. Instead of being proactive and going out there and actually trying to determine what the fundamental problems are within a piece of legislation, they bring forward additional legislation that is reactionary and not really trying to address the fundamental problems that are out there.

Mr. Speaker, this government, I know they keep talking about consultation when they bring forward legislation. Well, we know, quite frankly, that that again is more rhetoric than actual reality. We can point directly to another water bill. We talk about The Water Protection Act that was brought forward a year ago in the Chamber. Clearly, we as opposition tried to bring forward some amendments to make the bill a little more workable. In the end that particular legislation was passed. Our intent, our understanding was that the regulations that were going to be brought forward under that particular act would take some time to develop and that there would be a consultation with the stakeholders and consultation with opposition members. Well, quite frankly, that did not happen.

*(15:40)

The bill, Bill 22, was passed in June, and by the end of July the government had proposed water quality management zones as regulation under that particular bill. Then what the government did, instead of going out and consulting, they said, here are the regulations. Give us your feedback, but you have a month to do it. Well, that, in our view, as opposition, is not an effective consultation process.

I think what happened over the next few months, Mr. Speaker, is we saw just a great outcry from the public and from rural Manitoba in regard to water quality management zones and those regulations. Quite frankly, Manitobans are telling us those regulations do not work. Obviously, this government does not know what they are doing when it comes to water management acts and regulations. So this in our view is just another example of misguided legislation brought forward on behalf of this government.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to water and water management, a lot of common sense comes into play. I think that is something that is sorely lacking on behalf of this government. Because I know that a lot of people read Hansard and they are probably wondering what the intent of this particular bill is, I just want to take a second and describe what is on the government's spreadsheet in terms of their summary for this particular bill, why they are bringing this bill forward and what they hope to achieve by bringing this bill forward.

Clearly, there are only three items spelled out in their summary. One is to establish an office under the act which will enable common offence notices to be issued under the offence notice regulation. Two,

officers will be provided under this particular act and provided with the appropriate authority to enforce the act, and, three, they will provide those officers protection from liability under the act.

So, clearly, Mr. Speaker, the intent of this bill is to give the government the authority to fine people that they deem are not acting appropriately in water management issues. We think the existing act certainly has the parameters within it to allow the government to enforce existing legislation without coming in with this heavy-handed side of government. We know the government of the day likes to spend money, so in their quest to spend money, they have to find revenue to offset that spending. Our view is this is just another means for them to generate some more revenue to throw into their coffers so that they can continue to spend money beyond their means.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the conservation districts could play an important role in drainage throughout Manitoba. I believe that the fundamental issue here, why we have gotten into this mess, is that producers and municipalities do not have good, streamlined, timely access to providing permits and authorization to enhance drainage in Manitoba. So I think the government, instead of coming out with the heavy-handed fines that they are proposing, should actually look back and say, how do we provide a better process to people in Manitoba to allow for drainage and other water issues throughout Manitoba.

We do believe that the existing legislation does have provisions in it which can be used by the government and by the minister to prevent illegal drainage. It is quite clear in the existing Water Rights Act, it is spelled out that the minister does have that authority. Clearly, again, the offender, if you will, does have the chance to appeal a notice that has been put forward by the government. The person who does want to appeal can appeal that notice under the act to the Municipal Board. Now, what that Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) has said is that that basically takes control mechanisms, if you will, or deterrence out of our hands because it is tied up before the Municipal Board for that period of time, and it may be up to a year.

But I think, under further investigation, Mr. Speaker, the minister maybe did not read on to the second part of the appeal process, which is Section 24(2) under the existing Water Rights Act. Clearly, the minister and his department have the right to go

ahead and do whatever methods, or take the necessary steps to enact their order.

In fact what it says under 24(2): "An appeal of an order or decision does not stay the order or decision, or affect the power of the minister to take authorized steps pending the appeal."

So what that says, Mr. Speaker, is that if the minister seriously believes that someone is not abiding by the letter of the law, he can go ahead and implement steps and take order and take necessary precautions to prevent the drainage or whatever the situation may be without going through the appeal process. The appeal process will still be undertaken, but if the appellant is successful the minister would just have to come forward and make amends to the person who has been given the order.

So, Mr. Speaker, we think that the Minister of Water Stewardship is really hiding behind that particular caveat, and that caveat says that he clearly has the authority to go ahead and make those decisions, and we feel if those extreme situations that may exist out there he has the authority to do that. If he wants to make an example of someone, he can do that. Why go to the heavy hand of enforcement, bringing forward a situation similar to The Highway Traffic Act where people can be fined, when he already has the authority to do that? He has the authority to do it now. Why does he not take the authority that is before him and actually act within the accordance of his existing legislation?

Again, it looks like this government is taking the easy way out and, again, the heavy-handed way out. We feel again they should stop, look at the big picture. We know there have been great things happening in Manitoba through the conservation districts program. I think, Mr. Speaker, it is an opportunity for us to put resources in the hands of the conservation districts people. Those are the people who deal on a daily basis with drainage and water issues throughout Manitoba. They know the specific areas. They know where the trouble will be. They know the situations where problems may exist, and I think we should supply them the resources to make those decisions.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we see the heavy hand of provincial government coming in here where we should actually be giving authority back to the grass roots so that they can make those decisions in their individual areas. Instead, what we are seeing is the heavy hand of government bringing in water police, if you will, to try to determine who may be at fault,

and as a result implement those fines. I think that whole process of bringing in water police is going to put us into another bit of a double jeopardy because we are going to take money out of the Water Stewardship budget to pay staff to be police, to run around the province to be police. Really it goes back to the fundamental issue, if we had a proper process for drainage in Manitoba we would not have to have the regulatory process in place.

So what we are saying to the government is let us take the resources that you are going to try to put into Bill 14, take those resources, use them in a proactive way so that conservation districts can do their work on a grass-roots level, make those decisions out in their local areas and actually develop a better process throughout Manitoba.

Manitoba farmers have clearly recognized that they want clean water just as much as anyone else. They are going through the process of environmental farm plans. This is a federal initiative that they are undertaking, and what it does, it makes farmers recognize environmentally sensitive areas within their own farm. So, once they recognize those environmentally sensitive areas on their farm, they can take any remediation steps that they feel are necessary to correct that particular measure.

Here is where the federal program differs from where we are going in Manitoba. The federal program then says, okay, if you are prepared to make some positive changes to your farm, we are going to come to the plate, and we are going to bring some money. We are going to cost-share with you on those remediation programs that you want to undertake. So that is where the federal government says, okay, here is a little carrot, we are going to dangle this carrot for you, and they will fund those projects at 50 percent up to the tune of \$30,000.

*(15:50)

So we think that is a nice approach to take. We were kind of led to believe last year when we passed The Water Protection Act that the Province of Manitoba might look at some steps to have some funding in place to help producers out there as well in terms of environmental farm plans and so forth, so that they could make a positive change to their particular farm as well. But, instead, in reality now, what we see is the heavy hand of government coming forward and saying, we do not like the carrot approach, but we sure like the stick approach. So what they have done, they have come out and said, okay, under Bill 14, here is the heavy stick of the

Manitoba government. We are going to impose fines on you until you clean up your act; clearly, a different approach than what the federal government has taken, Mr. Speaker. That is the reason why we, as opposition to government, are going to oppose this particular bill.

Now, there are a lot of different issues that certainly should be addressed. Clearly, I think everyone in Manitoba wants to have clean water. Obviously, we have a different view from the government of how we are going to get there at the end of the day, to have better quality water in Manitoba. But, I think the thing that we like to do on our side of the House is be proactive: consult with the stakeholder groups, consult with the conservation districts, consult with the municipalities, consult with the farm producers, consult with the communities around Manitoba, get a sense of how we can work together to make things better in Manitoba, in terms of water protection and water quality.

Clearly, under The Water Protection Act, the farm communities have been singled out. We know that even from the government's own guidelines, they are saying that Manitoba producers impact less than 15 percent of the nutrients going into Lake Winnipeg. So, clearly, the agricultural producers have been single-handedly spelled out in this. We think this particular act, as well, singles out Manitoba producers for water quality initiatives, and we just think we have to stop and look at the big picture here, instead of being reactionary to these particular types of issues.

Mr. Speaker, I think that sums up our view of this particular piece of legislation. Again, the fundamental reason for this legislation is that the government is not taking the time to do their job. They have not done their job. They are now reacting to a situation that they have allowed to develop in Manitoba, so it is time, we think, for them to stop, have a look at the big picture and really clean up their act and let us get away from this Bill 14, the heavy-handed side of government. Let us stop, let us have a real open dialogue on the effective discussion we should have about water and water management in Manitoba. I thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, again I take great pleasure in rising to put a few comments on the record on a bill that, I think, is going to have a profound impact on the freedoms and rights of individuals in this province whose families have, in large part, been responsible for the development and

the pioneering of the agrarian areas of the province of Manitoba.

Indeed, these families have been huge contributors to not only the economy of this province of Manitoba, but, Mr. Speaker, these families that came out to this province and broke this very land and made Manitoba one of the best agricultural areas in all of western Canada. The diversity of agriculture is, I think, in large part demonstrated by the diversity of the people who came here and settled in Manitoba and, in large part, settled in the southern areas of the province that led itself to the production of agricultural goods.

How did they do this? Well, in large part, they had to clear some of the land. Those areas that had too many rocks on them or too much bush on them, they, by hand, with oxen and horses, proceeded to clear this land and plough and, indeed, start raising small areas of agricultural goods. As they became better at it and more adept to the Prairies and the prairie landscape, they indeed expanded that. Out of that grew an economy-based, diversified agrarian society that became very innovative. That innovativeness, Mr. Speaker, is what Manitoba is all about. That is what the people of Manitoba are all about.

They did, in some areas and in some cases, drain lands that were deemed to be at that time swamps or green areas. That is true. They did that. They, at the same time, built roads. The surveys were done, and 100 feet or 99 feet around every section of land was designated local government property; in other words, municipal roads. Those municipal roads, in large part, remained in most cases natural road-type things that gave farmers access to their lands, that they could, in fact, approach those lands from all sides for farming purposes.

Then, when rubber-tired vehicles or I should say mechanism hit the prairies, such as tractors, be they steel-lugged tractors or rubber-tired tractors, it became evident that they would have to have some road access to those areas as well. So the municipality started building roads. The only equipment that they had at that time to build roads was either scoops or these road maintainers, the belt-grader, elevator kind of graders that they had that threw up large ridges and made ditches on both sides.

Well, the ditches accomplished two things. The ditches actually provided some drainage for every square mile. In order to relieve the water that would

accumulate on that square mile—because it had nowhere to go now. It could not naturally run down to the lower areas of the land because that had now been blocked off by roads, the municipalities went to the Government of Manitoba, and the government, in fact, set up an agency that would help with the engineering and the design work to ensure that culverts could be installed in these roadways to allow the water, in an orderly fashion, to drain away into the next municipal ditch and the next municipal ditch and then finally find some rivers and streams that would allow for the operation of the agricultural activity on that land.

Now, why am I saying this? Well, Mr. Speaker, I attended a meeting just a short while ago where we were shown a map of southern Manitoba that demonstrated where the swamps had been. I looked at those little green spots in the southern part of the prairie, in the area where I live, the Red River Valley. I looked at that and there were probably I do not know how many acres that had been drained, and we talked about draining the swamps in the Red River Valley.

Then I looked at a road map of southern Manitoba, all the municipal roads, and I looked at myself and I said, what have we done? What have we created? We have created, Mr. Speaker, unknowingly, an environment that has designated 99 feet around every section of land almost as a riparian area, have we not, because each of those designated lands normally have at least two ditches on them, which in large part store waters, many of them throughout the year. There is water in many of the ditches throughout the year. So what does that allow in nature? It allows ducks an area where they can raise their young. It allows geese to nest there. It allows all the prairie birds to nest on these 99-foot strips of grass and roadway that we have. It allows the deer to graze.

* (16:00)

Two springs ago, we had a herd of deer on our farm. There were probably some 200 to 250 deer that were grazing on our farm. We talked about that in our house. We also saw the timber wolves and we saw the coyotes and we saw the foxes and, indeed, we had some black bear on our farm which we never used to have. You never used to see a black bear or, for that matter, a wolf or a white-tailed deer. But, in essence, we have, I believe, as farmers and municipalities and local governments, created an environment that is probably much superior to what

we had prior to any riparian legislation, any Bill 14s that are now going to provide policing authority and that are now going to provide a real stick to the government that they can hold over people's head and say, now you mind.

Remember, all that I have described so far, Mr. Speaker, has been done voluntarily by farmers and local municipalities through their own local levies of taxation to be able to allow them to maintain the roads, to clean out the ditches, and mow ditches and all those kinds of things. Now the reason I say clean out ditches, because we have talked so much about the pollution that farmers have, intentionally or unintentionally, supposedly done. The Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) has so often pointed the finger at farmers and told people that the farmers are the ones that are guilty of polluting our lakes.

Well, let me say this to you, Mr. Speaker. Here we have 640 acres of land, and the water dribbles off this land into the ditch. Now, if the water takes any of the soil along into the ditch, it sits in that ditch, the dirt settles out in that ditch, and when the ditch no longer is able to flow the water, that it becomes too clogged with this dirt, the farmers and/or the municipality come along and clean out these ditches and the soil is hauled back onto the field, back to where it is supposed to be. This minister now is accusing the farmers of polluting the water.

I would suspect that, unknowingly or unwittingly, we have designed a system which probably better protects the environment than anything else I have seen anywhere else in the world, except in the Red River Valley across in the United States, in the Red River Valley in Manitoba, and in much of the rest of the agrarian area in Manitoba, including the Souris Valley, the Whitemud Conservation District and all those others, because they all have, with the exception of a few areas, they all have 99 feet of riparian areas around every section of land.

Oh, the minister is now talking about doing five metres of land around every section. Well, that means that the farmers are going to have to break up a lot of this land that is now already in place as a riparian area in the form of road ditches and roadways, some of them driven on, some of them not, and we will now have to redesignate them to probably 15 feet instead of 99 feet.

I think what this minister has inadvertently done by introducing this piece of legislation, he

unwittingly, unknowingly, wants to pass legislation that will be a deterrent instead of a help. I believe this time the stick might, in fact, be used on the minister if we, in fact, did exactly as this bill says. But, Bill 14, in large part, is only the authority given to establish the regulation of enforcement. The regulation of enforcement—that is the policing authority of the agricultural community. That is what this will be called eventually. This will be called the policing bill of the agricultural community. Remember what these agriculture producers are. They are food producers.

I have been so astounded and amazed at the rhetoric that I have heard about the building of a food-processing plant in the city of Winnipeg. We are talking about building a state-of-the-art food-processing plant, and there are some political parties in this province that are totally opposed to building this state-of-the-art food-processing plant. It will produce bacon. It will produce ham. It will produce ribs. It will produce ground meat. It will produce stew meat and all that sort of stuff. Some of the best quality meat in all of the world will be produced right here in Winnipeg, and it will be the best quality that you can buy anywhere. They will be the safest, most sound meat products that the world can buy. We should be so proud of this plant, of where it is being built and how it is being built, that we should advertise this all over the world saying come and get it. You can buy it here in Manitoba, here in Winnipeg. You can buy the best-quality, best-protected, best-inspected meat anywhere.

Yet we have those organizations that are totally opposed to this, totally opposed to our agricultural producers, and this Bill 14 demonstrates why. This Bill 14 portrays our farm community as destroyers of the environment. This Bill 14 says because these farmers are destroyers of the environment, we must now put policemen in place to ensure that they will not destroy it any further. It points to the same mentality that now says you cannot build this food-processing plant in the city of Winnipeg. Well, any country in the world, any country in the world, would welcome this kind of a processing plant with open arms, but most countries in the world would also not even envision passing bills like Bill 14 because it is a slam against the integrity of the farm community that is out there. Those farmers have done everything in their power to protect the environment because they know that the land is the only asset they have to continue to try and provide for their families. That is the only asset they have. It

is the land, and who in their right mind would do anything to destroy that?

So, therefore, the ditches around every section should be deemed as retention vehicles. They retain the soil. They allow the soil to settle out of the water before it slowly moves along that ditch into the rivers and streams in a very clean manner. Then at the end of a decade or so, we bring the backhoes in. We bring the scrapers in. We clean out those ditches again to retain their strength as settling ponds, because that is what they really are.

You can only look at the cattails growing in them, and cattails are deemed to be the best environmental filter that nature has invented. Those cattails then grow the nutrients, take the phosphate out of the ground, take the nitrogens out of the ground, and we take the residue of those cattails and put it back in the soil, plough it back into the land. But those people who sit on the government side of this governing body, this NDP party do not seem to understand that.

* (16:10)

I would welcome them with open arms to come to our farm, or anybody else's farm, and look at what we have done to protect the environment, to protect the waters. Anybody who is silly enough to believe that farmers will inadvertently overfertilize their land needs to re-examine their own thinking. Who would, in their right mind, at \$480 or \$500 a tonne, overfertilize their fields? Why would they put 80 pounds on when 40 pounds will grow them the same crop? Why put 100 pounds on if all you will get is large grain? Large grain does not produce any seed, and overfertility only leads to large grain. So it is self-defeating from an environmental standpoint. It is self-defeating from an economic standpoint, and it is mind boggling that those sitting on the government side enacting this kind of legislation would not have done their homework before they brought it before this House.

Mr. Speaker, one would not want to use the word "ignorance," but surely we must think long and hard why this kind of legislation would be brought to the floor of this House. Why would we want to give the authority to a policeman to walk onto anybody's farm without permission, without authority, to remove works that nobody knows why they were put there? Oh, there are assumptions, but we now under this bill give the authority for an inspector to walk into any farm property, and if he or she deems necessary, they will be given the right under this bill

to remove, without the permission of the owner, any structure, and structures have many different forms on farms. Structures are very often put in place to do some very specific things for very short periods of time or sometimes for very long periods of time.

We sometimes put obstructions in ditches just to maintain higher water levels in those ditches for wildlife. We sometimes do that. Somebody might come along and say, oh, you cannot do that. That is now restricted under this bill. The inspector might come along and have it removed, and then what happens? All the little birds die.

That is really what this is all about, is it not? To give authority to an individual, who the minister will designate, to allow him access to private property. Seldom ever have we seen this kind of authority. I believe there are now some seven bills before this House that take away the individual owner's rights and give right of entry to a government ministerial appointed staff to walk in and do certain things, some under the guise of emergency management, some under the guise of Bill 14, some under the guise of Bill 21, and I could go on and on and list them all. I think all seven of them could be listed.

That is the mentality of this totalitarian government that we have today, and they know not what they are doing, Mr. Speaker, because once these laws are put in place, it becomes very, very difficult to remove them. We have seen in other totalitarian countries what, at the end of the day, happens when too much authority is given to the authority.

I think we should be very, very careful that we do not designate our agricultural producers as nothing more than tools of food production at the will of government and under the authority of government. I think it is very, very dangerous to take an individual producer's rights away as has been done under this bill. It will be a sad state of affairs if this kind of legislative authority is allowed to be perpetuated, and governments of all stripes, of all parties, should be very careful in what they do because some day, we might regret the day that we have given this kind of authority to those that are charged with the policing of the very things that we hold dear, and that is our individual rights and freedoms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I did want to take this opportunity to speak on Bill 14.

I think that it is a bill, as we have witnessed, members of this Chamber have spoken quite passionately about. I think whenever you talk about water, we all recognize how critically important it is for our province. It is one of those valuable resources that I think quite often is too easily overlooked. If you look at the world around us and the high demand for water, in particular fresh water, I think far too often we take it too much for granted. I think that we do need to do what we can to ensure that that valuable resource that we have is there well into the future, and it serves many, many different roles.

I would like to comment on a number of those roles, Mr. Speaker, but I always enjoy following the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) because he tends to speak very passionately about his experiences and his knowledge on this issue. I know, myself, I have had the opportunity to listen to many of his speeches in regard to water and have found them interesting. I do not necessarily agree with every point that the Member for Emerson raises, but I do respect the fact that he speaks very passionately about the issue. I think that he has an excellent understanding of many water-related issues that MLAs would benefit by if, in fact, they were to sit down and have a discussion with the Member for Emerson. I do, as I say, appreciate the words that he has put on the record.

One of the reasons why I feel compelled to indicate to members that they, too, should stand up and speak to legislation more, to share with members of this Chamber what they feel are those important issues. When we think about water rights and how important our waterways are, Mr. Speaker, the first thing that comes to my mind is the 1986 provincial election. It was back then when I actually first ran. The MLA back then was actually Maureen Hemphill. I can remember, I think it was the second town hall that I was at, where Maureen had given a very passionate plea about our Red River and how important the Red River and the Assiniboine River were to the city of Winnipeg.

She represented a portion of that river, because even your constituency, Mr. Speaker, I believe might be a part of the old Logan, quite possibly. You recognize how very important the Red River is in terms of just a lifestyle. At this particular town hall, that is when I first found out that the government back in 1986, during the election there was going to be a huge pledge. I believe it was in the neighbourhood of \$100 million over a certain period of time where the NDP were going to be investing, I could be corrected on this, but I believe it was for the

Assiniboine and the Red River, just the portions of those rivers that are contained within the city of Winnipeg. She felt quite passionate about how important it was that we continue to see walkways and bank stabilization and issues of that nature addressed.

If you take a look, I believe, at any city of the world where most cities that stand out in the world, you will find that there is some sort of a river or a lake component to it and that river or lake is highlighted. That is no different for here in the city of Winnipeg, you know, the city of Winnipeg, Brandon, our other smaller rural communities that hook up close to a lake, whether it is Killarney, others, because there is just so much value for it.

* (16:20)

People love to be around the water. It was not that long ago when we did not have The Forks as we see it today. It was just in essence a railway hub, a lot of old buildings and so forth. The government, at all three levels, decided that they would do what they could in terms of changing it around and try to redevelop that area.

What we saw was significant improvements, where there was a walkway that was built, a commercialization that had taken place. There is a lot more activity to the degree that I do believe it is probably the No. 1 tourist attraction in the province. Quite often, myself included, when people get guests or visitors that visit this city or our province, one of the things that they put on their agenda is to go down to The Forks. We are quite boastful and proud of that. In fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the pictures that I have in my own house is of The Forks.

If you take a look at the types of things that we have to do in order to beautify that area, the issue of stabilization of those riverbanks, of building a walkway, trying to make sure that as much as possible we are friendly to the environment, this is just a very high profile public project that brought in a great deal of dollars. It affected our rivers dramatically, and what we saw at the end of the day, I believe, is a very positive net gain in many, many, many different ways.

So, when we look at Bill 14, there are a few areas that I would like to talk about, because I think that we all want to do the right thing in terms of water. It was interesting hearing, as I listened to a number of the official opposition members speak to Bill 14, as I had listened to my own leader in regard

to this bill, that there are a couple of issues that come out of it. One is, from the official opposition's point of view, concern in regard to our farmers and the impact that this bill has on the farmer, and more than just the impact, the message that is being sent out to the farming community by the very presence of this bill. No doubt, that has to cause a great deal of concern.

The other thing, of course, and something which my leader had talked about was the issue of that whole protection from liability. It was just the other day that I was standing up talking about liability and the importance of accountability. What I saw then, Mr. Speaker, as I was speaking to a different bill, I spent a great deal of time talking about the issue of accountability and why it is the government did not see fit to incorporate gross neglect as something that would be of value.

It surprised me and I indicated back then that there were a number of pieces of legislation that attempted to deal with protection from liability. One has to wonder why it is that we are seeing more and more of that being brought in, Mr. Speaker. I, for one, like the idea of protecting members, boards and government officials from liability. I see that as a positive thing, but when you bring in that protection, there also has to be hand in hand with that, I would suggest, some sort of a sense of accountability foregoing liability. With a person being able to be sued, one would like to think that you are going to protect the person who might be at the other end. For example, if there is gross negligence, that there should not be that protection from liability.

We can all talk about what took place in Walkerton in Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and that was a disaster which affected the lives of a good number of people, hospitalized and, ultimately, I understood, led to the death of some Ontarians. There were some very serious issues that were raised back then in that particular situation. It dealt with the issue of negligence and some of the people who were involved and so forth. How would legislation of this nature affect that? So that is, I think, a really important point, and deserves some sort of a response from the government.

If I go back to the farmers, you know, it was just the other day, I was standing up and somewhat implying to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) that she really needs to do more for the farmers in the province of Manitoba; that, in fact, the government has done nowhere near the types of

things that it talks about, Mr. Speaker, in terms of assisting our farmers; that their record really is not all that good. Then I suspect that, if you provided some of the speeches that were given by other members of this Legislature here today, it, once again, raises the issue to what degree does this government really listen and support our farmers.

The Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), who is going to have to read the Hansard, here is a bill which he is ultimately responsible for. He is imposing it, and one would like to think that his approach dealing with this legislation would have included addressing some of the concerns that farmers have. I would have liked to have heard more direct comment from the Minister of Water Stewardship as to how he believes that the farmer will, in fact, benefit by this, because, on the other side, on the opposition benches, what I have heard is something that, in essence, reinforced what I was talking about the other day. That was a government that, on the surface, appears not to support the farmers to the degree in which they should be supporting our farmers. I know the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier (Mr. Doer) might take some exception to those comments and point out, well, we have done this or we have done that, and we have this and so on. But what you need to look at is that, as a government, you spend \$8 billion-plus, and, when you spend that kind of money, no doubt, there are going to be some things that are positive within that budget. But it is more than just the budget. It is the way in which you treat the farmers of our province. It is the way in which you stand up for the farmers in our rural communities.

You know, I cannot stake any claim to having lived on a farm or any rural community, Mr. Speaker, but I do like to think that I have had numerous occasions to be able to meet with and talk to literally hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals who live in rural Manitoba over the years as I tried to get a better understanding of the needs that our farmers have. You know, I can tell you that these wonderful Manitobans contribute immensely. I am sure that, with very little research, one could find numerous economic and social facts that would clearly demonstrate just how much of a critical role that they play. All in all, I do not think that the farmer asks for very much. I think that, in most part, the government has a responsibility to listen to what the farmer is actually saying and go from there.

* (16:30)

It was interesting when the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) was talking about marshlands. He was talking about green spaces and the positive impact that many of the farms had, whether it was intentional or unintentional, but how, through the road infrastructure, we have seen more and more green spaces. What I thought was really interesting is when he talked about the increase in wildlife, because an increase in wildlife is a fairly good indication as to what is actually happening in terms of whether it is crops or other things that are out there in the rural communities that are growing, that are feeding our environmental ecosystem. I suspect, if you are seeing increases as the member referred to, that is, in most part, a positive. It does mean that we should not sit back, that we do need to do what we can as legislators to make sure that we do not just sit and expect things to materialize in a positive fashion, that there is a need for us to be diligent and to do what we can in terms of bringing in things like legislation, or supporting them through things like family farm tax breaks. There are some things that, in fact, we could and should be doing.

But, when we look at the bill itself, and just wanting to comment specifically in regard to water, one of the biggest issues that I have always had some questions on is the whole issue of when we talk about water rights, and is ultimately the enforcement of what by-laws and laws and regulations that we do have. To what degree do we provide the resources that are necessary to ensure that there is a significant enforcement? I think that is an important perspective that is often overlooked, whether it is intentionally or unintentionally. I suspect that there are a lot of things that happen in the community which are not intentionally done, whether it is not getting a permit, or doing something that diverts water that might cause some problems just down the road. But I think that there needs very much to be the proper types of resources or allocation of staffing that ensures that the water rights and legislation that we have—in good part, common sense does prevail in terms of protecting our water. I do believe that that is important.

What would have been nice in this legislation is if we would have seen some principles that you can actually use for water. When we look at allowing for drainage or water storage, what are some of those basic principles?

Water diversion, these are all critical issues. On the water diversion front, we see a lot of it, Mr. Speaker. Every year when we see our floodway in action and the amount of water that goes through the floodway—it seems in the last 10 years we have seen more and more water going through the floodway, I suspect, than we have in the previous 20 years. It is a great quantity of water, and it is something that is critically important. The floodway serves a purpose, and that purpose has saved literally tens, if not hundreds of millions of dollars of damage. That is just the physical damage, let alone the psychological damage that is caused whenever there are floods in the city, or floods in any community.

Having water diverted is done for many, many different reasons; the prevention of floods is one of those. It was not that long ago where we had our highway closed, and the impact it had on communities like Morris. I can recall, I guess it would have been '97, I think it was, when we had the flood of the century. They were calling the Red River the Red Sea. There is a serious need for diverting water in order to ensure that there is minimal flood damage. That is a good way, I would ultimately argue, to cause the construction that would allow for, ultimately, a better and better environment.

There are other reasons why we might want to divert water, Mr. Speaker. Some of the best strawberries in the world can be achieved through water diversion. I see the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) puts two thumbs up. I think even the Member for Portage has possibly brought some of those strawberries here to the Manitoba Legislature. That is all done through water diversion and being able to ensure that there are adequate amounts of water to ensure that these crops are, in fact, growing. As a result, it adds to the economy in a very direct and positive way. So, on the one hand, you might divert water to avoid damage. In another way, you would divert water for economic benefits such as irrigation.

Quite often, you will divert water for tourism. Tourism is a critical industry in the province. I would ultimately argue that it is one of the potential industries that has the greatest potential for growth. Travel industry, visiting industry, tourism is the actual word that I was looking for. What you will find is that we do put in mechanisms to encourage that through the diversion of water. An example of that, I appreciate the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) talking to me about Pelican Lake.

Pelican Lake is where I happen to have my cottage. He explained to me in an understandable way in terms of just how important it was to control the level of that water. By controlling the level of that water, people that have cottages, such as myself, are able to enjoy our summers.

You would be amazed in terms of the number of people that go out; they visit the campgrounds that are around Pelican Lake, or they go out to the retreat area. It is done, again, because we are able to use water diversion and the techniques in order to be able to sustain something that is very important to us as a province, Mr. Speaker.

So the diversion of water, I would argue, is something that is important. It needs to happen. There are many reasons for it to happen, but it would be nice to see if the government would have established some principles underlying where and why we should be allowing for water diversion.

We have seen the need for water in other ways, you know, using water for industry and industry development. I can recall visiting plants, and just how important having large quantities of water have assisted in making sure that those plants are viable. It has always amazed me in terms of just the amount of water some of these plants will use.

The Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) talked about OlyWest, or he was talking about the hog production. The Manitoba Liberal Party does support rural Manitoba and the need for a hog processing plant. Where we would like to see it is in a different location, but the amount of water that is required, I think most people would be surprised. There are industries that rely very, very heavily on it.

* (16:40)

I had looked in terms of the act itself, The Water Rights Act. The Water Rights Act, when it talks about priorities, it lists off, actually, five and then a catchall, Mr. Speaker. It talks about the domestic purposes that water can actually be used for. Obviously, each one of these is wide and varying and, ultimately, as I would suggest to you, there is that underlying theme of a need for basic principles that could be applied in virtually all these different areas.

When we talk about domestic purposes, that can virtually range from leisure to the importance of necessity. There are municipal purposes. Municipal purposes can range from anything from water that would come out of a fire hydrant and the

mechanisms that are used for that to wading pools. Agricultural purposes, there are just so many ways in which water is used for agricultural purposes. Industrial purposes, I have commented on how important those industrial purposes are for our economy. But one of the things that is important is that we always think in terms of our environment and the impact it is going to have. You know, it is very easy for us to say: Well, here are X number of jobs. You have these jobs, and this factory can establish here or there or wherever it might be. We always have to be cognizant of the fact of the impact on the environment when great volumes of water are necessitated. Irrigation purposes is something which I have already had the opportunity to comment on. Then it talks about other purposes, and that would be the final point that it raises.

In looking at the legislation, it does deal fairly extensively, Mr. Speaker, with the many different purposes of water, but I think at times we need to get back to the basics and get a better understanding of why it is we are bringing in this legislation today. In fact, it was introduced, I understand, I believe, for a first reading last year. It was December 8, according to my notes, and then it was given, actually, second reading not that long ago. It was only May 24 when it was actually given second reading.

One has to wonder in terms of why it is that the government seems to be in such a hurry to pass this particular piece of legislation just given some of the comments that have been there. I think that, if you pass the legislation, possibly prematurely, or if you do it in a hurry-up fashion, it is going to be flawed legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this particular minister has rushed through other legislation inside this Chamber in which I can recall numerous, numerous amendments being proposed. In fact, I would go as far as to say that it was, I think, in the last session where the minister, the same minister, brought forward legislation. There was something like 29 or 30-some amendments. It was a huge number of amendments to that particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, one has to be concerned when you have one piece of legislation with so many amendments, and many of those amendments were actually accepted. I am just talking about third reading. I do not know, I was not there at the committee stage to see if, in fact, there were more amendments that were brought there. So it is almost like the minister gets an idea, and he does not

necessarily do all of his homework. I am getting the feeling, based on what I have heard from the Leader of the Liberal Party, what I have heard from members of the official opposition party, that there are a lot of flaws in this legislation. By the sounds of it, it is going to require, once again, a number of amendments in order to be able to address the many flaws that have already been pointed out.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is, indeed, merit for the minister to reflect on some of the comments that have been put on the record here in second reading and, possibly, maybe even entertain the idea of, prior to the bill going to committee, sitting down with some of the members that have expressed some concerns to see if we can work on some possible amendments that would make it more acceptable so that it would pass.

I think the government, at the very least, should be very sensitive to what the farming community is saying, given that we are here today as a province because of our farmers. The farmers should be at least afforded the respect to be listened to, and we need to be sensitive to them when we pass legislation of this nature. Thank you.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Just briefly, I want to take this opportunity to participate in the debate of Bill 14, The Water Rights Amendment Act, and to express at this time my concern for this government's lack of vision, as I will say, toward our greatest natural resource here in the province of Manitoba, that being water. For a number of years, I have lobbied very extensively for a vision, clear, decisive, understanding, of our greatest natural resource here in the province of Manitoba, and to accord it the respect and the responsibility within government for this natural resource.

I am very pleased and supportive of the creation of the Water Stewardship ministry. But I am disappointed in the current status of that ministry because there are so many other ministries that have interest in water, and I do not believe that they have been accorded the opportunity to co-ordinate with other ministries for the really, really important management of our greatest natural resource, whether it be in agriculture for the needs of agricultural production, whether it be livestock or crop, high-value or current low-valued commodities. Water is an integral part of production.

Manitoba is afforded a phenomenal tourism opportunity with the amount of fresh water lakes we

have in the province. As well, industry and residential rely very strongly on the availability of water for manufacturing and for the quality of life that we enjoy here in the province of Manitoba.

I want to recognize that the government of Howard Pawley struck a commission to provide a report to government regarding water in the southern part of the province. It was called the south Hespler report. It was received by the then-Finance Minister, Eugene Kostyra, in the latter days of that administration. Unfortunately, this government, the New Democratic government, has not looked to a former colleague of theirs and the report to which he provided to this House. This government continues to be reactionary in its management of water and, again, this bill that is before us today is one just of that premise. It does not really, truly look at the long-term needs of Manitobans and the best interests of our province, because not only is drainage very, very important to all Manitobans, but so is the ability to retain and store water in case of drought. If one looks to the Department of Agriculture and publications that speak loud and clear about the two restrictions of life here in the province of Manitoba, being the abundance of water and, also, the situation where drought comes upon the province and water is not available for all the purposes to which I have previously mentioned.

So that is why it is so important that we look at water management here in the province of Manitoba, not just the knee-jerk reactions that we have seen, currently, from the Department of Water Stewardship. We have to look at the long-term effects of our actions today.

* (16:50)

I will speak very specifically of my own experience in working with the Department of Conservation and the Department of Water Stewardship, whereby I was attempting to make a name change, just a very simple name change on the 20-year water licence, which I have had the privilege of having now for over 12 years. The irrigation, which that licence has been able to provide me, the opportunity to operate a high-value production of agricultural crops—it took over six months through this administration, the New Democratic Party administration, to make a simple name change on a licence.

I know now that that department has benefited from additional civil servants being employed in that section, but I will say that I am extremely

disappointed as to the length of time it still takes to provide for a water licence, in my case, for agricultural purposes. I hearken back to the days when there were basically only two employees in the water licensing department, one for the water courses here in the province of Manitoba, as well as another person dedicated to the ground water requests for a permit. Those two individuals functioned in close co-operation, but the issuance of water licences took place in a very timely fashion, because there was a very clear mandate delegated to these two individuals that they were able to act very responsibly and carry out their duties very diligently. They were committed to making certain that they preserved the water quality, as well as they did not see the usage of water exceed the recharge by Mother Nature to the various supply bodies.

I know my time is now concluded in participation in this, and I would like to yield the floor to another honourable member of the Assembly from Arthur-Virden, if I will, because I know that he has, in the area of his constituency, very important communities that he represents extraordinarily well, and he would like to participate on the issue of water. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Arthur-Virden. Oh, can I just deal with government House business?

An Honourable Member: If you have to.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I am just announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). According to the rules, this is pursuant to Rule 31(8). The title of the resolution is Improving Democratic Accountability through All-Party Legislative Screening of Provincial Appointments.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one put forward by the honourable Member for River Heights. This is pursuant to Rule 31(8). The title of the resolution is Improving Democratic Accountability through All-Party Legislative Screening of Provincial Appointments.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Portage la Prairie for that introduction.

Mr. Speaker, it is my opportunity and pleasure to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 14, The Water Rights Amendment Act, and bring to the attention of my colleagues in the House how serious this bill is in its ramifications to all Manitobans across the province. There is no doubt that I am assuming all members of the House, particularly our side of the House at least, support the efforts to prevent illegal drainage of any kind in the province of Manitoba, but I think we need to be very, very careful about setting up a circumstance where individuals are believed to be guilty until they are proven innocent. I think that is the concern with this bill.

The minister has brought this forward under the auspices of trying to provide some monitoring of the situation in Manitoba. It certainly would appear that they are prepared to put more enforcement officers on the ground in relation to inspecting individual farm sites and homes and yards. That is a concern to farmers throughout Manitoba, just like many issues. Many times in this House, I believe, I have said that we have an opportunity to develop livestock in this province, and we have an opportunity to learn from the mistakes made in other regions and jurisdictions vis-à-vis Holland, The Netherlands, as one example that I have referred to in the past. Another one would be the Carolina area of intensive livestock, but we have an opportunity to learn as we go and not make the same mistakes in developing an industry that is very, very important to the province of Manitoba, our agricultural industry.

Mr. Speaker, water is a part of that. There is no doubt about it. We need to have good, clean water in all of our jurisdictions for drinking, for potable water, and there is no doubt about that. I want to leave no doubt in anyone's mind that I am in favour of that, as well. I believe I have mentioned in this House before that I lived on a farm site that did not have a water source or a water supply underground in it of a nature that a person could drink. We used water from a creek for potable water.

I want to refer to a situation, as well, in regard to the importance of managing water. I have talked about that before as well. I think that one of the things we need to do in Manitoba is manage water well, and that goes along with what I have just talked about, about making sure that we do not make the

same mistakes that other jurisdictions have had, and learn from the mistakes that others have made as we developed that industry.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that Manitobans have spoken out in regard to the export of water in Manitoba. They want to make sure that we utilize the water to the maximum benefit that we can within our own province. I support that as well.

I want to say that, as we move forward, some of these circumstances may be dealt with in the future more readily by the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, but particularly by the conservation districts and even under The Water Protection Act. Perhaps, if they get to the point where they have actually formed water management areas in the province of Manitoba, I would add that they could have some jurisdiction in that area as well, as that bill implies that they would, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say as well that it is important that drainage be done in a managed matter. I only say that because I am hearkened by the meeting that I was at on international flood mitigation in Minneapolis last week, where it was brought up by one of the presentations from the Canadian side that, in the years before the Red River Valley was settled, or as it was settled, there was 11 percent of the area south of Winnipeg that was marsh, Mr. Speaker. Today, with the drainage, because it was settled and the drainage was there, and there were no rules in place about how those individuals could do that drainage in those very early days of settlement, and the days of horses, the valley has become drained and, quite rightfully has become, as the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) has pointed out in his presentation today, a very well-developed area of agriculture that is respected in the province of Manitoba, and one that would not be put otherwise.

I want to hearken to the days of pointing out the differences between the west side of the province and the east side, as I did in Minneapolis in regard to North Dakota, South Dakota, western Manitoba being different in a climatic region from Minnesota, the eastern two states below us, and eastern Manitoba as well, and the difference in rainfall. Because this area was settled first, as was the area south of us in the Red River in the U.S., there was much more activity taking place. So, as the further out areas became settled, Mr. Speaker, it did not have the same need to drain the water to be able to farm the land because it is much more porous soil.

Mr. Speaker, I bring to the attention, then, of the circumstances that now we have south of Winnipeg only 0.1 percent of the area south of Winnipeg; that is one tenth of 1 percent that is left as marshland today.

My ancestors farmed in the Sanford area. My grandmother's side of the family moved to Coulter, at the southwest part on the Antler Creek, because it was too wet to farm the land south of Winnipeg in their early days. They thought that would be much more prosperous for them out there because it was drier, and they could farm that land. They soon found out that, because of grasshoppers and drought, they were forced to come back to Sanford. They did, wisely, I think, at that time, make a decision because, of course, there were not the benefits of the farming practices that we have today and all over Manitoba

that allow us to much better farm in those areas of southwest Manitoba and have the opportunities that we need to have.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, I think, though, infringes somewhat on the rights of those individuals to be able to manage their own affairs. At the same time, we need to make sure that, as I have said, there is not illegal drainage taking place throughout Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) will have 23 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

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