

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 216—The Municipal Water System Phosphorus Control Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 216, The Municipal Water System Phosphorus Control Act; Loi sur la réduction du phosphore dans les réseaux municipaux d'alimentation en eau, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this legislation would provide for the elimination of the practice of municipalities adding phosphorus to their water systems in order to prevent leaching of chemicals from the pipes. There are now safe and adequate alternatives. The phosphorus is no longer necessary. It is causing a problem, as we well know, in Lake Winnipeg. It's time to change this practice and reduce this amount of phosphorus which is, at the moment, contributing to the algal bloom problem on Lake Winnipeg.

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

PETITIONS

Neepawa, Minnedosa and Areas—Local Hospitals

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition is signed by P. W. Snedden, Wayne Nelson, Wayne Zalluski and many, many others.

Public Meeting—Premier's Attendance

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Premier (Mr. Doer) has been silent on the issue related to serious allegations with respect to his office.

The Premier is not answering questions related to the said issue inside the Legislature.

There is no indication that the Premier is enforcing Manitoba's code of ethics for political parties.

Based on the 1999 Monnin report inquiry, leaders of political parties are obligated to enforce the code of ethics.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier to consider attending the November 5 public meeting at the Munroe public library, which is located in his constituency.

This is signed by James Cotton, Jasminder Brar, Kuljit Brar and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development

Second Report

Ms. Erna Braun (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Second Report.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings:

Your committee met on Monday, October 22, 2007, at 6:30 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

Bill No. 4 – The Real Property Amendment Act (Wind Turbines)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels (éoliennes)

Bill No. 10 – The Family Maintenance Amendment and Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'obligation alimentaire et la Loi sur l'établissement et l'exécution réciproque des ordonnances alimentaires

Bill No. 21 – The Housing and Renewal Corporation Amendment Act (Fund for Housing Revitalization)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'habitation et de rénovation (fonds destiné à la revitalisation des logements)

Bill No. 22 – The Medical Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi médicale

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the meeting:

Ms. Braun (Vice-Chairperson)

Hon. Mr. Chomiak

Mr. Dewar

Hon. Mr. Mackintosh

Hon. Ms. Oswald

Hon. Mr. Rondeau

Ms. Selby

Mr. Cullen

Mr. Hawranik

Mr. McFadyen

Mrs. Mitchelson

Ms. Braun resigned as Vice-Chairperson of the committee.

Your committee elected Ms. Braun as the Chairperson.

Your committee elected Ms. Selby as the Vice-Chairperson.

Public Presentations

Your committee heard three presentations on Bill No. 21 – The Housing and Renewal Corporation Amendment Act (Fund for Housing Revitalization)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'habitation et de rénovation (fonds destiné à la revitalisation des logements), from:

Sandie Matheson, The New High School Lobby Group

Doug Forbes, Private Citizen

Elizabeth Fleming, Provincial Council of Women in Manitoba

Your committee heard one presentation on Bill No. 22 – The Medical Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi médicale, from:

Dr. William D.B. Pope, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba

Written Submissions

Your committee received one written submission on Bill No. 21 – The Housing and Renewal Corporation Amendment Act (Fund for Housing Revitalization)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'habitation et de rénovation (fonds destiné à la revitalisation des logements), from:

Jennifer Zyla, Private Citizen

Your committee received one written submission on Bill No. 22 – The Medical Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi médicale, from:

Todd Campbell, Canadian Medical Protective Association

Bills Considered and Reported

Bill No. 4 – The Real Property Amendment Act (Wind Turbines)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels (éoliennes)

Your committee agreed to report this bill with the following amendment

THAT the proposed subsection 112(6), as set out in Clause 3(4) of the Bill, be amended by adding "pipeline" before "agreement" wherever it occurs.

Bill No. 10 – The Family Maintenance Amendment and Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'obligation alimentaire et la Loi sur l'établissement et l'exécution réciproque des ordonnances alimentaires

Your committee agreed to report this bill, without amendment.

Bill No. 21 – The Housing and Renewal Corporation Amendment Act (Fund for Housing Revitalization)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'habitation et de rénovation (fonds destiné à la revitalisation des logements)

Your committee agreed to report this bill, without amendment, on a recorded vote of yeas 6, nays 4.

Bill No. 22 – The Medical Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi médicale

Your committee agreed to report this bill, without amendment.

Ms. Braun: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Power Line Government's Policy

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in this morning's newspaper there was a very good advertisement run by Manitoba Hydro. The headline on the ad says: "I

want to be Power Smart. You can be too." It's with Shea Kelli, the host of Shea's Rockin' World Tour, who is a constituent of mine and a very fine individual. The ad goes on to say: "Some of the places I visit on Shea's Rockin' World Tour don't even have any electricity. In Manitoba, we have lots, but we shouldn't waste it. A really easy way to use less electricity in your home is to replace your regular light bulbs with compact fluorescents."

Now, Mr. Speaker, there was an old joke at one time, one that I would never tell, about how many NDP ministers does it take to change a light bulb. I want to ask the Premier this question: How many light bulbs are going to have to be changed to make up for his dim NDP Hydro policy?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the 120 megawatts that we have saved by closing the Selkirk coal plant, which was spewing emissions under their regime when he was chief of staff, would deal with thousands and thousands and thousands of light bulbs.

I'll go on further about energy smart when members opposite stop heckling, Mr. Speaker.

Line Loss

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier's directive to Hydro that they add more than 400 kilometres to the line from the north is at a very conservative estimate, even at 28 megawatts of line loss, going to require Manitobans to change 1,495,609 bulbs in order to make up for the lost power.

So I want to ask the Premier: If he can ask Manitobans to change \$1.5-million light bulbs in today's advertisement, why doesn't he take Manitoba Hydro's advice and make a right decision when it comes to the impacts of his daffy detour on lost electricity in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, under his—thank you very much, it's okay—assumptions on line loss and, of course, the new line will save more than the existing line over the status quo, which is clear.

Secondly, under his assumptions, you would have four times greater that amount of money or megawatts saved with the coal plant, and the 300 megawatts we have already saved with Power Smart, a program that was not in place when members opposite were in government, the 300 megawatts on Power Smart and the 100 megawatts on,

120 megawatts on the coal plant are just two examples of where we have saved 20 times the number the member opposite just used, Mr. Speaker.

The existing line has an existing line loss greater than the proposed new line, and I say proposed line because it has to go to the Clean Environment Commission. Mr. Speaker, 420 megawatts, clean energy coal plant, that's just the beginning of it in terms of energy efficiency, 20 times the number the members opposite had just cited is the already existing savings of energy under our intelligent strategy which has been recognized.

I might say, Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite was the chief of staff, Manitoba's energy efficiency rate was No. 9. The energy efficiency program in Manitoba, the 300 megawatts we've saved, is No. 1 in Canada for megawatts saved.

*(13:40)

Manitoba Hydro Power Line Reasons for West Side Location

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the NDP decision to run a hydro transmission line down the west side of Manitoba will lead to increased losses of precious clean electricity because of the additional 400 kilometres of line required in this route. Experts predict this loss will be equivalent to at least 28 megawatts of power. If this energy were not lost, it could be used to offset coal production by our export customers, potentially displacing almost 250,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year.

Mr. Speaker, given that between 2004 and 2005 Manitoba had a 20 percent increase in greenhouse gas emissions, why is this NDP government still entertaining the idea of running a hydro line down the west side of our province?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite were handing out that garbage in the election campaign. Environment Canada, and this is recycled so I give you credit for that, but Environment Canada has identified that the emissions went up by 2 megatons, in fact, 2.3 megatons between the year 1990 and the year 2000.

Mr. Speaker, they have identified further that the megatons have gone up .13 in the last six years. Now we still say we have work to do but that is, again, 20 times better than members opposite in terms of emissions. That's why our energy efficiency program has been rated No. 1 in Canada. The energy

efficiency is the first strategy any province has to put in place. Ninth place under the Tories, ninth out of 10. First place under our government. We're not perfect, but we're 20 times better on energy efficiency than members opposite.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, he got one thing right, Mr. Speaker, that they're not perfect because they sure are when it comes to the increases in greenhouse gas emissions in this province.

Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words, and their record on this is abysmal. Experts have said the extra 400 kilometres of line required for Doer's daffy detour could equate to a loss of at least 28—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind members again that all members in this Chamber are honourable members. I ask the honourable Member for Tuxedo to withdraw that comment.

Mrs. Stefanson: I withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member. Would you please continue.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, experts have said that the extra 400 kilometres of line required for this daffy detour could equate to a loss of at least 28 megawatts of clean energy power. This precious clean energy could be used to offset coal production, displacing nearly 250,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

Mr. Speaker, when will this NDP government stop with the photo ops, stop with the empty rhetoric and start to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this province?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, as early as 1990, members opposite, when they were in government, it was recommended that they do something about increased reliability. What did they do? Absolutely nothing. In 1996 they had a loss of some towers for hydro transmission. What did they do in the subsequent three years? Absolutely nothing.

We have picked an option here that will reduce line loss out of the existing bipoles, out of the existing bipoles of existing generation by 75 megawatts. That's what bipole 3 will do going down the west side. It will increase the energy efficiency of what we're generating by 75 megawatts, more than three times what members have said would be the losses over their hypothetical alternative which is not viable.

Environmental Enhancement Loans Program Program Status

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, in her remarks to the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce this morning, the minister responsible for rural initiatives and agriculture acknowledged that her program, environmental enhancement program, is a failure. In Estimates, she acknowledged that no one has taken advantage of the program.

This initiative has now added to the minister's record of failed, dismal projects. I will review them, Mr. Speaker: Ranchers Choice, failed; hemp processing, failed; cattle check-off, going to buy cattle for Saskatchewan slaughter plants; Winkler environmental, failed. Now the environmental enhancement program has failed.

Why will this minister not revamp this program but continue this dismal record of failures in this province, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I didn't realize that the Member for Russell was at my speech this morning at the Chamber of Commerce, but if he was he would know that is not true. That is not what I said at all.

I will stand by our record of what we have done for growth in rural Manitoba by theirs. I am sure he is not very proud of some of the investments that he made when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker, projects like Isobord that had failed dismally.

But I would ask the member opposite, too, if he really cares about the livestock industry in this province, whether it be pork or beef, that he for once stand up and say he supports increasing slaughter capacity, rather than bad-mouthing the industry when they want to see more slaughter capacity.

Mr. Derkach: Enhancing slaughter capacity in Manitoba is hardly a program which buys cattle for slaughter plants in Saskatchewan, as this minister is doing right now.

Mr. Speaker, this morning she said that she will not be able to spend the \$2.5 million that was allocated to this program. So, I want to ask the minister if she will go back to the drawing board, work with agricultural producers and come up with a program that truly recognizes the need for environmental enhancement in agriculture.

Will she work with agricultural producers to bring a program that in fact will be useful and productive in this province?

Mr. Wowchuk: Again, I would say to the member that whoever was taking notes for him should be more accurate. I did say, Mr. Speaker—

An Honourable Member: You weren't there? You weren't awake, were you?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: Our government recognizes, as we make changes to manure management regulations and make changes to protect our water supply in Manitoba, that there are going to have to be changes. We have committed \$2.5 million, and I said to the producers this morning that we probably won't spend all of it this year, but we will have to increase the amount in future years as producers ramp up the steps that they are taking to improve the environment.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the member should get his facts straight.

Hollow Water Cottage Barricades Government's Response

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): The Minister of Conservation yesterday made the comment that the barricades put up by Hollow Water were put up by the chief, that they were unnecessary and illegal. Mr. Speaker, we all know that. We've been telling the minister that for the last four weeks.

So I ask the Minister of Conservation, and really the relevant question is, and I hope he listens to this one: What is he going to do about the illegal barricades?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): The Member for Lac du Bonnet has a long list of bad advice that he has given to members across the way. He can just add this to his list as well. Last week he advised me that I should just write a cheque for all of the damage that's going to occur in cottages there.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? There was a better way to do it, and we did it a better way. We made the commitment weeks ago to work with cottagers, to work with their associations to put a plan together. We made that commitment and we followed through on it. Almost 35 cottagers got in on the weekend, winterized their cottages, and we have a couple more now who have asked to go back in.

We said we would do it, and we did it, despite his bad advice.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, and the barricades are still there.

So, the Minister of Conservation has stated that we're doing all that we can do from our side of the barricades. Cottage and homeowners are being denied access on a public road, and now obviously the Minister of Conservation is also being denied access. As a result, the minister is respecting the authority of Hollow Water over a government-owned public road.

I ask the Minister of Conservation: Who has authority over that public road? Is it he as minister of the Crown or Hollow Water who put up the barricades?

* (13:50)

Mr. Struthers: More bad advice from the Member for Lac du Bonnet, Mr. Speaker. Over and over and over again the member insists that we put ourselves in place of the RCMP and we do something draconian with the barricades.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum here. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. The honourable minister has the floor.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lac du Bonnet can sing, row, row, row your boat all you like, which is what he was doing, and he can belittle the efforts that the people in the Department of Conservation made to get those cottagers in to winterize their cabins. Cottagers sent us e-mails congratulating us on doing that and thanking us for the service we provided.

Or we can sit back, like members opposite, and simply give bad advice. I'd rather take action, which is what we did, and we'll continue to do that.

Economy—Manitoba Labour Migration

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Finance was running in a marathon, he would be at the starting gate and everybody else would be at the finish line.

The Chartered Accountants of Manitoba has now released a second section of their report, their annual MB Check-Up. The research shows that Manitoba posted the lowest job growth, the lowest

wages and the lowest post-secondary education attainment rates. As a result, Manitoba is losing our skilled and educated workforce. Our sons and daughters are leaving to pursue better opportunities, higher wages, improved economic opportunities elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Finance satisfied to occupy the lowest rung in the ladder and watch skilled and educated Manitobans flock out of Manitoba to other provincial provinces?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Let me just put the record right for the member opposite. Between 2001 and 2006, the growth in real wages in Manitoba was among the highest in the country. We admit that we started from a low base in the '90s when disposable income and wages were stagnant, but they've been coming up ever since we've been in government, Mr. Speaker, and they will continue to go up.

With respect to post-secondary education, we actually recognize that there's more to Manitoba than just Winnipeg and you cut it off. We actually built and constructed University College of the North, which is in 17 communities in the north, educating people in the north. We've doubled community college expansion opportunities. We're doing a major project in his own constituency that his party voted against.

When it comes to educating Manitobans, enrolments are up over 30 percent. When it comes to wages, they're the second-best growth in the country, and there's more to add on the next question.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, obviously, the minister didn't understand that. Okay, we've got the lowest job growth, lowest wages and lowest post-secondary education attainment rates in western Canada. That's what we've got.

The business community is now saying we have to, in Manitoba, increase the net pay to our employees, and the way we do that and what they're asking for is a reduction in income tax rates and an increase in the personal basic exemption, Mr. Speaker. This weekend, Bob Silver, the owner of Western Glove, announced that his company is eliminating 100 production workers.

When is this minister going to wake up and realize that if Bob Silver, the co-chair of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, can't keep jobs in Manitoba then the problem is real? Is the minister embarrassed by this abysmal performance,

or is he going to continue to duck the issue and rely totally on political spin?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to hot air, the member is rapidly moving into first place, and it's got nothing to do with reducing greenhouse gases, I might add.

Now, let's talk about jobs. We have the highest participation rate in western Canada in the labour market, over 68 percent. We have the second-lowest unemployment rate in the country at 4.3 percent, and we have the second-lowest unemployment rate for young people in the country. These measures indicate that we have high participation in the labour force, and we have low employment rate.

Mr. Speaker, let's not forget there's only one party in this Legislature that's committed to increasing the minimum wage. Not the Conservatives, not the Liberals, only the NDP is committed to increasing the minimum wage in this House.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Privatization Costs

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): A year ago today, the NDP announced that it planned to privatize part of the WRHA: payroll, human resources, finance and supply management. This work was going to be outsourced to a private for-profit company.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health if she can confirm that the privatization costs currently under discussion will be \$30 million annually for a 10-year contract. That amounts to \$300 million over 10 years, and every 10 years thereafter. And is this the largest privatization of health care in Manitoba's history?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): It hasn't been done.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, while the NDP are privatizing part of the health-care system, and the discussions are underway, they have done the opposite in other areas of health care. They bought the Pan Am Clinic, they built a sandwich factory. Yet, at the same time that they said they were going to privatize the back part, the backroom, of the WRHA, they at the time went out and bought the private MRI clinic at the Maples Surgical Centre so that it would come into the public system.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health if she could tell us why privatization is good in one part of health care but not in another.

Ms. Oswald: I used to think that the member opposite and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) didn't talk very often about their stance on privatization of health care because they couldn't sell it. It's clearly because she doesn't get it.

The very fundamental principle of the work that is being done with the Pan Am Clinic, with the Maples clinic, is that there is one line for service. That service is based on medical need, not on the size of a person's wallet which has been advocated time and time again by the member opposite.

So not only does she not understand what's going on in Manitoba, not only is she somehow raising the issue of privatization that previously she's tried so desperately to conceal whether it's privatization wholly, their privatization of home care, but now she's just getting it completely wrong. It's a bit mind-boggling.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Minister of Health didn't get a good briefing from the previous Minister of Health who I would indicate announced to the media a year ago today that the Province was going to privatize city hospital services—headline in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Monday, October 24.

So I would like to ask the Minister of Health if she could please tell us where the negotiations for this have progressed to, considering that the previous minister that was in that position of Minister of Health had already started down this road a year ago. Could she give us an update as to where those negotiations are at?

Ms. Oswald: I honestly have never been so happy to stand up in Question Period and answer a question in my life. I was pretty happy on the day when the member opposite wanted to ask me about the firing of nurses. That was a very happy day for me to get up and remind members opposite that they fired 1,000, and we've got them back plus 500 more.

But today the member opposite wants to get up and talk about our party's opposite stance on the privatization of health care. We believe in public health care. They're on the record supporting private health care.

And in answer to her question: It has not been done, Mr. Speaker.

Government Operations Carbon-Neutral Government

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, sadly one of the most effective parts of the

government's climate strategy seems to be the increased sequestration of atmospheric carbon dioxide into algal blooms in Lake Winnipeg, but we clearly need a better approach than that. And changing the way we do things means showing some government leadership.

During the election campaign earlier this year we called for the provincial government to move to become carbon neutral in its operations. I ask the Premier whether he will commit today to operating a carbon-neutral government by the fiscal year 2008-2009?

* (14:00)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have flattened out the carbon emissions for the whole province. We have plans to close the second coal plant as long as we can have the proper transition for employees, the 64 employees working at that plant in Brandon. To reduce, again, emissions considerably will get us below where we were in 2000 when we came into office, when we do that. We have a continued strategy on renewable energy, wind, geothermal energy-efficiency to continue to work towards a target that is consistent with what we have to do.

The member opposite, when he was in the federal Cabinet, they pledged to join Kyoto between the years '93 and '97. When he was in Cabinet, emissions went up dramatically in Canada. We certainly are targetting legislation that we will introduce in the House and debate in the House to attempt to reach the Kyoto targets of 6 percent reduction by 2012.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the sad reality is that in Manitoba the emissions, the greenhouse gas emissions are still going up and they're still well above where they were in 1990. We look forward to the targets because we've been waiting for them for many years.

Today the Premier announced that he will be working with other governments to design a multi-sector market-based mechanism to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Can the Premier indicate what he's doing in this respect, and indicate why Manitoba-based offsets are presently much less readily available than purchased offsets in other jurisdictions?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, what we've done is that we were the first jurisdiction in North America to join public sector jurisdiction. Hydro joined the Chicago commodity market and had carbon credits attained by Manitoba.

In fact, when we closed the Selkirk coal plant down we actually gained money from the action that took place, and we also reduced emissions by 124 megawatts coming from a coal plant. It was the largest emitter, and the member opposite was the chief of staff, the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in Manitoba.

I would dare say it was spewing pollutants all over, especially northeast Winnipeg and northeast in the Capital Region. So we're pleased that we have taken both those actions and the answer to the question is we're already registered. Actually, we joined up five years ago.

Public Meeting Premier's Attendance

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, it's proving to be a challenge to get this Premier (Mr. Doer) to recognize that he does have an obligation to be accountable to his own constituents.

Mr. Speaker, as we try to put up posters and leaflets and we have a radio campaign that's being planned, we want the Premier to come out to his own constituency. I know he doesn't reside in the area. I know he doesn't believe he has to go into the area between elections. That's what he believes. We believe that he does have a responsibility to tell Manitobans and to take a position as to what's been happening in his office.

My question to the Premier is: Will the Premier ensure that if he is unable to attend the November 5 public meeting that he will have any one of his 33 NDP MLAs, that are prepared to clap their hands at his beck and call, to be there in attendance in his place? Will the Premier at least make that commitment?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Inkster continues his one-person campaign in Manitoba after he had promised the Legislature that should Elections Manitoba find no wrong-doing, he would publicly resign. After having said that, and not doing that he continues his one-person campaign against the Member for The Maples (Mr. Saran) who won in a nomination.

I don't know how the Member for Inkster had his nomination. In fact, I don't know how the Member for Inkster has time to do his work in his constituency, since he's running around with radio ads and running around putting up posters in the Premier's constituency when we have duties that are given to us by people that elect us in this Legislature.

I would ask the member to live up to his pledge that he made here, and that is to resign and do the right thing so the people of Manitoba will know that he lives up to his word. He said if there's no findings, he would resign. We're waiting for him to do that.

CancerCare Manitoba Updated Equipment

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, early detection plays—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for St. James has the floor.

Ms. Korzeniowski: Mr. Speaker, early detection plays a vital role in effective treatment of breast cancer. Can the Minister of Healthy Living inform the House of recent developments that will provide updated equipment to CancerCare Manitoba?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member for St. James for this great question. We do know that early detection for breast cancer is essential for increasing the survival rate. That's why today, our government announced \$271,000 to replace two mammography diagnostic units at CancerCare Manitoba.

I was very proud to be joined by many cancer survivors, staff, as well as volunteers of CancerCare Manitoba to make this great announcement at the HOPE Centre. The HOPE Centre is a very vital part of our system which provides information, education, hope, and most importantly, strength, to fight the battle of cancer for women. I think that it's very important that we continue to support prevention initiatives as well as early detection and treatment.

School Taxes Farm Property

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, not only is this NDP government applauding itself for refunding taxes that shouldn't be collected in the first

place, they are charging Manitobans \$1.5 million to do it. The administrative cost is 3 percent, the same administrative costs of payday loan companies to cash a cheque. Only this NDP government would think that this is a good, sound policy—to collect the tax, then rebate the bulk of it and then charge Manitobans \$1.5 million to do it.

Mr. Speaker, when is the NDP government going to stop wasting taxpayers' dollars on needless administration charges and do away with school taxes on farmland property?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Imagine this, Mr. Speaker. When the Conservatives were in power, they increased the portioning on agriculture land. They increased taxes on farmland by some \$7 million.

We came into office, we made a commitment to reduce education tax on farmland. We started with 20 percent, we went to 50 percent, we are up to 60 percent. Keep waiting, Mr. Speaker, we are going to reduce those education taxes on farmland by 80 percent.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we would have eliminated it already, not just made rhetoric.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, if this NDP government truly believes \$1.5 million in administrative costs to administer the rebate program is acceptable, this is just bad policy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: When will the smoke and mirrors go away and this minister stop wasting taxpayers' dollars?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, under the previous administration we saw education tax on farmland go up. Under this government we put in place a policy to reduce education tax on farmland, and what did they do? They voted against every budget that we brought in that would reduce education tax on farmland. They talked about it, but they did absolutely nothing and then they voted against it when we brought forward a policy.

* (14:10)

Rural Health Care Doctor Retention

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, 14 rural emergency rooms throughout Manitoba

remain closed because of this minister's mismanagement. This includes the ER in Wawanesa. On October 4, in Estimates, the Minister of Health led us to believe that the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority was aggressively pursuing negotiations with Dr. Nick Abell, of course, in hopes that he would come back to the community to work.

Can the minister give us an update in terms of how those negotiations are going?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, again, the single most important thing that a regional health authority can do in co-operation with a government is to increase human resources in rural Manitoba, in urban centres and in the north. As I said to the member in Estimates, it was our understanding that the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority was going to make contact with Dr. Abell, in addition to other efforts that are being made to bring resources to rural Manitoba.

We know that by increasing our spaces at medical school, by being aggressive on international medical graduates and working hard and committing to bringing a hundred more doctors to Manitoba, we can work to achieve that goal. Again, I have to ask the member opposite: How many doctors did they promise during the election? It was zero, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the fact remains Dr. Abell not very long ago was actually practising in Wawanesa. He left because this minister and her government failed to give him a good reason to stay. I'm not surprised the minister doesn't know why he left or where to find him. She isn't willing to learn from those doctors who have left the province. That's why we keep losing them.

Last week, we on this side of the House received an e-mail from the RHA asking for Dr. Abell's contact information. Can the minister say: Are they aggressively pursuing this doctor? And at the same time, are they really trying to retain doctors in Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, again, on the specific issue of that specific doctor, our information tells us that the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority was going to be in contact with him, in addition to a number of other recruits.

The simple fact is, Mr. Speaker, that since 1999, we have a net increase of 235 doctors here in Manitoba. That's 86 doctors for rural Manitoba. We

know that the College of Physicians and Surgeons posts a 10-year high increase in doctors in Manitoba at 54. Ten years ago, it was also a high. The highest loss of doctors, and that was 74.

Ethanol Plants Hartney and R.M. of Cameron

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, on September 20, the Minister of Agriculture met with proponents, municipal leaders and supporters of the Clean Country Resources ethanol project in southwest Manitoba. The Town of Hartney and the R.M. of Cameron are putting up a hundred thousand dollars to show support for this project, and the minister promised a prompt reply to their inquiries.

Has she replied, Mr. Speaker, and, if not, when can they expect a written response as she promised?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I did meet with this group when I was visiting in southwestern Manitoba, and my staff has been working with them and looking at ways to find the resources that they need in order to complete the work that they want to do this fall.

Permits for Water Tests

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, just looking for a reply so that they could have one, but these Clean Country Resources proponents and many municipal officials requested the government's assurance that permits for water tests would be allowed this fall before freeze-up.

With trials required to be pumped for 72-hour periods, will the minister indicate what steps she has taken, or will take this week, to support this testing before huge ice rinks result from having to perform these tests in the rigours of winter, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the member, staff from my department and the department of STEM have been working with this group, and it is my understanding that resources have been put in place and the testing that they are wanting to do this fall is going to be able to be done. But I can follow up with the member should there be some outstanding issues. The information I have is that my staff has dealt with them, and they are able to do the testing that they want to do this fall.

Bill 21
Request for Withdrawal

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, my question's for the Minister responsible for Housing. Last night at committee we heard three very good presentations from individuals and organizations that were opposed to Bill 21 and felt that this was just smoke and mirrors, a piece of legislation that was being put forward by this government, and that if the government had the political will to renovate and fix up inner-city housing, they would do it through appropriation and not through legislation.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister, as a result of those presentations, consider withdrawing Bill 21?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, here's a chestnut, Mr. Speaker. I've got two bills here. One says Bill 38; one says Bill 21. I've checked both bills and the only difference between these two is the number.

Now, I don't know what explains the opposition having said for Bill 38: There are good intentions here to allocate money into economically less viable areas of the city. It's very important that we recognize the need for housing in the inner city. Their spokesperson said: This bill, this one here, is a good bill.

Perhaps the members opposite might want to try and muster some credibility and explain why now they say on Bill 21: This bill is bad law.

Good bill, bad law. Good, bad. Good, bad.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Pembina Constituency College Partnerships

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Today I would like to acknowledge an important partnership between Garden Valley Collegiate Technical Education Campus and Assiniboine Community College.

The campus in Winkler is an important regional centre for technical-vocational education and training. They have continued their exceptional dedication to education, helping to train students for careers and advance their entrance into the job market.

Assiniboine Community College offers a two-year program that aids in filling the demand for trained heavy-duty technicians. With this agreement, five spaces will be reserved for qualified graduates from Garden Valley Collegiate.

But the truly exciting part of this co-operative effort is that students who meet the requirements of Garden Valley's diesel technology program can transition directly into the second year of ACC's heavy-duty equipment technician program. These young people will enter the job market sooner as skilled workers.

I am pleased this initiative will open educational and career opportunities for the young people of the Pembina constituency. It will reward the hard work of students and encourage post-secondary education. This partnership is helping to fill the demand in the trade sector, and, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that some of the hardest working and most talented workers in Manitoba call our constituency home.

I'd like to congratulate Principal Dan Giesbrecht of Garden Valley Collegiate and President Joel Ward of Assiniboine Community College, as well as all the staff and students of both institutions.

For all their hard work and being not only proactive but innovative in dealing with the demands of education today, I must thank the Garden Valley School Division, including Superintendent Vern Reimer and board chair Kelvin Dyck.

Finally, but most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I wish the students who participate in this initiative the best of success. I hope they will enjoy a bright future and a fulfilling career. Thank you.

Inwood School Grand Opening

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): On October 22, the MLA for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), our Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, and I had the distinct pleasure of attending the grand opening of the new Inwood School, a 24,166 square foot replacement structure which cost a total of \$5.4 million to build.

The design includes five classrooms, a kindergarten, gymnasium, library, multipurpose room, science lab, resource room, computer room and life skills area which will provide core facilities for 135 students from kindergarten to grade 12.

Since 2000, this Manitoba government has provided in excess of \$378 million in capital program funding for the public education system, an

increase of nearly \$200 million from the previous seven-year period.

Cooper Rankin Architects and Red Lake Construction are to be commended for their good work on the project which recognizes the importance of energy conservation by incorporating Power Smart technologies and incentives. This project can be viewed as the culmination of many years of re-investment in the facilities of the Lakeshore School Division which recognizes that there is a clear limit as to how far our children can be expected to travel to get to school each day.

It also incorporates the ideology that as many communities as possible in rural Manitoba should have, at the very least, one good school to serve the needs of the people. Adequate public infrastructure is key to the maintenance of vibrant rural communities and the economic health of our province as a whole. This NDP government knows that rural Manitoba is and will continue to be the base upon which our home and native land will thrive as long as investments of this nature are made.

I congratulate the people of Inwood and thank, on their behalf, the provincial government and the Public Schools Finance Board for addressing the needs of the Interlake region.

* (14:20)

Louie Tolaini

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I'd like to extend my sincerest congratulations to Mr. Louie Tolaini, the founder of the TransX Group of Companies. He has recently been named the Ernst & Young Prairie Entrepreneur of the Year. For Mr. Tolaini this award only further confirms his position among the most successful and hardworking Manitobans.

Part of his success is that Mr. Tolaini has always applied the same optimism, vigour and diligence that marked his earliest achievements. Mr. Tolaini came to Canada as a hopeful 19-year-old with visions of earning enough to return to his native land and purchase a farm. However, the intervention of fate quickly rerouted the young Mr. Tolaini's plans. His hard work allowed him to establish a small trucking company out of Virden.

Today the TransX Group of Companies based out of Winnipeg stretches across North America and has an annual sales figure of more than half a billion dollars. The company employs over 2,500 people

and hopes to become a one-billion-a-year company by 2014.

As economists of all stripes have long noted, entrepreneurs are the engines of the economy, and fortunately for Manitoba, Louie Tolaini has understood this quite literally. While his accomplishments within the business community are foremost, we should also not forget his contributions as a citizen. Taken together, both the economic and social contributions that Mr. Tolaini has made to the local community, the province and nation quite clearly have exceeded anything he could have imagined as a young Italian immigrant with no knowledge of English.

Mr. Tolaini has been repaid for all his hard work by finally realizing his original dream that he carried out upon his arrival to Canada. He now owns a small vineyard in Italy.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude by again congratulating Louie Tolaini on receiving this prestigious award of Prairie Entrepreneur of the Year and thank him for the benefits that his vision and his work have contributed to the social and economic life of Manitobans.

Public Accounts Committees Conference

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to attend the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference in Victoria from August 19 to 21. I was joined by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) and the Clerk of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Every year legislators and staff from federal, provincial and territorial Public Accounts committees from across Canada meet in conjunction with the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors. These very useful meetings are used to discuss matters of mutual interest relating to financial accountability.

It is an exciting time for people interested in accounting and auditing. The conference allows participants to network and share experiences while exploring new and innovative ways of operating. During the conference we had the opportunity to discuss important issues facing our committees with both the federal Auditor-General as well as provincial auditors general. All participants were able to gain excellent insight into the various ways that committees operate.

There was an excellent discussion on the relationship between Public Accounts committees

and auditors general. I raised the issue of televised or Web-broadcasted meetings and discovered that this is happening in Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and British Columbia.

I have served on the Public Accounts Committee for a number of years and most recently as its Vice-Chair. It is truly an honour to serve the Legislature by sitting on this committee, and I look forward to continuing to do so.

I want to thank the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia for their outstanding job as hosts of this year's conference. Their warm and open welcome made the conference a wonderful way to share and learn from participants on a topic that is of paramount importance to us all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Canada Wings Aviation Training Centre

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Portage la Prairie, along with the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski), I was very pleased to attend the opening ceremony for the Canada Wings Aviation Training Centre at the Southport Aerospace Centre located just south of Portage la Prairie. This impressive new training facility is indeed remarkable and will be used to train Canadian Forces pilots as well as the military pilots from around the world for decades to come.

In 2005, the federal Department of National Defence awarded Allied Wings Flight Training Services a \$1.77-billion contract that will have the centre conduct pilot training for the next 22 years. The No. 3 Canadian Forces Flying Training School uses the facility with 70 students currently attending, and it's anticipated that more than 300 could eventually be attending at any one time.

Using the most advanced technology in the world, students experience the inner workings of the cockpit through flight simulation before they actually take off. Using the virtual technology, trainees can be transported to airports around the world. These simulators also introduce trainees to dangerous situations and bad weather conditions without ever leaving the ground. Two of the four units even have the ability to imitate an aircraft's movement involved in a crash. All of this results in a better prepared pilot trained to the highest of military standards.

As a young man I had a pilot licence, and it was wonderful to experience it again when I flew the King Air Turbo Prop during a simulation at the new facility.

At the opening ceremonies, the outstanding records of two pilots that were highly decorated during the Second World War were recognized. The on-the-ground pilot training facilities are situated in the newly christened Hilly Brown Building. This is in recognition of Brown's impressive flying record as a fighter pilot during the Second World War. The main theatre in the training centre was named the Glen Ellwood Theatre, who survived more than 100 combat missions, most as a navigator with the famed Pathfinder Squadron during the Second World War.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Allied Wings Flight Training Services and to thank all the current and former board members of Southport Aerospace Centre and members, current and former, of Canadian Forces personnel whose foresight and hard work saw the creation of this state-of-the-art military pilot training facility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GRIEVANCES

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

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a grievance.

Each session, Mr. Speaker, every member in this Legislature is given the opportunity to grieve, and this is a process where perhaps we can express our frustration with the administration of government and perhaps with the policies of a government as well.

Today, I stand in my place to grieve against the government, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what mismanagement has occurred not just in one area, but in many areas of their administration.

The latest and the largest mismanagement issue, of course, that's been highlighted across newspapers and across the media and has been brought to the attention of Manitobans largely by our leader, Mr. Speaker, is the whole issue of where the bipole line is going to be constructed in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the fact that Manitoba Hydro, who should have the responsibility to decide where this line should be, who have expressed their view and their option, their first choice as not being on the west side of the province, we have a Premier (Mr. Doer) who has decided to overrule common sense, overrule science, overrule the professionals and announce that the line will be built on the west side of the province despite the fact that it's going to cost a significant amount of money more to all rate users, and taxpayers for that matter, of Manitoba. Also, the amount of line loss that will occur is fairly significant and something that should be taken into account when one considers the construction of a new bipole line.

*(14:30)

Now, added to this, Mr. Speaker, the fact that people who live on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, I think, for decades have been awaiting this type of an announcement to be made and hoping that this kind of an initiative would impact on them in a positive way. I say that because people on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, northern Manitoba, have largely been isolated from the rest of society in our province because they do not have access by road to the capital city of our province. They do not have the opportunity for jobs. A bipole line constructed on the east side of Lake Winnipeg would have given them those opportunities, opportunities for jobs, opportunities for access to, if you like, the rest of the world, the rest of the province, the hope that their children would have a future, one that could be somewhat brighter than it is in their isolated circumstances today.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier single-handedly has decided to take all of those hopes and dreams away from those people on the east side of the lake. There are many reasons why we object to the route that the Premier has chosen. We object to the process that he has taken, has followed, because it is a process which was not inclusive. It did not include the discussion of job opportunities to the people on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It did not involve the consultation of people who live on reserve lands on the west side of the province, and it did not even involve a consultation process with people who live in southwestern Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a high-handed approach to a development that is going to impact the lives of thousands of Manitobans for a long, long time. We are going to take up this fight on behalf of those

people, on behalf of Manitobans, on behalf of the people on the east side of the lake. We are going to take up the fight and make sure that they are given a second chance, make sure that they are given an opportunity not only to voice their concerns, not only to voice their vision in terms of where a bipole line should be, but I guess, in an attempt to get the Premier to listen to reason, the Premier to listen to what people have to say about this initiative, and the fact that this is not a decision that should be considered lightly because of the impact it's going to have on many, many Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, that's one area of grievance that I would have. The other area is the way in which this government has mismanaged the whole area of social services. When we see the deaths of children because of inattention by an administration who should take that responsibility seriously, one has to think that something is amiss in the ranks of government.

Mr. Speaker, children continue to die. Children in care continue to die in Manitoba, and that just should not be. We have heard and listened to the frustration of front-line workers who say that their workload is simply too heavy to be able to meet the needs of those children and those Manitobans in care. They have expressed not only to us but to government that more resources have to be put in place to deal with the issues that are before them.

It's okay for us to sit in administration, to sit in this House, Mr. Speaker, and point the finger at others. When it comes to decisions and when it comes to policy, that finger has to point back at oneself. It has to point back at those who have responsibility for setting policy, for leadership in this province.

That is what is lacking, Mr. Speaker. We have a lack of leadership in this province. We have a government that continues to point to other people, people who are working their hearts out to make this a better province, and yet they are bearing the burden of blame when it comes to issues like social services and the care of children.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a great deal has been made about devolution, and I will not forget how this whole process started. It was Tim Sale who, I think, was in charge at the time when devolution all started. Of course, this was his mantra to devolve social services. Not that devolving social services is a bad thing, but it's the how and the preparedness of being in a position, of being able to accept that

responsibility, to accept that burden of responsibility by those who have not been in that position before.

Yes, at the outset, it seemed like everything was going to be going along just fine, and then the problems started to occur. Mr. Speaker, you cannot blame those who have received that responsibility. You have to blame those people who were in charge of the policy decisions, the people who were in charge of taking the action without having people properly prepared. Therefore, chaos ensued, and that's what we have witnessed with the social services program, the child welfare system in this province. It's been a chaotic process, a chaotic experience by many, not just children, but families, families who have been impacted by this wrong-headed approach because proper preparation was not done by those who were in charge.

We go on and I look at where we are in the whole area of rural development and agriculture, and the responsibility that I have for in terms as a critic. I have to say that in rural development and in rural communities today we have seen communities regress in terms of being able to address the issues that they have before them. Why? Again, because of a government that just can't get its act together, a ministry that can't get its act together and policies that are wrong-headed, policies that don't really hit the nail on the head when it comes to addressing the issues that are before people and Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, in 2003, we saw how BSE impacted on the economic growth in this province, the economic sustainability of our rural communities. The minister at that time promised that we would have slaughter capacity in this province, expanded slaughter capacity in this province and she made a big to-do about the fact that we were going to have additional slaughter capacity in short order in this province. Well, it's been four years-plus and we don't have expanded slaughter capacity in this province. As a matter of fact, the newest initiative undertaken by the minister is to grant money toward the purchase of livestock that are going to be processed where? In Manitoba? No, they're going to be processed outside of our province, namely in Saskatchewan.

Under this cattle enhancement loan program that was given out, the minister made an announcement about it, but she didn't tell Manitobans the full story. We only learned the full story after prodding into the initiative and finding out that indeed this money is not going to enhance slaughter capacity in Manitoba,

it's going to enhance the ability of people to get their cattle out into the Saskatchewan slaughter plants and have them processed there.

How does that address the issues that this minister was talking about? How does this address enhanced slaughter capacity in Manitoba? How does it address economic development? How does it address the creation of new jobs? Well Mr. Speaker, it does not.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: I regret that my time is up, but I could go on and on and on about the issues that we have with this government. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce that Wednesday, October 24, will be Concurrence, and, following Routine Proceedings, we'll call the following ministers in Concurrence: Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh); Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk); and Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux).

Mr. Speaker: It is announced Concurrence for Wednesday, October 24. Following Routine Proceedings, the following ministers will be called for Concurrence: Minister of Family Services and Housing; Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives; Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Mr. Chomiak: I'd also like to announce that an Opposition Day will be scheduled for the House for October 31 and will be provided for in this House by agreement, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that October 31 will be an Opposition Day by agreement. Is it agreed? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: Finally, for now, would you call bills in the order that they were established earlier today? *[interjection]*

Yes, Mr. Speaker, for clarification, the same rotation that they were provided for—*[interjection]*—starting with 15 and proceeding there, just for—

An Honourable Member: 19, 20, and then 5.

Mr. Chomiak: 19, 20 and 5.

We have one other announcement, thank you. My second, finally, Mr. Speaker, is I'd like to announce that the PMR for next Tuesday; that is, the private member's resolution for next Tuesday will be our resolution on diabetes.

Mr. Speaker: The resolution for next Tuesday, for private members' hour, will be the government resolution on diabetes.

Now, we're okay, so we'll resume Debate on Second Readings in the order—we'll start with Bills 15, 19, 20 and 5.

* (14:40)

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 15—The Biofuels Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: I'm calling Bill 15, The Biofuels Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurchou), who has 20 minutes remaining.

Is there will of the House to keep the bill remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No, it's been denied? It's been denied. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 15, The Biofuels Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to—*[interjection]* Order, please. I was putting the question on Bill 15, The Biofuels Amendment Act.

The Member for Inkster wishes to speak?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes.

Mr. Speaker: We have to put it to the House because I was already putting the question to the House.

So, if the Member for Inkster wishes to speak, can I have leave of the House to allow the Member for Inkster to speak, and then I will continue putting the question? Is that agreeable? *[Agreed]*

Okay, it's been agreed to.

Mr. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in this day and age what we find is that there is a great deal of interest by the public to look at issues that are more environmentally sound in terms of government policy. I can recall, back into the early '90s, when the issue of ethanol was actually really being discussed in a very strong fashion. In fact, I think actually one of the first speakers I heard talk on this issue was the current Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party, where he talked about how Manitoba has a great deal to be able to contribute towards ethanol and that it's a win-win situation.

Mr. Speaker, I think that, all in all, what we want to be able to do is to see, where we can, ethanol and the production of ethanol increase. The reason for that, I believe, is driven for a couple—you know, there are a couple of reasons why we're seeing that public pressure to address this issue. The primary one is that of the environment. The idea of taking gasoline and having a mixture which makes the exhaust that much more clean and better for our environment is a positive thing. I really think that Manitobans look to government to come up with initiatives that will, in fact, make a difference for our environment. It's one of the reasons why I believe that we have seen a number of private members' bills that have been brought forward from the Leader of the Liberal Party, everything from the banning of phosphates in dishwasher detergent to the discussion of the banning of plastic bags. These are the types of issues which I believe you're going to see more and more brought to the attention of this Chamber, in good part from the Manitoba Liberal Party because we want to ensure that the government is actually taking tangible actions to protect our environment.

The government in the past, I think they somewhat assume, they somehow make the assumption that, because there's this New Democratic Party title, they have ownership of the environment. I've made reference to the fact before that, you know, today's NDP are not NDP. Their behaviour, Mr. Speaker, in many ways, in many ways, do not reflect it. You know, they will talk about the environment and, ultimately, and I'm going to go to that phosphates bill for the dishwasher.

Mr. Speaker, if they pass that bill, what would happen is that it would have more of a positive impact on Lake Winnipeg by passing that bill than any other measure that this government has done since it has taken office. What does the government, or how does the government respond to it?

Well, they have their own ideas. This is one of their ideas, ethanol, and trying to promote ethanol. But if they can't assume or take 100 percent credit of the idea, then, quite frankly, they don't want anything to do with it, whether it's better for the environment or not.

The best example I could come up with was the day in which I asked the Premier (Mr. Doer) the question about supporting the Liberal bill. The Premier says: Well, Ottawa's going to do it. But don't worry, if they don't do it, then we'll do it. Well, Mr. Speaker, can you imagine if the government applied that same principle on every initiative that's out there? As the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) points out, well, that's leadership. He makes it in tongue-in-cheek, of course.

This government has a serious problem with taking ideas no matter where they come from and doing what they can to enact them. This legislation that's being proposed, that was brought forward by the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Gerrard), should have been accepted. But now what we hear is that the government, who knows when, will come in with its own legislation, because it doesn't appear as if it is going to be happening in Ottawa, so they are going to come up with their own legislation. Of course, they don't want to be overly embarrassed, so they'll try to bring something else to the table. So they'll say well, our bill does more.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the government has the chance to do something. The government does have a chance to do something positive today, but it chooses not to. Bill 15 and the principle of Bill 15 in terms of going to committee and hearing what presenters might have to say—I understand that my leader might have already spoken to this bill, so we have a sense in terms of what it is that we feel on this very important issue. I felt that it was important to stand up, primarily because I believe that we need to do what we can in terms of environmental types of issues and be aggressive in addressing them.

So, if there's a bill like Bill 15 that's before the Legislature, that all members attempt to understand it and look at ways in which we can accommodate passage of progressive legislation that's going to have a positive impact on the environment, and that is the No. 1 issue in regard to this piece of legislation from my perspective, Mr. Speaker.

There are other issues as a direct result of this bill. The benefits, and hopefully there will be benefits to many of our friends in the agricultural

community that have life investments, that are in essence banking on the government to do the right things in regard to the ethanol industry by the creation of the fund that the minister is hoping to be able to ultimately put together.

* (14:50)

So there are a number of reasons why it is that I think that this particular bill should be going to committee, but I did want to take, you know, this opportunity because I think it's important that the biodiesel sales, whether it's ethanol or the future of that whole market area or that industry, are being looked after in a way in which we'll see significant improvement in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, when the government comes up with legislation that can make a positive difference, you will see that we would be prepared to, at the very least, allow it to go to a committee where we would be afforded the opportunity to maybe better understand the intent of the legislation, and if there's a need for some amendments or some amendments do come to the committee, that the government would be open to it as opposition quite often witnesses government bringing forward amendments in committee to its own legislation.

So, whether it's the committee stage or third reading, sometimes there is a need for us to make the changes. Having said that, you know, the essence of Bill 15 is a bill in which we don't have a problem in terms of going to committee. As I indicated, I just want to have the opportunity to speak on this very important issue and look forward to it being brought to a committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to put a few comments on the record regarding Bill 15. Basically, the intent of this bill is something that is positive. On the other hand, though, when the government of the day comes up with a bill and says that they're going to be putting this into action as well, it sort of reminds me of the term that we have used numerous times within this Chamber, and that is, there is more talk than action.

I think what we would like to see, Mr. Speaker, is that within the rural community and in the commercial industrial community, we would like to see real action taking place. That is where producers who want to get into the processing business of ethanol are actually given the tools whereby they can do the work. That is something that is lacking with

this government, and we see this time and time again.

Yes, the minister got up yesterday and indicated that there were five plants going in the province. I wish that they would be named. I think we would all like to know where these five plants are. Yes, they tout the fact that Minnedosa has been expanded, no thanks to the government of the day. They were already in business and certainly they have expanded what they were doing.

However, this is something that we would like to see and it's an economic driver within the province. It's a value-added industry. I believe it's something that we need. It's good for those who are producing and who are growing the product for the ethanol and the biofuel industry. However, we need to have the processing out there and have it take place.

So I'm sorry to say, but this is a government that is sorely lacking in action. They put forth bills time and time again. They put legislation forth; however, they don't act on it. So, Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see that we sit here and we stand here, we debate the issues, and yet when it comes to putting things into action out in the field, out in the province of Manitoba, this is not taking place.

Now, in 2003, The Biofuels Act through Bill 15 should assist the move toward renewable energy. Now this would have broadened the types of fuel that would be included but again it has not taken place. So I just want to put a few comments on the record. I believe it's good, No. 1, for the ag industry to be able to use their product for the biofuel, the biodiesel, the ethanol industry. It's a good value-added industry and, of course, you can take the by-products of that and they are used in the processing or rather for the growth of, in the feed supplements for livestock, as cattle, hogs are able to utilize the by-products of this, but further, it also enhances the clean energy within the province.

The minister, of course, has indicated today that they're going to be moving towards, I believe it is 2012, where they're going to have certain requirements in place regarding the environment, regarding the toxic emissions. However, this would be something that would help to assist them in moving in that direction. However, again, we are extremely sceptical on this side of the House as to the direction that this government is going because, as I said right at the outset, the actions speak louder than the words, and the words have not been taking place. Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I, too, am pleased to be able to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 15, The Biofuels Amendment Act. Certainly, members on this side of the House are, in principle, supportive of some of the aspects of this bill, but we wonder why the NDP has not proclaimed several sections of the original Biofuels Act, leaving it, for all intents and purposes, fairly hollow.

The encouragement, obviously, of biofuel production like ethanol and biodiesel is essential to rural Manitoba and, indeed, to all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. Yet the NDP seems fine to drag their feet on proclaiming The Biofuels Act years after it was passed, and I recall being in the Legislature when it was passed back in 2003. So my colleague from Pembina (Mr. Dyck) has mentioned already there's all talk and no action when it comes to members opposite, members of this government, with respect to this very important issue and with respect to issues of the environment.

We do know that, in several cases, with respect to greenhouse gases back in 2004-2005, Mr. Speaker, the greenhouse gas emissions were up 20 percent in this province alone. It's an absolutely abysmal track record for this government, this NDP government, I might add, when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions in our province—and I think, again, it's just indicative of a government that has completely mismanaged this whole issue, that sees fit time and time again to talk the tough talk but that they're not prepared to walk the tough walk. I think it's rather unfortunate for people in our province who see this as a very important issue when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions and issues relating to the environment.

So, again, we've seen this happen back in 2003; we brought that forward, Mr. Speaker. How many more times do we have to go back and revisit this act before this NDP government will get it right?

Having said that, I know there are a number of my colleagues who are interested in saying a few words on the record as well, so I will leave it at that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I, too, want to put a few things on the record in regard to Bill 15. Like the Member for Tuxedo, I remember very clearly the first year I was elected, in 2003, that the government came forward and said they had to bring in this legislation in order to move forward on ethanol and biodiesel. To my disappointment, here in 2007, we

have yet anything to see as a result of the bill going through in the fall of 2003.

I know that the government probably rushed in order to try and get this bill through and obviously we're paying for it today. We have lack of ethanol and biodiesel today in the province of Manitoba as a result of that, and unfortunately we see the changes that they're bringing forward in Bill 15 and it says that it's going to broaden the scope of the 2003 Biofuels Act to include biodiesel and other emergency biofuels. Also, it's going to harmonize Manitoba's ethanol mandate and incentive program, focus on fuel quality, framework for our future biodiesel sales, and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

We find it a pretty sad day whenever the government messes up and never does their homework. They have the expert staff that's there at their disposal in order to move forward on some of these initiatives, but, unfortunately, the government hasn't done their homework on this particular issue. I know that we on this side of the House have been very aggressive. In fact, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), yesterday in Question Period, asked a very specific question to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) in regard to two projects that have been on the go for quite some time and have yet to see daylight within the province of Manitoba—who asks nothing other than infrastructure and the guidance of which this government has not done in order to move forward on these two particular projects.

* (15:00)

Today in the House, the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) asked specifically about a project in his area, and the minister gave him some hope that the department's looking at it. But we need to do more than look. We need action. We don't need smoke and mirrors. We need some action that's going to be taking place within the province of Manitoba. If we're going to add more value-added to this province, we need to do it through initiatives such as ethanol and biodiesel. We know that the communities work hard in order to bring forward rural initiatives, more value-added, in order to make their communities grow and prosper. We all can't live in the city of Winnipeg, nor do we all want to live in Winnipeg, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We want to make sure that our children have jobs in rural Manitoba, that they're able to stay

within their own communities, provide education for their children, hospitals, doctors and nurses and also things that are very important to them, and that's the small rural towns and small rural communities. We can do that through harmonization with new businesses such as ethanol and biodiesel.

We also have another aspect that we have to look at is the by-products that come as a result of these products, Madam Deputy Speaker. We need to make sure that we have the livestock sector in place whenever we're talking about the by-products that come as a result of these. With the high cost of inputs on behalf of the livestock producers, we need that consultation process in order to take place which, again, we're hoping that the Minister of Agriculture and her staff have moved forward, in order to make sure that these in fact will be in a position to help those producers, especially this time, of which the cattle producers and hog producers are very low margins. We know that they need any help that they can get in order to be competitive in a way that would be meaningful for them to compete in the marketplace as a whole.

The framework for a future biodiesel mandate. We know that we have met with the trucking industry from time to time. They've talked about this particular issue, and we want to make sure that it's very compatible for their industry. I know that they are certainly looking forward to moving forward on this initiative. We certainly hope that the government has this bill right. We hope the amendments that they brought forward are right, and we look forward to this bill going to committee in order to make sure that we have the inputs from the various organizations that are so important to consultation when it comes to making sure that the amendments are in line.

So, with those few short words, Madam Deputy Speaker, we'll move forward on seeing this bill go to committee.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 15, The Biofuels Amendment Act.

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

Bill 19—The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan), Bill 19, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act.

Is there unanimous consent for the bill to stand in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik)?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I am pleased to speak on Bill 19, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act. We know that the purpose of this bill is to ensure that regulated professions and people applying for registration to practise these professions are governed by registration practices that are transparent, objective, impartial and fair.

Of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't think that anyone would argue with those words, but on the intent of the bill, as I've spoken to some of the professions that would fall under this legislation. Of course, they tell me that they practise this already and feel that this is what they do now.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we don't have a problem with that particular portion of the bill. In fact, I have to say that during the election, our leader did make a commitment as well to look at bringing forward this kind of legislation. We recognize that it's very, very important to have people that are coming into this province, for them to be recognized in their chosen professions. We want them to come here. We want people to come and be able to practise in the area that they are skilled and trained. There's no question about that.

I think that the regulated professions, right now, are doing a very good job of that, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think that some of them, though, I do know, have some concerns. But I also just want to say, when you think about the number of people that have come into our province, it's wonderful. We welcome everybody that wants to come into our province of Manitoba and add to our Manitoba mosaic and our multiculturalism here in the province of Manitoba. Certainly, we want them when they come to this province to stay in this province, to be able to practise, to be able to put their professional skills and expertise to use. We want them to be able to do that in a fair—be treated fairly and openly and transparently in the professions that regulate, and,

certainly, we know that many of the professions already have said this is exactly what we do.

I think what our leader was working toward in his commitment in the previous election campaign was we know we need to address this. We know that there are steps that need to be taken. We know that the process is one of consultation and one of meeting and speaking to groups to make sure that everybody is comfortable and happy with the legislation that would be put in place that would govern these bodies. There are a number of bodies; I think 30, so far, proposed under this legislation. Speaking to some of them, some of them are quite happy with the way the wording of the bill has been put forward because they feel that they already do this. So they just feel that they will be able to—in the words of one of them: Well, if the government needs to do this, fine, but we're already doing it. So we can live with it because we're already doing it.

I think, though, there are others that have brought forward some concerns that we need to specifically have a look at. I've spoken to a few groups and, actually, in about an hour from now, I'm going to be meeting with several other groups because they have contacted me to speak about some of the concerns that they have with this legislation. So I know that perhaps they will bring forward their concerns, and they will come to committee and they'll discuss their concerns. I urge the government and the minister to take these concerns under advisement, to look at them very seriously so that they can be incorporated; if there are amendments that can be brought forward, that they would be incorporated, and to strengthen this legislation and make it good for all of the bodies that would be governed under this legislation.

I have spoken with some groups and I just want to say some of the things that we want to raise as points of concern that I think should be addressed before the legislation would go forward. One of the things was, yes, we support, and one of the groups said to me, yes, we support the idea of transparency, objectiveness, impartiality and fairness. I don't think that anybody would say those are bad things to support. Obviously, they're laudable goals. But some think, are we going to place an administrative burden on the organizations? Are we going to have to report to a fairness commissioner, and what are we going to report? How often are we reporting? What are the reporting requirements? What exactly is going to be built in, in terms of a bureaucracy with this fairness commissioner? These are questions that the people

ask. What is the fairness commissioner supposed to do, because each one of these organizations has a body that looks at the practices? They have to look at people that are coming in from other countries and other cultures, to look at the credentials that they have and their ability to integrate into the Manitoba work force. Certainly, that is everybody's goal because, as we know, we have a labour shortage in this province because of so many people that have left the province.

*(15:10)

So we do need to have people come and join our labour force here. There's no question about it, and we do need to be able to facilitate that. But, as the groups are saying, they think that they're doing it already. So I'm not sure whether the minister thinks that they aren't capable of regulating themselves in bringing people into the professions through their own objective, fair, transparent and impartial ways, but certainly some of the professions feel that that's the way they've been treated.

Another thing that I heard is, again, yeah, we support the act. We don't have a problem with the act. This is coming from people that I've consulted with, but they say why do we need it? Why do we need it? *[interjection]* Well, exactly. That's why people are asking, why do we need it, because we are doing it already. The regulated professions say, well, we're doing this; we feel that we're doing a good job. So I don't know if the government doesn't feel that they're doing a good job of it, but they certainly, I think, believe they are doing a very good job of it.

Again, the other comment from this particular organization was, well, the fairness commissioner, is this a person that would interfere in any way in what we see as being appropriate in our profession? These are questions that I throw out because they are questions that have been brought up, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now, I think one of the most significant concerns that has been raised to me is when the press release was issued on April 18 of 2007 about this legislation that would be brought forward—and the press release, it focusses on the internationally educated or out-of-province individuals that would be coming into the province or foreign-trained people. So this is exactly what we're referring to. The press release, what it says is different than what the legislation says. So this is the first thing that was brought to my attention: Why does the press release

focus on foreign-trained individuals and yet the bill does not specifically focus there?

So they thought, does this mean that there is an intent to tell the regulated professions how to regulate the people that they regulate within Manitoba, because it doesn't necessarily say foreign-trained individuals, although that's what it says in the press release? But in the legislation I think it leaves it wide open, at least to their interpretation. It leaves it wide open for this group to be actually regulated by the government.

This raised some concerns. They felt that perhaps the legislation was done a little bit in haste, Madam Deputy Speaker, without full consultation, because when I asked them if they had been consulted they said, well, we were told the legislation was coming and we were asked, did we have any questions? So they feel that it was pushed a little bit upwards, maybe, because there was an election coming in the spring, and they thought that perhaps it was politically motivated in that regard. They feel that they do a very good job of their profession and are wondering exactly what role the government is trying to assume here.

I guess what they're trying to impress—I know that they will bring their concerns to committee, but what they're trying to say is if the legislation is meant to specifically speak about internationally trained, or foreign-trained credentials, is the government trying to then, in the bill, not put that in there on purpose so that there's a way to manage all of the regulated professions in the province? If this was to happen, I think it would be kind of a slippery slope into government being able to dictate to professions who and who could not practise in that profession. I don't think that's where we want to particularly go.

I know that this legislation has been modelled after legislation in Ontario. Certainly, in Ontario, they have gone further in their legislation and done more, but we also know that in Ontario this legislation has only been there for just over a year, and there's not been an annual report come available yet. So there's no way to measure how it actually was working in that province.

You know, to get things right, there needs to be a lot of consultation. There needs to be gathering of information from other jurisdictions to make sure that we get the best and throw out the worst, so we need to look at what other people are doing, assess their successes and failures and take that information and mould that into what is good so that we can

learn. We can learn from what other people do, whatever other provinces do. We need to sort of look very closely at this.

I know that in other provinces there are services for people. In Alberta, they have an International Qualifications Assessment system. In Québec, for foreign professionals, as a regulated industry, all foreign-educated health-care workers must belong to a professional corporation which ensures that foreign qualifications are equivalent to Québec qualification. Of course, in Ontario, they do have The Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act which they proposed and passed last year.

Which brings me to another concern which has been raised. That is, is there a problem in any particular profession with not recognizing foreign credentials and foreign-trained individuals to work in that particular area of their expertise and skill? If that's the case, perhaps we need to be working with those organizations rather than taking a broad brush and painting it across all of the regulated professions, which has been suggested this is, maybe, what's happened here. There are some professions that need more help in this regard to live up to this standard, but maybe some of them, as they tell me, they're quite capable of doing it and are doing it.

Another concern, as I think I've touched upon, is the idea of the fairness commissioner. What is the role of the fairness commissioner? Where is this fairness commissioner going to be located? Is this a fairness commissioner that is outside of the government, or is it somebody that works right in the minister's office, for example? What is the role of the fairness commissioner? These are questions that need to still be answered, I believe.

* (15:20)

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that we have heard from a number of people on this. We think that the intent of the bill and the wording of the bill, there's not a problem with that, but we do think that there may be some areas that we need to look at to be sure that the people that this affects are completely in agreement and happy with the legislation that they will then have to abide by and live with.

What we do want to ensure, though, is that there's no more red tape that comes associated with this bill. We know that there's a ton of regulations and regulatory requirements in regulations. As one

person has said to me, the devil is in the details. The details are the regulations. In regulations, there are regulatory requirements and we know that there's a ton of those and we don't want to impose anymore restrictions on the people and their abilities to carry out their functions. So that's one thing we want to be very careful of that there's not an imposed burden with more regulatory restrictions.

I think that in the bill there's a requirement for the minister to consult during the process of the regulations, but one of the groups I spoke to just in the last couple of days said they are still waiting for a phone call. They were told that they would be consulted during the regulations, but I guess they haven't been consulted with yet, and they're eagerly sitting by their phone waiting for the call. But I'm sure that they will be presenting at committee and we'll be having that opportunity to hear what they have to say.

I think that we don't want to build a bureaucracy here. We don't want to have a fairness commissioner that has a half staffperson, and then has a full person and then has three people. You know, I think we have to be very careful of that. We need to specifically know what this person will do. If they're only going to require an annual report or biannual report from the professions, and have a look and just rubber-stamp and say yes you're doing your job—as they all are doing, I think, right now—then we have to say, well, do we need this? On the other hand, if this person is going to require a lot of staff because there's a lot of paperwork and red tape and regulatory requirements, then that is going to impose burdens that the regulated professions would not, in my understanding, from what I've heard from them, they would not be happy with this.

So I think that what we want to do is pass the bill to committee and look forward to having a number of people come forward to committee and tell us their views, and have the opportunity to ask questions and perhaps propose some amendments to strengthen this legislation.

I certainly urge the government to listen to the regulated professions. Listen to what they have to say. Take it step by step. Get it right, so that everybody is happy with it and certainly, recognize—I do want to again recognize the work of the regulated professions. All of the people in these professions, I think, do their utmost to ensure that they treat anybody that's coming into that profession with the utmost of fairness, transparency, impartiality and

fairness, and, certainly, know that they would strive to do that.

Again, just say that we did make a commitment as well in the campaign of this spring, that we certainly wanted to have a look at this kind of legislation and take some steps toward it, certainly recognizing that this is what we want to do in this province to welcome our many different cultures that we have coming into this province from all around the world and hope that they add, and I recognize, of course, that they do add to our multicultural mosaic here in Manitoba.

With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to say that we look forward to hearing what presentations there will be in committee, and I'd like to offer the floor to my colleagues. Thank you very much.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I, too, want to put a few comments on record. Certainly, I want to recognize the fact that the area that I represent has been the recipient and the benefactor of many of those who are immigrating to this province so there are some things that are out there specific to the constituents that I represent, those who have moved into the area. I know that over a period of time, I have raised a number of the issues and those, in some cases, have been resolved. In some cases, they continue to be concerns to those as they struggle to get registration for their specific trades that they are involved in.

I want to also indicate that it was our government that put the nominee program in place, and I want to say, though, that I'm pleased that the present government has carried on with this nominee program because I believe it has been a very successful one. Again, speaking specifically of the Pembina constituency, certainly the people who have immigrated and have moved into our area have added to our mosaic, have added to the culture of the area, and we are extremely pleased that they have come.

Now, if I can digress just a moment on that, certainly it has added to some challenges as well because with them have come fairly large families who have small children. So, right now, we've got close to a thousand students in huts, and so we need to provide accommodation for them as well, but that

is an aside to Bill 19 that we're talking about here this afternoon.

Some of the concerns—and I just want to express these—are as to the fact that how will this in the end result, how will it work out specific to the administration of some of the people who are registering in order to be able to get their credentials recognized by the existing bodies.

We saw this afternoon that, yes, the government of the day is out there applauding themselves for having taken partial taxes, education taxes off of farmland, and yet, though, in conjunction with that, we see also that they've added some huge administration costs to that program. So this is a concern that we have regarding this program as well. Are they going to be using this in an administrative fashion to add to the costs to those who are applying in order to be recognized and have their credentials recognized by the different agencies?

I know that previously I talked to the issue and I still have a few calls; it's not as many, so I would indicate that it is improving. However, when people have the qualifications when they immigrate to the province, they have the requirements in order to be able to fulfil the jobs that they have been hired for but cannot get the transfer of their credentials, it is a concern. So this continues to happen and it's a matter of the granting agencies or the individual bodies of our professions granting them and just allowing them to challenge the exams.

I think that that is certainly the direction that we need to go, and I know that we are continuing to go. Ongoing in my discussions with those people who have these concerns, they do indicate that they are quite prepared to challenge the exam, but they do not want to go back and take an extra three or four years of university education when they already do have the qualifications.

Again, I would affirm the point that certainly we want them to be qualified to fill those positions; however, in many cases they do have challenges. They have concerns expressed by those granting the certification that they are insisting that they take upgrading. Again, I would say that those who are applying and who are being denied the credentials don't have a problem with upgrading if, in fact, they do not have the knowledge and fit into the program. In many cases, they do have the knowledge; they do have the educational background and simply, as I

say, they would love to challenge the exams. So those are some of the concerns that we have out there.

* (15:30)

The other one, as my colleague from Morris has indicated, the whole area of the fairness commissioner. Again, I don't have the knowledge on that one to indicate that there is something that is negative regarding it, but we do have concerns that this will, in fact, truly be a fairness commissioner and that this person will look at it independently of anyone else and respond in a fair fashion.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, again, I want to indicate that we have concerns regarding this bill. Again, historically, when this government has put legislation in place, we see the legislation coming in place but we don't see it enacted and we don't see the results of this in so many cases. So this is a concern that we have. We continue to express that. I think as we were talking about the previous bill, I said in the comments that I made that we want to see action. We don't want to just simply see words but we want to see this put into action.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, with those few comments, again I do have some concerns about it, but I believe that we are heading in the right direction. I certainly hope that this will be implemented, that those who do immigrate to the province, that they, in fact, will be able to, as I indicated, challenge the exams that are out there, challenge the professions to make sure that they do have the knowledge, the background to be able to enter the professions that they are qualified for. We should continue, and I trust that we will continue, to work in that direction.

There are a few other of my colleagues who would like to put a few comments on the record, so, with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): I do appreciate the opportunity to participate this afternoon in debate on Bill 19, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act.

I rise to offer concerns at present that perhaps may or may not be addressed by the legislation we have before us. I am aware of a consideration, that as we provide more professional bodies with the opportunity to regulate entry into their particular professions here in the province of Manitoba, that the responsibility is given up by the Legislative Assembly to the professional bodies and

organizations to provide for accreditation and entry into various professions. I think there are more professional organizations that want to be recognized with legislation from this Chamber so that their organizations can be recognized as well. So this is an expanding situation rather than a contracting one.

But, once the organizations have the responsibility for regulating the entry and membership into a particular professional body, there goes also the responsibility to make sure that those that are entering into that professional body are properly trained in the best interests of that particular profession. However, when we allow that to happen, the professional bodies then with this new power can, in fact, restrict entry into those professions. If the entry into those professions is restricted, then perhaps some professional bodies may then try and garner a greater dollar from the marketplace, being that there are fewer professional individuals available to perform these duties.

That's what I'm afraid to say has happened with a particular experience that was related to me. A young lady, after seven years of study abroad, accompanied her husband to Manitoba and landed here under the immigration nominee program. She felt that it was going to be a very quick entry into her chosen profession for which she was very skilled and trained. However, that particular professional body chose that they would put up a number of roadblocks for her to start her practice, because I believe at that time that that professional body was trying to restrict individuals in that profession, because maybe, in their consideration, there was an abundance of professionals in this particular field.

Now, I'm not naming this particular profession because I believe it is being looked at, and I hope that the consideration is addressed. But the restriction, I felt it almost comical, because this individual was from the United Kingdom where, in fact, all of her training and all of her practice time was conducted in the English language. But upon entry into Manitoba here, do you know what, Madam Deputy Speaker? That particular individual was prevented from getting her accreditation because they wanted her to take English.

This to me is beyond my comprehension as to why this professional body would require this young lady to take English before she got her accreditation. We have to start wondering why, because, obviously, in speaking with the individual, there was no impediment to her speaking of the English language.

In fact, she was very, very understandable and very professional in the expression of her dismay as to the professional body to which she was attempting to join here in Manitoba.

Now, earlier this year, during the election campaign, recognizing that we need to have an opportunity to review professional body determinations, it was our position that this could very ably be undertaken by the Ombudsman's office with the addition of professional staff to the Ombudsman's office. It was certain, and I remain certain that that could have been the most cost-effective, efficient manner by which to address consideration regarding the concerns such as I've just made example of. However, in any event, the government has chosen to effectively create by legislation more bureaucracy than I believe would have taken place if our election promise—had we had the opportunity to fulfil our election promise.

Now, in examination of The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act, I do believe there is merit, and I am looking forward to listening to individuals that will come forward during the committee process in address of this legislation. I do believe it has merit. It is perhaps a little bit more cumbersome than I would have liked to see or our party would have liked to see. But I know also, too, that there are a number of yet to be recognized professional organizations that are knocking at the government's door asking for legislation to provide for their professional body to become the accrediting organization. So we need to have some type of mechanism by which to oversee the entry into professional organizations and also to safeguard those individuals that are wanting to join professional bodies here in the province of Manitoba, thereby providing a fair and equitable assessment of their skills and abilities to the benefit of not only the professional organization but to the benefit of all Manitobans.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I personally support the undertaking of the government in this fashion, although I leave my debate this afternoon with the cautionary note as to whether or not this is, in fact, the most cost-effective and efficient manner in which to scrutinize the professional body's accreditation of individuals. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

* (15:40)

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): I appreciate the opportunity to put some comments on the record

regarding Bill 19. I do, certainly, recognize my colleagues put some very valuable points on the record regarding this proposed legislation.

It appears to me that it is, in relative terms, a bit of a feel-good bill going forward. Obviously, it's intended to be umbrella legislation, if you will, to cover a number of the professions throughout Manitoba. I guess we know that that particular list, that schedule that will appear, that particular list can be amended from time to time. So it will, over the course of time—eventually we'll be adding more and more professions that fall under this particular legislation. So that's always an interesting concept. You never know just exactly what organizations might fall under this umbrella legislation.

It would appear to me from the outside that the province, the government, will now have an opportunity to keep a very close eye on these various regulated professions. There will be, certainly, it looks like annual reporting requirements coming forward from the organizations. Obviously, the government will have an opportunity to address those particular professions, how they are regulated in terms of the scope of the regulations that they have. So, of course, we always have a little concern when the government gets involved in regulating any organization to some degree.

The interesting thing, I believe, going forward here will be the actual committee presentation. We certainly look forward to seeing how the organizations really feel about this particular umbrella legislation going forward. I think the key point here, too—and we look at the explanatory note dealing with this particular legislation—it's very important that the whole idea of transparency, the objectivity and the impartiality play a very important role in this legislation. We feel that's very important. The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) talked about some different situations that come forward. I think it's important that these organizations be very open and transparent in terms of their dealings with their members.

The bill also makes reference to the appointment of a fair registration practices commissioner. I hope that that's not necessarily someone that will be there as in a regulatory capacity. I would hope that it's someone that could be there in a more positive role and that they could work with the various professions, the various practices and actually provide some positive information, some positive

feedback so that it can facilitate the development of those particular professions.

In looking at what Ontario is doing in regard to this particular situation in regulating professions, Ontario talks about establishing an access centre. I think this could be a very positive item going forward. I think it's something that we should consider here in Manitoba as we develop this legislation. This access centre, my understanding is it will help foreign-trained professionals retain and get the information and, of course, referrals that they need to work in their profession.

I think that's very important in Manitoba, in particular. We do have quite a variety of immigrants coming into the province and they do play a very important role in Manitoba. We know we are losing some people outside of Manitoba, a lot of professionals leaving the province. So it's important that we do whatever we can to get professionals back to fill those vacancies. In particular, we know we've got a serious situation in the health-care field where there's just about every specialist and every specialty department that you can name having a chronic shortage of staff. So I think, if handled correctly, this could be a very important aspect to possibly retaining professionals and, furthermore, the other side of it, is actually getting professionals into Manitoba and getting them actively involved in the work force.

The important part about getting them actively involved in the work force is the time line it takes to get them involved in the work force. We know that there's a lot of red tape and regulations involved in terms of getting people here and then getting them actually into the work force. I'm hopeful, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this particular legislation will actually facilitate getting people here, qualifying them under whatever profession they will be looking for and then getting them, as soon as possible, into the work force because, as I said, we have a chronic shortage of some of these professionals.

Again, just getting back briefly to Ontario in terms of their access centre, they talk about it serving as a centre for excellence on internships and mentorships for educational institutions. Again, it can be an avenue to have an organization that can actually really do the groundwork, getting the people to where they want to be and dealing with education facilities and dealing with the business community, really to get them out there. This is kind of where the

rubber hits the road, if you like, the actual getting things done on the local level.

We hope that this process doesn't get tied up in bureaucracy. We know it can be. This government has done in the past, brought out legislation that makes people feel good. They feel things are moving ahead, but at the end of the day we really have to make sure that these positions do get filled, that people do come to the province and they fill in with the roles that we need here in Manitoba.

So I do think that this can be a very positive legislation going forward. We hope that the government will certainly pay attention in committee when people do come forward and, again, make sure that the resources are there to help facilitate getting people into the proper positions and dealing with the regulations concerning the various professions as well. Just another cautionary note, I think, and the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) did raise it, sometimes we're a little concerned about the detail in regulations. Hopefully, there won't be too much there to make the process too cumbersome.

So those are just some of the issues that I wanted to raise for the government in moving this bill forward. We certainly hope things will work out, as we do know we have a shortage of some of the professionals in Manitoba, and we want to work wherever we can with the Province to try to address those and move them forward. So I just thank you for the opportunity to say a few words on Bill 19.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to take a few moments to put a few comments on the record about Bill 19, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act and indicate that the issue of recognizing foreign credentials is certainly not a new issue. We just go back a little in history and look at the reason the Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation was changed to the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship back in the early '90s, was because we had a Premier that was very supportive of working toward—*[interjection]* The Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) indicates that I bet you were the minister, and, yes, I was, but the direction that I was given when the name of the department was changed was to aggressively pursue an immigration agreement with the federal government, so that we would have some control through a provincial nominee process of bringing immigrants to our province.

We worked very hard to accomplish that and we did manage to achieve getting that immigration agreement signed. I want to commend the government today for continuing through with aggressively pursuing immigration to our province. I think we've had considerable success, and it is as a result of that agreement being signed and Manitoba having some control over bringing immigrants to our province.

But, you know, back then, and that was 15 years ago, the issue of recognizing foreign credentials was a significant issue, and that was one of the issues that many new immigrants and those that were involved in bringing immigrants to our province had concern with. Here we are, 15 years later, and we're still discussing and still talking about the same issues and the same concerns. Very little progress has been made and, really, we recognize that it is the professional bodies that have to make decisions and license professionals to work in the province.

*(15:50)

So I would venture to guess that some sort of legislation might be needed to give this a little bit of emphasis and a bit of a push. I would be very interested in hearing at committee what members of the public have to say and what members of the professional organizations have to say, but it's clear that something has to happen to ensure that, when we bring immigrants with skills and qualifications to do a certain job into our province, we afford them the opportunity to work in those professions. So I'm thinking that moving in this direction, whether we agree with the detail of the legislation or whether we'll agree with the regulations that are brought in as a result of this legislation, time will tell.

I just want to indicate that we are extremely supportive of ensuring that, when people come to Manitoba, they can have a job in the profession that they are trained in and, hopefully, that then will allow them to stay or encourage them to stay in Manitoba where we want them to stay and to practise.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Deputy Speaker, I, too, want to be able to get on the record in regard to Bill 19 because I think Bill 19 is a very important piece of legislation.

Right offhand, I appreciate the minister providing her office if I need it to get a debriefing on the bill. I felt fairly comfortable in being able to address the bill without the debriefing. Having said that, I do want to raise some concerns.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the speaker before me, the Member for River East highlighted a very important issue through the Provincial Nominee Program, a program that was put into place before this government had taken office. That program was to enhance opportunities for immigrants to be able to come to our great province. What I have found is that, over the years, the NDP have made some modifications to it. I would ultimately argue that some of those modifications are of a discriminatory nature, that the government needs to look at getting, or making, or enhancing, or giving more strength to the Provincial Nominee Program. I bring forward petitions and it's difficult because, you know, I don't know, the minister is either intentionally misleading the House, or she just doesn't understand the questions, the petitions. It's got to be one of the two. That's the best that I can figure.

So I look to the minister to review the program and to do the right thing because this particular bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, could have a very positive impact on immigrants that come to our province if the political will was there.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what I have seen is a government that talks very positively about immigration. In certain areas, the government is doing a good job, but they are doing that good job because of a program that was put into place before it even was in power. So all it's really doing is administering the program. The program itself needs to change.

One of the issues that is critically important to our immigrants is to ensure that credentials get recognized. This government's ability to recognize those credentials has been very disappointing. We have, and I'll refer to the Philippines, because this is where I do a great deal of work in terms of constituency work. We have medical doctors that were practising medicine in the Philippines for years that are here, that are feeling frustrated because they are not getting their credentials recognized. We have a government that doesn't support equal opportunity for nurses that live in the Philippines to be able to come under the same way in which a computer engineer would be able to come through in order to come through the Provincial Nominee Program.

There is a different system that has been set up, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that is the reality. There is, this government and this minister does have a discriminatory approach at dealing with making sure that immigrants have equal opportunities to come to our province. That's where the Liberal government would differ.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Labour, on a point of order.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is unbelievable that the MLA for Inkster is putting these kinds of comments on the record. It is shameful. It is absolutely shameful he's putting these kinds of comments on the record.

I spent 3.5 hours in Estimates with him trying to explain to him the difference between a computer technician and a nurse and the self-regulatory bodies. I tried desperately to try to get him to understand it, and now he walks in here and starts talking about a bill and goes back to his petitions that he tables every day in this House that are intellectually dishonest, as far as I'm concerned. So it is really unfortunate that he's putting these kinds of comments on the record, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. This is a dispute over the facts. This is not a point of order.

* * *

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster has the floor.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister makes my point. Is she misleading the House, or does she really not understand what she's talking about? It's one of those two. I don't think she knows the program.

You know, the other day, when we were in the Estimates, she had civil servants right in front of her, Madam Deputy Speaker, and she's saying, oh, the waiting list is only three months. She's on some other planet. She really doesn't understand.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would caution all members to just keep some decorum in this Chamber. Thank you, both. The Member for Inkster has the floor.

Mr. Lamoureux: I think that she might have actually convinced some of her colleagues that what she is saying is accurate, Madam Deputy Speaker. I really think that to be the case. If we take a look at the bill, the bill which this minister brought forward, that she supposedly believes in, the question is: Is the minister listening right now to this bill, the bill that she brought forward? I don't even believe she's listening to the bill itself, and I look, I don't necessarily see what happened to her.

Having said that, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Point of Order

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Member for St. Norbert, on a point of order?

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understand from some of the past proceedings in this House that it's not acceptable to make comments about whether members are present or absent in the Chamber. Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Member for Inkster, on the same point of order?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I might have implied that she was absent. The member confirmed it on the record, and for that, I guess I would apologize for that implication, but I would have thought she would have been here to debate the bill.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order please, I need to hear in order to make a ruling.

Member for Inkster, have you finished?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes. No, no. I want to continue on the bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No, no. I mean on the point of order. I'm sorry, I couldn't hear.

This is not a point of order. He did not refer to the presence or absence of the member. He just said he didn't know what had happened to her.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, inside the bill, the minister makes reference to a number of different organizations. What she wants, ultimately, is these organizations to report to a fairness commissioner. If the minister truly believed that she would like to be able to help the immigrant community in terms of getting credentials recognized, as opposed to making that appointment of a political nature, she gets to choose, and her government gets to choose, who that fair practices commissioner is going to be. Why not allow the Legislature to figure out who that appointment is going to be? Why don't we have that commissioner appointed in the same fashion that we appoint the Child Advocate or the Ombudsman or the provincial Auditor or Elections Manitoba's Chief Returning Officer?

* (16:00)

Every one of us inside this Chamber knows the importance of immigrant credentials and the roadblocks that are put into place that keep immigrants from being able to practise the profession that they were practising prior to coming into our province. Everyone knows that, and there are many different injustices that are put against these people unfairly, Madam Deputy Speaker. If the Minister of Immigration (Ms. Allan) wanted to do something positive for immigrants, what the Minister of Immigration should do is allow that individual to be hired by the Legislature as opposed to her or any other minister deciding who that person is going to be.

In the beginning of the bill, in the explanatory notes, she talks about how this bill's going to "...ensure that regulated professions and people applying for registration to practise those professions are governed by registration practices that are transparent, objective, impartial and fair."

Why doesn't the minister take it to the next level and acknowledge that if we're going to have this commissioner and you want to give teeth to that commissioner in a very real way, the best way to do that is to allow the Legislature to appoint the commissioner, not the party of the day that happens to be in power.

So my challenge to the government is to understand the legislation that the minister has brought forward. My suggestion is that you don't

necessarily believe everything she tells you because I don't think she quite understands everything that she says, Madam Deputy Speaker. So I would suggest that you find out what the bill says and if you really want to help immigrants in the province of Manitoba, that you would look at having all parties being able to hire the commissioner as opposed to the minister.

With those few words, Madam Deputy Speaker, we're prepared to see the bill go to committee. Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 19, The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act.

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

Bill 20—The Planning Amendment Act (Deemed Single Operations)

Madam Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton), Bill 20, The Planning Amendment Act, is there unanimous consent for the bill to stand in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik)?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No? Unanimous consent has not been given for the matter to stand.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Madam Deputy Speaker, Bill 20, The Planning Amendment Act (Deemed Single Operations), when I first saw this, I thought fluffy. Fluffy was the name that came to me in this. Closing loopholes, perceived loopholes.

The legislation treats two or more existing or proposed livestock operations as a single operation that have the same owner or related owners and are located within 800 metres of each other.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this legislation is not necessary. It was a one-off occasion that happened. It hasn't happened since. Everyone agrees that if an operation is under 300 animal units, 299 or less, there's not a technical review required. If it's 300 or more, it needs a technical review. Nobody's arguing about that.

The questions, though, that come up from this and a reason that I called it fluffy was because I think this government is just trying to use more regulations as the cure-all for Lake Winnipeg. The farmers themselves are very good stewards of the land. They are not deliberating dumping phosphorus into Lake Winnipeg as the government would have the general public perceive.

This legislation is being brought forward as closing loopholes as part of their phosphorus strategy for Lake Winnipeg. Yet, in the rural areas outside the Perimeter, the farmers are using soil testing. We have some of the most stringent livestock regulations in the world probably, and definitely in this country. For instance, you cannot apply hog manure unless it is injected, and yet, if I was to own a house in Winnipeg, I could take my lawn fertilizer, I could dump it as thick as snow on the lawn and nobody's going to say anything. Somehow it's just not quite the same.

If I had a cottage, which I don't, and I had the septic tank out there, I could run the grey water into the lake. Somehow, that just doesn't seem to be the same as applying fertilizer in some people's eyes. So, when they get around this and they bring in this Planning Amendment Act and closing loopholes, we wonder where the real loopholes are in their so-called phosphorus strategy. We know that it's again just more smoke and mirrors. I've heard those words so often today, it's almost becoming repetitive.

An Honourable Member: It's a new motto.

Mr. Pedersen: Perhaps it's a motto. I don't know.

When I had the bill briefing and met with the deputy ministers on this bill, and I called back to get a clarification, under the legislation it says, under applications, same ownership, same kind of livestock, again that would be over the 300 animal units within 800 metres would require technical review. So my question to the minister's office was: What is the same kind of livestock? I asked: If you had a feedlot, a cattle feeding operation on one side of the road and a cow-calf operation on the other side, over 300 animal units in total, is that the same kind of livestock?

For those of us who are familiar with the cow scene, it's not quite the same type of operation, but that was the question. The first answer I got was, well, depends how many lagoons there are. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, if I can give you a little farming lesson here, there are no lagoons in a dry

cattle operation. So I'm thinking, oh boy, I'm in trouble here.

So what I'm asking is, what I have asked then is: What is the same kind of livestock? That was over a week ago. I've still not got an answer back. Does that mean any animal units or any operation of any size now is under technical review?

What happened to the municipality's responsibility in this? If the municipality under the present legislation has authority under 300 animal units and now suddenly we're lumping all kinds of livestock as the same, have you taken away from the municipality's right to decide where these operations should be?

Madam Deputy Speaker, this just goes way beyond what they need to be doing here. There are so many things that they could be doing and instead they run around—*[interjection]* Yes. I know. You should come out in the countryside someday. There are so many things that are happening out in the countryside that are good things and that we need to really focus on those.

One of the problems, another one of the problems of the many problems of this legislation is that there is no support for the technical end of this. The farm community is way ahead of the government on this and, instead of working with the farm community and with the hog industry, instead they put moratoriums on so there can't be any more building. We have the most stringent legislation out here and it just relates back to so many other things. We talked about biofuels this morning and how they don't do anything, how this government just doesn't do anything on it. All they'd have to do on this one is put some money into helping the technology move forward. Instead, they see us as just closing loopholes, in other words, shutting down operations. They have no idea what it does to the country and to our rural economy.

* (16:10)

This legislation, if it's allowed to pass, is targeting the very ones that they claim motherhood to, this is the family farm operation that runs under 300 animal units. Now they're proposing to stop them with this legislation. So, all of a sudden now, even the family farm is not safe with this government. So there is no justification for this legislation; it's bad legislation. Right now, and it really begs the question, if you're going to go ahead with Bill 20, and right now you're waiting for the

Clean Environment Commission report to come back and you're still going ahead with Bill 20, does this mean that this government actually knows what's in that report? Because they're going ahead and changing the act without waiting for the Clean Environment Commission, so what do they know that their general public doesn't know? How can you go ahead with that?

We have municipalities that are sitting on their livestock policy right now because they're waiting for this Clean Environment Commission report to come back before they put in their development plans with their livestock policy. At the same time, this government goes ahead and just acts as if there is no report coming ahead. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's arrogance on their side to even propose something like this. It's their lack of understanding of what happens out in the rural areas. It's certainly a lack of their understanding of what's involved in this operation. It's really unfortunate that they do this. *[interjection]* If we were to line up the municipalities that supported this and those that didn't, we would know right away where the support is for this. So we don't worry about little niggings like that.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I've laid it out as I see this. This is bad legislation. I think it should be withdrawn. They should be waiting. First of all, they should be waiting for the Clean Environment Commission report to come back. Then most of all they need to listen to the municipalities that are involved in this, and there is no support for this. Talking to the AMM executive, they don't see any use for it. The Manitoba Pork Council, I can't repeat what they'd like to say about this legislation because it's just not nice.

So get with the program here, start listening to the people of Manitoba and withdraw this legislation. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I'm pleased to rise to put some thoughts on the record on Bill 20, The Planning Amendment Act. I agree with my colleague here that this is unnecessary legislation.

I have a background in municipal politics. I was on a planning district board for 20 years, and I was the chair of that planning district board for 12 of those years. Our planning district is the Neepawa and Area Planning District. It was formed in 1978, and it includes three rural municipalities and an urban. So I think I have a lot of background on dealing with things that pertain to The Planning Act. I was also

involved in a lot of the development of the legislation that is there now.

All of the planning districts have been required to include a livestock policy in their development plans. That requirement, I think, comes into place—it's been changed a couple of times now; it was supposed to be January 1, 2007. Now I believe it's January 1, 2008. The big problem with it is that our planning district, for one, was one of the first out of the blocks on this and started putting that in place, got all our work done. Now, it sits on the minister's desk and collects dust until he signs it, and there doesn't seem to be any move toward signing it. What it's doing is leaving us out in the rural areas, in those planning districts, in limbo. We can't proceed with a lot of the things we should be doing in those planning districts because of the tardiness of the minister.

Ours is, supposedly, going to be the first one that's put in place, to the best of my knowledge, and we were told by the department that we've done a wonderful job of developing that plan. Yet, it doesn't move. Part of the problem, I think, that occurs is the lack of co-operation between departments. We'll have four or five departments dealing with our development plan, taking a look at it and picking it to pieces at times, but they almost seem to go at odds with each other. I think there has to be a lot more co-operation in those various government departments to make these development plans work. In our case, we had to have about three hearings, and they were all actually driven by Agriculture that didn't like things we were putting in our plan and wouldn't go away until we changed some of them.

So it truly does appear that one hand doesn't know what the other is doing. When we do our development plan and are planning by-laws, we include setbacks. The Province sets minimum setbacks and, in most cases, the planning districts, rather than use the minimum setbacks, will stretch those setbacks out a little. So the fact that we have the setbacks on our local level means we really don't need this legislation. It's redundant. We have those rules and should be—we're responsible for the land use at the local level and should be responsible for that land use and this is basically a land-use issue.

The Technical Review Committee will look at any site, and I was interested to see, and I've seen a lot of Technical Review Committee reports. They'll look at a site and they'll never say a site is not a good site. They'll say, if you do this, and if you do that,

and if you do something else, then it's fair to go. That kind of smacks of who's actually writing my cheque. I need to make sure they're pleased.

I believe that this amendment, this bill, is designed simply to appease certain segments of the population by saying, look what we've done. We've passed this bill that will do this. It's not even necessary. We had one case some two or three years ago where somebody went around this bill, went around the rules and the regulations that were there, and that prompted a knee-jerk reaction from this government to, oh, we've got to put legislation in place to stop this. In the two years since, there hasn't been a single case, and I would hazard a guess that, even if this legislation wasn't in place, that there will not be another case.

*(16:20)

At one time, the technical review committees weren't required for any operations under 400 animal units. We certainly felt that 400 animal units was a reasonable threshold. They lowered it to 300, and now they've got to, it appears, put in some rather useless legislation to lower it even further. Most planning districts do put their own number in, in spite of what the legislation says. The legislation says 300 animal units. Most planning districts go below that. My own planning district is at 200 animal units and then we ask for a review on it.

So this piece of legislation is really saying that the planning districts don't know their own business, don't know what they're doing, so we have to put legislation in place to make sure we control anything that falls under their purview. It's very similar to the hog moratorium. We'll put a hog moratorium in place, and that will really look good to a certain segment of the population. Here we're going to put this little change in the bill in place and that's going to really look good to a certain segment of the population, even though it's not necessary. There's no need for this. It's a redundant piece of legislation. The rules are already there. The municipalities and planning districts are quite on top of this type of issue and do regulate it well and use their local knowledge to do that.

We see too many cases where somebody looks at a soil map, sitting in Winnipeg, and makes decisions based on that rather than on the local knowledge that's out there with the councillors and reeves and mayors in the areas that actually live there and know what's there.

In our own development plan, the Department of Agriculture was arguing that there should be up to 800 animal units set up in a certain area that the local councillor said part of the year is under water. It really made a lot of sense. They were arguing against what we'd put into place to restrict livestock operations in that particular area.

Once again, I'll just repeat what I've already said. This is a piece of legislation that's not necessary. I cannot support this piece of legislation. We certainly have the wherewithal in the rural areas to handle these situations ourselves. Thank you very much.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Deputy Speaker, I, too, just want to put a few comments on the record regarding the legislation, Bill 20, put forward, The Planning Amendment Act.

I want to thank the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) for the comments that he has put on the record and I think illustrate very clearly the reasons why we are opposed to this piece of legislation. The Member for Ste. Rose just indicated that this was redundant and, in fact, that AMM has been dealing in many of these areas and the different planning districts are dealing with the issues that are out there. So they are opposed to it and not supporting it. I guess I would wonder why the government is coming forward with this legislation.

It was interesting, as the Member for Carman was putting his comments on the record, that the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) seemed to have an awful lot of information that he wanted to put on the record. Yet, though, for some reason or other he has been stifled and muzzled, and he hasn't been able to put that on the record.

I would think that, as we debate within the House, this is truly a debate, this is legislation that is affecting many, many people within the province. I think so often within this Chamber we forget that there is a rural Manitoba out there. In fact, when you look at it, and it appears that the sector of the agriculture industry that this is focussed toward is the one that is, in fact, putting \$1.5 billion-plus into the economy every year. I have no idea how much \$1.5 billion is when I look at it in actual numbers, but it's a lot of money. So we have a sector of our economy here that is contributing toward our economic base, which is contributing to the taxes within the province, which contributes toward our health care, our education, our highways, and so on. I find it interesting that, where you have groups within our province who are opposed to this legislation, we

would have a government, a minister who would come forward and say, no, we're going to put this in place. I'm not sure to appease who or which groups. There must be a group out there that they're trying to appease.

I just found it interesting that the Member for Interlake, while he seemed to have some information that would be advantageous, that may help us in making our decision, although so far the information that we have would tell us that this is bad legislation, he could put that on the record so that we would be able to debate it from his vantage point. But, as I indicated, I guess it's called toe the party line; consequently, he's not able to put this information forward.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm really concerned about this piece of legislation. Again, as I indicated, I believe that there is a sector within this province—and I don't want to start talking about urban and rural differential, but it appears it would be more the urban that the government of the day is trying to appease and trying to console and say, listen, we're going to put something like a moratorium out there, which when we don't know how to deal with growth, we put moratoriums out there.

It reminds me of the example, historically, when you had the marching forces coming out, what they would do is they would have their castles, they would build a moat around it, and in order to be able to make sure that they could control that group within the castle, they would withdraw the water, well, basically to starve them out. That's very similar to the moratorium that we see taking place within the province. Rather than knowing how to deal with expansion and the growth within the industry, we put moratoriums in place which help to just shut down the industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that is just the wrong approach to take. I think we need to go out there; we need to address situations, and I know that my colleagues have indicated that who in the agricultural society who is out there and has either a livestock industry or is into grain production, why would you want to go and ruin something that is giving you a livelihood? I don't understand that. I'm involved in agriculture myself. I have no idea why I would want to go out there, and if I could use the example of drinking water, why I would want to go and pollute my well and then go and drink out of it. It just makes no sense.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am really, really concerned about this legislation. I know that the government of the day is going to, if I could use the term, ram it through. They will be hearing representation of people who are opposed to it, but, again, it's something that somewhere some minister, probably the Premier (Mr. Doer), has said, this is what we're going to do because politically this makes sense to do it; maybe it's going to gain us a few more votes.

But, on the other hand, is this good legislation? Madam Deputy Speaker, I would submit to you that the answer to that is no. It is not a good piece of legislation. Why do you want to kill the goose that is laying the golden egg? That's what I see taking place here. I think it's not looking and, in fact, taking advantage of the expertise that is out there.

As the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) indicated, he has been on the planning district for 20 years, I believe it was. He's knowledgeable. He's got the expertise. It is groups like that who are saying, no, this is not the direction to go, yet we have a government out here who is throwing that advice to the side. They're saying, no, we will not listen to the information that we have at hand, so, consequently, we're going to ram it through.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is a real concern to me. I think in our debate I would again challenge the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), get up, put your points on the record so that we can, in fact, see why you think it is such a good piece of legislation. Thank you very much.

* (16:30)

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, just for your information, I have done a little bit of consulting work in the past prior to taking on this position, and one of those jobs in one of the fields that I worked in was working with municipalities and planning acts. A local municipality in our area was faced with a challenge, an extremely large challenge. They had a large recreation area in their municipality. They had a lake and a lot of development around it, a couple of towns, but they also had a large agricultural land base. There was a will to develop that land base and they wanted to develop that in a way that it would employ people in the area and keep people there and perhaps grow their villages.

So what they did is they went to work doing a planning act, put together a development plan. They presented that to the now-current minister and her departments and, by golly, it got passed. It was a model for the province. I can tell you after seeing the ones in the province that are there today, there was a lot of improvement needed. And there were a lot. Many, many municipalities have no planning act at all. Even today, although the Minister of Agriculture, at one time in 2005 said, or before 2005 made a comment or made a statement that by the end of 2005 there would be planning districts throughout the province. That would be mandated. It's never happened. I'm sorry. It just never took place and today there's a lot that aren't there.

But this municipality took it on themselves, put it all together, and it was a model; it really was a model. They actually did some development. They did about \$45-million worth of development with that plan in place, and the government of the day, which we still have today, the NDP government, all of a sudden said, no, no, that plan is no good. They took it away. They squashed that plan.

Now we're coming up with some more restrictions. We're coming up with restrictions on a development that works in rural Manitoba, Madam Deputy Speaker. That was a development that kept people there. It gave people an opportunity to diversify in agriculture. It gave them an opportunity to keep a generation on the farm that is going away, being lured away by high dollars somewhere else and not in this province. They've left this province in hordes of 40,000 or more at a time.

We have industries out there and we have regulations in the industry. This legislation has been brought forward to probably, as has been pointed out, to close a loophole, so to speak. That loophole doesn't really make a difference. It's a feel-good piece of legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have a highly regulated industry, more highly regulated than any industry at all. The city of Winnipeg could well do to have the same regulations that the hog industry has in this province.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I might point out to the House that there is a project going on with the second-largest, privately owned hog company in Canada and now the proud owners of Springhill Farms. They are doing a multi-million dollar project with the University of Manitoba on hog manure and its impact on the soil and its impact on the feeding industry of the cattle

afterwards. What we're finding is that they are making soil. They are making soil on what was marginal land, is now turning in to be productive land. Where people at one time farmed 1,200 acres and ran 50 cows, now they can run 600. Isn't that wonderful that we can utilize, we can utilize the land that we have here? Isn't it wonderful that the assessment goes up on that land, that municipalities have money to build infrastructure?

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that we need more of this type of development. We don't need legislation that takes away from the initiative of private investors in this province. We don't want to chase them somewhere else. Saskatchewan's doing well without us going over there. They're doing well. In fact, they're leaving us in the dust. The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), tweaking away over there, has got some of the poorest municipalities in the province, some of the poorest that could benefit from this type of development.

I have seen some places there that are suitable for development. However, he's pleased not to have that. It's unfortunate. I think he just needs to take a little trip outside of the city of Winnipeg, or at least visit his riding more often to see the depression that is there.

An Honourable Member: Keep them in poverty; that way they'll stay home.

Mr. Graydon: Keep them like that. He doesn't know any better anyway, it's okay.

This legislation is redundant; it's not necessary; it probably won't buy any votes anyway. It's just adding a little bit more restriction to industries that are overregulated.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say at this time that I could not support this type of legislation for the reasons that I have given you.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I know the time is short, but I do want to put a few things on the record in regard to Bill 20.

Listening to the Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), I know he was trying to help the Member for Interlake in regard to having some industrial growth within his constituency. He said you put them in a swamp. Well, I'll tell you, I'd like to take the Member for Interlake and tell him that there's a lot of good land up there, that obviously he should get out of the city, go out past the swamps and have a look at some of that good land. I know he likes to go out and

hunt bears, but there's more than that as well. He figures that's the only source of economic growth that he has there, but I can tell him one thing for sure, that we on this side of the House want to make sure that we have the sustainable agricultural products within this province of Manitoba—

An Honourable Member: Very sustainable.

Mr. Eichler: You're darn right it's sustainable. The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) thinks that we have to do nothing in order to have growth in this province, but I can also assure the Member for Interlake that he's wrong on this case. He talks about building a school in Inwood for \$5.4 million, and that's his sign of economic growth. Well, unfortunately, this bill is not going to do anything to help the Member for Interlake have his industries grow.

I know that the situation in Bill 20, this will definitely hamper a number of the projects that are in that particular region and, in fact, the province as a whole. If you want to look at value-added within the province of Manitoba, we have to look at ways to be creative. I know the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) went to the briefing on this particular bill, and when they asked about the specifics of animals, they really didn't have a clear definition of whether or not a dairy barn adjacent to a hog barn would be permissible, whether or not a poultry industry next to a hog industry would be admissible, so, obviously, there are some serious flaws in this particular piece of legislation.

We know that the farmers are the best stewards of the land. They know exactly what needs to happen. I know the Member for Interlake's chirping back there; he's trying to get up and make some points. But again his colleagues have told him to be quiet, let the bill get through. I know deep down he wants to go with his farmers and try and help them out, but he's not going to get up today and talk about it, but he should. He should talk about what is the best for his constituents. I know that he's really sensitive about the former Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Uruski, and he should listen to him as well because he knows, as the Minister of Agriculture in the past, that there's a good future for agriculture, but the present member just seems to be missing the point.

I know that the government is definitely going against farmers in any way they can. They put a moratorium on our hog barns, and they're yet to make a decision on whether or not the CEC is going

to have their report back in time so they're able to lift the pause in time for the fall so that we can go ahead and have an increase in upgraded barns, not old barns, but new barns. It'll be state-of-the-art. Yet what they're doing to this legislation is putting in another stall, just another way of putting a hold on the livestock industry within this province.

If they don't want the environment polluted, they put a bill in place that overrules the farmer so they don't have a say. We have good councillors; we have good farmers; we have people that can make these decisions without having to put legislation in place in order to make that happen.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that we have a couple of other bills we want to get to before the end of the day, but I do want to have these few comments put on the record in regard to Bill 20. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any other speakers? Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 20, The Planning Amendment Act (Deemed Single Operations).

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

* (16:40)

**Bill 5—The Public Accounts Committee
Meeting Dates Act
(Legislative Assembly Act Amended)**

Mr. Speaker: Bill 5, The Public Accounts Committee Meeting Dates Act (Legislative Assembly Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to put a few brief comments on the record with respect to Bill 5.

We object to this bill, Mr. Speaker, and we've made our views known that we object to it for a number of reasons.

First of all, the bill legislates when we can have Public Accounts within this Legislature. It only allows six Public Accounts meetings a year. I believe that the government carefully crafted the bill itself just to ensure that we don't have Public Accounts meetings during session, while we're in session, Mr. Speaker.

Let me tell you why. When we look at the meeting, the dates that are contemplated within the bill, they are: the third Wednesday of February, of course, we don't normally sit in February; the third Wednesday in April, that's a possibility, Mr. Speaker, depending on when the federal budget comes down and when the budget comes down from the provincial Finance Minister; the third Wednesday in June, we normally rise after the first week of June so we wouldn't have a Public Accounts meeting during that period of time; the third week in August, we very rarely sit, if any, in August; in October, the third week it's possible even to avoid that date if the government really wants to, although this year, certainly, it would have been applicable; and the third week of December, we normally rise after about the first week and a half of December.

So, when you look at the dates that were contemplated within the bill itself, there's a possibility of two Public Accounts meetings while we are sitting in the Legislature, and four, almost definitely, we wouldn't be sitting in the Legislature at the time of the meeting. So that's a concern for us in terms of when the Public Accounts meetings were contemplated, but most importantly, Mr. Speaker, what we are concerned about is the number of Public Accounts meetings being legislated in this House.

I only point to other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, to make my case. We require a more powerful Public Accounts Committee in this Legislature to hold the government to account. Other jurisdictions have recognized that.

I took the opportunity, a couple of months ago, to go with you, Mr. Speaker, to Saskatchewan, as well as a government member—

An Honourable Member: A junket, Regina.

Mr. Hawranik: I wouldn't call Regina a junket, but in any event, we did go to Saskatchewan. One of the questions I had during that period of time was to find out a little bit more about the Public Accounts Committee in Saskatchewan. What I found out really opened my eyes to what Public Accounts committees can do in Manitoba and other jurisdictions.

In Saskatchewan, while the Legislature is sitting, Saskatchewan has two Public Accounts meetings a week. Not a month, two Public Accounts meetings a week, and every second week while they're not sitting. So the number of meetings is substantially different in Saskatchewan as it is here in Manitoba.

For that very reason, and that's not unusual throughout the country, Mr. Speaker.

What we also found in Saskatchewan was that the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader basically told us that we're the laughing stock of the country. We're the only jurisdiction, in their view, that has a dysfunctional Public Accounts Committee. For that very reason, we need to reform the Public Accounts Committee.

Some jurisdictions have provision to allow witnesses to be called under oath. Most jurisdictions, have the power to call witnesses to the Public Accounts Committee to testify as to the reports that are being considered.

Other jurisdictions don't call ministers. They call deputies only and the Auditor General, as well as other witnesses that may be relevant to the report.

Questions, though, I can tell you Mr. Speaker, our Public Accounts Committee, of course, we call ministers, and what I find is not a lot really gets accomplished because it deteriorates into questions of policy and politics, and that's what we have to get away from, in my view. Questions need to relate to administrative matters only and not to questions relating to policy and political questions.

The Public Accounts Committee focuses on recommendations, whether they were fulfilled, and why and why not. In fact, even recommendations come from the committee itself to help understand the finances and the way things were done within each report. The Chair, in other jurisdictions, as it is here, is normally an opposition member and the Vice-Chair being the government member. They decide on meetings and they decide on the agenda without interference by government or by House leaders themselves.

What I can say, Mr. Speaker, though, is that we have been meeting with the Government House Leader and we have a commitment, at least, to look at reforming the Public Accounts Committee in the province. That's a step forward. I'm all for it. I'd like to see changes, permanent changes, perhaps, after we visit other jurisdictions in February in Alberta and British Columbia. I'd certainly like to see permanent changes in effect. That's a commitment that I've made to our caucus. I know that the Public Accounts Chair is also on board with that. I know that the Government House Leader is on board with that to try to reform the rules and the Public Accounts Committee so it can be a more effective committee

of government. Although we have to come to some kind of arrangement with respect to Public Accounts Committee on a trial basis, I would hope that that process does proceed before the session ends and that we move toward a more fruitful and productive Public Accounts Committee.

Thank you. [*interjection*]

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I apologize to my colleague from Inkster because I believe he wanted to speak before I did, but I'll make sure that there is some time left for him to put some words on the record.

But, with regard to Bill 5, Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that the government is attempting to address the issue of the Public Accounts process that we have been floundering under for so long. But what I'm seeing from this legislation is that it does not address the whole issue of accountability, because all it does is set dates for six meetings during the course of the year. If we compare ourselves to other jurisdictions, we will still, even when this legislation passes, be somewhat of the laughing stock of Canada when it comes to the process of public accounts and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, we as legislators should not put ourselves in that position. I think that we could probably achieve the same thing if we were to, in our rules that we negotiate from time to time, establish meeting times within the rules that could address the needs of us as legislators. Also, the accountability issue would be addressed for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, other jurisdictions have several important aspects in their Public Accounts process that I think are very meaningful. One of them is, of course, the ability to have the deputy minister or other members of the administration present when questions are being asked. Questions in Public Accounts are not asked simply by the opposition; they are asked by both sides of the House; they are asked by government and they are asked by members of the opposition. In that way, the intent is to help the administration of that department become more accountable in terms of the recommendations, perhaps, that flow out of a report, and in seeing that those recommendations are implemented, and then having a follow-up in terms of whether or not those recommendations were lived up to and what effect those recommendations might have had on a particular department.

This process should be viewed as an assist to a department rather than a criticism of a department. For too long, our process in Manitoba has been one where we put the minister on the stand as a witness and then we get into the whole area of policy and politics and we forget about the recommendations that, perhaps, have flowed out of a report which could help in terms of the administration of a department. It isn't so much a criticism on the part of a minister or part of the head of a department. Rather, it's to give us a better understanding of how those recommendations are implemented and whether those recommendations are, in fact, working to improve the system at the end.

* (16:50)

Now, we've seen in other jurisdictions how sometimes that process falls apart. I think that the process fell apart to a certain extent at the federal level. But, even at the federal level, it did hold people who were administering departments and parts of government accountable to Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, in talking to the Auditor General, our own Auditor General would like to see improvements made because, as the Auditor General of our province, that position is held in fairly high esteem across the country. We have an Auditor General in Manitoba who's well respected across the country. I think that office would certainly appreciate if we, as legislators, could do our job in a better way in terms of addressing the recommendations that flow out of her report or from reports that were made before. I think we could do all of ourselves a favour if we could address the issue of better accountability through the Public Accounts process.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, I think a lot of this could be done—I know I've got a fairly good working relationship with the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), who is the deputy chair of Public Accounts, and I think together we could probably move the process along if there was willingness on the part of our colleagues to do the same. I don't simply point a finger at government, because I think all of us have a responsibility here, collectively as legislators to make sure that this process is enhanced, modernized and becomes far more accountable than it has been in the past.

So I'm one who would like to see this bill withdrawn, Mr. Speaker, because I don't believe that this bill meets the needs of us, as legislators, and it doesn't meet the needs of Manitobans.

I also believe that a minister should not have to sit as a witness before Public Accounts. I believe that a deputy minister should be able to answer the administrative questions that are put by the committee. I think a committee should also be somewhat knowledgeable about the kinds of questions that are put to the administrator. That means that, perhaps, prior to a Public Accounts meeting, the Auditor General should have the ability with the clerk of committees to be able to brief the members of the committee as to what the essential aspects of any bill or any report that is being examined by Public Accounts, what those essential parts are, so that when we go into a Public Accounts process before the public of Manitoba, we are then armed with the kind of information that we, as legislators, should have in order to be able to ask relevant questions and not stray into the area of policy, not stray into the area of politics, but, indeed, make this a true administrative accountability session.

Now, one might say, well, that's largely dependent upon the Chair who sits at the front of the room and does the meeting. Well, that's part of it, Mr. Speaker. I think that the Chair does have a responsibility, but members on that committee also have a responsibility to ensure that they do their job. That's one of the reasons why committees for Public Accounts are permanent committees, is because those people who sit on Public Accounts need to be knowledgeable, need to be armed with the proper information before they go into a Public Accounts process.

I think we could move a long way, Mr. Speaker, in this aspect, and it's for that reason that I asked questions of the Premier (Mr. Doer) with regard to his intent or his view of modernizing Public Accounts. From what I got from his answers is that he is prepared to move forward and to allow us to have a Public Accounts process that is, indeed, far more progressive than what we see in our province.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, is the control of the Public Accounts process. That process should be controlled by the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the committee. That's why you have them as Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee. In other words, the agenda, the meeting dates, the issues that are going to be dealt with, the time of the meetings should be the responsibility of the Vice-Chair and the Chair of the committee. At the present time in Manitoba, it is in the hands of the House leaders, and we know that sometimes House leaders have a different agenda

than perhaps the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. That's not a criticism of the House leaders; rather, it's just a flawed process in the way we do things in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we could all move forward fairly progressively if our attitude is right, if the will to take the chance on a provisional basis is there. What I had recommended was that we move ahead on a provisional basis so that, if the process works, then we can start looking at making those rules more permanent. But, in the beginning, let's take a look at dealing with some of those outstanding recommendations and outstanding reports that are before Public Accounts that haven't been looked at since 2002, and let's bring ourselves up to date so that, indeed, we can become current. Then we can do our jobs much more effectively.

To that extent, Mr. Speaker, I would recommend to the government that they take a very serious look at pulling this bill off the Order Paper. Let's move in a progressive way on a provisional basis to see whether or not we can make this process far more accountable, far more productive, far more progressive, far more modern, then I think we all can take some credit for having done something very constructive and very positive in our province. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak to Bill 5. Bill 5 is proposing to make the Public Accounts Committee meet six times a year. There is no question that Public Accounts needs to meet more if we can establish, and I don't think we need the law to force us to establish that the Public Accounts meet six times a year.

I would like to take a look, and the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) does a wonderful job in terms of talking about the different times of reform that we could have at the Public Accounts Committee. I, too, was on that Regina junket, and I must say it was a wonderful experience. It was a full day of activity, and the hosts were absolutely fabulous. I say junket, obviously, tongue in cheek. It was a wonderful experience. One of the things that we've taken away from that was how effective Saskatchewan's Public Accounts Committee is.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I think it's important that we take it the next step. We're talking about, I believe, the trip, whether it's to Edmonton or to Victoria, in looking at things like the Public Accounts and our rules. I think that there seems to be

some good will from all parties in working with your office to try to make a positive difference with respect to that Public Accounts in the rules of this Legislature.

I would like for us to take advantage of that good will. Saskatchewan, as has been pointed out, meets on a weekly basis. Other jurisdictions do not allow for ministers to be members of the committee. I think that there are a number of things that could be done that would give more accountability within the civil service through our Public Accounts Committee.

I realize that we would be entering into some new area for MLAs here in Manitoba because the Public Accounts in the past, and the way in which it's been functioning has not been remotely similar at all to more effective Public Accounts committees across Canada. That's why we find ourselves in a situation where other jurisdictions look at Manitoba, and I think there's a general consensus that Manitoba is more lacking in terms of an effective Public Accounts than any other Public Accounts Committee in the country.

I see that there appears to be some good will. The deputy chair and the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, I think, are advocating sincerely to try to usher in that new reformed Public Accounts. I believe that the committee membership,

that MLAs are honourable and responsible and would put in a genuine effort to make our Public Accounts more in keeping in terms of the way in which they behave compared to other jurisdictions in Canada—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hour being 5 p.m., in accordance with the sessional order adopted by the House in June, item 6 of the sessional order states that the Speaker must, at 5 p.m., interrupt the proceedings without seeing the clock, put all questions required to conclude the second reading stage of all specified bills, then, at that stage, the question must be decided without further debate or amendment.

The hour being 5 p.m., I will now proceed in accordance with the provisions of the sessional order. Just to advise members, there are no remaining ones, so I'm going to put the question.

Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 5, The Public Accounts Committee Meeting Dates Act (Legislative Assembly Act Amended).

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

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