

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

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authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-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.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	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.
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, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	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.
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SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 6, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 13—The Preparing Students for Success Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 13, The Preparing Students for Success Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi visant la réussite scolaire (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Allan: Bill 13 introduces amendments to modernize our education system to help young people prepare to meet the needs of our modern economy, including raising the compulsory school age in Manitoba from 16 to 18.

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

Bill 206—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Disclosure of Government Directives)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the member from Carman, that Bill 206, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Disclosure of Government Directives); Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba (publication des directives gouvernementales), be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West, seconded by the honourable member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), that Bill 206, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act

(Disclosure of Government Directives), be now read a first time.

Mr. Borotsik: Bill 206 is rather an interesting bill. It simply is one of accountability and transparency. It asks that if there is any political directive given to Manitoba Hydro that Manitoba Hydro publish that in the *Gazette*, Mr. Speaker, so that all Manitobans can see what the directive from government is and also how much that directive is going to cost Manitoba Hydro. Thank you.

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

PETITIONS

Multiple Sclerosis Treatment

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

More than 3,000 Manitobans and their families are impacted by multiple sclerosis, and Manitoba has one of the highest rates of MS in the world.

New research indicates that there may be a link between a condition known as chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency and multiple sclerosis. Preliminary studies indicate that many MS symptoms can be relieved with angioplasty, a common procedure.

In order to test this procedure for safety and effectiveness, additional research and clinical trials are needed. Manitoba is not testing for CCSVI, conducting research or conducting clinical trials.

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador will be monitoring MS patients who have undergone the liberation treatment and studying its impact. Saskatchewan has announced that it will move forward with a clinical trial when their research community presents a proposal and has invited other provinces to join them. Meanwhile, Manitoba's provincial government has not taken up this initiative nor shown leadership on this issue.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider making the province of Manitoba a leader in CCSVI research and to move forward with clinical trials as soon as possible.

This is signed by G.J. Lexier, B. Streu, S. Maycock and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

And these are the reasons for the petition:

More than 3,000 Manitobans and their families are impacted by multiple sclerosis, and Manitoba has one of the highest rates of MS in the world.

New research indicates that there may be a link between a condition known as chronic 'cerebalspinal' venous insufficiency, CCSVI, and multiple sclerosis. Preliminary studies indicate that many MS symptoms can be relieved with angioplasty, a common procedure.

In order to test this procedure for safety and effectiveness, additional research and clinical trials are needed. Manitoba is not testing for CCSVI and conducting research or conducting clinical trials.

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador will be monitoring MS patients who have undergone the libertarian treatment and studying its impact. Saskatchewan has announced that it will move forward with a clinical trial when their research community presents a proposal and has invited other provinces to join them. Meanwhile, Manitoba's provincial government has not taken up this initiative nor shown leadership on this issue.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider making the province of Manitoba a leader in CCSVI research and to move forward with clinical trials as soon as possible.

And this petition is signed by S. Friesen, D. Sawatzky and J. Thiessen and many, many more fine Manitobans.

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North–Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by N.R. Zamonsky, M. Cote, C. Dupas and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Bipole III Project

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

In September of 2007, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro directed the utility to abandon an east-side route for its Bipole III project. Five days later, Manitoba Hydro announced that the utility will—would be proceeding with a west-side route.

* (13:40)

Manitoba Hydro staff, technical experts and regular Manitobans have communicated to the provincial government that they would prefer an east-side route.

A west-side route will be almost 500 kilometres longer than an east-side route, less reliable, and cost taxpayers at least an additional \$1.75 billion.

The extra cost being forced on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans by the provincial government will mean that every Manitoba family will end up paying \$7,000 for this decision.

Since the current provincial government has come into power, hydro rates have already increased by almost 20 per cent. If this decision is not reversed, it will result in further rate increases for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to allow Manitoba Hydro to proceed with the shorter, cheaper and greener east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, enabling the utility to keep our hydro bills lower and to ensure a more reliable electricity system.

And this petition is signed by J. Angelini, S. Hayward, K. Sampson and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

In September of 2007, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro directed the utility to abandon an east-side route for its Bipole III project. Five days later, Manitoba Hydro announced that the utility would be proceeding with a west-side route.

Manitoba Hydro staff, technical experts and regular Manitobans have communicated to the provincial government that they would prefer an east-side route.

A west-side route would be almost 500 kilometres longer than an east-side route, less reliable, and cost taxpayers at least \$1.75 billion.

The extra cost being forced on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans by the provincial government will mean that every Manitoba family will end up paying \$7,000 for this decision.

Since the current provincial government has come to power, hydro rates have already increased by almost 20 per cent. If this decision is not reversed, it will result in further rate increases for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to allow Manitoba Hydro to proceed with the shorter, cheaper, greener east-side route, subject to the necessary regulatory approvals, enabling the utility to keep our hydro bills lower and to ensure a more reliable electricity system.

And this petition is signed by M. Pilkington, A. Giffin, L. Douma and many, many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table, in accordance with section 28(1) of The Auditor General Act, the report of the Auditor General to the Legislative Assembly on performance audits.

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I'm pleased to table the 2009-2010 annual report for the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation.

Mr. Speaker: Another one?

Ms. Marcelino: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the first-quarter and second-quarter reports for the 2010-2011 for the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation.

And I'm pleased to table the 2009-2010 annual report for the Manitoba Arts Council.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, today is Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. On December 6th, 1989, a misogynist gunman roamed the corridors of Montréal's École Polytechnique and killed 14 women simply because they were women.

This date has become a national day of mourning, not only for the victims of the Montréal massacre, but for all women across Canada who have died as a result of violence. Sadly, in the past year, 13 Manitoba women have died as a result of violence. We honour their memories here today.

While society agrees that violence against women is wrong, at times this violence continues to go unnoticed, particularly against those who are marginalized. Today we also remember missing and murdered Aboriginal women, whose families experience the pain of their absence every day. Ending violence against women is not something government can do on its own. Every Manitoban has a role to play, whether by offering support to a woman in an abusive situation or teaching young children that all forms of violence and abuse are wrong.

Earlier this morning, the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council held a sunrise memorial here at the Legislative Building. This event was an opportunity to reflect on the lives of women that have been lost so tragically. Our government is committed to promoting women's equality and working to eliminate violence against women.

Today, we thank our community partners working on the front lines in shelters, police departments and the justice system, who have made Manitoba a leader in addressing domestic violence. At the same time, we recognize that more must be done.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask, that following the statements by my colleagues, we observe a moment of silence together. Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Today, we mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The United Nations has called on governments to stand up and raise awareness to combat the continued presence of violence against women. It is a mistake to think that such violence and harm take place only in faraway countries. Indeed, it can and is happening in our own backyards.

Today marks the anniversary of the Montréal massacre, where 21 years ago, a man marched into École Polytechnique in Montréal, killed 14 women, injured 10 other women and four men before turning the gun on himself. These 14 women were killed for no reason other than one man's hatred of women. We must continue to remember this tragic day and to combat such violent acts with increased resolve to create a world where horrendous tragedies like these will not happen again.

We continue to see around the world disturbing examples of violence against women. One high-profile case is that of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, an Iranian woman, who is alleged to have had an adulterous relationship following the death of her husband. Later, the charges were changed based on false and coerced confessions, and she was accused of assisting in her husband's murder. She was lashed 99 times in the presence of her children and then sentenced to be stoned to death. International outcry and strong criticism from world leaders stopped the stoning from being carried out, but Mrs. Mohammadi Ashtiani remains at risk of execution by hanging or other means.

Gender-based violence is one of the greatest blocks to development worldwide, Mr. Speaker. Violence against women has negative effects on poverty reduction, women's health, the fight to control HIV/AIDS and the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Today, we remember all of those who have been and continue to be victims of violence.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I speak—I seek leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join others today in speaking on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

* (13:50)

Today, we remember the very sad events of December the 6th, 1989, when 14 young women were killed at the Montréal's École Polytechnique.

We remember, as well, the 13 women who died in Manitoba over the course of the last year as a result of violence. And we remember, in particular, the missing and murdered women not only of Aboriginal, but of all backgrounds, but particularly those of Aboriginal background who seem to be picked upon so unfortunately in Manitoba.

I attended, with many others in the Chamber, the sunrise ceremony this morning, and I was moved by the speech from Stephanie Forsyth and the comments and the moving moments from—throughout the ceremony. We need clearly to continue to do far better than we're doing at the moment. The continuing violence against women is a testament to this need for continued improvement in this area in Manitoba, in Canada, and around the world.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for a moment of silence? [Agreed]

Please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

ORAL QUESTIONS**School Division Overcrowding
Government Strategy**

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to thank my three colleagues for their comments just now on the important issue of violence against women and also acknowledge the speaker this morning who spoke very well at this morning's sunrise ceremony.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to matters of public education, today we have the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) introducing Bill 13, The Preparing Students for Success Act, at the same time as we're aware that this government's failure to plan, with respect to schools in Manitoba, is resulting in absolutely, unbelievably difficult circumstances both in the Seven Oaks and the Winnipeg school divisions, with respect to overcrowding for students in those school divisions.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier: Why did he and his government fail so badly to plan for the needs of these kids?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is this government that put a record commitment to capital for new schools and repairing schools into our budget in the last three years—\$310 million—which the members opposite have opposed. This money has gone to building new schools; it has gone to repairing existing schools; it has gone into safety upgrades; it has gone into other forms of capital which improved the performance of those schools in terms of technical-vocational training.

All of these initiatives are intended to refurbish our schools, to provide the kind of facilities that will provide a good quality education to people. And with a respect—with respect, when schools start to be overcrowded because we have more people coming to Manitoba, more young families in Manitoba, we will work with those school divisions to address those concerns.

Mr. McFadyen: And as we welcome those families to our province, we want to be sure that those kids have a chance to get an education in schools that aren't overcrowded. We have the superintendent of Seven Oaks, Mr. O'Leary, saying, and I quote: We're getting to a danger point. Portables are a solution, but only to a degree. He also goes on to say, the Minister of Education has to say this is a crisis and we need a fast response.

Mr. Speaker, we have rising enrolment, we have a failure to plan and we have a Minister of Education who, in response to these concerns being raised by Mr. O'Leary and others, says that there's no new money, no new schools before 2013, three years from now. How do they set priorities in this NDP government? How do they set priorities?

How is it that some capital projects move at full speed, Mr. Speaker, and other capital projects are being delayed, especially those that are needed for the requirements of kids and their education?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there is a new collegiate in the Seven Oaks School Division, the West Kildonan Collegiate. We were happy to provide the capital for building that school. That is a very modern school now.

We will continue to examine where there is student population pressure in our schools and to address that through the capital planning process of the Public Schools Finance Board. Members opposite had a program that was about \$30 million—\$25 million a year for school capital; we have a three-year program of \$310 million for improving public schools, and that program will go to priority projects. If those priorities are shown to have changed because of growing student population pressure in various school divisions, that will be examined on a rational basis by the Public Schools Finance Board.

But what I can assure the members opposite, we won't do what they did. We won't cut funding to the public schools like they proposed just this last June, when they proposed to cut a half a billion dollars out of schools, hospitals and services to families. We will support those people—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, this is not a person who's got a partisan interest in supporting us. It's Mr. O'Leary who says that they're reaching a crisis and a danger point with respect to schools.

It was foreseeable, Mr. Speaker. It should have been planned for. Now we have a government saying, you've got to wait until 2013 before anything new happens.

I know that they brag all over the place about how much money they spend for Manitoba taxpayers. Why are their results so miserable? Why is it that they have failed to plan? Why is it that they're so desperate to make announcements,

Mr. Speaker, that they've completely forgotten to deal with what's important, that's planning for the needs of Manitoba students?

Mr. Selinger: As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the Seven Oaks School Division has a new high school, West Kildonan Collegiate. That was built under this government. It was on the list to be addressed for many, many years and it was ignored by members opposite.

The reality is we're spending a record amount of money to improve our public schools. We are also seeing growth in our population, something that didn't happen in the '90s when people were leaving Manitoba. Last year we had a record 17,000 people return to this province. And we are seeing those people settle in Winnipeg, we're seeing them settle outside of Winnipeg.

And where we see population pressure of students who need more classroom space, that will be provided. Where we see that that pressure will be there for the long term and new schools need to be expanded, that will be provided. That is why the Public Schools Finance Board has been mandated to have planning in place to address the long-term needs of schools.

We have the resources to do it. We have the vehicle to do it. We have the population. And where it's justified, it will be done.

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Cost Estimate Update

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question.

Speaking of a complete failure to plan, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro and this government have just released their updated capital expenditure forecasts for all their major projects. Virtually every project that Hydro is planning had adjustments to those numbers but, yet, we have the very same number in respect to Bipole III: 2007, \$2.2 billion; 2008, \$2.2 billion; 2009, \$2.2 billion. The recently released numbers for 2010: \$2.2 billion.

My question to the Premier is very simple: Who are they trying to kid?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, let's be clear, it's only the Leader of the Official Opposition that does not believe we need converter

stations in the province of Manitoba for additional hydro capacity. He—by doing that, he would load all the risk on the existing converter stations at Dorsey, where 75 per cent of our power goes. Hydro, Manitobans, all the technical experts know that we need additional converter stations, as we build out Keeyask and Conawapa, to provide power, not only to the south of us but to the west of us.

And it's that denial, that refusal to build the converter stations, that will put the Manitoba economy at risk for billions of dollars of losses, what almost happened in the late '90s when they were busy privatizing the telephone system. It'll also put our exports at risk, \$20 billion over the next 20 years. And it will also—it would also, with their plan to run it down the east side, threaten the future opportunity for UNESCO World Heritage designation and the opportunity to protect the boreal forest and grow our ecotourism industry.

* (14:00)

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier obviously hasn't read what Hydro just released, because in the just-released capital plans for Hydro, they plan to run all of their export power through the existing Dorsey Converter Station. So I don't know whether he's not reading the Hydro reports, whether he's not up to speed on this file, but according to the number—the reports just released within the last three days, it's all going to continue to go through Dorsey under all the export sales.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier needs to get back to reality, get back to the facts. Everybody in the province knows that the \$2.2 billion is an outdated, phony number. Bob Brennan himself said a few weeks ago it's more like \$4 billion. Why are they trying to hide facts from the people of Manitoba? Is it political damage control or is this just another example of a government that can't be trusted?

Mr. Selinger: Hydro will update the numbers. As they go through the process and apply for the environmental licence and they zone in on exactly what the project's going to be, they will update those numbers. But that is not the same as the reckless, irresponsible statements of the Leader of the Official Opposition where he says the converter stations are not needed. He says that we could load all of the future risk and present risk of Manitoba Hydro—75 per cent of it—into the Dorsey station. Manitoba Hydro has made it crystal clear. They need existing converter stations to avoid a disaster inside of Manitoba and to protect export markets. We need to

protect the Manitoba economy. We need to protect our export markets, which keep hydro rates the lowest in North America.

The members opposite are in denial on that. The Leader of the Official Opposition is in denial on that, and because he's in denial on that, he is being reckless and irresponsible with the future of Manitoba's green energy economy.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I'm in good company because Bob Brennan said, just on CBC the other day, one option might be to accept the fact that AC might be the best way to send the power down south, even though the losses could be higher, and then you wouldn't need the conversion equipment if you came down with AC; that was Bob Brennan just a few weeks ago. Bob Brennan says they don't need the converter stations. Other hydro experts say they don't need the converter stations.

Rather than getting caught up on a phony attack, on a made-up bogus side-issue attack, why doesn't the Premier address the real issue and tell Manitobans why he's hiding the real number from Manitobans? He knows it's not \$2.2 billion. Bob Brennan says it's more like \$4 billion. Why is he doing exactly what he did on Crocus?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member was reckless and irresponsible when he lost 20—when he lost up to \$33 million to the Crocus Fund during his time in office when his cronies were interfering in the Crocus Fund. All the allegations he has made in the past have been proven false, and, once again, Mr. Brennan has written a letter, which I tabled in the House, a memorandum to the Minister of Hydro, which I tabled in the House, which made it absolutely clear converter stations were needed for further expansion of hydroelectricity generation in this province. The member knows that. He wants to just skip over that very relevant fact because it puts on the record that he is wrong, once again, and being reckless and irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker, 75 per cent of the power goes to the Dorsey stations. As hydro is expanded, they need additional reliability on converter stations. That's essential to the Manitoba economy. It's essential to the export economy. Only the member from Fort Whyte is in denial on that and, in his denial, he puts the Manitoba economy at risk. Shame on him.

Football Stadium Costs and Funding Options

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question, Mr. Speaker.

About seven months ago this Premier said he was going to build a brand new stadium for \$115 million and that there would be private sector money in that deal. Will the Premier now come clean with the people of Manitoba and admit that he falsified that information only seven months ago?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I'm just going to caution members about picking their words carefully. *[interjection]* Order. All members, when they bring information to the floor of the Chamber, I as Speaker, I take it as factual information. *[interjection]* Order. Everyone knows what the term "come clean" is. We've been in politics long enough. So let's just pick our words carefully and let's treat each other as honourable members, and I'm sure we can come up with different versions, different words. Let's just pick our words carefully. I'm cautioning all members of the House here.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question raised by the member opposite suggests that the stadium won't be built. I can tell him it will be built. It'll be built based on a plan brought forward by the Bombers, the City government, the provincial government, the University of Manitoba and partners from the community.

They were opposed to building the new MTS Centre. They blocked it every step of the way; we know that. They've objected to—on every instance on this project as well, although once in awhile we see a little wiggling there. We know now that they've at least acknowledged that it's a good site. This is a step forward, Mr. Speaker.

The plan will be brought forward for a new stadium. It'll be brought forward as the final details are worked out among all the partners. It'll be brought forward in such a way that we have a facility that will replace a stadium that is time expired at the university. It'll replace the stadium that's time expired at Polo Park. It will open up Polo Park for further economic development.

That was always a possibility under the original plan, and it will generate in Manitoba a facility for amateur sport, community and professional use all year-round, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we had a—the situation with Crocus where he was writing memos to Cabinet saying it was headed to a liquidity crisis as they were publicly inviting Manitobans to invest in the fund.

Mr. Speaker, we also had a situation where he told Manitobans that bipole, the west-side bipole, was going to cost \$2.2 billion when his Hydro CEO is now saying it's going to be more like \$4 billion.

A few months ago we had a situation where he said that the stadium was going to be \$115 million and that there would be a private partner, and we now know that none of—neither of those statements seem to be working out for him.

So I want to ask the Premier: When are we going to get a nice clear answer about what the stadium is actually going to cost, what we're actually going to get, and who, in fact, is going to pay for it versus what he's been telling Manitobans for the past seven months?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear, when it came—*[interjection]* We're happy to do that.

Mr. Speaker, clarity requires us to put on the record that the greatest losses in the Crocus Fund occurred under the member opposite when his cronies were in charge of that project. What's also clear is the members opposite would roll the dice on the future reliability of Manitoba Hydro for the Manitoba economy, for our export customers.

What's also clear, Mr. Speaker, is the members opposite opposed the MTS Centre. They opposed the stadium project. They do not work with the community. We work with our partners in the community to come up with a solution that is robust, that will provide a facility that's a hundred per cent owned by the community, 50 per cent by the University of Manitoba, 50 per cent by the City of Winnipeg, available for use all year-round to replace two time-expired stadiums at the university, at the Polo Park site.

We'll clear the Polo Park site for future economic development. All of these things will contribute—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Just last week in the *Swan Valley Star and Times*, which is hardly a hot bed of right-wing opinion, the *Swan Valley Star and Times* said that this Premier has, and I quote: Reduced the provincial NDP to a sleazy American-style attack party smearing people with half-truths and lies. End of quote. That's not my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that's the opinion of the *Swan Valley Star and Times*.

Mr. Speaker, rather than playing into what the *Star and Times* now seems to think about he and his government, why not just come clean today about how things are going on the stadium?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the member opposite has made it very clear that he does not support the stadium. He has made it very clear historically that his caucus opposed the MTS Centre. He has made it very clear that he is against The Water Protection Act. He's made it very clear that he's against increases in the minimum wage. He has made it very clear that he does not support legislation that protects workers in the workplace health and safety legislation.

Those are facts, Mr. Speaker. Those are facts never denied by the member opposite. He has never stood up and repudiated any of those facts that are on the record. That indicates very clearly that we are speaking the truth to Manitobans, but they need to know what the Leader of the Opposition stands for and what he would do to this province.

* (14:10)

Boiler and Pressure Vessels Inspections

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, this government pretends to be business friendly, but in fact they are driving business out of business here in Manitoba.

The Mechanical and Engineering Branch in the Department of Labour was responsible for enforcing the safety codes for boiler and pressure vessels as the authorized inspection agency for Manitoba.

Can the minister tell us why Manitoba has been suspended as the authorized inspection agency and why businesses now have to go to the government of Saskatchewan for their safety inspections?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I'm pleased to put some facts on the record regarding inspections in the Mechanical and Engineering Branch.

We have had some staffing situations where there're a limited amount of people who can perform those kinds of inspections, who are licensed to perform them. We are working to address those.

In the meantime, in order to not interrupt those businesses that rely on these inspections, we have worked with them to make arrangements with the government of Saskatchewan who can do those inspections. We have also told those businesses that, should those arrangements result in increased costs to those businesses to fly people from Saskatchewan to do it, that we will work with them to cover those costs.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, this minister knew six months ago this was coming and she did nothing.

Some businesses are forced to the-go to the government of Saskatchewan for safety approvals on their pressurized equipment because there was no longer anyone here in Manitoba who can do this, which has resulted in Manitoba's accreditation being suspended. What was costing these businesses \$500 is now costing them \$7,000 because of this required inspection. This is a cost that they cannot handle, Mr. Speaker. There are no people—no people—within the Mechanical and *[inaudible]* branch of the Department of Labour who can provide this expertise because of this minister's mismanagement.

Will the minister compensate these businesses for her incompetence?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we are working with the businesses that are affected by this while we're working with the Mechanical and Engineering Branch to make sure that we have people in place that can do those inspections. It takes a long time to learn how to do those particular kinds of inspections and get licensed. Those inspections represent a small percentage of the volume of work that the Mechanical and Engineering Branch has done.

In preparation for that, we have talked to those businesses about making arrangements with the government of Saskatchewan which has the inspectors on staff. We've also told them that we would assist them if they encounter increased costs.

I thought when the member was standing up to talk about business, she might be congratulating us on becoming a tax-free zone for small business as of December 1st. She'll have another opportunity to do that.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, this minister's asleep at the switch. She's known for six months about this and she's failed to have a plan.

The Mechanical and Engineering Branch of the Department of Labour is also responsible for inspections of pressure boilers and pressure piping in schools, hospitals, public buildings, as well as elevators, propane tanks and amusement rides. Yet, there are thousands of inspections behind schedule because there's a lack of inspectors, Mr. Speaker. Not only has the minister forced businesses to go to Saskatchewan for inspections, she's put the public at risk because of her mismanagement.

Why has she failed to plan ahead for these inspections, now leaving the public at risk, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it incredible that the member opposite would talk about inspections in workplaces and risk. This is a party whose leader has said that adding more Workplace Safety and Health inspectors was nothing more than more bureaucracy, nothing more than red tape. That's what he said.

This is a party opposite that, when we introduced legislation to increase fines for repeat offenders who had violated The Workplace Safety and Health Act, what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They spoke against it. They call—they said that we didn't need any of those fines.

That's their record on workplace safety and health. I'll stand by our record any day.

**Child and Family Services Agencies
Child Abuse Investigations and Reviews**

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): And on September the 8th, after begging for help and being returned home three times, a six-year-old little boy was being brutally abused, finally got the help he was begging for and was apprehended from his mother's care. He had been removed from a foster home and placed with his abusive mother earlier this year.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister promise full disclosure on this case, end the secrecy and release the details of the reviews being conducted on the terrible treatment this little boy received after being placed in the care of his mother?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should be reminded of

what the Children's Advocate has told her, and that is that Manitoba has the most robust independent review mechanism in the country and has a public reporting mechanism that is second-to-none. Indeed, the Ombudsman, as well, has a role to ensure accountability for any recommendations made.

In the event—and I believe the member is talking about a case where there were child welfare interventions, but serious questions remain as to whether there could have been more timely or different responses, and, in that case, the Children's Advocate has been asked to look at the situation even though there was not a death, because we do have some serious questions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And, again, very serious questions after the fact.

Mr. Speaker, on October the 24th, 2010, four-year-old Dillon Breana Belanger was allegedly killed by her mother at their home in Stuartburn. She had been in foster care for the majority of her life, but was placed in her mother's care.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve to know why this government's child welfare system is failing children like Breana. When will the minister tell Manitobans what happened here? Why this little girl was moved from a safe foster family and put into harm's way?

Mr. Mackintosh: As I said in my earlier answer, that is—it's questions like that that have led to the most robust review mechanisms in Canada; in addition, of course, to the role of the Chief Medical Examiner and any inquests; in addition to the role of any criminal proceedings which, of course, are public; and, of course, in addition to extraordinary powers set out for the Children's Advocate, wherein, the Children's Advocate, at her discretion, matters can be made public, as well, recognizing that the public interest is something that is very important to be balanced when you're also looking at the right of confidentiality to a family. And, as well, of course, there are the immediate reviews that take place by agencies and authorities. So the Children's Advocate has expounded on the progressive ways that Manitoba has ensured that there is robust, outside independent reviews.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, but robust reviews do nothing to bring back a child that was killed as a result of the policies of this government on Child and Family Services.

On June 24th, 2009, 20-month-old Jaylene Sanderson-Redhead was killed by her mother while in a women's shelter. The details of the treatment she received at the hands of her mother are horrific. She also was removed from a safe foster home and placed in her mother's care even though two of her siblings were permanent wards of Child and Family Services.

There's a terrible pattern here, Mr. Speaker. Again, the minister called a number of reviews into this child's death. Review after review, and children continue to die in the care of a system that's supposed to protect them. When will he make the reviews public? What's he hiding?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the member, of course, as long-time member-minister for Family Services, operated under much weaker rules when it came to public disclosure. And, in fact, when we brought in legislation to strengthen public accountability measures and enhancing the role of the Children's Advocate, the very member that just asked the question voted against that law.

* (14:20)

And I also remind—or perhaps the members opposite who want to ignore how they helped to break the child welfare system in this province, and, of course, if you listen to them, there were certainly no tragedies in Manitoba, and, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that is why we had outside reviews that the former minister ordered and that is why child welfare is being overhauled in Manitoba.

But I think it's time for the members opposite to fess up and tell Manitobans that with their half-billion dollar cut to social services and other services, they plan to pick up where they left off and cut foster services.

Agriculture Industry Supply Management Commodities Quota Tax

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I think it's time that the minister stepped up to the plate and called an inquiry into the Phoenix Sinclair case as well. He's been negligent in his portfolio.

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday I had the pleasure of attending the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba's awards banquet. Dairy farmers, like other Manitoba's supply managed producers, work very hard producing high-quality nutritious food. These farmers were very disappointed when this NDP government announced this spring a new tax on a transfer of

quotas on milk, poultry and eggs. Producers spoke out against this. My colleagues and I spoke out against this new tax on farm families and consumers.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture confirm today that he has finally listened and that he has taken the quota tax off the books for good?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, we've been very consistent in answering the questions of the member from across the way. When he's brought this up in the past, we've indicated that contrary to what they've been telling people, there is no quota on the—

An Honourable Member: No tax?

Mr. Struthers: Not only no tax, there's no quota either, even with the misrepresentation coming from across the way, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, we've had some very good meetings with all five of the supply sector managed groups, and we've discussed this issue, and I announced very clearly on Thursday night to the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba there would not be this quota on sales.

Agriculture Department Producer Service Reductions

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't seem to understand it's about quotas, but I'm pleased to see that the government has finally came to its senses and that he dumped his first-of-a-kind tax on those who produce milk, eggs and poultry. It's unfortunate that this government was trying to balance its books on the backs of Manitoba farm families and consumers.

Mr. Speaker, now that this government has dumped the quota tax will the minister confirm that he won't reduce departmental services to supply managed producers instead?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Isn't that rich coming from the same people that would take supply management and set it adrift, Mr. Speaker, in every opportunity, every agreement on international trade, just as they would with the Canadian Wheat Board? Isn't that rich that they would sit here in the House and pretend, feign like this, support for supply management, when, over the years and up till today even, they don't support that at all?

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, how is it that his crystal ball is so clear on what we'll do and yet it's very cloudy on what he does?

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the minister's dropping the tax on producers and supply managed sector issue. We asked him repeatedly to do this and he finally listened, but I suspect the minister has been told to find that money somewhere in his department. The Premier and the Finance Minister clearly told him that he had to find money to help balance the books.

Will the minister stand up for Manitoba farm families and confirm that he won't introduce any new taxes on their operations? Will he make that commitment today to producers and to consumers?

Mr. Struthers: One does not need a crystal ball to look to see what the Conservative Party would do to Manitoba agriculture, Mr. Speaker. He just needs to look a little bit to his left, maybe pick up the *Carman Valley Leader* and see what his colleague is saying.

We don't—it's not that complicated, Mr. Speaker, just read the papers in your own constituencies and find out what your ag support is. What did he say? He said, oh, I'll put less—the Tories will put less focus on other issues such as health care, roads, social services, agriculture, rural depopulation. One doesn't need a crystal ball to see how shallow the approach of members opposite is.

School Division Overcrowding Government Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just about everything this government's done has been poorly managed, missing targets. We saw this again in the Auditor General's report tabled today where the government is going to miss its target for greenhouse gas reduction by a mile.

But, what I want to ask the Premier about today, is the shocking crisis in education in Winnipeg North.

When I was at McDonald's on Saturday, for example, people were talking about the overcrowded schoolrooms, about the huge increase in enrolment for which this government had so poorly planned.

I ask the Premier: How could it be that he has so poorly planned for the students of Winnipeg North?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we have built a new collegiate in the Seven Oaks School Division. We have a record

commitment to capital for public schools. We have that commitment going into priorities based on an analysis of where the pressures are with student increases in population. And we know that—we know, contrary to what the official opposition has said, where they said there would not be a need for additional funding for education because student numbers would be flat or declining, that we have a growth in the population of Manitoba. This growth is in no small measure due to our very successful provincial nominee immigration program. And where we see a growth in families and children attending schools, the capital planning, we'll take a look at that and address those needs. In the short term, they can make portables available. In the long term, they can put money into improving, expanding and building new schools, which is exactly what we're doing with a record commitment to public schools capital in our budget, which the member opposite, who's raising this question today, voted against.

Mr. Gerrard: We want immigrants for Manitoba. We welcome immigrants to Manitoba. But we need to have a government which is able to plan to adapt to the increased capacity of our schools and other institutions. We should not be stuck in a situation where our children are put at risk because schools are overcrowded, our children are put at risk because they can't get the education that they desperately need. This government is putting children at risk. It's putting education at risk by not having an adequate plan for immigrants and others in Manitoba.

When is this government going to have a reasonable and responsible plan for education, for schools, for Winnipeg North and for other areas where there's big increases in immigration populations?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, first of all, 80 per cent plus of all the newcomers that come to Manitoba stay in Manitoba. This is a very positive thing. The settlement services that we provide assist in that regard.

We are thrilled that they're going to our schools and we want them to continue to go our schools. And we want to improve those schools, which is why we have a record investment, not only on the operational side in the budget for education, but on the capital side, to build new facilities, new classrooms, new schools, improved technology in schools, improve the kinds of investments in schools, which will allow

young people to thrive and go on to post-secondary education or trades.

And I must remind the member opposite, he wanted to cut a half a billion dollars out of the budget this spring. He voted against our budget, both on the capital side for facilities and on the operational side. If he's sincere in his desire to see this happening, will he get up today and reverse his decision on the budget and support our investments in education?

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it's not just about how much you spend, it's how well you manage the money. And this government has done an awful—a very bad job in terms of management—very poor. Money is being wasted. Money is not being spent well and children are not going to have the schools that they need because this government is mismanaging its expenditures.

We have a bill today which talks about trying to keep children in school and we applaud. We've been talking about the need to make sure that children stay in school but, but what is important is that there be adequate facilities for children in school. There needs to be not a situation where there's tremendous overcrowding, where education and children are at risk.

When is this government going to put in place the plan and implement it so that children in Winnipeg North and other areas of this province have adequate and good school facilities and good schooling?

* (14:30)

Mr. Selinger: Well, first of all, I thank the member for his indication of support for our education bill to allow young people to stay in school until 18 years old. And this is a big step forward in Manitoba to provide all programs and opportunities for young people to be able to stay in school until they're 18, and yes, part of that plan will require further capital investment in our schools. And along with the record amount of money we're putting in that, we will address where there are pressure points in our public schools and we will put resources to that.

We've made announcements in southern Manitoba to expand schools there and provide new schools. We've made announcements in the north of Winnipeg, including a new West Kildonan

Collegiate. We've made announcements all across Manitoba to improve our schools.

We just opened up a brand new school in St. Laurent, Manitoba, a community school, something that had been needed for years. It's going to be an excellent facility in that community. The Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) was out there to open that up, and we will have many other good announcements that improve our schools as we go forward, unless, of course, we are foolish enough to go with the reckless position of the members opposite.

Affordable Housing Accessible Units

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, the government of Manitoba is rightfully proud of its long-term plan, vision and commitment to provide housing that is accessible to all people no matter what their background or abilities. On Friday, December 3rd, I was very pleased to be in attendance at an announcement made by our government to expand the number of accessible housing units for Manitoba families.

Could the Minister of Housing and Community Development please provide this Legislature with more information on this great new project that will begin construction very soon in the scenic community of St. Norbert?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): I was excited to be joined by many community advocates and supporters of a new project on International Day of Persons With Disabilities. We announced \$10.6 million for the development of a new housing project that will serve many families across the city of Winnipeg. It will include housing for people with disabilities and housing with people without disabilities—will be a mixed-income project. There will be 37 units in total; 31 of them will be in an apartment. Many of them will be multiple bedrooms, and this is very important, this shows our commitment to housing across the province of Manitoba for affordable as well as social housing. The many advocates that were there were very supportive and encouraging of this project, which will prove and support integration of all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Remembrance Day Ceremonies

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, this past Remembrance Day I participated in a number of commemorative events in my constituency of Radisson. All of these services provided an opportunity to reflect on Canada's long and proud military history. In particular, it was time to take pause and pay tribute to the Canadian Forces and sacrifices the men and women in uniform have made and continue to make in the name of freedom and safety. We all talked about the significance of poppies and of Flanders fields.

The first event was at Radisson constituency's French elementary school in Windsor Park, École Lacerte. This event was especially significant as the principal of the school, Mr. Bernard DesAutels, is also a major in the Canadian army. He has proudly served overseas as a United Nations peacekeeper and he was also a spokesperson for the military during the massive flood in 1997. His commitment to our country is equally—is only equalled to his commitment to his students. This was evident at the ceremony which was attended by many special guests including Major Mike Jogan, Major Karl Desilets, Lieutenant Kim Poirier, Corporal Eric Boulet and a number of cadets.

Thereafter, Mr. Speaker, I attended the event at Windsor Park Collegiate, where I witnessed students speaking with deep-felt emotions and dedication to our veterans and those who are still fighting to protect democracy and service to our community. In particular, I was impressed by the personal reflections provided by some of the students. In particular, I was quite struck by the reflection read by grade 11 student Vikki Ladd. Her poem was especially touching and served as a moving reminder of the importance of educating our young people about Canada's place in history.

The day was concluded by my attendance at the St. Boniface Legion and services at St. Philips Anglican Church. The program included a solemn sermon as well as many musical performances.

As always, Mr. Speaker, a few days prior to that, I also attended Transcona Legion parade followed by services at the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Transcona.

It was a real honour for me to attend these Remembrance Day events with such distinguished

men, women and children. May we all continue to be mindful of the sacrifices these men and women in uniform make for the love of our families and our country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

River East Kodiaks Varsity Girls' Volleyball

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I'm extremely proud today to stand and recognize the hard-earned victory of the River East Kodiaks varsity girls' volleyball team, who represented River East Collegiate at this year's provincial championships.

On November 29th, the team defeated the Lord Selkirk Royals to win the Boston Pizza AAAA girls' volleyball championship and the AAAA varsity girls' provincial high school volleyball championship.

The River East Kodiaks swept the Selkirk Royals 3-0 at the University of Manitoba's Investors Group Athletic Centre to earn their seventh provincial title.

It's so wonderful to see young athletes striving for excellence in sport throughout this province. These girls have demonstrated wonderful examples of athleticism and the heights that can be achieved with discipline and motivation.

River East head coach, Megan Bradshaw, did a remarkable job in helping the team become provincial champions. Ms. Bradshaw is a former member of the River East Kodiaks and played on the 1998 and '99 provincial winning teams. Her experience has gone a long way in helping the girls achieve their goal, and she has worked vigorously to coach and inspire the Kodiak team.

I want to congratulate Crystal Mulder of River East, who was the tournament's Most Valuable Player, along with teammates, Shanlee McLennan and Sam Dubicki, who were selected to the tournament's all star team.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the River East constituency and constituents, I would like to extend my congratulations to the River East Kodiaks for winning the AAAA High School Volleyball Provincial Championship. The girls played hard all season and are deserving recipients of this championship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Friends of Sherbrook Pool

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Today I'd like to recognize a great group of volunteers in my constituency of Wolseley known as the Friends of

Sherbrook Pool. I recently had the pleasure of attending their annual general meeting where some long-serving members of this group are stepping aside to enable a new group of folks to take over this very important task.

This group started, Mr. Speaker, back in 1992 when a report from the City of Winnipeg actually suggested that the pool be closed, and these local residents rallied to the cause and recognized the enormous importance that this facility plays in our neighbourhood. They fought hard; they fought honourably, and 18 years later it's quite clear who won.

The pool is still open. It is thriving. It now offers, thanks to the efforts of the Friends of Sherbrook Pool, a free swimming program for inner-city kids, known as Kid Swim, and they also managed along the way to raise enough money to add a fully equipped exercise room to the swimming pool grounds.

Simply put, Mr. Speaker, the Sherbrook Pool would not exist in my constituency if it weren't for the tireless efforts of these volunteers over many, many years.

I want to particularly thank some long-standing members who are moving on to a hard-earned retirement, on the volunteer front here anyways. Those include Christine Common-Singh, Randy Conway, Kris Robinson, who'll still be involved, and Sophie Melnychuk along with many, many others.

I also want to certainly pass on my very best wishes to the members of the incoming board who include Karen Mackintosh, Katherine Thompson, Kris Robinson again, as I mentioned, Jen Nagy, Kate Kehler, Hilda Toews, John Hutton and Tracy Morin—all of them working with their very impressive staffperson, Ms. Hillarie Gair.

So on behalf of all members of the Legislature, I want to thank the Friends of Sherbrook Pool for their great efforts over all these years.

Breezy Point Road

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I want to read into—the following for the record for *Hansard*, a letter that was sent to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) as a petition but was not allowed.

Now that the cabins are gone, the traffic on Breezy Point Road, Highway 320, to and from the former end of Main Street, is 10 times worse. Traffic starts at 4 a.m. and doesn't quit until 2 a.m. Many

vehicles are speeding, endangering our families who also travel this road. Further, speeding increases risk to our livestock, pets and wildlife.

People are making and leaving fires unattended. This is a fire hazard. There are dry grasses, weeds and dead trees in abundance in the area along the Red River. People are also littering the road and ditches with garbage.

* (14:40)

On November 2nd, after dark, a deer was shot by people returning from the end of the Main. They stopped their vehicle, shot a deer on the road. This incident occurred at the corner of a residential yard site. This is a concern for us who live—and for natural resource officers and rescue workers who protect us. We're also concerned about people drinking and driving.

We want a metal gate put up at gold dike—ride—road, past Willow Springs Campground, with a key for natural resources, RCMP and fire departments.

The residents and property owners look forward for your help. This was sent on behalf of a number of residents from the area: Mike and—Myrtle and Nick Gorda; Adele McCaw; William McCaw; Roxane Anderson; John Anderson; Albert Makara; Darlene Makara; Patrick Schuit; Barbara Mason; Duncan McIvor; Theon McIvor; Kathy Monkman; Lee Hanson; Jean Welch; Faye—Karen Fey; Tim Gutheil; Leverne Tucker; Myrna Fey; Kenneth Fey; Dennis Fedorchuk; Danny Land; Steve Bileski; Ron Delaney; Greg Wakaluk; Lorna Wakaluk; Laurel Monkman; Helen Wiess; Jean Atkins; Bill Atkins; Shelley Smith; Ken Prychun; Natali Schuit; John, Alice and Victor Shachty.

So submitted on behalf of the bees—the presence—the residents from Breezy Point, and we're glad to put that on the record for them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Workers Compensation Office (Brandon)

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, recently—and I'll just wait for my light here—oh, there it is now. Recently the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba announced that they will be opening an office in Brandon. This office is scheduled to open in 2012 and will help address the needs of both employers and employees in the Westman region.

Currently, the main office for the Workers Compensation Board is located in Winnipeg, with a second smaller satellite office located in Thompson.

The office in Thompson provides initial adjudication of claims, as well as case management services. In addition to initial adjudication of claims and case management services, the Brandon location has planned to offer a wide range of services such as health-care examinations, assessment services, vocational rehabilitation and safe work services. This will reduce the need for individuals from the western Manitoba region to travel to Winnipeg in order to access these Workers Compensation services.

Given the wide range of vocations and the large number of employers in Brandon and in surrounding areas, the opening of a new WCB location is a natural fit to accommodate the growth that the Westman region has experienced in recent years. Moreover, the new Workers Compensation Board offices—office—is further recognition of Brandon's regional importance as Manitoba's second city and is a key provincial hub for government services.

Mr. Speaker, it is reassuring to know that the board of the WCB is constantly looking at ways to provide excellent service to all of its customers throughout the province. I commend the work—WCB for its planned opening of a new Workers Compensation Board office in Brandon, and I commend the work of so many people in organizations such as the Brandon district labour council in lobbying for this office through the years.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to attending the official opening of the Brandon Workers Compensation Board office in 2012. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, would you call for second reading, Bill 11, The Planning Amendment Act, followed by Bill 14, The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments).

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 11—The Planning Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll resume debate on second reading of Bill 11, The Planning Amendment Act, and it's standing in the name of the honourable Minister for Innovation, Energy and Mines.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): And, Mr. Speaker, just to conclude my comments that I had in this regard, it's very important that—and it happened today in question period, where we saw the members opposite make all kinds of claims and all kinds of points, and then voted against a bill—bills that dealt with the very points indicated. For example, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) complained about the capital plan in education—or the operating plan in education—that we've increased dramatically, and he voted against it. Votes do matter in this House. How you vote on behalf of your constituents matters, and it's similar to this bill. How you vote on this bill does have ramifications for how you represent your constituents.

So the members can't continually have it both ways and mouth their right-wing, very narrow, reckless statements during question period, and then come into the House during bills, Mr. Speaker, and, when we have bills that deal with the very issues raised by members opposite, support those bills or, in some cases, oppose the very bills that they're supporting, supposedly, in question period. There are ramifications.

Further, a good indication of what you're going to do in the future is what you've done in the past, Mr. Speaker, and we know, for example, that members opposite have trashed planning and land planning in this province. They've trashed any efforts we've made in terms of dealing with water and water stewardship. They've trashed the ability and the capability of some of the boards to deal with these matters. Now we have before us an act that, in a meaningful way, deals with some of these issues, and it goes contrary to their so-called utterances and their so-called public statements during question period. You cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) gets up regularly and criticizes—he criticizes issues that we brought before this Chamber and then votes in favour of bills that deal with the very issue he's criticizing. There are ramifications. You cannot have it both ways. I know members opposite feel that being in opposition means they should criticize everything. I don't think it's wise, myself, having spent a number of years in opposition, but that's the position and that's the role they've chosen, to criticize everything, whether just to criticize it completely, but then, when we come to votes, they're not prepared to acknowledge that the very actions—the very actions—that they're asking us

to do, have been rendered impossible to do if we follow their budget provisions.

Their amendment last year, that was supported by all of the members on the opposite side, would see half a billion dollars cut from the budget, would go to cut the very programs that members stood up over eight or nine questions this morning and demanded from the government—they demanded the very things that they voted to cut less than a year ago. They demanded the very things—and it's similar with this bill. We think it has significant impact on the lives in Manitobans. *[interjection]* And I hear some of my colleagues in the Chamber shouting a touch loudly, and I understand how frustrated they are, but they've got to get their act together. They've got to get their act together and they've got to have some consistency, and they seem to really dislike when we point out the inconsistencies of their policy statements. When we point out their policy statements, quote them back to members opposite, it is a—it's a revelation, I think, to Manitobans and it certainly is a rebuttal to members opposite about their constant—and their constant clamouring, clamouring for one thing, voting against another.

And, with those few comments, I recommend that this matter be dealt with as expeditiously as possible on the benefit of all Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): And I, too, would like to put a few words on the public record in terms of Bill 11, a bill—an amendment to a bill that's all about planning, which I suppose members opposite aren't that much interested in given what I hear on a daily basis in this House.

This—we've all had very frustrating situations that have come forward to us as elected members of this Legislature. I've had some frustrating situations as minister, whether it was Minister of Conservation or Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. One of those frustrating times is when I'm asked to deal with something—something that may have been decided upon years ago with a minimal, if any, amount of thought given towards planning—any amount of thought given towards foresight. And some examples of that, where there'd be a major—large livestock or agricultural entity, a seed-cleaning plant, an alfalfa plant, a feedlot, a hog barn that's located in rural Manitoba, and, for some reason, for some reason, a number of residents are allowed to build around this agricultural entity.

* (14:50)

Well, you know what happens then, Mr. Speaker? The logical next step is that offices of every MLA here and government department start to get those calls about—how can I live next to this agricultural operation? And, you know, I feel for these folks. It would be hard to live next door to certain agricultural entities. I understand that. I think we all get that.

But, Mr. Speaker, why was this—why would this kind of a situation be allowed to occur in the first place? That's what we're trying to get to here. Why on earth members opposite would not support good decision-making and a process for good decision-making is—it's a little crazy, but they have that right. They have—they're opposition; they have all the fun and none of the responsibility, I suppose.

But, Mr. Speaker, we can't have those kind of situations continue to evolve, and we can't have the opposite of that either because the flip side of that coin, I've seen happen, as well, where you have a little community, a number of residences living in rural Manitoba, small communities or larger urban-rural centres that—who are there. They've been established, and then along comes some big agricultural entity and plunks itself down right next to this community where people have been living. The folks living in that area need to know what's going on. They need to have an avenue to participate. They need to be assured that there's going to be some planning take place that would benefit all of those living in that area.

In my own constituency, I can remember a number of years ago dealing with a—dealing with what was a very tough issue; a company that made a deal with a local landowner to establish a hog barn in an RM in my riding. And, Mr. Speaker, the—quite frankly, they chose the wrong spot by which to build this hog barn. It got the ire up of the neighbours. It got the ire up of—because it was located next to Lake Dauphin, it got the ire up of every group that has anything, any connection, to Lake Dauphin.

And I can remember at the time the local RM council said, well, why don't you just pick another site, oh, several kilometres further east and you won't have these problems? But people had dug themselves in by this time. It was more a question of pride than anything and they went at it. They did, they went at it. They had a fight over it, and the final analysis—well, two things really happened.

First, the hog barn was turned down and in an area of Manitoba, a rural municipality that's basically—should be open to agriculture and to livestock and to projects such as this, they were turned down. They didn't—neither side of that issue really exercised much common sense at all. For the sake of a few kilometres moving they got their project turned down. And in the next municipal election, lo and behold, four of the municipal councillors, now a majority on the council—back in those days, anyway—were elected on the basis of saying no to everything that was agriculture, whether it be hog barns or feedlots or anything. That was the next step that came forward.

I know the member for Emerson's shocked. I agree. I was shocked, too, Mr. Speaker, but now we have a chance to do something about it. *[interjection]* He wants to know what did we do about it. Well, here it is; it's Bill 11, The Planning Amendment Act.

He can stand up in his seat and he could vote for this act and we could put it in place. And we can put some common sense rules in place. We could give people an opportunity to take a look from a planning angle. The people chairing the—this is about the technical review committees, Mr. Speaker. The people who would be chairing these technical review committees are from the Department of Local Government. That department is the lead department when it comes to planning, when it comes to put-in-place processes that help people plan, plan for success, plan for development, plan to protect water, plan to protect the environment, plan to grow the industry.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the member from Emerson is inspired. Maybe he'd be inspired enough to finally take a proactive approach and vote for something that would actually provide that kind of leadership. But I don't think he's going to. He's more interested in playing the little silly political games that the members of the opposition go over and over with in this House, spinning their wheels, thinking they're getting someplace, thinking that they're helping a single farmer when they're not. It's quite comical across the way.

These technical review committees are a very important part of the process—of the planning process, Mr. Speaker. I do also want to make sure, very clearly, that members opposite know that this is connected to the Clean Environment Commission's

report. The report that we—who had 48—*[interjection]*—yeah, I realize that—but 48 recommendations from the Clean Environment Commission. People who brought together scientific evidence from a broad spectrum of people who research these issues: people who understand water protection, people who understand protection of soil and air, people who understand that planning is necessary when we sit down to make these kind of decisions. The Clean Environment Commission gave us 48 recommendations and this is yet another example of how we, as a government, are following up on that report; how we are following up on the good work that the Clean Environment Commission did and the good research that it brought to bear on the issue, specifically, in terms of the sustainability of the hog sector—hog production here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I think what was pretty clear is that this is a big province with a lot of opportunity. It's a big province with a lot of opportunity in terms of agriculture. It—this province has a lot of room for hogs and cattle and wheat and canola. It has a lot of opportunity.

But what the Clean Environment Commission said to us is that we have to have some forethought in doing this. We just can't throw the door wide open like the Tories across the way did back in the '90s and let things just explode all over the place, with no thinking involved. This is another step along the way in terms of providing that sustainable development approach that the Clean Environment Commission said that we must do. This is another step that builds upon the changes that we've made to the Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation.

We're looking at ways to incorporate phosphorus provisions by 2013; we're looking at a ban on all winter spreading by 2013; and we require management—manure management plans for all new or expanding hog operations. Those are recommendations right from that Clean Environment Commission's report.

Another recommendation—and I think good work has been done by the minister and the Department of Labour and Immigration in terms of including farm buildings in the building code for Manitoba. Again, a recommendation that has flowed from the Clean Environment Commission report.

I know that my colleague the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) has been working to put people in place that can be helpful, can be useful, for

the farm community in terms of administering these regulations that we bring forward.

And, I know too, Mr. Speaker, that we have put forward a number of ways in which we can help monetarily because it is—and we've understood this from the beginning, that the former minister and myself, as the former Conservation Minister, we're very clear, that we just can't simply ask a farmer or tell a farmer exactly what he has to do without at least saying to that farmer, here's a little bit of help in doing that.

* (15:00)

And, Mr. Speaker, in conversations that I've had with Manitoba Pork—very good discussions with them—conversations with Keystone Agricultural Producers, discussions with the National Farm Union, discussions with a number of groups involved with this, I think they understand the—that it is important to make sure that we have a financial commitment on this. Including, by the way, very good discussions with the federal government, who I think understands that if we're to grow agriculture in Manitoba, in Canada, that we do need to be supportive of the farmer making transitions from the way things were done in the past to a new reality, a new reality which involves a commitment to the environment, which involves a commitment to protecting Manitoba's water.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the only people who don't understand that are the people I'm looking at right now across the way in this Legislature. We hear over and over and over again all the ways in which they will turn back the regulations that protect our water, that protect our environment. We hear—and I was there during the hearings when the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) put on record very clearly that he would roll back—that he would gut the—any kind of regulations, any kind of act that would protect Manitoba's water, and he was very clear about that.

We don't need—as the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) said today—a muddy crystal ball to figure that one out either, because it's there, it's in black and white, it's in *Hansard*. It has been stated very clearly, their lack of commitment to protecting Manitoba's water. Mr. Speaker, more to the point, very clear on what they would do to rid Manitoba of any kind of regulation, any kind of acts—water protection acts—that lead to a cleaner water situation here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wrap up my words that I have to say on this by thanking all of those individuals who have come forward and brought advice to this government in terms of focus on planning, a focus on planning when we make these big decisions. I want to acknowledge the groups that I deal with as Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Minister for coming forward with what I think are some very common sense suggestions having to do with planning and this amendment.

I also want to acknowledge the work that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities has had over the years and quite recently in terms of putting together a body of advice that I think does make sense, does understand that we have the responsibility to move forward in a strong way with these types of regulations, and that we have a responsibility to make sure that the process is focused on planning, the focus is on a broad range of input, and that the citizen of Manitoba can feel very comfortable that they do have an avenue by which they can be heard, that the evidence that they bring forward would be considered, and, Mr. Speaker, I think that's very fundamental to the planning process.

For all those reasons I would support, and I would hope the members opposite would support, the passage of the—of Bill 11, The Planning Amendment Act.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): My pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 11, amendment to The Planning Act.

The Planning Act is something that this government has paid good attention to over the years, made a number of improvements to the system—to a system that was in need of a number of improvements when we came into office, following in the footsteps of members opposite who basically had written the hog industry, in particular, a blank cheque to go out onto the land and do whatever they felt was necessary in order to propagate this industry. And I think back to the old days when a lot of Manitobans raised hogs, and one of the first things that the Conservatives did—and we'll be paying tribute to the former minister later on in the week here, and I won't be critical of him at that point—but what he did—and I'm referring to Mr. Enns. And what he did, he thought he was doing the right thing at the time when he ended the single-desk selling of hogs in this province, but I do have to put on the record that when he did take that action, he took it

against the advice of the existing hog producers of our province at the time.

The pork council of the day was adamantly opposed to that, and unlike our government that goes out and consults with the people to get feedback and try and sculpt our laws to conform in that regard, members opposite in that particular occasion anyways, completely ignored the advice of producers, the vast majority of hog producers in this province and bulled ahead with the elimination of the single desk, and that quite rapidly led to the, well, not decimation of the industry. Decimation means one in 10 producers go down. In this case, it was more like nine out of 10 hog producers went down, and just the big guys, the big corporate producers were left standing at the end of the day.

But that was no surprise because, of course, we all know that the Conservative agenda is the big-business agenda. They're not truly committed or interested to family farms or anything like that. It's the big guys, the big companies. That's where their hearts lie and that's where the rubber meets the road with members opposite, so, of course, killing the single desk was the first step in a progression of steps that their government took with basically no regard to, first of all, as I said, family farms, but, in hindsight, we see very little regard for the environment either.

And I have to just look to my own constituency which is a classic example of that, and the technical review committees that they set up had a lot to do with that. These were—you know, I don't want to disparage provincial staff by any means but, you know, you want more public input. You don't want people deciding on issues that have to then police the operations. That's an inherent conflict of interest and that was one of the things they did.

One of the things that was interesting to me, and, believe me, when I was first elected, I got to know about the whole technical review committee process in a hurry. They say that becoming a member of the Legislature is a very steep learning curve and this was a good example of that. But the technical review committees never really said yes or no to an operation. They would draft a report in very scientific, technical language, but at the end of the report, there was no real advice to the municipalities whether this was a good idea or a bad idea. And I've always been at odds with that, and I would hope that this amendment would address that so that when these committees actually report to councils, that

they give them some meaningful advice as to whether or not to proceed with a proposal.

Another thing that we're putting a high emphasis on is getting some local feedback from people who live in the area. It's surprising that a lot of the proposals in the Interlake went ahead, and I can look to a wide number of them. And it just amazes me that hog barns were put where they were in my home constituency, for example. There is a place, obviously, for a hog industry, for a livestock sector, and the manure garnered from the production of livestock is absolutely good fertilizer. It's organic fertilizer. When you look at the whole situation with phosphorus, which is a finite resource, it just makes sense to be recycling the manure.

* (15:10)

But the problem with the hog industry, the way members opposite set it up, was that they weren't really farms anymore. They were meat production factories. And where a normal farmer who is producing livestock might think of the manure as fertilizer, a lot of these big corporations merely looked at manure as a disposal problem. They could care less about its fertilizer components. It was: how do we get rid of this the fastest, the cheapest and, you know, inside or outside of environmental regulations? And that's, sadly, how it played out.

I know that a lot of them, rather than siting their barns in the crop production zone, where the fertilizer, where the manure, the manure fertilizer could be quickly incorporated into the soil and the full nutrient value captured—and I'm differentiating between incorporating manure into the soil as compared to simply broadcasting it on the surface, which is quite often the case when, say, for example, pastures are being fertilized—incorporating it into the soil captures a lot of those gases, greenhouse gases, that would have migrated up into the atmosphere. So that's where barns should go. That's where they make the most sense. That's where the manure could be fully incorporated back into the soil and we would all be happy with that. But, no, rather than doing that, they were going off into the bush and building them in swamps.

I know west of my hometown there was a block of land between two wildlife management areas—imagine this—wildlife management areas. It was ridge to swamp country. There were no fields in between that, and one farmer—I won't mention any names here—made a deal with one of the members opposite who was the—I forgot, Minister of Agriculture or

natural resources at the time—managed to get a big block of Crown land right in the middle of this area, this wildlife management area. And it was a block of nine quarters, I think it was—nine or 11, or there were two private quarters there and seven or nine Crown quarters that—and there was—this was at a time when decisions on the sale of Crown land were made right in the Cabinet room. Right? There were no terms of reference or guidelines or anything like that. It was who you knew and who's—who your friends were in Cabinet and who you went fishing with, or off to Cuba, or wherever with. That's how Crown land decisions were made back in the bad old days. And this was a prime example of that. And the next thing you know, in the middle of this pristine area, which was prime elk habitat, good wildlife country—and really that land should have been incorporated into this wildlife management area, it would have joined two separate blocks into one larger block. It was the ultimate solution. Instead of that, we got two big hog barns right in the middle of it.

Well, the next thing you know, the municipality builds a mile of road to the hog barns, and then they went into a drainage ditch just to the west of the community of Fisher Branch, and, again, orders came right from above. And I know this for a fact because I spoke with the drainage officers on the ground, friends of mine. I've known them all my life, and they said, none of this came to us. There was no consultation at the local level whatsoever. It came right from this building, the orders to go in and double the drainage capacity in this particular ditch. There were a few blocks put in place further upstream, but wouldn't you know it, in the middle of the night somebody came along with a backhoe and these blocks were dug up. Next thing you know, the water is mainlining off these rocky ridges and out of these swamps, almost flooded the town of Fisher Branch. They had to come in with emergency measures, build up a municipal road, and it was only through extreme action such as that, that the town was saved. And, you know, it's hard to reverse these types of decisions. It's been a problem since then for this particular municipality.

In fact, all of this water coming out of these—out of this swamp country is now flooding some of the best farmland in the municipality. In fact, one of the highest assessed quarters in the municipality the provincial government had to buy back because it was flooded all the time. And, in fact, we have now converted it into a retention area, and that's where we have to store water to prevent the town of Fisher

Branch, and further upstream the communities of Peguis and Fisher River, from flooding.

So that was how members opposite planned and implemented the hog industry in my home municipality; putting them in marginal lands, flooding some of the best lands, insane to say the least. And that's just one barn, you know, and we've had to amend the act a number of times.

I know there was another example, not too many years ago, when—I think it was the time we reduced it down to—well, it was after—reduced it to 300 animal units. One operator got the bright idea he would buy two quarter sections side by side and build half a barn on each quarter section. Coincidentally, the animal unit count for each of those barns was 294 animal units, six animal units under the 300-AU threshold. And—well, of course, they had a very compliant reeve at the time. This was in the RM of Armstrong and the reeve of the day was Garry Wasylowski. Some of you may have heard of his name. As a matter of fact, he was nominated shortly thereafter as the Conservative candidate and ran against me in the last provincial election. And, believe you me, that—bullying that particular project through, which we subsequently had to make an amendment to prevent from happening in the future, went a long way to him losing the election against me. Even in his own municipality, he didn't win the polls. So that's an example of how not to go about doing business.

We've made a number of other changes over the years. Putting farm buildings into the building code made a lot of sense as well for these large buildings. And I think we've seen numerous examples over the years of how these things tend to spontaneously combust; whether it's truly an accident or not is debatable in some cases. There was a barn that burnt just a couple of weeks ago under very suspicious circumstances but, you know, so, just—it just makes sense to try and cover something like that off.

I think it also makes sense to be looking at the manure storage tanks under the barns itself because, you know, the manure management plan is licensed. The storage container is licensed but the barn itself where the manure is initially contained, which is closer to the aquifer than the storage tank outside because it's dug into the ground, doesn't it just make sense that that should be studied and properly permitted as well?

And this one barn that I was thinking of—and this is a classic example of the technical review

committees. I actually did my own review of the spread fields that the proponent had listed in his technical review. First thing I did was I pulled the aerial photos of the eight or 10 quarter sections that were listed. Well, wasn't I surprised when one section in particular was covered with bush. I mean 160 acres of bush. Very difficult spreading manure, even for Conservatives, in the bush, unless of course they just run the big hose out there and let her go, which has happened before as well.

* (15:20)

And then I looked further down the list, and by then a number of people had called me to complain about this particular proposal, and I started looking at some of the names of some of the people who were complaining. And wasn't I surprised when I saw their land was listed as spread fields for this proposal. So, obviously, you know, things weren't being done properly. Obviously, there wasn't due process followed and, obviously, the locals hadn't had an opportunity to have input because if they had, you know, problems such as this would quite likely have cropped up.

There was some mention made about, you know, local knowledge in terms of aquifers, in terms of swamps and where the ridges were being spread upon and, you know, ridges in the Interlake. If anybody understands the hydrology of Manitoba, our ridges, the limestone ridges, are highly fractured, first of all, because of the weight of the glaciers that passed over and, then, of course, when the glaciers melted, Lake Agassiz formed and all of that water sat on top of these highly fractured ridges for thousands of years and eroded all of these fractures so that these ridges today are, in essence, direct conduits to the aquifers. And you can't just be spreading manure on limestone ridges with no overburden whatsoever; that's just utterly nonsensical, but that's what happens—that's what happens if they're not sited properly and people are looking to marginal land, instead of the good land, the crop zone, where the barns should be built. These are the kinds of things that happen.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Again, I look to my home municipality—one particular barn. And local lore is there used to be a lake in the area and there was a geologic shift or something and the entire lake disappeared over a couple-week period. It just disappeared, went into the ground, and they say it came up three miles

further away. All of a sudden, this water came out of the ground, and the local name for the lake is Dry Lake—you know, makes sense, I guess. It dried up in a hurry anyways, but wouldn't you know it, that was the very quarter section that one of these barns was built on, you know, and, obviously, if that's where the barn is built, that quarter section of land is being used—well, not anymore, I think the barn is shut down now, but was used for the spreading of manure for years.

So there was a lot of local opposition to this, but, you know, things were just pushed through. The environment aquifers—never been a high priority for members opposite. And, I have to say, I take my hat off to this current provincial government for putting the moratorium on the expansion of the hog industry into the Interlake in play because, you know, until the industry gets it right and understands that we want to see the livestock sector and the hog industry go forward in a sustainable manner, long-term sustainable manner, then we're not going to countenance this type of behaviour. And it's just example after example after example how not to progress with an industry. That was the legacy of members opposite and it's to the credit, as I said, of the government of the day that had the courage to put a stop to it.

And, you know, you look to the aquifers in the Interlake region, in particular. And I read the report that the hydraulic engineer, his name is Bob Betcher—I recommend it to all of you. He wrote a definitive report on the aquifers in Manitoba and expanded it in summary to all of Canada, and the water in the Interlake is some of the best water in the country—certainly some of the best water in the province of Manitoba, but across the country as well. And this was the best that members opposite could come up with was to hopefully turn the whole area into one massive hog production zone and spread manure willy-nilly from one end of the region to the other, and I know that people en masse were opposed to this.

And I'm not talking about environmentalists or townspeople or whatever. A lot of farmers came up to me as well and said, you know, this is not good; it's making us all look bad. And, frankly, it was, because farmers are good stewards of the land for the most part. But when you corporatize an industry and industrialize it as have members opposite, when you have shareholders, big lawyers and doctors in Toronto or God knows where having ownership of these barns, what do you think? Obviously, it doesn't

matter to them. They're living a thousand miles away or a hundred miles away. Do you think it matters to them what happens to our aquifers in the Interlake?

And, when those aquifers are damaged, we don't know how long it takes for them to recover. You know, once you've got nutrients, nitrates and so forth in these aquifers it could take a hundred years for them to recover. You know, that nitrogen once it gets into the soil and it starts going down, it just doesn't drop into your aquifer in a matter of weeks or months. It will go down for years and years and years.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So there's a number of places in my region and across the province where we're dealing with contaminated wells now. You know, we're in a wet cycle here and it's horrible when, you know, you don't have clean water coming to your house. And, you know, our government has done a lot in terms of establishing sewer and water projects in our various small communities across the province, but that doesn't address each and every individual well. Like, anybody who lives in the country, and I do, I have my own well. If that water was contaminated, I would be finished forever. *[interjection]*

Well, I've been told by our whip that I should wrap it up. I was just warming to the topic here and looking back with nostalgia to the old days when we actually had 40 minutes to speak in the House instead of a mere 30. But, if others wish to speak in this regard, then I respect that and respectfully take my seat in that regard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I'm going to talk for a few minutes on Bill 11, The Planning Amendment Act.

In particular, the problem here is that this bill, like other things which are happening at the moment in Manitoba, shows the poor ability of this government to plan and the mismanagement. This is an issue dealing with technical reviews and the technical review committees. We're not—what we're given is enabling registration to allow them to make—the government to make regulations. It shows that after 11 years in government, this government still hasn't got it right, and so they're still trying to change and manipulate the way that—I say enough is enough; if you can't get it right in 11 years, you should be out.

The fact of the matter is that this government right from the beginning has not done an adequate job in this rather critical area of land use planning

and that the failure in 11 years to get this right is having an impact in a whole variety of ways. We had, many years ago, the report of Ed Tyrchniewicz in terms of how we might approach some of the concerns around the hog industry, but this government has, you know, caused in some ways havoc and in other ways, you know, poor planning and poor management in the way they've approached this, and yet at the same time we still don't have targets for reduction of phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg, and there's no evidence that the situation on Lake Winnipeg is improving.

* (15:30)

Each year the algal blooms get worse, and this year was a good example of some very severe algal blooms, and people in Victoria Beach can certainly talk about that. But people elsewhere on Lake Winnipeg and particularly in the north basin have seen these huge algal blooms and the problems which have resulted from this government's inadequate ability to get on top of the nutrients going into Lake Winnipeg in a quick enough kind of fashion.

So, you know, this is another example of a bill which, you know, an issue which could have been dealt with some time ago, and now the government is coming in at the tail end of its third mandate trying to make a last-minute switch. But it's not clear that this is really going to make a lot of difference. It's not entirely clear that these powers were not there to start with, and in any event, you know, the sad part about this is the illustration of poor planning and poor management by this government in—not just in this area but in many areas.

I would speak of, as another example of poor planning by this government, the situation in health care, just as a comparable example. I was in Flin Flon last week. There was a hall, a community hall, with about 400 people crowded in there, all very upset with the poor planning and poor management by this government and the things that were happening in Flin Flon and the NOR-MAN health-Regional Health Authority.

One of the major issues was the costing of a new clinic, and with evidence provided by a number of speakers that the costing that was done has overemphasized the revenue that is likely to come in from private billing in the proposed new clinic and the hospital, that they have underemphasized the costs in terms of the renovations in the proposed new clinic in the private hospital—in the hospital, and that

they have overemphasized the costs of continuing in the—what was the existing clinic and what is still the existing clinic, because the government or the RHA put in items which were, you know, not, in fact, real costs or added costs or by counting things twice. Anyway, it was clear that the—there was a major problem in the costing and that the government may actually have decided to go for a more expensive and less convenient option in going to—for a clinic in the third floor in the hospital which has people tramping through the emergency room and going up a—an elevator which is used by many, many other people. And there was a lot of concerns that were raised around that.

I'm pleased that the minister has ordered a—an operational review of the NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority, because it was apparent—it was apparent—it was apparent that the—things are not going well and there were many, many concerns and that was just one of them.

Another concern was about a physician, a Dr. Settee, who has been the family physician of Manitoba—I think it was 2005 or 2006. When you have a—somebody who is a star like Dr. Settee in your health-care system, you should be supporting him. If a coach has got a player like Wayne Gretzky, you make sure that you're going to work with him well, because his skills are needed to score goals, and in case—this case, we're talking about Dr. Settee and his skill's needed badly to make sure that people are looked after well.

I had two people come up to me at the end of the public meeting and both said, you know, Dr. Settee has saved my life, and he has saved, I am sure, many, many lives in Flin Flon. And the stories of his dedication to duty, to his ability to, on occasion when needed, go and visit people in their homes, his willingness to pitch in and help when it came to the health of people. And yet this NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority has, instead of supporting and working with Dr. Settee, have threatened him, have attacked him, have taken away his hospital privileges without substantive justification. This is what's happening in the regional health authorities which are being mismanaged, and I'm just talking about it as an example of poor planning when we're talking about a planning act.

And there were also a lot of issues around the quality of care and the standards of care that are happening at the moment in Flin Flon and it's certainly clear that operational review is badly

needed. And I'm glad that the government, instead of, of course, planning well ahead of time, now has to cover up or has to come in afterwards with an operational review to try and sort out the problems that were created because of the poor planning.

In any how-case, back to this issue of this planning in rural Manitoba. This particular bill, Bill 11, to the extent that it, you know, may provide a modest improvement, is a pretty small change. And, as I said already, that, you know, it shows that the planning really should have been done properly when the measures around the technical review committees were introduced in the first place, and it's too bad that it wasn't.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Following the member for River Heights' speech, I was just double-checking which bill we were speaking on again. I was looking on the Order Paper, trying to find something that matched the member's comments but, certainly, I'm assuming we're on Bill 11.

And I say that because I wanted to speak on this because I do have a direct interest in this particular matter, not just in terms of the portfolios that I've been honoured to have in this Legislature the last number of years. I mean, I've been Water Stewardship Minister, Conservation Minister. I've had the opportunity to be the Intergovernmental Affairs Minister, now Local Government affairs.

And I dealt with a lot of the planning issues—The Planning Act. We've actually done a lot over the last couple of years to bring The Planning Act up to par. We've done a significant province-wide consultation and review on provincial land-use policies and I know the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) is moving forward on that, updating a lot of the elements of that.

And we've acted, over the last number of years, in a very significant way, to bring The Water Protection Act—also to bring in some significant improvements to the way we deal with various challenges that we're facing—faced with. And I note the degree to which we've really moved on livestock manure and mortalities management regulations over the last period of time.

And what I'm curious, by the way is, the member—members opposite—where they really stand. The one thing about the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) is he is a true Liberal on this, as in he—

I think, various times he's given speeches on both sides of the issue. The reality is, when it's come to actually seeing how the—I was going to say the Liberals; it's now—it's singular—how the Liberal has voted in this House, it tends to be with the Conservative members.

And, you know, it's interesting because I know there's some sensitivity about some contrast advertising that's taking place right now across the province. Now, you know, this is nothing new in politics. I've been seeing contrast advertising for quite some time. But what struck me about it is the degree to which members opposite have taken great objection to statements that reflect how they vote in this Legislature.

Now, I've watched them—I've watched them on The Water Protection Act. You know, the member—the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), when he ran for Leader of the Conservative Party, said he would scrap the water regulations. He said it in Brandon; he said it very clearly. This came right after The Water Protection Act. So, clearly, what we brought in place to protect Manitobans' tremendous resource in terms of water, he said he would oppose.

* (15:40)

Now, I was shocked. When I had the opportunity to bring in legislation—it's been followed up by my colleague, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) in terms of other initiatives. When we brought in legislation that gave clear ability for our province to enforce, through inspection, our water regulations, you know what members opposite did? They voted against it. They turned around and they said, it would be the water police. And, you know, this was, by the way, one of the nicer things they said because, certainly, I remember the former member for Emerson making some rather inflammatory comments, and these were about civil servants who were out there protecting Manitobans' water against people that would decide to bring in illegal drainage, for example. And I think that's, you know, that's the lay of the land when it comes to members opposite.

But, you know, we saw, again, when it came to livestock manure mortality regulation, we saw their approach as well. They attacked the legislation. They really showed, I think, again, a knee-jerk reaction to what was a clear—a well-thought-out legislative initiative. And, you know, it reflected—Mr. Speaker, there's been a significant increase in the livestock industry in this province we've seen over the last number of years. But you know, clearly, there are

parts of the province that were clearly identified as having sustainability issues. There are limits to what you can have in the way of those areas, and we brought in legislation that clearly did that. It reflected the sustainability issues. It protected sensitive areas.

And what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They opposed it. So I—you know—I realize that there is some, you know, frustration from members opposite. Every so often they reference us actually going out and telling the public what they actually did. But one of the great things about this Legislature is whatever you say and whatever you do, particularly how you vote, is recorded in *Hansard*. It's recorded for posterity.

And I want to put on the record that, clearly, over the last 10-plus years, the members of the opposition have shown that they're stuck in the '90s, and I would suggest it's probably more like the 1890s than the 1990s. They simply don't get that when we're dealing with some of these significant challenges, whether it be water quality, okay, with nutrients in our water systems; whether it be in terms of many of the challenges we face right now in terms of drainage—I mean, let's not forget, when they were in government they slashed the drainage budget. We have built it up again and we built up maintenance as well. And I look at, you know, the challenges we face currently as we go into the winter and into next spring on the flooding side, and our preparations as a province.

Members opposite simply don't get it. I'm—in fact, I was reminded just the last few days again, we're faced with some elevated floods risk. We all know that. You know what the Leader of the Opposition said about the floodway expansion in 2008? He called it a big rip-off. Well, I could tell you, if we end up having to use the floodway, I want that member opposite—because I guarantee you, it will be used, and hopefully we won't have to use it this upcoming year. But, you know, it protects against the one-in-seven-hundred-year flood. You know what, again, thanks to the media and thanks to *Hansard*, he called it a big rip-off. I could tell you, can you imagine if we didn't have the expanded floodway, what kind of a risk we'd be faced right now in this province?

And, by the way, Mr. Speaker, on the flood protection side, since 1997, we have brought in over \$130 million in terms of mitigation in this province, flood mitigation. And, again, we are much better

prepared than we were in 1997, and part of that is the floodway.

So what I want to suggest to members opposite on this bill is, you know, I would appreciate them taking the opportunity on The Planning Amendment Act, which deals with a lot of these issues, the conditional use of The Planning Act, and it deals with inherently what that planning act does in terms of the environment. I'd like to see members opposite stand and actually disown their position. Because, you know what, it's interesting, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has spoken, I know members on this side have spoken, but you know it's funny how from their seat or press conferences they say, well, these contrast ads, well, they're not really accurate.

Well, you know, I've gone through each and every statement that's been put out, in terms of our statements about what those members opposite stand for, and every single one of them is backed up by a clear public statement or a vote. And let's be very clear to Manitobans, if you care about the water in this province, there's clearly one party that has taken on the tough challenge and it's brought in improved planning. It's brought in The Water Protection Act, has brought in the kind of inspections and the licensing that we need to get the job done, that's recognized that there are sensitive areas across this province. We have done that. We have taken up that challenge.

There's another party that has opposed every single one of those initiatives, but not only that. They want to throw out the Clean Environment Commission-mandated improvements to waste-water treatment in this province. And, you know, I'm in a—I'm not going to get into what—how that's been phrased in certain public statements. I have said that we now know what the P in PC stands for and it's certainly not progressive. And I can tell you Manitobans know what they stand for as well. They stand for a—you know, a trip backwards—a trip backwards.

And I know the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), you know, is speaking from his seat because he should know that many of the municipalities in his constituency are moving ahead with state-of-the-art waste-water treatment, regional systems.

I—you know, I think it's really important, but you know the bottom line here is the members opposite

have shown time and time again that they have no plan to protect Manitoba's water. We have shown that we do. We're doing it through The Planning Act. This Planning Amendment Act is another step forward, and I want to see where they stand.

I want to see them stand in their place. I want to see which side they're on. I know Manitobans know it is not on the side of protecting the water and the environment of this province. It's on a backwards vision that would put us back, not back to the 1990s, but the 1890s. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 11, The Planning Amendment Act.

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill 14—The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments)

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Now I'm going to call second reading, Bill 14, The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments).

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 14, The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments); Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'achat de médicaments sur ordonnance (contrôle de certains médicaments couverts et modifications diverses), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

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

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister for Health, seconded by the honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines, that Bill 14, The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

Ms. Oswald: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and it's my privilege to stand and provide more information to the House concerning the important amendments that we are bringing forward to the prescription drugs cost act—assistance act.

These changes proposed in Bill 14 are intended to help improve the appropriateness of prescribing in our province, Mr. Speaker, responding to the advice we've received from a number of groups including the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba, the Auditor General and an external advisory committee on Pharmacare.

The proposed amendments will help to address potentially inappropriate prescribing of controlled drugs, drugs such as OxyContin, Mr. Speaker, and other narcotics. This will help ensure that not only people for whom these kinds of drugs were intended, you know, that they will have access to them but indeed they will be appropriately prescribed.

The amendments will also help to strengthen drug prescribing—be careful now, you might learn something—to help strengthen drug prescribing and effectiveness to retrospective drug reviews and prescriber education. As well it will make some minor housekeeping amendments.

So let me begin. The monitoring of prescribing of OxyContin and other controlled drugs—this is something I want to really focus in on and talk about because this is important to our society. One of the primary functions of the proposed amendments to the existing act will be to enhance the monitoring of prescribing of controlled drugs, as I mentioned, OxyContin and others, to reduce the occurrence of inappropriate prescriptions, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:50)

The amendments are indeed responsive to a request that we received from the College of Physicians and Surgeons to improve their ability to monitor the prescribing of such drugs. Under the proposed amendments, an advisory committee will be established with membership from the College of Physicians and Surgeons and other professional regulatory bodies as needed to provide advice on how to review prescription data from the Drug Program Information Network. This, of course, is an electronic system that logs prescriptions in Manitoba.

The advisory group would identify prescribing patterns which could identify potential abuse, misuse, or general inappropriateness and those kinds of issues can be identified in regulation. If there are

indeed concerns, information about the prescriber would be sent to the college by the department for their careful review. If it is deemed by the college that they want to investigate or audit a specific provider's prescribing practices, at that point, they could request patient-identifying information—but not before that, Mr. Speaker—to support their investigation in accordance with their laws, regulations, and bylaws. This process is responsive to the college's request to strengthen the monitoring of the prescribing of OxyContin and other controlled drugs. The focus of this specific initiative is on the prescribers or, as have come to be known, the supply, not on those who are having prescriptions filled.

The amendments proposed in this bill build on steps that have been taken earlier this year, including moving OxyContin to part 3 of the provincial drug program formulary, initiating an education campaign, and providing training intended to increase the number of physicians with a methadone licence.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, under the category of retrospective drug and/or therapeutic drug class utilization and prescriber education, the second proposed amendment is to provide an advisory committee of experts with the mandate and authority to carry out specific functions, including conducting retrospective drug and/or therapeutic class utilization reviews and to focus on drug effectiveness to enable prescriber education. It is our intent to expand the mandate of the existing committee of experts known as the Manitoba Drug Standards and Therapeutics Committee, or the MDSTC, to undertake this function. For the information of the House, the MDSTC is currently comprised of three physicians and three pharmacists to provide advice on adding drugs to the Interchangeability Formulary.

The new functions are responsive to advice we've heard from the Auditor General in the past, in her audit of Pharmacare, as well as advice from the expert advisory committee established to provide recommendations on responding to the first audit of Pharmacare. The new functions are intended to improve the appropriateness of prescribing and the cost effectiveness of Pharmacare.

Mr. Speaker, in April of 2006, the office of the Auditor General completed the audit of the Pharmacare program and, in that report, it was noted that work could be done on monitoring the quality and the relevance of drug use, and work could be

done to encourage appropriate and economical prescribing and dispensing practices and we took that advice to heart. Further, and to be quite specific, the report said—and I'm quoting here—that Manitoba Health was not required under any act to be responsible for monitoring or analyzing drug use in order to identify potential instances of poor prescribing practices or situations which indicate the potential harm to the recipient of drugs.

And so, out of that report, we began working on this and several other recommendations to ensure that we would be able to have, indeed, the Manitoba Drug Standards and Therapeutics Committee, as suggested by the expert advisory panel, be the ones to have an expanded mandate to address this specific recommendation, and that's what these proposed amendments will do. We know that the expansion of this role for MDSTC will serve to assist Manitoba Health in determining which drug benefits will be provided to Manitobans by government programs, to assist Manitoba Health in determining which drugs and drug products are indeed interchangeable, to assist Manitoba Health in ensuring government drug benefits are rational and cost effective, and also to assist Manitoba Health in addressing other drug utilization issues.

In carrying out its mandate, the MDSTC reviews manufacturers' drug submissions and the clinical criteria in the proposed provisions of utilization management agreements. The MDSTC also considers the recommendations of the common drug review, which we all know is a national process for reviewing the cost-effectiveness of new drugs and making listing recommendations to public drug plans.

The proposed amendments would indeed provide a legislative basis for the role of the MDSTC in relation to the Pharmacare program, and enable them to take on this expanded mandate, which will undoubtedly improve public safety and cost efficiency by facilitating appropriate drug utilization. These types of reviews, which are already done within hospitals and personal care homes, will most often result in education for prescribers, which we believe to be a good thing.

There are some other issues in the context of this bill, Mr. Speaker, that require clarification, and these amendments will serve to do that. They include providing clear authority for Manitoba Health to refer matters or, indeed, complaints respecting inappropriate prescribing, to a regulatory body for

review or investigation. It's true that currently there is no specific legislative authority for referral of matters or complaints respecting prescribing to a regulatory body, and this can sometimes create some ambiguity about whether such complaints can be received by a regulatory body. Obviously, we believe that any issues that are raised related to quality and safety should be reviewed appropriately. We know that patient safety is paramount in all of our discussions, and so clarifying a legislative authority for these referrals we believe to be a very important step.

This amendment will also clarify that in those cases where concerns are raised by experts and officials or an expert committee created under the act, that it can, indeed, be referred for appropriate follow-up to a regulatory body.

Another amendment will provide a clear legislative basis for the existing review process for coverage of a drug under part 3 of Pharmacare, under the specified drugs regulation made under the act. The specified drugs regulation, made under The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Act, lists the drugs which are covered under the Pharmacare program. And part 3 of the regulation enables the minister's delegate to approve coverage of a drug that's not listed under Pharmacare or on a case-by-case basis, if specific criteria are met. That process has been in place since 2001, and this, indeed, will entrench it in law.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, this bill proposes an amendment that would provide a clear legislative basis for the minister to enter into agreements for the purposes of this act, and I just want to say that there has been already some advice and consultation concerning these amendments. The Ministry of Health engaged in extensive discussions with the College of Physicians and Surgeons; indeed, they have requested that some changes be made to implement a system that would work and enable them to really focus on situations whereby prescribing may be inappropriate, and to have the authority to act in these cases. We have also had conversations with community advocates, caregivers and citizens who, perhaps in their neighbourhoods, have seen some concerns regarding what they believe to be inappropriate prescribing by some doctors. Mercifully, we believe this number to be very low, but, regrettably, they do exist and we, indeed, want to empower the college to have a path that they can take in order to implement action, discipline as appropriate for doctors that may,

indeed, be making some very harmful and poor choices.

As previously noted, the college will continue to be consulted in developing the proposed regulations respecting the sharing of information from the Drug Program Information Network, and also in reference to expanding the scope for MDSTC. We know that so far, the committee itself gives its unequivocal support, and we are pleased with that. Consultations with other professionals like pharmacists, medical professionals, nursing, other groups who are able to prescribe, will also be carried out prior to any specific initiatives being implemented and, of course, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to seek advice from members of the community that will be able to offer their good counsel when it comes to issues of public safety and security.

* (16:00)

So, Mr. Speaker, taken together, these proposed amendments seek to make improvements where they are needed. We have been given advice and we are acting upon it. These changes will further enhance what is widely recognized as one of the best pharmacare programs in the country, a program of which we should all feel very proud.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I would just like to indicate that we support this legislation, and I would also like to indicate that this province is four years behind Saskatchewan in bringing something like this forward. They've dragged their heels on this. I think we've waited long enough to see these changes brought forward.

I do note that the Auditor General was very critical in the audit of the Pharmacare program here in Manitoba, had said that the program here was mismanaged, and that there were some very, very strong recommendations made towards government. I know that some of that is addressed in this legislation.

I would also indicate at this time that this government has poorly managed the area around addictions in this province, with waiting lists of addictions, with, you know, poor control over the addiction issue, and this government has dragged their heels on that too. It's appalling where we see young people that are dying on addiction waiting lists.

So, Mr. Speaker, we don't think that this should be dragged on any longer. We understand the challenges are out there, and I would ask leave that this bill gets passed on second reading today.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just a few words. We've seen the problems which have arisen in Manitoba because of the lack of this legislation and the fact that we got behind Saskatchewan, and I'm certainly ready to support this legislation now. It's certainly something which could've been here several years ago.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): I'm very pleased to rise on this bill and to talk about some of the ramifications and consequences of passage of this bill. *[interjection]* I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Roblin Russell and his colleagues, who's very anxious, it seems, to debate this bill, are prepared to pass this bill.

We are very pleased with that, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's been many years since I've been in this Chamber while we've been government that I've seen members who want to jump up and support government measures, and I think the members opposite are finally realizing that being the party of negativity and being opposed to everything and having to face the voters and having to face the fact that people recognize that you can't be against everything and in favour of nothing can have consequences.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to talk about this bill and some of the ramifications. It was very interesting to hear the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), and I want to remind the House the member for Charleswood last election was broadcasting and long saying that—I think it was Grace Hospital would be closing, and we heard Grace Hospital would be closing over and over again. And, in fact, it's been expanded by this side of the House.

So it's good to see that members opposite are perhaps getting a dose of reality—of reality, Mr. Speaker—when it comes to dealing with some of the day-to-day problems as they are related to the specific need to deal with OxyContin and other narcotics, as they relate to the control under the—through the College of Physicians and Surgeons under the prescription drug monitoring and—act.

Mr. Speaker, as we go through our transition into society, as we learn to deal with matters of

addictions and some of the related causes of addictions, we've been—we've had to be agile and we've had to be reflective on the attitudes and the role in the communities.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting that members opposite would talk about an auditor's report dealing with some of these issues that we're, in fact, dealing with. I want to remind members that it was long before that that we had, as ministers of Health, before us a provision to provide for a safe utilization of drugs and other—in other words, harm reduction, and harm reduction has become a very important aspect of dealing with many of the social and many of the addiction problems we face today.

And I can remember sitting around the all-ministers meeting in Ottawa with members of every political stripe talking about harm reduction and being unanimously—*[interjection]* This is harm reduction, Mr. Speaker, having the ability to look at the prescribing practices in a proactive way. Having the ability and the legislative authority to do audits and reviews is very important to the tracking of new and various kinds of designer drugs that have come on the market in the last few years.

In other words, this is prescriptive, Mr. Speaker, rather than reactive. This is the ability of—to deal with matters that become a huge problem in many jurisdictions. Particularly, I call it the Rush Limbaugh syndrome. You know, members opposite remind me a lot of that individual. That Rush Limbaugh is very quick from the lip and he criticizes. He's very bombastic. Everything that he says is right-wing, and yet he, unfortunately, found himself in a situation where he, too, was caught in the dilemma—as any of us are potentially—are potential of—get caught in the addictive confines of OxyContin. And it's something that no matter how strong one's will is, no matter how one professes to be a principled individual, circumstances and associations and the way of life sometimes brings individuals into situations where they're faced with addiction and related problems, and they need a helping hand, and that's something that I think is recognized across the country.

And the members opposite like to play a we're-here-first game. They often refer to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I know Saskatchewan very well, and I know for a fact that Saskatchewan often follows the lead of Manitoba in many—particularly crime prevention measures. And if you were to go to Saskatchewan and talk to the present

minister, he would tell you how often Saskatchewan has followed the lead of Manitoba. That is the Saskatchewan Party, used to be known as the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan, but, unfortunately, they had to lose the name because they lost most of the members into jail and they lost the name. There's no more Saskatchewan conservative party. They're called the Saskatchewan Party, and it's a result of some unfortunate circumstances carried out by the former Saskatchewan conservative party.

But I digress, Mr. Speaker. The point is that very often in the prairies we develop common strategies. I know, for example, that we've—Alberta and Saskatchewan have both followed our lead in crime prevention, and on matters of dealing with addictions and related matters, we are very much in sync and in touch with the same kind of general approaches that are adopted in a prairie western mode. I know members opposite like to cite various jurisdictions as being ahead or behind. I like to think that we, in the west, together with, particularly, Saskatchewan and Alberta—and particularly Saskatchewan—have the same kind of social, economic and cultural background that means a lot of the measures that we undertake are similar.

With respect to this particular bill we need the provisions that are provided by legislation in this bill. The original framers of the act and some of the original provisions of the act did not provide for some of the exigencies that have occurred as a result of the change in addictions towards some of these very, very dangerous and severe addictions in the form of OxyContin and in the form of other narcotics, some of which are designer-related drugs, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:10)

It is a plague that we are facing in the Western world, Mr. Speaker. The addiction ratios are very, very high. The—between alcohol and drugs, I suggest that without—in absence of alcohol and drugs, our crime rates, our violence rates, our family breakups, and so many of the upheavals and difficulties in society would be eliminated.

So it is very important that we collaborate in this Legislature to deal with harm reduction, to deal with these matters, Mr. Speaker. Some suggest there's only one way to go; I've heard members opposite say the only way to solve these problems is jail. If that was the case, then the United States would have

solved the problem a long time ago. And, in fact, we know it requires a combination of factors: prevention, recognition, and the ability, as is outlined in this act, to monitor and to have the authority to do follow-ups with respect to serious drugs like OxyContin and other narcotics.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a very progressive and a very prescriptive forward stance with respect to addictions in this province. We've had expansion of services across the province. We were a country leader with respect to dealing with the issue of cocaine abuse that scourged—that was a scourge across the country. Fortunately, we haven't had the same impact here, probably for society and cultural reasons and probably, one would hope, because of some of the preventative measures that have taken place both legislatively and in terms of program assistance from both the Province and the federal government in dealing with the plague that we face in this regard.

So I'm very happy to hear from members opposite that they are in favour of moving this important bill along, Mr. Speaker. It's always nice to be able to say to the public that we're of one mind in dealing with serious matters, particularly those relating to matters of addiction and abuse that we face on a daily basis in this province, on a daily basis across the country. We only know too well what the ramifications are in this regard, and we know only too well that it is in association with both health and matters of mental health.

I'm pleased that this Province a long time ago—well, not a long time ago, certainly during the era in which we inherited from the lean and mean cutbacks of the '90s, Mr. Speaker—we created a system where co-occurring illnesses and co-occurring matters relating to mental illness and addictions would be recognized for what they were. That was a significant step forward as a society and I'm glad that that framework is in place.

And I'm glad that we're able to move forward on bills like this, because for every addiction that you're able to prevent, Mr. Speaker, or every individual you're able to help work their way out of this terrible downward spiral is—behind that individual is—are family members, are parents, are siblings, are relatives, are associates and are friends who are completely caught up in the same nightmare of addictions. And it touches us all; it touches every single individual in this Legislature one way or the other, either through the legal system, through the

health system, through the social services system, or through a variety of the interactions we have.

And I'm very proud to think that all 57 members of the Legislature—and, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it's relatively common for most legislation to pass by this Legislature with the support of all parties, although the—what we've seen, in a very contradictory way, has been the fact that members have opposed all of these measures in a budgetary sense, and budgetary—at the end of the day, the ability to pay for these services comes down to the ability of the government to pay for these services, and, unfortunately, members opposite have taken another track. Members opposite have endorsed, by their votes and by their public statements, the fact that they want to remove half a billion dollars—half a billion dollars—from the present budget in order to balance, and that would have untold horrific ramifications for our society.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, not being able to pay the salaries of the nurses and the health-care providers, and the addiction specialists, the psychiatric workers, and the care homes, and the individual programs, and the AFM programs, and all of the community-based programs that provide services. Imagine cutting that off at the source and, in fact, that's what the members have asked for and voted for.

So it's a bit difficult to reconcile members' votes on these programs and then their support for the very nature of these programs, Mr. Speaker. You can't do a program without paying for the program. You can't do a program without, in this case, having the physicians and the pharmacists on the committee, and looking at this and taking away their otherwise productive hours in their employment. You can't do this for free. You can't do this for free. It comes at a price, but we're prepared to pay that price because the price in prevention and the price in harm reduction is far less than the ramifications of allowing this problem to continue throughout, and for not doing anything about it.

And that's where the contradiction lies. Members opposite say, well, we support this program, but, no, we're not going to budget for it. No, we're not going to budget for the doctors and the nurses and the social workers and the teachers and the aides and those community workers who provide this service. You can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, we face that in the comments of members opposite.

But I think Manitobans, as—you know, and I know, in fact, Manitobans are supportive of our efforts and Manitobans get it. They get it that we're a place that works with people. We're a place that's inclusive. We're not a place that forgets people and leaves them behind and says, you know, the only way up is to throw someone in jail or to leave them behind. That's not the Manitoba way. The Manitoba way is to lend a helping hand and to lead someone—hold someone up, not push them down.

And that's what we see in this bill and that's the spirit in which this bill is going through this Legislature. And I hope that members opposite will reflect on the issue of how they reconcile what they say in this Legislature with how they vote on matters relating to bills like this. And maybe we'll have some consistency and maybe we'll have some accuracy from members opposite from the way they talk and the way they vote.

Because, Mr. Speaker, as it now stands with the commitments that members opposite have made, the half a billion dollars would not come cheap when you consider that social programs and related programs, for example, in health, are probably 80 per cent of the costs of health care. It's from the funding of the people that provide the service. That's why we saw such a horrific situation that occurred during the mean and lean 1990s, and that's the ramifications of what the members would do by cutting out of the budget half a billion dollars without even looking at what the ramifications are.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I commend this bill to the Legislature and look forward to speedy passage as we move forward on the fight to protect Manitobans, to deal with harm reduction and to help those who, unfortunately, are in a situation where they have to rely on others, as well as themselves, to get through this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:20)

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's a pleasure to rise today and to speak about Bill 14.

Bill 14, of course, includes provisions that'll facilitate the monitoring of potentially dangerous drugs such as OxyContin and other narcotics. This has been requested by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba, and I'm very pleased with the

leadership of the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) that this bill has been brought forward, and it sounds like we have got considerable support for this bill moving on to committee and becoming law in Manitoba.

Of course, OxyContin and other narcotics are valuable drugs when used properly. They relieve suffering, they assist people in their treatment, but they can also be very dangerous drugs when used improperly when unleashed on the streets of Winnipeg and elsewhere in Manitoba. And the importance of Bill 14, of course, is to help ensure that only people for whom these kind of drugs were actually intended will have access to them. And these amendments will assist to strengthen drug prescribing and effectiveness through introspective drug reviews and prescriber education. Certainly, as the member of an inner-city Winnipeg riding, I support this for health-care reasons. As the Minister of Justice, I also support this for public safety reasons. This bill will, indeed, try to reduce some of the difficulties with trafficking, with the improper sale and use of narcotics such as OxyContin in our communities.

You know, as we move towards a safer Manitoba, we know there's three main pillars of successful measures that a government can take to make our streets and our neighbourhoods and our communities safer. One, of course, are the laws and policies that are in place, and we know sometimes those laws, those policies are federal, and we do our best to raise our voices to make sure effective laws and effective policies are in place. But we also, as a province, do whatever we can within our own control and our own jurisdiction to have the right laws and the right policies. And I'm quite satisfied, Mr. Speaker, this is the right law to have in place in the province of Manitoba.

We know, of course, the second pillar of building stronger communities and safer communities is the ability for enforcement. On the Justice side, of course, that means more support for our police officers, that means more support for our Crown attorneys, that means more support for probation services and that also means more support for our corrections system where needed. In this case, of course, with Bill 14, although I believe there's a big public safety element, the enforcement is going to be provided by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba itself. And, of course, as the governing body which decides who and who cannot practise medicine in the province, and as the

society which is able to put requirements and standards in place for all of its member physicians, I'm quite satisfied there will be appropriate enforcement through the provisions in Bill 14.

The third most important pillar of our system, of course, is prevention and, certainly, this bill does much to prevent narcotics from falling into the hands of the wrong people, inflicting damage and loss on our communities.

Now, as has been pointed out by the College of Physicians and Surgeons—or the college—there are currently certain impediments to the effectiveness of their prescribing practices program, and by enabling the use of and disclosure to regulatory bodies, such as the college, of information from the Drug Program Information Network, it'll be easier to monitor prescribing practices for controlled drugs like OxyContin. And to try and address these concerns, the existing prescription cost drugs cost assistance act needs to be expanded with provisions to allow for the monitoring of prescribing by physicians in Manitoba. And the college has come forward to suggest it needs to be amended to provide clear legislative authority for the existing review process for drug coverage which, Mr. Speaker, Bill 14 certainly provides.

And we know these changes need to be made because of the nature of OxyContin and other narcotics which, unfortunately, have a street value and are open to abuse both by those who would sell them to individuals in our community and also by those who, unfortunately, abuse those drugs for purposes for which they are not intended.

These amendments are very positive because not only will they allow for greater monitoring, they also allow for greater educational provisions, to give further guidance to practicing physicians in the province of Manitoba on the risks and the potential misuse of certain narcotics. We know that the illegal drug trade provides actually a major source of income for organized crime in the province of Manitoba, in addition to the actual damage being done to those who abuse the drugs.

The amendments also allow, quite appropriately, for an expert committee to monitor drug use more generally in a retrospective manner, which is exactly what the Auditor General had suggested when commenting on the cost effectiveness of our tremendous Pharmacare system here in Manitoba. And it is a pleasure when standing to speak about Bill 14 to be able to talk about Pharmacare in the

province of Manitoba, a program that is already recognized as being among the very best out of all the jurisdictions here in Canada. With aging parents myself, I know I certainly appreciate that when they have expenses that arise from drugs that are necessary, that Pharmacare is there to support them in their senior years.

These changes to The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act are themselves a testament to this government's commitment to provide the highest standard of patient safety to all Manitobans wherever in the province they may live, and this means taking these necessary steps to put these oversight and education and monitoring regulations in place to make sure that drugs are properly prescribed.

But beyond that, of course, our government is also quite clear in our continuing resolve to keep providing effective and efficient drug coverage to all Manitobans, and by enhancing the monitoring for these drugs with an emphasis on the most frequently prescribed drugs in Manitoba, we're able to better support more appropriate prescribing based on evidence and through prescriber education, which, in turn, has the benefit, Mr. Speaker, of helping to keep our drug coverage costs lower, which benefits every single Manitoban.

Now, the changes put forward also are acknowledgement of the needs and concerns the importance of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba regarding the monitoring of the prescribing of OxyContin and other narcotics, and it's a certainly a reflection of this Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) continuing with the tradition of this government of being ready to listen to the concerns of the college, listening to the concerns of those working in health care in Manitoba and to keep working with them to improve our health system, to build a stronger system and to make sure we have the highest standards of patient safety.

Now, of course, we've proved our commitment to health care time and time again with repeated investments, enhancements, improvements to the Pharmacare program, and I think it's important as we discuss Bill 14 to note that this government has more than tripled our investment in the Pharmacare program since 1999, in fact, an increase of over 220 per cent, which has allowed us to do a number of things.

We know that all the time, better and sometimes unfortunately more expensive drugs come into the marketplace. We've stood up and we've met those challenges. Our government has added more than 2,500 more prescription drugs to the formulary here in Manitoba. We've extended Pharmacare coverage to more than—to nearly an additional 25,000 families in Manitoba. We've more than doubled the amount of free prescription medicine received by the average Pharmacare recipient, up from \$1,021 a year in 1999 to \$2,900 per year at present, which means nearly an additional \$1,800 in free medicine covered in the Pharmacare program for the average Pharmacare recipient.

And I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, that our government has implemented a palliative care drug program, so that patients who choose to live their life—their last days at home in the comfort with their family and friends, who chose to spend their last days at home, will receive their drugs free without any deductible whatsoever.

And, of course, on deductibles, we've improved our Pharmacare program through important changes to deductibles. Some of these changes include limiting Pharmacare deductibles to the rate of general inflation for the duration of our five-year plan, meaning deductibles will go up by less than 1 per cent for this year, and it also means that more than 98 per cent of families, 49 of every 50 families receiving Pharmacare benefits, will see an increase of their deductible of no more than \$2 per month this year.

Of course, we've also updated the Pharmacare deductible structure. We did that last year to make it even fairer by adding more and more brackets for income, meaning that Manitobans aren't faced with major deductible increases when a small increase in income would put them into a new deductible bracket. And, of course, in 2007, a program very popular in my own constituency of Minto where there are a number of low-income Manitobans—we introduced the deductible instalment payment program for Pharmacare, and this allows patients with very high drug costs, 25 per cent of monthly income or more, to pay their deductible in monthly instalments, and they're able to do that, of course, through Manitoba Hydro which provides that ability for people to pay their deductible through their hydro payments. Don't try that with a private company. We can certainly do that here in Manitoba because of one of our crown jewels, Manitoba Hydro, providing not

only services but social benefits across the province of Manitoba.

And, of course, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans receiving income assistance, Manitobans living in personal care homes, do not pay any Pharmacare deductibles.

But it's not just about adding more drugs to the formulary. It's not just about expanding coverage. It's also making sure we do what we can as a province to get better prices while also adding more drugs that we provide to Manitobans. And Manitoba's often the first province, or among the first, to list new drugs for coverage in Manitoba. We were the first province in Canada to introduce two HIV drugs. We were also the first province to list a drug called Zeldox for the treatment of schizophrenia, and we're only second to British Columbia to list the new diabetes drug Lantus. So we're certainly there for the citizens of Manitoba to make sure that our Pharmacare system remains one of the best in the country. But we also want to make sure we're getting good deals for Manitoba taxpayers.

* (16:30)

And the Auditor General, back in 2006, issued a report with some ideas on new policies to reduce costs and improve the utilization of drugs. And we've made changes following that report to drug listing policies to save the Manitoba taxpayer millions of dollars at the same time allowing us to cover more drugs and provide support to more families. And it's helped us to better manage those drug costs, bringing drug spending increases down from double-digit annual increases in the late 1990s to 2 to 5 per cent annually over the last few years as CIHI has reported.

We also know that, traditionally, drug companies were not exactly lining up to give Manitobans competitive and fair prices on drugs. We looked at prices a couple of years ago and found that Manitoba was actually paying more than some other provinces, so we moved on that and we've introduced utilization management agreements and a generic drug policy to keep getting better prices for Manitobans every chance we get, and certainly to keep drug companies accountable for what they project the use and benefits of a drug will be. And the result of that, of course, is getting Pharmacare benefits out to more Manitobans at the most competitive and the most fair price that we can and saving Manitobans, at the same time, millions of

dollars per year—per year that we can reinvest in new brand name drugs.

The Competition Bureau has commended Manitoba for our new generic drug policy, and, in fact, in their document, *Benefiting from Generic Drug Competition*, they cite Manitoba's plan as one of the country's important developments in public and private drug plan generic drugs policies. So, in addition to expanding Pharmacare, in addition to making it more cost effective, we continue to work on making it the best program in the country, and I'm very pleased Bill 14 allows us to continue to move down that road.

And, of course, Bill 14 also gives me a chance to stand and talk a little bit about the other health-care investments that our government has made since forming power in 1999. We know having timely access to quality health care is of utmost importance to Manitoba families, whether they live in Winnipeg or they live in rural communities, they live in the north, anywhere they go in the province. Certainly, health care continues to be a priority for our government even though we know it isn't for members opposite.

And that's why I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, there's 405 more doctors practising in Manitoba than there were in 1999, including 111 more doctors in rural areas of the province and, as well, 223 more family doctors on the front lines providing health care to Manitobans.

Of course, in the last election we committed to hire 100 more doctors over this mandate and we haven't just met that commitment, Mr. Speaker, we've exceeded it, something that Manitobans are truly grateful for and something that continues to be something our government strives to improve in this province.

That's doctors, what about nurses? Nurses, there's 2,532 more nurses practising in Manitoba than there were in 1999. In the 2007 election, again as the party actually talking about health care, we committed to hire an additional 700 nurses and create 100 more nurse training seats, and we've now surpassed those commitments. Just as with doctors, we've exceeded our promises by adding 943 more nurses and 124 more nurse training seats in the province of Manitoba.

And I know, certainly, that members opposite don't like to talk about health care. We know it's not their priority, which is why we stand in this House,

we stand in our communities, we take every opportunity to talk about the investments that we make in health care, the investments members opposite didn't make when they had the chance, which they've told they won't make by their statements in this House and elsewhere, and, of course, the type of things they clearly could not deliver as they stood in this House last June and voted to slash \$500 million out of a budget which would have dramatic and horrible consequences for our health-care system in the province of Manitoba.

So, of course, more nurses, more doctors. I'm very pleased the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) have also announced that every Manitoban who wants to have a family doctor will have one by the year 2015. That means more doctors. It also means more creative and better and more modern ways to deliver health care, meaning more nurse practitioners in clinics that can provide immediate service as well as things like a mobile clinic bus.

And we've invested heavily in rebuilding and building new health facilities in our province and have built or modernized over 100 facilities since 1999, meaning new and renovated hospitals, personal care homes, clinics and other facilities.

We brought great new technology to Manitoba, including the first MRIs located outside of the city of Winnipeg, something, I think, is important to rural members whichever side of the House they may sit on, and tremendous advances such as the gamma knife, which is a non-invasive radiosurgery tool for cancers and tumours in the brain, which we were the first in Canada to have.

Well, we know that there's been investments all over the province of Manitoba, as we build our health-care system—things like the new Women's Hospital at Health Sciences Centre, now under construction. We know that we promised—I expect the members opposite would mothball it, as they mothballed other health-care facilities in the past—as we move forward to have a first-in-Canada mental health crisis response centre. It'll be located at the Health Sciences Centre to get better, quicker, more effective treatment for people with mental health issues.

You know, I was very pleased—we represent all Manitobans. I was very pleased the Minister of Health very recently announced the new Tabor personal care home reinvestment in the community of Morden, which is growing quickly, also has a

growing number of seniors. Of course, we also announced a new children's rehabilitation centre, providing other specialized services under one roof. We've announced the expansion of the Ste. Anne Hospital, where actually one of my best friends where he—where his partner gave birth which was something that we all celebrated.

Of course, building a new Selkirk hospital, dialysis expansions in Russell, Gimli, Peguis and Berens River, a new emergency room for the sunshine city, the beautiful community of Dauphin, a new primary care and traditional healing clinic in Pine Falls and a new emergency room in Steinbach at the wonderful hospital there.

And I know members opposite don't like investments like that. Well, they don't like it on their spend-on their tax days; they like it on their spending days and when they bring petitions into the House. *[interjection]* And I hear them saying they're supporting the bill but, sadly, they don't support the budgets. They don't support the budgets this government has brought in each and every year, investing and re-investing in health-care capital, investing in personnel, making sure we have doctors and nurses and technologists not just in the city of Winnipeg, but across the entire province.

So, certainly, this is a great bill. It's a great opportunity to remind people not just of the steps we're taking as a government to deal with things like OxyContin and other dangerous narcotics, but also to talk in a broader sense about our Pharmacare system and the investments we're making across this province to provide the best possible care close to home.

So I'm very pleased to be in support of Bill 14. I look forward to comments that other members of this House may have on this bill, and I do look forward to it going forward to committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): It's my pleasure to stand up today and put a few words on the record about Bill 14, The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments). And, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am very much in favour of this particular piece of legislation.

I had the opportunity to go online and do a little bit of research before coming into the House today, and one of the places I visited in my electronic search was a place called heretohelp.bc.ca. And I

want to read you the message that was on the message board there, and I think it speaks very much to the need for this piece of legislation.

It goes like this, Mr. Speaker: Hello. I'm looking for help, suggestions, advice, anything at this point before I go off the deep end, trying to figure out what to do. My husband of seven years is very addicted to OxyContin and Percocet. He has back pain, and the doctor is leaning towards chronic back pain. He's been on pills for over three years now and it's gotten to be an addiction. He lies. He buys pills off people who sell them. He's not the man I married. We have two children, ages three and six, and he has a son from a previous relationship, who is eight. I hide his pills. He goes looking for them when I'm not home. When he's out, the withdrawal is horrible.

I don't know how to be supportive anymore. I'm scared. We will lose everything because he is bouncing cheques for money for pills. He makes excuses to take another one. He blames other people for his pill buying. He says he washed them in his clothes to cover up taking too many.

He was double-doctoring, and they had finally put a red flag on his file.

I'm embarrassed and have nowhere to turn. I have one friend who knows about how bad things are, and she told me to walk away. I'm scared he will hurt himself if I do. I love him, but I can't love someone who can't be trusted, and I can never believe things he says because he has lied so much. I'm sorry if I'm repeating myself, but I really am in need of help. Please, someone, give me some ideas.

* (16:40)

Mr. Speaker, I thought in reading this that this spoke amazingly to the need for this particular piece of legislation. The response on the message boards to this particular individual's message were very much: get help, get help for your husband, get help for yourself, take care of yourself, take care of your kids, but also, be watchful. There was also, of course, one individual who said, get out—get out now. But I give this individual who, of course, I don't know who it is, it's an anonymous post on heretohelpbc.ca, and it doesn't speak to who it is, but it does speak to the need to look at OxyContin and Percocet use here in Manitoba and across the United States, I found out in my electronic search, across BC, across Ontario.

In doing my research, I found also that Ontario has been grappling with this problem and has been

actually using Manitoba as an example of a leader. A Collingwood doctor says Ontario should follow Manitoba's lead in creating strong relationships against the prescription painkiller OxyContin. We know, Mr. Speaker, that in March the western provinces placed restrictions on people's access to the prescription painkiller in an effort to make sure that illegal drug use was curbed.

But there is something I do want to say, Mr. Speaker. I think I've mentioned previously in the House, that I have had experiences myself in having a friend go through cancer. And my friend was actually on Percocet during the time that he was going through cancer. And when this bill was introduced I did take the opportunity to speak to our Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and talk to her about my concerns that people who legitimately needed to have access to this drug would not see that their use was curtailed or made so challenging that they weren't able to manage their pain. I was assured by our Minister of Health that that will not be the case. I was assured, as well, that Manitoba is launching a brochure campaign that will work to educate physicians and pharmacists and patients about the drug and that we will be spending \$35,000 to train physicians so that they know more about the drug.

I was really quite surprised, Mr. Speaker, when I found out about how prevalent the use of this drug is and also how prevalent the number of people who actually abuse the drug and the number of overdoses that occur as a result of the drug.

OxyContin has a nickname; it's called hillbilly heroin, which was a bit of a surprise to me, but I guess maybe I don't follow this drug as much as other people do. But when I started doing more reading I found out why it would be called hillbilly heroin. And I think the message that I read into the record that was on this website, heretohelpbc.ca, really speaks to why people would become addicted to this particular painkiller.

One of the websites I found, which was from December 3rd in Florida, just talked, Mr. Speaker, to the number of people who have actually become addicted to this powerful painkiller and the number of people who have died from this painkiller. And it said the powerful painkiller was blamed for 46 deaths in the first half of 2010, up from 27. So we really are seeing a big increase in the use of this drug and the amount of people who are overdosing and dying as a result of being addicted to this drug.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Florida Medical Examiners Commission examining 89,800 deaths in Florida between January and June of this year reported the increase. Of those deaths, 4,150 people were found to have died with one or more prescription or illicit drug in their body.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, when we take a look at this, we realize this really is becoming somewhat of an epidemic. We also know that, according to reports, 18 people between the ages of 26 and 34 in the 12th district in Florida died from overdoses. And it appears that this age group, 35 to 80, there was a death rate of 17 deaths. It seems also that when you take a look at it, this is a drug that is used by people who are sometimes a little bit older. And, in doing my research and reading, I found that there—one of the reasons people think that individuals get addicted is because of the feeling that, if this was prescribed by a doctor, then there couldn't be any harm in taking it, and I think that it's easy to see how people could get addicted to it when you realize that that's really not the case.

In Washington, DC, they recognize that the painkiller OxyContin can be very dangerous, and they've actually taken some steps just recently, so that they would look at accidental overdose and abuse. And what they're doing is they're making it harder to crush up this pill, harder to cut it, harder to grind it, harder to chew it or dissolve it. Although this doesn't resolve everything, Mr. Speaker, I definitely think that it will be a start, and it appears to me that many, many jurisdictions are looking at this particular drug.

They're also looking at Manitoba to see how we are moving forward with our steps, and Bill 14, which includes provisions that will make it easier to monitor this potentially dangerous drug, is going to be an important step. It will also help ensure that people who need the drug can have access to it, and the amendments will help strengthen drug prescribing and effectiveness through looking at drug reviews and some of the education that we can do, as I mentioned.

I think the other thing that we need to recognize as well, Mr. Speaker, is that there's a huge impact on the law enforcement area when these drugs reach the street. In terms of public dollars, what has been seen is that in Ontario last year doctors prescribed \$54 million of OxyContin, which is kind of staggering when you think about it. Addiction rates are soaring, and in Ontario the estimated 464 deaths

in five years in Ontario have been blamed on the drug.

One of the things that's been happening in Ontario is that individuals who have similar concerns have gathered together to work as a team. They talk—Dr. Graham Cunningham talks about the impact of seeing broken families, which, obviously, that particular message spoke to violence, and this being a day of remembrance, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we're speaking on this bill, because I could definitely see family violence and spousal abuse being related to this drug abuse, and also much more police involvement.

Dr. Cunningham and others who studied this believe there's two factors, as I mentioned. They said sometimes doctors might be too quick to prescribe OxyContin, and also sometimes people fake their symptoms. They go in and they say they need the drug and they don't. Sometimes the drug is ending up being sold on the street, and in a report that I was reading, it said that a pill that costs the public plan \$4 at the pharmacy can sell for as much as \$45 on the street. That's a lot of money for that pill to be able to sell for. I think that the name hillbilly heroin really speaks to the addictive nature of this drug.

In Ontario, the other thing that they've also noticed is that there's a huge increase in their public funding of drugs as related to the use of this particular drug, and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in 2008 released a study showing the greatest increase in patients seeking treatment for narcotic addiction from 2000 to 2004 came from people who were hooked on OxyContin. A study by another agency showed increased use of OxyContin among teenagers in Ontario. In 2007, the Ontario bill for OxyContin was \$54 million, which represented 337 separate prescriptions.

* (16:50)

I know here, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba, in terms of addressing some of the issues of overprescribing, this bill is moving towards addressing that, and what we are doing is making it possible for a group of people who are going to be acting as an oversight group to be able to assist the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba to monitor the prescribing practices for drugs such as OxyContin. These changes are needed to be made because of the potency of some of these drugs, as I mentioned.

Amendments such as the one proposed in this bill enhance a pharmacy program that is already recognized as being among the very best in Canada. These changes to The Prescription Drug Cost Assistance Amendment Act are also a testament to the Manitoba government's commitment to health care. I know that, when I travel around my constituency, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the things that I hear a lot from our—my constituents, is that we really are delivering on our health-care promises.

In this particular legislation that we've put forward is going to do that; it's going to enhance the monitoring mechanisms for all prescription drugs, with an emphasis on the most heavily prescribed drugs. And the changes in this bill are also, as I said, an acknowledgement of the needs and concerns that have been brought forward by the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It's a reflection of our readiness to listen to what we've been told by the college, who is, of course, a group of professional individuals, and it ensures that Manitoba remains committed to providing among the best Pharmacare coverage in all of Canada.

I also must say, Mr. Speaker, I was so very pleased to be able to join the Minister for Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors on November 25th, when we announced 10 new additional treatment beds that is actually related to the agency in my community, the behaviour health foundation, and they are going to be opening 10 treatment beds for women. They will be provided with funding of \$661,000 for the remainder of the 2010-11 year and \$1,013,240 in following years. And these beds are going to be put in place to ensure that there's treatment for women, and that has been something that's been identified. We know that women are as much at risk as men are of becoming addicted to drugs or to alcohol, and I'm very, very pleased to have been able to join the

minister in this announcement because I think that it's something that we absolutely need to address.

We've also looked at addressing this in terms of our mental health crisis response unit and that, located at the Health Sciences Centre, and our mental health crisis centre which is going to be located at the Health Sciences Centre.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, I have a friend who has had to—had some experience in having to call our mental health crisis response team, and has found it a successful—in terms of assisting her in dealing with some of the issues that she personally has been facing with her child.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I'm very much in favour of the passing of Bill 14, and I'm very happy to see this—the members on the other side are as well. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question for the House is second reading on Bill 14, The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Prescription Drug Monitoring and Miscellaneous Amendments).

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, perhaps you could ask the House if there's will to call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

Okay, the hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 6, 2010

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