

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

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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	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.
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DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
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WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, September 23, 2009

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 38—The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson), that the addictions—that Bill No. 38, The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister for Healthy Living, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill No. 38, The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, these amendments to The Addictions Foundation Act will modernize the legislation to make it consistent with that of the regional health authorities and CancerCare Manitoba.

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

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition.

Many seniors from the Morden-Winkler area are currently patients in Boundary Trails Health Centre while they wait for placement in local personal care homes.

There are presently no beds available for these patients in Salem Home and Tabor Home. To make more beds in the hospital available, the regional health authority is planning to move these patients to personal care homes in outlying regions.

These patients have lived, worked and raised their families in this area for most of their lives. They receive care and support from their family and friends who live in the community, and they will lose this support if they are forced to move to distant communities.

These seniors and their families should not have to bear the consequences of the provincial government's failure to ensure there are adequate personal care home beds in the region.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in a personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider working with the RHA and the community to speed construction and expansion of long-term care facilities in the region.

This is signed by Mary Unrau, Helen Doell, and Susan Janzen and many, many others.

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

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort

who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has told the town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program, however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

This is signed by Dale Williamson, Marge Wynn, Louise Olsen and many, many others.

Seven Oaks Hospital—Emergency Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The current Premier (Mr. Doer) and NDP government are reducing emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital.

On October the 6, 1995, the NDP introduced a matter of urgent public importance that stated that, quote, "the ordinary business of the House to be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the threat to the health-care system posed by this government's plans to limit emergency services in the city of Winnipeg community hospitals."

On December the 6, 1995, when the then-PC government suggested it was going to reduce emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital, the NDP leader then asked Premier Gary Filmon to, quote, "reverse the horrible decisions of his government and his Minister of Health and reopen the community emergency wards."

The NDP gave Manitobans the impression that they supported Seven Oaks Hospital having full

emergency services seven days a week, 24 hours a day

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Premier of Manitoba consider how important it is to have the Seven Oaks Hospital provide full emergency services seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by R. Almario, S. Almario and J. Hay and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Midwifery Services—Interlake Region

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Residents of the Interlake Regional Health Authority do not have access to midwifery services.

Midwives provide high quality, cost-effective care to childbearing women throughout their pregnancy, birth and in the post-partum period.

Women in the Interlake should have access to midwifery care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider working with the Interlake Regional Health Authority to provide midwifery services to women in this health region.

This petition is signed by Colleen Mulvena, Donna Helm, Celine Wurster and many, many others.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today, we have my grandson, Joshua Hickes, in the gallery.

And, also, in the public gallery, we have with us Colonel Gary Solar, past Honorary Colonel of the Fort Garry Horse, Lieutenant Colonel Larry Lajeunesse, who is Senate Chair, and Major Trevor Larsen, Second in Command, Fort Garry Horse.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gang Violence Government Strategy

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, all Manitobans have been horrified by the recent stories of reports of Manitobans being shot, stabbed, set on fire and beaten by cue balls, among other things, as part of the ongoing rash of violence here in the city of Winnipeg but also as part of the crime wave that is impacting other communities around the province.

Mr. Speaker, people from the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) are saying that crime is out of control and needs to be addressed. Even this morning, the Premier acknowledged that we have a serious problem.

This government has already had six news conferences to announce six failed gang strategies. When are they planning to announce gang strategy No. 7, and what assurance can they provide to Manitobans that strategy No. 7 will be more effective than strategies one, two, three, four, five and six?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite voted against 20 police officers for the city of Winnipeg this last year. He voted against police officers the year before that. He voted against additional prosecutors the year before that. He's voted against funding for recreation programs in every budget we've presented, including funding for the Turtle Island community centre and other community centres across Manitoba.

So budgets—the seven budgets that we've included more police officers in to add over 150 police officers in the province of Manitoba, including many of them designated to the city of Winnipeg, they vote against them.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, since I was elected I've voted against four failed NDP budgets and four failed NDP strategies. I will—and we will continue to vote against failed NDP strategies and in favour of strategies that work.

This morning the Premier's hand-picked successor, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), said that if elected his strategy would be to ask people to get better deadbolts, lock themselves inside their homes and, at the same time, better get to know their neighbours, Mr. Speaker, nonsensical rhetoric coming from his hand-picked successor.

Will he speak to the next Premier, the member from Minto, and ask him to deal with the problem this Premier isn't prepared to?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite makes predictions and perhaps he shouldn't. The last major prediction on budgets he made was that the rainy day fund would be drained in three years. We now have four times more money in the rainy day fund than when we came into office.

So if one is to go through all the rhetoric and all the noise the Leader of the Opposition puts on the record in *Hansard*, one could find mistake after mistake after mistake. He's fortunate that people don't hold him accountable to those mistakes, but we on this side will hold him accountable for the errors he makes on the factual side of the record, Mr. Speaker, and that he should be very careful what he says in this House.

Mr. McFadyen: If only he was as threatening to gangs as he is threatening to members on this side of the House, we would—Manitobans would be better off.

Mr. Speaker, his budget is \$400 million off the mark already, only five months into the year. It's no wonder Manitobans don't have faith in his government.

I want to ask the Premier, though, when we see people who are being burned in their yards, when we see people who are being stabbed, shot and violently assaulted through our city of Winnipeg, we know this is something that no member of this House wants to see. We know this isn't the Winnipeg and the Manitoba that we want, but when are we going to move from empty platitudes, such as what he said this morning on CJOB about walking and talking like ducks, to real action to protect law-abiding Manitobans?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite doesn't complete the quote. I talked about the fact that the police and the prosecutors have to prove over and over and over again on every individual case that a known member of a known gang is, in fact, a member of a criminal gang.

We have suggested that the federal government, along with proclaiming the higher sentences for murders conducted by gang members—and we expect the federal government to do it shortly—we have recommended that there be lists of gangs in the Criminal Code so prosecutors and police do not have to go to court time and time again, including in cases

just recently where known members were alleged to be part of the Hells Angels gang. Twelve out of the 13 were convicted, but wasn't—one wasn't convicted because of the lack of delineation in the Criminal Code.

So, if the member wants to finish the quote, I'm disappointed that he's opposed to our proposal to have criminal gangs listed in the Criminal Code so police and prosecutors can put those people behind bars where they belong.

Gang Violence Government Strategy

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the Premier wants to blame Ottawa, but it was his Minister of Justice who stood before the media and Manitobans in the summer and promised the seventh gang strategy to deal with the outbreak of violence in Winnipeg and Manitoba. Weeks after that announcement this minister has done nothing as gang violence continues to become more extreme as gang members continue to run on the streets, intimidating Manitobans and attacking those who would try to clean up the neighbourhood.

Mr. Speaker, despite six previous failed gang strategies, the minister made a commitment to Manitobans, and they shouldn't have to live in fear for another weekend.

I ask this minister: Will you produce the gang strategy that you promised by this weekend or will you resign so somebody else can do the job?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): If only it were so simple for the member to drive in from Steinbach and have his press conferences.

Mr. Speaker, there are three components. First off, we were the first province, and we went to Ottawa to change the federal legislation. Fortunately, three aspects of the gang strategy are gonna be proclaimed on October 2nd because Manitoba did, and if you don't—and they are for drive-by shootings, that are now gonna be a criminal offence raised by Manitoba. They are for serious offences if you're a gang member for a murder and recognizance for gang members—all Manitoba proposals, all brought to Ottawa, all being proclaimed on October 2nd because this government took the lead, and if you don't believe us ask Rob Nicholson.

Second, Mr. Speaker, we're gonna announce enhanced programs on our gang programs. When we

announced the youth auto theft strategy, you were against it. You said it wouldn't work. Now you said we have to keep it completely the way it is. What change in attitude.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: We've heard their program. We've heard their oh-cut-down-the-shrubs-and-put-up-some-more-lights programs in the past. Manitobans have seen that for 10 years, and we've seen the result of that soft-on-crime approach. We've seen the results of six failed gang strategies before: shootings, stabbings, people being attacked, being set on fire, as a result of revenge gang attacks. This minister stood outside of his office in the summer, and he made a promise, a vow to Manitobans that he would take responsibility, and bring forward a gang strategy so that Manitobans wouldn't have to live in fear.

I wanna ask him: If he won't bring forward that gang strategy before this weekend, will he step down from his office so somebody else who can do the job will do the job, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, in point of fact, Mr. Speaker, we had a gang strategy. We're gonna bring forward some additional measures. Over the summer—over the summer, the member from Steinbach when he drove in to do his press conference overlooked the fact that we had some intelligence that indicated there was some problems in the city of Winnipeg, and as a result—as a result, some additional measures were put in place, and fortunately, a number of issues were resolved in the city of Winnipeg. As a result of that, there's gonna be some augmentation.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can't go around and play political games with the member for Steinbach talking about programs when real people and real police officers are on the street. We paid for an additional 200. You voted against it, and now you ask for strategy. We want people on the street, placed on the street, probation officers on the street, and we got it and you're gonna get more.

Mr. Goertzen: Ask for a strategy? The minister promised it in summer, Mr. Speaker. The Premier, perhaps as the desperate act, the last desperate act of a man leaving government, goes on the radio this morning, he makes some glib comments about gangs, and then he punts the ball over to Ottawa. Those glib comments that Manitobans heard, just because him and his government have failed six times in the past doesn't mean that they can just punt the ball to Ottawa as he leaves office. It's his

Minister of Justice who made a promise to Manitobans this summer that there would be a gang strategy, that things would improve even though they failed six times before. He made the promise; he has to live up to that promise.

I'll ask the Premier: His one last act of government, will he remove that minister from office so we can at least try to get somebody in there who takes it seriously, who'll fulfil the promise and will make the streets of Winnipeg and Manitoba safer for all of our citizens, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, five of the laws, the only ones brought forward, the only comprehensive gang strategy ever brought forward by a Bruce MacFarlane who did research, we brought forward to Ottawa. The member—Leader of the Opposition was there. Five of them had been passed; a couple are coming through on October 2nd.

* (13:50)

Secondly, I just came off a western Canada conference where we looked at best practices, and we—and Mr. Speaker, some of those best practices that we looked at, we actually brought Manitoba programs to the other provinces that are copying. Some of them are going to be announced very shortly.

But I don't—we don't have to listen to the rhetoric of the member opposite. We have said from the beginning that gangs is the biggest problem. Members opposite didn't even write a letter to Ottawa as we did, and you—I can quote Minister Nicholson saying: I've got to tell you Dave Chomiak is the NDP, not a member of my party, I mean he's out there supporting it.

Where was the member for Steinbach? He couldn't drive to Ottawa? He couldn't even write a letter to Ottawa to support our gang strategies? And you have the—and you have the tenacity to yell from your seat when you couldn't even write a letter to the minister. That's a shame.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Before recognizing the honourable member for Steinbach, I just wanna remind all honourable members when making reference to members in this House, please do it by constituency or by the portfolio that the minister holds. *[interjection]* Your time had expired. *[interjection]*

Okay, the honourable member—the honourable Attorney General?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, the federal Minister of Justice when he was referring to this, said: I mean, I get support; I've got to tell you, the member for Kildonan, he's NDP, not a member of my party, Mr. Speaker.

South Eastman Regional Health Authority Hearing Test Wait Times

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): We can see that this Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) failed as the Minister of Health, and now he's failing as the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, a Winnipeg doctor requested a hearing test for a patient in rural Manitoba and was told that the wait for a hearing test in South Eastman RHA is seven years long.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us why patients in southeast Manitoba have to wait seven years to see an audiologist for a hearing test to find out if they're going deaf.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we had discussions about this issue and about augmenting programs for children and for families concerning hearing screening. We know that we are working through regional health authorities with our I HEAR program to do augmented screening. There have been some discussions regarding the use of a universal screening program. That's actively under discussion.

We know that any parent that is concerned about hearing or other aspects of their child's health, one day is too long to wait, and we're working with our regional health authorities to ensure that these times for waits for hearing and for other kinds of screening are brought down as quickly as we can.

Mrs. Driedger: Well, Mr. Speaker, she couldn't be doing very much if the wait is seven years long in rural Manitoba.

The doctor felt that this seven-year wait was totally unacceptable, so she called the WRHA audiology referral centre and was told that they have strict regulations at the WRHA to not accept referrals from other regions. So Winnipeg patients can have an audiology test in one to two months, but rural Manitobans have to wait seven years for this test.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to explain why patients in Manitoba are being treated differently. Why the long wait in rural Manitoba and the short wait in Winnipeg?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, and just to be clear, of course, the issue of hearing screening and any patients or families that have an urgent situation, they don't go on those wait lists. They are seen immediately, usually within one to three days.

We also know that work is being done in co-operation between regional health authorities. There is an issue regarding availability of specialists in urban centres versus rural environments. That is a fact, Mr. Speaker. We are working to develop co-operation among our regional health authorities. And again, as is always the case, if the member has a specific case with which she has concerns, I'm open and willing to work with her and work that family to ensure that that child and that family gets the care that they need.

Mrs. Driedger: I would just indicate to the minister that she does have a letter on her desk. She's had it for a while, and she has not responded to it yet.

Mr. Speaker, the South Eastman RHA told the patient that if she wanted to get her hearing test done more quickly than seven years, that she should go to a private clinic and pay the cost herself. They then gave this patient a list of all the private clinics that this patient could go to. So the patient has three options: go deaf, move to Winnipeg, or go to a private clinic.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: Which option does she suggest to this patient?

Ms. Oswald: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I say very clearly that any wait for a child and a family that is having concerns about that child's hearing or about any other issue, any wait is too long. Parents are concerned about their children, and they want to have access sooner. Any extended wait time is unacceptable and we're working to bring those wait times down. We're doing this through developing the I HEAR program across regional health authorities, for expanding universal hearing screening and by expanding the number of specialists that we're bringing to Manitoba across medical fields.

I might remind the member opposite that in all of her rhetoric, her leader said very clearly, health care wouldn't be their priority. They didn't promise to bring a single doctor to Manitoba nor train a single nurse. Seems a little odd this indignation today.

Home Care Rural Services

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, Ryan Elke, a constituent of mine and a young man who

suffers from muscular dystrophy, had been living at home with his parents until he had to be admitted to hospital in May. He now has a tracheotomy and a feeding tube. Ryan wants to come home, but he can't. Why? Because his family lives outside the Perimeter Highway where home care is not available to him.

Can the Minister of Health indicate why she has failed to provide Ryan with equitable services because he chooses to live outside the city?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Again, questions of home care from the members opposite are always interesting. We know that it is their party that embarked on a journey to privatize home care.

But nonetheless we know that the preservation of publicly funded home care is a jewel in Manitoba. It is the envy across the nation. But we need to do more. There's no question about that. We want to make sure that we have home-care professionals, not only in urban centres but in rural environments. We want to make sure that we have appropriate training for them.

And on the issue of a specific case, we'll have the regional health authority work with that individual to be able to provide as many supports as those individuals with complex medical needs have in their homes.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, in a letter sent to the minister and copied to me, Ryan's mom, Louise, says she now has to learn how to take care of her son's trach and feeding tube if Ryan is ever to come home. Either that or pay for a private firm to send an attendant because home care won't, or admit him to an expensive personal care home.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister: Is it the health policy of this government that if you live outside the city of Winnipeg, you must train to provide your own health care or pay for a private agency to provide it?

Ms. Oswald: I think we need to be very clear about which party in this House has a policy about paying for health care and which party does not. We work very—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Oswald: I seem to have touched a nerve. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to continue to fund home care in a public—publicly funded manner.

There is no question that we need to improve our resources for health human resources.

I know that the member opposite is not suggesting for a moment that we should be having personnel that are not trained in complex medical procedures to be assisting individuals in their home. We need to have individuals that are trained to do that, and we need to have more of them. We're not denying that, and we're working on it.

Mrs. Taillieu: It's clear that paying for private health care is on the hidden agenda of the NDP party.

Mr. Speaker, Ryan Elke cannot come home until he has home care. The home-care co-ordinator at the Health Sciences Centre told Mrs. Elke they would be able to get the need—they would be able to get the help they need from home care and obtain the necessary funding if they would simply relocate to the city. So the Elkes have three choices: move the family to Winnipeg, admit Ryan to a personal care home, or pay for private health care.

Which option does this minister recommend?

* (14:00)

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I'll say once again, the members opposite can say anything, if they wish, about who stands for privatization of health care and who does not. The public clearly knows. There's no question when their leader bragged about, you know, being the engineer of the privatization of home care. We know that the members opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Oswald: —on the record again and again.

What I can say to members opposite, we know, of course, their record on ambulances in rural—in rural Manitoba, that the facts are clear. I am saying to the House today that there's no question we need to augment our workforce, particularly in areas of individuals with complex medical needs. We are growing our workforce in areas of lighter responsibilities for home care. In the area of complex medical needs, we need to continue to grow that workforce. And I'm suggesting to the member opposite that we work with—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Parkland Regional Health Authority Ambulance Services

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, last fall I asked the Minister of Health to address the

ambulance needs of Eddystone, Bacon Ridge and Ebb and Flow First Nations. The minister responded by telling the House how many ambulances there are in the provincial fleet. A year has gone by; the problem still exists.

I ask the minister: When is she going to take some action? When can I tell the people of the area that their emergency response concerns are going to be resolved?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I'm not entirely sure why the member objects to making note of the fact that we have replaced the fleet of ambulances, 160-plus.

I can let the member opposite know, and I can remind him, that the investment in the Medical Transportation Co-ordination Centre in Brandon has allowed us to streamline and standardize dispatch and collect data as we've never collected before in terms of measuring the response times. Regional health authorities have access to this data. They have the ability to prioritize this data to ensure that rapid response is happening in communities and enable us to make the best possible investments into communities for emergency care.

In the member's region, he knows that there were investments with the Sandy Bay station. We're going to continue invest based on real-time data from MTCC.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, the area I refer to is home to about 2,500 people, and I hear the minister talk about appropriate response time and quick in-moving faster. It's—they're approximately 45 minutes to an hour away. I think that's totally inappropriate response. The Ebb and Flow First Nation has a number of trained EMTs and is willing to train more.

Why won't the minister acknowledge the need for the service in the area and take action to correct a serious shortfall in protecting the people who live there?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, we know that discussions within the regional health authority and the communities have been going on about amalgamation with the Whitemouth EMS station. We know that there is very intense work going on, on response times, on shoot times, in assuring that people will get the care that they need when they need it.

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker, practically every community in Manitoba would wish to have a fully staffed, fully stationed ambulance centre. We need to make sure that we make our investments in the best possible way with the safety of patients in mind, taking that advice with real data that we get from the MTCC and from the medical experts on the front line.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, I presented a petition in this House, with over 400 names, asking the minister to take action on ambulance service in this area of the province.

I ask the minister: Wouldn't this be an appropriate time to work with INAC and the people of the region to develop an ambulance service with a reasonable response time, an ambulance service that will save lives and bring peace of mind to a large segment of Manitoba's population?

Ms. Oswald: And I'll say again, we have made significant investments in emergency medical services in the last 10 years in Manitoba. We know that a recent story regarding EMS said, in reference to our substantial capital investment, a decade ago ambulances were sometimes little more than converted hearses. They were run by dozens of individual municipalities, driven largely by volunteers with only basic skills whose job was mostly to transport patients, otherwise known as scoop and run. Now medics are a profession like nurses or doctors. Their skills often match what you get in an emergency room and they've been better integrated into health-care system—more ambulances, better data, better response times, updated equipment, Mr. Speaker.

Yellowhead Regional Employment Skills & Services Office Closure

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): The Yellowhead employment skills and services office in Minnedosa is closing this Friday. From August to September this centre had over 40 new clients. This office is integral to the community, particularly during a time of recession.

The minister of competitiveness, trade and training waited until today to address this closure and still her response is inadequate. She has indicated that her department is taking interim measures to ensure services are maintained.

Rural Manitobans deserves more than stop-gap measures, Mr. Speaker. In a time of recession what

long-term steps is the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade going to take to make sure that this office and its essential services are maintained?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Well, thank you very much, Mr.—[*interjection*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a very, very serious issue. Employment Manitoba works with stakeholders throughout the province to provide employment and assistance services to unemployed people and officials—[*interjection*]

Officials in my department have been in touch with the organization and they will be working with the chair of the board to ensure that those services are maintained while they work out some of the structural issues with the organization.

Mrs. Rowat: This government has a long history of making promises to rural Manitobans and going back on their commitments. In 2006, the Province said—I'm sure the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) will like this. In 2006, the Province said that they were going to protect Crown lands branch employees from Neepawa and Minnedosa who were being displaced. They didn't.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister commit to working towards a long-term solution for this office and to start fulfilling instead of breaking promises that her government makes to rural Manitobans?

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to put factual information on the record in regards to this.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Allan: On the 20th of July, Mr. Speaker, the Yellowhead Regional Employment Skills & Services board made a decision not to sign a new contract with my department for those services. At no time was funding cut or reduced.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing in my department is working with the organization, and we will continue to work with the chair of the board to make sure that those services are in place as quickly as possible, not just in the short term but in the long term, as well.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, we are in a recession, and employment services and services that are provided out of these offices are extremely important.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP government not concerned of the potential mess that the former Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade has left for this community and this region with regard to Employment Manitoba?

Again, I ask the minister: What long-term solution is the government willing to put on the table to ensure that rural Manitobans who need essential services, like employment services, will receive them continually without a break in contract, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess the MLA didn't hear the response to my last two questions. The break in service was determined by the Yellowhead Regional Employment Skills & Services organization, and officials in my department are working with the organization to ensure that their area will receive the employment-related services through the itinerant service and through other employment assistance services that are located in the area.

We take this very, very seriously and we will continue to work on it. Thank you very much.

Crime (Leaf Rapids) Government Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the lead subject today was crime and gangs. I want to bring up to the attention of this Legislature a community which has had huge problems with crime and gangs because it has been totally abandoned by the NDP. And I, of course, refer to Leaf Rapids where the mayor tells me that there will be, by the end of this year, an estimated 600 people who've been put in jail. And for a small community that, that's almost, you know, it's terrible. And the fact is that, even though this is partly social problems that I hear today, that the only social worker in town is leaving in the next day or so and is going to be gone for two weeks. The NDP have abandoned this community.

I ask the Deputy Premier: Why has her government abandoned Leaf Rapids?

*(14:10)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, Mr. Speaker, as members of this House, and indeed Manitobans, know, Leaf Rapids unfortunately had a very significant change in their economic base, and that can have very deep impacts on a community and the sense of community, but this government, through

several departments, has been working with the community to make sure that we listen to them first of all in terms of their priorities, that we make sure that we are co-ordinating the services in that community and that we are able to provide the supports for families that are in need.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the mayor and his community have been crying for help and yet this government is not listening, has abandoned this community. You know, they talk, they talk about recreation, but the fact is that the recreation centre in this community is a Crown corporation, the responsibility of the Province, and yet is in such bad shape that the gym is not operational and that the town offices had to be moved out of the recreational centre because there's so much mould and so many problems, and this government has so badly looked after the centre's recreational centre that it's hardly useable, and I'm even hearing that the government might abandon it too.

What are the government's plans for this recreational centre which is so important to this community and so vital if you're going to have any possibility of helping Leaf Rapids?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I will not argue with the member for River Heights for a moment on the challenges that Leaf Rapids has experienced over the last several years, as the Minister of Family Services has pointed out, because of a situation with respect to a change in the economic circumstances of the community. This government fully realizes that. As a result, many different departments from this government have gotten together to try and address the problems with the community, the community not in isolation, but the community as part of the discussion, including Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and other departments in this government. We fully take that seriously, the issue raised by the member for River Heights, and I want to assure this House that we're working on the problem to correct the situation.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, you know, the minister is partly right that part of the solution is employment and jobs for people in Leaf Rapids. Well, the problem here is that there were 60 people who applied from Leaf Rapids to get jobs at the Wuskwatim Dam, huge opportunities. Sixty people applied, only four were given jobs.

What on earth happened to the breakdown here? Was it a problem that the training didn't work? Was

it a problem that the hiring practices were terrible? Why were the people of Leaf Rapids left out in the cold and totally forgotten by this government? This is appalling situation. The community's abandoned. Why?

Mr. Robinson: Well, I agree that the situation in northern Manitoba communities is appalling at the best of times, and I want to reassure the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) that I share in his frustration for the most part. *[interjection]* Well, the member from Steinbach chirps from his chair, and I would question if he's ever been to any of these northern communities.

I want to say, first of all, Mr. Speaker, that with respect to the Wuskwatim project, a priority is for the Nelson House community, the Nelson House band members, secondly, broadly, to northern Manitobans, and we share with the member's concerns that the member raised from River Heights about the issues in Leaf Rapids. I have given a response in this House that indeed this government, with the community, are trying to address this problem.

Medical Careers Exploration Program Funding

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, research indicates that the earlier students consider post-secondary education, the more likely they are to attend and graduate.

Would the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy please advise the House of any recent steps taken to promote access to post-secondary education?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Today, at the Pan Am Clinic, I was pleased to announce \$134,000 in funding for the Medical Careers Exploration Program. This is a partnership between grade 11 children–grade 11 students from Children of the Earth School and the Pan Am Clinic. It provides the students with the opportunity to work with professionals in a professional situation. So it not only encourages access to post-secondary education, but also addresses the need to have more Aboriginal people engaged in the health-care profession.

I was very pleased today, and I know members of the House will be encouraged to hear one young woman say she would like to be an oncologist, a young man say he would like to be a paramedic,

another young woman said she'd like to be a midwife. Someone told me she'd like to be a nurse.

Mr. Speaker, it was a fine, fine day.

Interlake Flooding Forage Assistance Program Extension

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), the member from Emerson and I met with Interlake producers about the severe toll that months of excess moisture has taken on their farm operations.

These producers are dealing with limited feed supplies, in addition to poor or non-existent crop yields.

Livestock producers are very concerned about the availability of feed supplies and winter is fast approaching.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture commit today to extend the Manitoba Forage Assistance Program, tell producers who are short of feed due to feed conditions like excess moisture? Action is needed now or we're gonna lose more producers.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Well, I'm very pleased that the member opposite didn't blame us for the bad weather, because now he'd have to start giving us credit for all of this good weather that we have seen for the last couple of weeks.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is the most important thing that the farmers have right now—good weather where they can continue to reap the benefits of their harvest and prepare for the winter months.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt there are concerns in the Interlake. My department is doing an assessment of the feed supply and the need for feed supply in that area. My staff is working with producers at looking at rations on how people might feed their animals, and we continue to work at other options with the federal government for people of this area.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the producers need actions and need action today, either say yes or a no, and this minister needs to be very clear about that, not whether she's working on a problem. That's the issue.

Pastures and forage crops in the Interlake have been damaged by excess moisture, fields are heavily rutted and need to be restored so crops can be

planted next year. There are serious drainage problems in this region, thanks, in no small part, to the Minister of Water Stewardship's (Ms. Melnick) failure to manage a significant backlog in doing these applications.

Will the Minister of Agriculture today commit to extension of the Manitoba Forage Assistance Program with an increased payment from \$40 to \$60? Is she working on a recovery plan? Yes or no, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Wowchuk: I'm pleased that the member opposite recognized that this government did some very good work last year when we put in place the forage assistance program, thanks to my colleague from the Interlake who had intervened on behalf of the producers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we put in place the forage recovery assistance program for producers. We had some 768 farmers make application for that program.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious situation, and I can assure the member that my staff is doing an assessment and looking at whether or not there is need for an AgriRecovery program in this area. That's a joint federal-provincial program, and we are also working with federal officials on that program as well.

Raw Sewage Dumping West St. Paul

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): We learned yesterday that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) and the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) knew that raw sewage was pouring into the Red River in West St. Paul.

My question is: Why did it take the minister till now to act on this issue?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, and I thank him for his recent concern about the quality of water in the province of Manitoba.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, it was a couple of years ago when we had a meeting with the representatives in the municipal councils, where I was in attendance with the First Minister (Mr. Doer) and a few other MLAs, where we discussed the issues of on-site waste water management and the fact that we needed to address that issue. So, as a result, we've had inspectors on the ground since 2008 looking at this very important issue.

* (14:20)

Not only that, the Rural Municipality of West St. Paul has received funding for a sewage treatment plant and plans to partner with the Rural Municipality of St. Andrews for a joint sewage collection system which would alleviate most, if not all, of the sewage-related problems in West St. Paul.

That, of course, is a very important budget item; members opposite will once again vote against our budget.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 138

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Minnedosa constituency, it's my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize the ever-growing contributions by the men and women of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 138 as they celebrate their 70th year of service to the community.

This anniversary celebration is being recognized along with Legion Week in Minnedosa, where the group is once again volunteering its time to serve the community with a week filled with events for the community's enjoyment, fun-filled events including a public barbecue and bingo, as well as a Museum Day where the public has a chance to view the legion's assortment of historical artifacts and learn about the sacrifices made by our soldiers and veterans.

The contributions that members of the Legion Branch 138 make to the residents of Minnedosa are astonishing—or astounding—whether it's providing support to the community's senior population through housing or to youth through program funding and scholarship opportunities. There is not a soul that is not touched in some way by a legion member.

The Ladies Auxiliary is an integral extension of the community's legion branch, and the women assist with a multitude of fundraising and volunteer services supporting legion programs and the greater community.

The mission statement for the Royal Canadian Legion is twofold: to serve veterans and their dependants and to promote remembrance and to act in the service of Canada and its communities. It is my pleasure to congratulate the Minnedosa Legion Branch 138 on accomplishing both of these goals, as

we are reminded to remember the past and support the generations of the future.

So I would like to congratulate the Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 138 on their 70th anniversary and say thank you for their continuing service to the community of Minnedosa and surrounding area. Thank you.

Sergeant Sean Clint Fisher

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to share with the House the contributions of Sergeant Sean Clint Fisher to the Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

Sergeant Fisher is a member of the Fort Garry Horse Combat Engineer Squadron and was deployed in Afghanistan in 2008 as a section commander for 12 Field Squadron with the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry battle group on Operation Athena. Sergeant Fisher pioneered the high readiness training to develop the tactics, techniques and procedures for emergency route clearing using the Buffalo and Husky mine-detecting vehicles.

During patrols, his crews were under the constant threat of improvised explosive devices, IEDs, and his crew struck IEDs on nine separate occasions, including two detonations on Sergeant Fisher's own vehicle. Undeterred by the extreme danger, he continued to perfect the effectiveness of the route clearing with the combined use of tanks, armoured engineer vehicles and dismounted soldiers. He went on to develop a plan in which the vehicles could continually patrol major road systems in Afghanistan in order to defeat the insurgents' tactics of placing IEDs. This significantly reduced the number of attacks on Canadian convoys and vehicles while serving to increase the confidence of the local population and Afghan security forces.

I was pleased to attend the parade in which Sergeant Fisher received the Canadian Forces Expeditionary Force Commanders Commendation for his leadership and ingenuity in this mission. He is considered a true hero in putting his life on the line to save others.

Sergeant Fisher is also employed as an instructor at the Manitoba Emergency Services College in Brandon and commutes weekly to train with his squadron at McGregor Armoury in Winnipeg. His employer at the Emergency Service College, Fire Commissioner Jones, was also recognized by the

Canadian Forces Liaison Council for his support of a reservist employee.

Mr. Speaker, the work of Sergeant Fisher is just one example of what our reservists have accomplished. I would ask all members of this House to join in recognizing his outstanding contribution to the Canadian Forces. Thank you.

Canwest Raise-a-Reader Day

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, it's a wonderful day here in Manitoba. The weather is crisp, the sun is shining, and I was pleasantly greeted on my way in to work by volunteers raising money for local literacy programs.

Growing up without television, the Internet or video games, reading was opportunity to entertain ourselves that had always been a great passion of mine. Therefore, it is with immense delight that I rise in the House to mark the National Canwest Raise-a-Reader Day here in Manitoba.

Volunteers were out raising money from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. for local literacy programs and bringing attention to family literacy issues in the community. You couldn't miss them. The volunteers, including local writers, newscasters and business leaders, were all wearing bright orange shirts and trading newspapers for cash donations.

It is an unfortunate reality that in Manitoba nearly 40 percent of working-age adults do not have the necessary literacy skills to fully participate in our modern knowledge economy. Helping people improve their reading skills is not only an investment in an individual, but it's also an investment in our community. The International Adult Literacy Survey has linked low literacy levels to unemployment, poverty and high crime rates. Literacy is too important to our future to allow it to remain hidden behind closed doors, and real action is critical for a society's social and economic well-being.

Started in 2002, the Canwest Raise-a-Reader program has raised nearly \$12.7 million across Canada. All the funds raised in our community stays in our community, funding local initiatives and programs such as adult education centres, the International Centre, CNIB and Literacy Partners of Manitoba, amongst others.

As the MLA for Springfield, I want to thank all of the volunteers who made Canwest Raise-a-Reader Day such a success. Also, I'd like to thank those individuals and organizations who work with

individuals every day to improve their literacy skills. Your service to the community is invaluable. I hope every Manitoban is given the opportunity to love reading as much as I do and is able to engage in lifelong learning essential to their social and economic well-being. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre 25th Anniversary

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 25th anniversary of a thriving community organization, the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. In the Ojibway language this name literally means: we all work together to help one another, a statement that has significant meaning in an organization such as this.

Since its inception in 1984, Ma Mawi, as it is affectionately referred to, has grown from an important community initiative to an exceptional agency whose mission is to provide culturally relevant, proactive and supportive programs and services for Aboriginal families.

Initially established by Aboriginal women in response to the number of Aboriginal children involved in the child welfare system, Ma Mawi recreated itself in the late 1990s, putting a greater emphasis on reconnecting with the urban Aboriginal community to develop community capacity. During this transformation Ma Mawi became a learning organization that worked to develop leadership skills within the organization. Programs were created to build leadership and capacity in the community and create a partnership between the organization and community members. Since that time, the organization has shifted from an approach that attempted to fix existing problems to one that embraces an asset-based approach to development, seeking to build upon existing strengths.

Today, the objective of the organization is to create local solutions that will ensure personal, family and community well-being. An overarching essential part of this vision is that it is imperative for these efforts to be undertaken in ways that empower community members with a sense of pride in being Aboriginal.

Mr. Speaker, in the struggle against many challenges faced by Aboriginal communities, Ma Mawi has worked tirelessly to strengthen families and build healthier communities. I thank them for their years of hard work and dedication. Congratulations to Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, an

inspiring community organization, on their 25th anniversary.

Government Record

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we are on the seventh day of the session and we had six matters of urgent public importance as the NDP abandon people all over Manitoba and forget about the critical issues that need to be dealt with today.

Today, of course, I raise the issue of how they have abandoned the community of Leaf Rapids, abandoned looking after the community centre, which is a Crown corporation and their responsibility, abandoned looking after crime and problems—social problems in the community, abandoned looking after economic employment opportunities, even though there's Wuskwatim Dam nearby.

* (14:30)

Look over the last week. We've heard about how they abandoned the communities of St. Theresa Point and Garden Hill this spring when the flu came. They've abandoned community after community in not providing adequate long-run solutions when it came to Greyhound transportation. They abandoned the people of the Interlake because they haven't prepared the whole area with a water management system which is helpful, and they're not prepared to support them when they fall on very troubled times because of all the water.

They've abandoned the people in Pine Falls, many of whom are locked out of their jobs at the moment because the community is in great difficulty because of the situation of the Pine Falls mills. They've abandoned people in Killarney Lake because they are failing to do anything about the severe alcohol problems, the loss of tourism. They didn't even show up for a major meeting on September the 9th. They've abandoned the hog farmers and never showed up for a meeting with hundreds of people in Morris. They've abandoned people who are concerned about Lake Winnipeg erosion and Sagkeeng and elsewhere.

One after another, this government has abandoned people. They've even abandoned the retired teachers in Manitoba and refused to give them the sort of support that they should have had after they served the people of this province for so long and so hard in the education system.

Mr. Speaker, this is a terrible record for this government while there are candidates going all over the province trying to get elected as leader of the Liberal Party—the party—the NDP party. The NDP party has abandoned the people.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Morris, on a grievance? On a grievance?

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): It's regrettable that I must stand here and speak on a grievance today, but there are so many issues and so many phone calls and e-mails that I've been experiencing just this last little while from people within my constituency and even others from other constituencies in the province, Mr. Speaker, that really prompts me to stand on this grievance today because there are just so many issues that are being brought forward. It's almost impossible to get all these questions proposed to ministers. So I'd like to speak about some of the issues that have been brought up to me in my constituency.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, we had the flood of this century this spring. Second largest flood on record, but the largest flood of this century since we passed over to 2000. Many people were affected. Thankfully, many people were not hit as hard as they were in 1999–1997, but many people, nonetheless, were affected, had to be removed from their homes or weren't able to get to their place of work, had to rent equipment such as boats so they could boat across the big red sea that covered the land between their property, usually perched high on a dike, to their place where their car was stored or where they could get some other alternative ways to reach their workplace or their school.

And since then, I've had a number of people call me and ask where their claims are at because they're being told by this government, you're not going to get covered. You're just not going to get covered. You better provide everything from your cancelled cheques to your social insurance number to your driver's licence to every single proof of identification or we're just not going to even cover you at all. And they're just saying, why is this necessary? We're being treated as criminals by this government simply because we're putting in a claim which they told us to do.

So they're very concerned as well because they know this government is not particularly interested in protected their personal information, so they're

concerned when they ask for all this information. They don't know what is going to be done with it and, in fact, they're just fearful that their claim is actually just going to be denied.

So it's very troubling that people that have been put in the situation where they've lost a lot of property due to floods. That's really not anything that they could prevent, and they're told then to fill out some forms for compensation and then basically told, well, you forget it. I mean, it's just not going to happen and, in fact, if it does, you'll be very lucky. But, Mr. Speaker, that is what we have traditionally seen from this government, the way they treat rural Manitobans.

I know that this spring there was also an overview of 2009 spring flooding in Manitoba, and that's the name of the document, *An Overview of the 2009 Spring Flooding in Manitoba*. That document was produced and submitted to the government and, interestingly, there was a section in this document that said one of the things that needed to be addressed, should we be talking about future floods—because, as we know, we get regular floods in the Red River Valley. We get very significant floods every few years, but we only get these huge floods-of-the-century every so often. But every year, in the Red River Valley, we do get a significant water level raising and, at times, that becomes what we term as a high-water event, in which case ring dikes have to be closed, and Highway 75 is under water.

And, of course, this poses a big problem, not just for the people in the Red River Valley, but for anybody that is travelling between the capital city in Manitoba—Winnipeg—and to our neighbours to the south into North Dakota and the United States. This has a huge impact on trade and tourism, a huge impact. And one of the recommendations from that overview, that report, was that there should be—sections of Highway 75 should be raised. And it's very troubling, Mr. Speaker, that this government has still not addressed the notion that they need to do something with Highway 75 to keep it open during flood events in the spring.

And, in fact, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) last spring, in this House, standing just over there, told me that they were very close to an announcement, Mr. Speaker. And, yet, still it's now almost October and there's still nothing, nothing.

And what did we say this spring? We said to them, three years ago we asked you to address

Highway 75 to keep it open in spring flood events. Three years. They had three years to address that problem since the last flood, major flood in 2006. Now, in 2009, we saw the same issue all over again because they did absolutely nothing to address the problem.

And now, we're told in the spring, oh, yes, we're getting close to making some kind of announcement. And now it's six months later, six months closer to next spring, which could be another flood—we don't know. And are we again going to be saying, what have you done? And they'll have to say they've done nothing, nothing again, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, there seems to be a theme of them doing nothing. I think that their slogan should be spend more, get less, because they're always talking about how much money they're putting in this and how much money they're putting in that, but the fact is there's no results, there's no results. So that says to me that's a mismanaged spending. In fact, it's an inability to manage the finances in this province if you have to spend more and get less results. That's just simple, inefficient management.

And if that's—and that is what's happened, Mr. Speaker, is constantly, when we ask questions, we get answers back: well, we just put this kind of money into health, we just put this kind of money into this, we just did that, we just did that. All these announcements of funding and, yet, we're not seeing any results. We're not seeing improvements. So what does that say? Where is the money being spent? Is somebody getting some money for not doing something? You have to ask these questions, because money's flowing but there's no results. Where's the money flowing to? It's a valid question, and one, I think, needs to be answered by this NDP government.

* (14:40)

For example, I raised the other day that the Z-dike, the Z-dike that extends all the way from St. Norbert, all the way to Brunkild, Mr. Speaker, is a dike covered with high-grade limestone riprap, crushed limestone. It's actually, in some places, several feet deep and thick on this dike. Now, all the other dikes in the Red River Valley, all the way from Emerson to St. Jean to Morris to Aubigny to Ste. Agathe to St. Adolphe, Rosenort, St. Norbert, all, and countless—countless private residents, are all protected with earthen dikes, dikes built from earth and seeded with vegetation to cement that earth.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the dike around Morris was built after the 1950 flood. Next year, in 2010, that town is going to be celebrating 60 years of that dike protecting that town, and if you want to talk about wind and wave action against that dike, you need to only stand on the top of that dike facing the south when the wind is blowing and you look over that Red Sea and that's all you see is water, and you see the wind blowing and the waves lapping and that dike, that earthen dike with not one piece of limestone on it has withstood 60 years, and not—granted, it doesn't have water against it every single year in those 60 years, but I can tell you it's been at least six or seven times in the last 15 years.

Now let's contrast that to the dike at Brunkild. Now, granted this dike is part of a bigger project, the floodway project, to protect the city of Winnipeg, but just look at the cost associated here. There was \$12 million—\$12 million, spent to put this high-grade limestone riprap on the dike for as far as the eye can see—\$12 million. And I just have to make one further comment on that. That dike didn't see a drop of water in the last flood in 2009. That could have been very easily—that money could have been better spent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please seek leave of the House to call third reading on Bill 238? No? Okay. Would you please call Bill 238. Second, would you please call debate on second readings, 37, and then report stage amendments, Bill 4? I believe leave is required for that, and then 26.

Mr. Speaker: So, orders of the day, we will deal in this order: we'll first deal with Bill No. 238, and if that's completed, then we'll deal with Bill No. 37, and if that is completed, I have to ask the House, is there leave then to deal with Bill No. 4 if Bill No. 37 is completed. Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Okay, leave has been granted. Report stage. So then if we complete that, then we'll go to Bill No. 26.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 238—The Service Animals Protection Act

Mr. Speaker: Okay, I'm going to call concurrence and third reading on Bill No. 238, The Service Animals Protection Act.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Wellington, that Bill No. 238, The Service Animal Protection Act; Loi sur la protection des animaux d'assistance, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park, seconded by the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino), that Bill No. 238, The Service Animals Protection Act, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and speak on the third reading of Bill 238, The Service Animal Protection Act.

Mr. Speaker, this will be first-in-Canada legislation that recognizes the valuable role that service animals play in our society, whether they are in private or public service. This legislation makes it an offence to interfere with a service animal, and such interference can not only impede the animal's ability to focus and concentrate at the moment, and therefore undermine the safety of the human and animal team, but it can also undermine the animal's training, and in some cases require the costly retraining or replacement of these animals.

Mr. Speaker, that training can take years and cost tens of thousands of dollars not to mention the time lost during retraining or replacement of these animals. This legislation gives owners and handlers peace of mind as well as previously unavailable means by which they can seek compensation for such damages to their service animals.

It also allows for fines that are in keeping with other related animal legislation. An amendment at committee stage now also provides a justice with the opportunity to order attendance at obedience training where interference has involved another animal.

This amendment was the result of co-operation and information from the service animal community who would like to see logical and practical consequences that could potentially prevent future incidences of interference.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that this legislation can be part of educating Manitobans about the role that these animals play in our society and to

encourage a growing respect for these animals. Information on the government Web site will be the first step in this direction to educating Manitobans, and I look forward to working with the many supporters of this legislation to continue to raise awareness about the etiquette associated with service animals and, again, the vital role they play in each of our lives whether we realize it or not.

These animals, when they work in private service, work as part of a human-animal team that makes life much more enriched and easy for those that have often visual impairment or hearing impairment or other medical conditions that can be mediated by a service animal, and their contributions to society are enriched by their partnership with their service animal.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

In public service, these animals protect us every day in ways that we are often unaware of, whether this is service animals that are trained to sniff for bombs, for drugs, or service animals that are employed in the investigation of crime, or more touching, in many respects, to the one that we most often think of, is in search and rescue where the role of a service animal can mean life and death for loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank those who have collaborated in bringing this legislation this far. There are too many to name them all individually here but I would like to acknowledge a few. We'd like to begin with Ms. Yvonne Peters for bringing this issue to attention and for her ongoing support of this legislation.

I would also like to thank members of the board and staff of various organizations within the city and across Canada including CNIB, the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities, the Canadian Council of the Blind, Manitoba division, Independent Living Resource Centre, and the Manitoba Deaf Association.

Also important in their support were the Office of the Fire Commissioner, the Winnipeg Police Service, Brandon Police Service, the RCMP, Manitoba Conservation, the Manitoba Police Canine Association and the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg.

I would also like to thank, specifically, Sergeant David Bessason who has afforded me the

opportunity to go and watch police canine training sessions.

* (14:50)

I would also like to personally thank Janet Hunt and Vic Pereira and their wonderful canine companions for the friendship that they have extended to me during this process and the opportunity to meet and interact with their amazing service animals.

I would also like to thank Doug Parisian, who made many interesting contributions along the way, most significantly working to inform me about issues around retraining and his work towards the amendment of this bill and his ongoing support of the bill.

There are so many things I would like to say about this legislation and the process, but the most important thing is I really appreciate the opportunity to have worked with so many wonderful people to bring in legislation that is, in many respects, long overdue for those in the service animal community; again, whether they have a personal service animal that works with them in private service or whether they are one in—of the many peace officers in our province that, again, daily work to protect us with their service animals at their side.

These are amazing animals. The work that they do and the contribution they can—they make to us on a daily basis is immeasurable, and the least that we can do for these animals and their human partners is to afford them the peace of mind that this legislation provides.

So, in closing, I look forward to continuing these relationships as we move forward with educating Manitobans and Canadians about this issue, and I look forward to this legislation becoming the first in Canada to recognize the valuable work of private and public service animals. And, most importantly, I look forward to its unanimous passage today and to the prospect of colleagues in other jurisdictions bringing forward similar legislation across Canada.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I, too, just want to add some comments from the Manitoba Liberal Party's perspective on this bill.

We support the bill in terms of what it is doing. In fact, we recognize the value of contributions that service animals provide, not only our province but

provinces across Canada, and I think whether it's a disaster, it's an airport, all sorts of circumstances in which we see service animals providing a service to the population, that we need to acknowledge the efforts of all those individuals involved in protecting us in many different ways.

And there are a lot of special animals that provide services, everything from a police service, to customs, to even—you know, we can make reference to those that would assist the blind. There's many ways and many roles that animals play in today's society, and, as the member that spoke before me made reference in terms of the people that were involved in assisting with the legislation, we would extend our appreciation to all of those that played a role in bringing forward Bill 238 to this date and, ultimately, we look forward to seeing its passage.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Is this House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of The Service Animals Protection Act.

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 37—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Limited At Large Elections of Trustees)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): We will now return to debate on second reading of Bill No. 37, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Limited At Large Election of Trustees).

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I would like to put a few comments on the record in regards to Bill 37—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Is it the will of the House to have the matter remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik)?

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): No.

Mr. Schuler: It is with great pleasure that I stand in this House and put a few comments on the record in regards to Bill 37.

This is one of those bills that—normally we don't like to see bills rushed through the House. As the public and most individuals would know, it's probably not a healthy thing to rush legislation through any legislative Chamber, and specifically when it comes from a New Democratic government and it deals with elections.

This, however, seems to be a fairly innocuous bill. It involves three school divisions that are basically grandfathered into a system of electing school trustees, moving away from a ward system to elect it at large, something that they had previously and just gives them back that opportunity to do so. They have asked for it. We have had an opportunity to have a briefing by the minister's department and staff which, I believe it was Dr. Yeo and one other staffperson, and we certainly appreciated them having us in and giving us an explanation on the bill. They also gave us a side-by-side explanation for it. So we are basically at the point here where we would have no difficulty with this legislation going through.

One of the difficulties that we do have with legislation when it's New Democrats changing election laws is it tends to be that everybody else suffers except for them, and we've seen that happen over the years. They tended to be a punishment politic style of a legislative process whereby the punishment was meted by a New Democratic government on all the opposition parties.

Unfortunately, for the electorate is, while all that was taking place, it tended to be that the New Democrats had—seemingly, had their hand in the till. We see that from the kind of refunds that the NDP party of Manitoba had to give back to Manitobans because they had taken canvassers' time, converted that into donation and issued tax receipts for it, which, as we know, that is not allowed under our system.

So, it was basically a system that was created: Do as we say, not as we do. And I can remember, over the years, this Premier (Mr. Doer) getting up, the member for Concordia, and saying, you know, we've never had the member charged, and we have a clean lily-white scale, which was actually interesting because, in the meantime, under the darkness of night, they were paying Elections Manitoba back all kinds of money and still are probably at the point where they should be handing back all kinds of other money.

So we're prepared to let this legislation proceed. We are always leery when it comes to New

Democrats changing election laws, but this one seems to be fairly innocuous, and we'd like to see it move on to committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): The question before the House is second reading of Bill No. 37, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

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

We are now moving on to second reading of The Apprenticeship and Certification Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for—

An Honourable Member: When's Bill 4?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Bill No. 4, by leave? Is that agreed to the House?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Agreed?

It is my understanding that, by leave, we are considering Bill No. 26, The Apprenticeship and—

* (15:00)

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Bill 4—The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): It is my understanding that leave has been granted to consider report stage amendment of Bill No. 4, The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I move, seconded by the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen),

THAT Bill 4 be amended by replacing Clause 4 with the following:

Tax incremental financing according to plan

4(1) Tax increment financing under this Act may be implemented only in accordance with a tax increment financing plan that meets the requirements of subsection (2).

Content of the plan

4(2) A tax incremental financing plan must set out

(a) the objectives of the plan and the risks and the benefits associated with it;

- (b) the need for the plan, including substantiation that the development or redevelopment will not progress significantly without it;
- (c) a description of the properties or classes of property that are proposed to be designated as community revitalization properties;
- (d) a statement as to whether the properties to be designated are, or will be, properties in respect of which tax increment financing will also apply to municipal property taxes;
- (e) a description of
 - (i) projected revenue from tax increment financing attributable to the proposed designation,
 - (ii) the grants proposed to be made from that revenue,
 - (iii) any financing arrangements that depend on the grants to be made from that revenue, and
 - (iv) any contingency plans to be implemented in the event that the actual revenue is greater or less than the revenue required to support those grants;
- (f) the projected impact, if any, that the plan will have on the residents affected by the plan; and
- (g) the projected impact that the plan will have on any school division affected by the plan.

Public planning process

4(3) Before a tax increment financing plan may be implemented, the minister must

- (a) consult with
 - (i) the council of each municipality within which any property to be designated under the plan is located, and
 - (ii) the school board of each school division within which any property to be designated under the plan is located;
- (b) hold one or more public hearings to review the plan, after making it available to the public for inspection and giving notice to the public of the proposed hearings and where the plan is available for inspection; and
- (c) keep a record of the public hearings and make those records available to the public.

Revision to the plan

4(4) If change to the plan is proposed in the course of the hearing under subsection (3), the minister may, without holding further hearings on the revised plan, revise the plan to reflect the proposed change

Community revitalization property

4(5) Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation,

- (a) designate real property as a community revitalization property in accordance with the tax incremental financing plan if the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that
 - (i) a significant improvement to the property would not occur without the proposed tax increment financing, and
 - (ii) it is in the public interest to support the proposed improvement with tax increment financing, and
- (b) designate other real property as a community revitalization property in accordance with the tax increment financing plan if it is in close proximity to the property designated under clause (a).

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Is there leave from the House to have the amendment considered as printed? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted.

THAT Bill 4 be amended by replacing Clause 4 with the following:

Tax increment financing according to plan

4(1) *Tax increment financing under this Act may be implemented only in accordance with a tax increment financing plan that meets the requirements of subsection (2).*

Content of plan

4(2) *A tax increment financing plan must set out*

- (a) the objectives of the plan and the risks and benefits associated with it;*
- (b) the need for the plan, including substantiation that development or redevelopment will not progress significantly without it;*
- (c) a description of the properties or classes of property that are proposed to be designated as community revitalization properties;*

(d) a statement as to whether the properties to be designated are, or will be, properties in respect of which tax increment financing will also apply to municipal property taxes;

(e) a description of

(i) the projected revenue from tax increment financing attributable to the proposed designations,

(ii) the grants proposed to be made from that revenue,

(iii) any financing arrangements that depend on the grants to be made from that revenue, and

(iv) any contingency plans to be implemented in the event that the actual revenue is greater or less than the revenue required to support those grants;

(f) the projected impact, if any, that the plan will have on residents affected by the plan; and

(g) the projected impact that the plan will have on any school division affected by the plan.

Public planning process

4(3) Before a tax increment financing plan may be implemented, the minister must

(a) consult with

(i) the council of each municipality within which any property to be designated under the plan is located, and

(ii) the school board of each school division within which any property to be designated under the plan is located;

(b) hold one or more public hearings to review the plan, after making it available to the public for inspection and giving notice to the public of the proposed hearings and where the plan is available for inspection; and

(c) keep a record of the public hearings and make those records available to the public.

Revision to plan

4(4) If a change to the plan is proposed in the course of a hearing under subsection (3), the minister may, without holding further hearings on the revised plan, revise the plan to reflect the proposed change

Community revitalization property

4(5) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation,

(a) designate real property as a community revitalization property in accordance with the tax increment financing plan if the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that

(i) a significant improvement to the property would not occur without the proposed tax increment financing, and

(ii) it is in the public interest to support the proposed improvement with tax increment financing; and

(b) designate other real property as a community revitalization property in accordance with the tax increment financing plan if it is in close proximity to property designated under clause (a).

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): It has been moved by the honourable member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese), and seconded by the honourable member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), that a report stage amendment be considered to the community—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Dispense.

The House can now—can undertake debate.

Mr. Briese: It's a pleasure to rise and speak on the amendment we are proposing to Bill 4, the tax incremental financing act.

We had committee hearings two nights ago on this bill and we heard over and over again from the presenters—I shouldn't say over and over again. There were five presenters and we heard a constant refrain from them.

One of the things that they continuously brought forward was that there should be a but-for clause in this and we have included that in the—in the amendments that we're proposing. We ask that the need for the plan to include substantiation on the development or redevelopment will not progress significantly without the tax revitalization financing. As the bill is written right now, it leaves that wide open. In fact, it goes far beyond that. It leaves the door open for almost anything to take place as a—as an incremental tax revitalization project.

Second theme we heard several times the other night was that there had to be more a defined area to where tax incremental financing could be used. And we've seen that issue arise over a period of time and in several other incremental tax financing zones

across the country and across the United States, especially.

There's definitely a need to define areas. The incremental tax financing should not be used if this bill passes. Even, it should not be used in anywhere except blighted or brownfield areas. It should not be used as, basically, a slush fund for the Minister of Finance to encourage development.

I ask the question, always, why every developer wouldn't apply for a TIF zone to be proposed under this legislation, no matter what the project is, to get some up-front financing that isn't a big problem for them to handle, and it will help them get their project off the ground, even if it's one that would proceed without TIF financing. The tax incremental financing should be slated only in areas where no development would take place without the tax incremental financing.

Something I was thinking of just a while ago here that I think could be on the agenda and something that we haven't heard, but it's certainly something that probably could happen under the way the legislation is written at the present time. Personal care homes have property taxes, and personal care homes outside of the city of Winnipeg require a 10 percent community contribution, and we have a new personal care home in my community. Our community contribution was \$3 million. The town, plus four surrounding R.M.s, used the—went and debentured their shares of that \$3 million and used a tax-sharing agreement that they entered, hoping to pay off those debentures over the next 20 to 25 years. I think, with the way the government, the NDP government, has scrambled around looking for all sorts of financing, it's not too long before they would suggest that maybe they would use TIF financing on personal care homes in rural Manitoba and continue to take the 10 percent contribution out of the municipalities, leaving them no way to raise the funds to offset that, and I don't think that would be too far down the road.

*(15:10)

We talked about accountability, and then that was mentioned in the—*[interjection]* Sorry about that. That was mentioned in the hearings—the committee hearings the other night, and we cover that fairly well in this proposed amendment. All this amendment is meant to do is make it more open to the public, a public process to enter into a TIF zone, not something that's done behind closed doors.

We ask for at least one public hearing to review the plan and a record of the public hearing that then becomes public—that is available to the public. We ask for any financing that may go on, any financing plans. What are the proposed grants that are going to be granted to developers up front? Because this is debt financing. You're putting out the money in a grant form up in front, and then you're using TIF to pay back that—hopefully, pay back that grant.

One of the things that came out of the committee hearing the other night was the fact that the TIF financing that's used for up-front funding for development should not be any more than 40 to 50 percent of the TIF projection because, in a number of areas, the property values have actually dropped, leaving somebody holding the bag, and I presume it would probably be the school division holding the bag to make up the shortfalls that never did materialize. Either that or the government is going to have to do it or the property taxes outside that particular TIF zone are going to have to do it.

Somebody's got to make up the shortfalls, and there's been quite a few cases in the United States since the drop in the economy and the drop—the massive drop in their housing market where TIF financing fell far short of projections while the money was already paid out up in front. It was already given to a developer. The TIF funding never materialized. Who picks up the shortfall? The money's already out there.

So those are some of the things we're trying to address in this amendment to Bill 4. We believe this is a very credible amendment. It gives some accountability, some satisfaction to the public that this is an open and transparent process that the Province and the developers are proposing to enter into.

With those few words on the amendment, I know I have a number of colleagues that want to speak to it, so thank you very much, Madam Deputy Minister.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Just wanting to put a few comments on the record, but also, in many ways, to clarify what the MLA for Ste. Rose was saying.

Some of the presenters the other evening did—I thought did a very good job of clarifying what TIF was all about, tax increment financing, which a lot of people have trouble with understanding what it's about, so I can understand how the opposition, not

meaning to make mischief or feel that they are making rightful comments, are really confused and putting inaccurate comments on the record.

Bill 4, The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act, has been carefully developed to ensure it'll provide an innovative way to support the revitalization of communities in Winnipeg and across Manitoba while protecting tax revenues for school divisions and, as a first priority or priorities, it will be used to support downtown Winnipeg affordable housing, southwest transit, rapid transit corridor and CentrePort, and, you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the inland port of CentrePort Canada, tax increment financing will support the creation of this inland port in Winnipeg, and you have people like Dave Angus, for example, the president of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce sees the inland port as the best economic opportunity the province has ever had.

The MLA for Brandon West described the economic spinoffs from the port as being on par for this province with what the oil sands have done for Alberta. It's something that we can't afford to lose, and Chris Lorenc from the Heavy Construction Association said, we must, as Manitobans, all become the primary champions of this great opportunity. And so the Leader of the Opposition, really, in his opposition to this particular piece of legislation, is really offside with the mayors of Winnipeg and Brandon by opposing the TIF bill.

Tax increment financing had been requested by the City of Winnipeg, by the City of Brandon and also by CentreVenture, all wanting this as a tool. It's just one tool in the toolbox, Madam Deputy Speaker, to be able to have economic development opportunities take place in the city of Winnipeg and, of course, elsewhere as well.

Bill 4 was introduced, or reintroduced, with amendments that strengthen partnership and transparency by specifying that municipalities and school boards must be consulted before a property is designated as a community revitalization property. Money collected from TIF-designated property can only be invested in the same property. The municipality must agree with the purpose of the revitalization grant, and the fund must be audited annually by an auditor and the minister must provide an annual report on the use of the fund.

So many of the—what the member from Ste. Rose is raising, we have addressed prior to introducing or reintroducing Bill 4 with amendments.

So we've already addressed a lot of what they are saying. Bill 4 is structured to work best in Manitoba. It is a made-in-Manitoba bill. Other TIF legislation in the U.S. and Alberta was carefully studied before we entered this, but it wouldn't work best in Manitoba just to copy it. For example, school divisions also receive regular tax increases as assessments increase in regular assessment cycle. Alberta's legislation, for example, doesn't share the assessment increase.

Our tax increment financing approach requires individual properties to be designated before they can be TIF'd. Properties to be TIF'd can only be used to support projects where significant redevelopment is taking place and there's a public interest in making that happen. That's the but-for clause that the members opposite often refer to and have referred to in the other evening's committee hearings.

In practical terms, this requires a plan. The developer would have to demonstrate that there's a gap that prevents development from taking place without government investment, and the proposed opposition amendments appear to envision defining a zone. Municipalities can define a zone under their authority and it's our expectation that the municipality would have a plan for the redevelopment of that zone or that particular zone if they wish to designate it as such.

The Province can designate properties within the zone. By designating properties and not a zone, Bill 4 ensures that school tax revenue is preserved. Other properties around the initial property may benefit and the incremental revenue will go to schools. So we addressed, Madam Deputy Speaker, the issues that the member from Ste. Rose is raising. Now I know he really doesn't object to TIF. He's actually quite in favour of it, and I think he mentioned that the other night, but he's rewording it in his own language on how it's important to have economic development, and when we raise the issues about, well, it could be rapid transit, it can be talking about—and the money's not going to be used for stadiums.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, members of the opposition are raising the, you know, the same idea that the Leader of the Opposition raised once on CJOB; that tax increment financing will take money away from schools to fund the stadium. Absolutely wrong. He says, don't take money from them and put that money to things like stadiums. In fact, tax

increment financing, I've been advised, won't even be used for the stadium project. So, again, it's one of these red herrings that they throw out there to either scare school divisions or try to frighten people, and yet you've got CentreVenture and others who stepped up and said, we need it. The City of Brandon says, we need this. City of Winnipeg, we need this. So the Leader of the Opposition is totally offside, where the mayors of these great cities want the opportunity to be able to move their cities forward and they need economic development opportunities to happen.

And here we have the opposition, I'd like to know where they stand on True North Centre or the MTS Centre as I call it, as it's called now. They were kind of against it before, but then they changed their mind and they're for it. But as was pointed out by CentreVenture, because of MTS, all those properties and the increase in value to those properties because of MTS Centre have skyrocketed. And I can't remember exactly his words, but he presented that as one example, MTS, that the opposition was against it. And I know that they've changed their mind now, of course. It's one of the busiest entertainment centres in North America, and, indeed, the world. Now everybody, you know, wants to sing hands and—hold hands and sing "Kumbaya" and because now it's, now it's wonderful, it's successful.

* (15:20)

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would argue that CentrePort and other initiatives like this using TIF can be equally as successful and even more so. And, in fact, even, to use the words of the member from Brandon West, saying, this is the greatest thing that we have going forward into our future. This is our equal to what Alberta has in oil.

So, you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to conclude by saying this, that we're—the opposition's amendment certainly is not something that we're looking at because we feel that those amendments have been addressed already. Prior to bringing this—reintroducing this legislation, bringing it to committee, this is built in. A lot of what they are raising is already in the legislation and there has been consultation taking place and discussions happening. And we are certainly on side with the mayor of Winnipeg and the mayor of Brandon and CentreVenture wanting to move forward on this legislation. We believe it's a, just one tool, just one tool to help economic development in this province.

So, with that, I would just like to say thank you for the opportunity to speak to the opposition's amendment. Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would strongly suggest that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) take a strong and—take a look at the bill itself and I challenge him to show us actually where it does have in the bill something that states, and a clause that states, a but-for clause, because it's not there.

And I suggest that the Minister of Transportation, rather than coming here and reading out a briefing note that he's received from his staff and his office, Madam Deputy Speaker, that he actually come here with the facts and present the facts in front of this Legislature because that is exactly why the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) has brought forward these amendments in this Legislature, to deal with parts of this bill that are in fact omitted from the bill.

So I would suggest that if the Minister of Transportation and other ministers opposite, and members opposite, don't have a problem with a but-for clause, that they should in fact support this amendment because it adds that in, Madam Deputy Speaker, and so I'm surprised.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And I know the minister hasn't been in this portfolio for very long and perhaps it was dumped on his desk. I know we're in the middle of a leadership campaign for the NDP party, but you know what, life goes on in Manitoba and it's not all about an NDP leadership and this government has to be accountable to Manitobans and needs to set aside its own party politics and put Manitobans first, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So I would strongly suggest that members opposite go back to the drawing board, that they, when they stand up and speak to this legislation that they look at—or this amendment to the legislation—that they look at this very seriously, because it adds something into this bill that is the key component of any TIF legislation, regardless if it's in Manitoba, Canada, the United States, North America, wherever it may be, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This, a but-for clause, is a key to any TIF legislation and that is why we on this side of the House have a serious problem with this piece of legislation because it is not in fact TIF legislation.

And we have spoken time and time again in this House, Madam Deputy Speaker, about the fact that we are very much in favour of TIF legislation, if that's what in fact it was that was brought forward into this House.

Now, we've already seen, Madam Deputy Speaker, that they took one, you know, kick at the can last year in Bill 46. They brought that forward. They couldn't get it right then. They went back to the drawing board once again, they brought forward Bill 4, and here we are. They took some of the problems that we had, accountability, ministerial accountability, they put that into the legislation but they left out the key component of any TIF legislation: a but-for clause.

And also, Madam Deputy Speaker, what this does is say that any investments from—that the Minister of Finance decides to get involved in, and to have TIF legislation and to be represented by TIF legislation, has to be only for blighted communities, and that is what the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) is bringing forward here.

So I don't know why members opposite have a problem with this amendment to the legislation, because it actually strengthens the legislation. And if they weren't so afraid and if their real hidden agenda wasn't to use this legislation as nothing more for the Minister of Finance in this province to use this type of legislation for a further slush fund to use more tax dollars for Manitobans towards their own pet projects, Madam Deputy Speaker, then they would have supported this amendment today.

But I think what we're seeing here today is what members opposite are all about: they're afraid of accountability, yet they bring forward legislation that calls on municipalities to be—to be—and municipal representatives to be accountable, Madam Deputy Speaker. Well, it's a joke. They're not even accountable themselves to their own legislation that they bring forward in this province, and I am—this very much concerns me and makes me very, very upset when the minister who is now responsible for this legislation stands before this House and says that there is already a but-for clause in this piece of legislation. There is not, and there is nothing in here that says specifically that these types of investments have to go into blighted communities.

So, despite the fact that we have a serious problem of what this Province is trying to do, they're trying to take education tax dollars with this legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker. They're trying

to take those education tax dollars and put them into a slush fund where the Minister of Finance can decide whatever his pet project—or her, sorry, her pet projects now, we have a new Minister of Finance now—where she can decide where she is going to spend those tax dollars, those hard-earned tax dollars that are supposed to be going to education funding in this province.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would suggest that members opposite have nothing more but a hidden agenda when it comes to this piece of legislation. If they didn't have a hidden agenda, then they would support this very, very important amendment to the legislation today. Unfortunately, they will not, and so we continue to know that really this legislation is nothing more than setting up a government slush fund—another one. And we on this side will stand up for Manitoba taxpayers and ensure that the Minister of Finance does not have the opportunity, ever, to take their tax dollars and have the ability to set up their own slush fund to fund their own pet projects.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Madam Deputy Speaker, and I certainly appreciate the comments that were put on the record by my colleagues. Not so much the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux).

I would like to first of all congratulate the member from Ste. Rose for bringing forward such a well-conceived and well-drawn and well-thought-out amendment that, in fact, allows checks and balances into an otherwise open-ended piece of legislation for the Finance Minister simply to take advantage of.

As was mentioned, the but-for clause is very, very important. If there are developments that are going to happen regardless of whether there's a TIF or not, it makes only common sense to allow those developments to happen without having to take advantage of revenue centres from either the municipality or the school division, and we'll talk about that at length. So that's the first thing.

Should the developments proceed without TIF, then please allow them to proceed. There's no need for government intervention. There's no need for other additional—other additional subsidies, if you will, or grants that have to be put forward at the cost of, not the government, but the municipalities and the school division, and I think that's an issue that has to be underscored and underlined on a regular basis.

This is a revenue centre that is the domain of municipalities and school divisions. Now, municipalities and school divisions don't have as many opportunities to raise revenue. They don't have as many revenue centres as does the provincial government. School divisions get—school divisions get minor grants from the Province where the majority of the funding comes from taxpayers—which it shouldn't be on the property taxes in the first place, Madam Speaker. It shouldn't be on property taxes, but it is.

* (15:30)

As a matter of fact—as a matter of fact, the grant that was offered by the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) to the Brandon School Division just recently, wasn't that turned down? Turned down, and they raised taxes to the property tax owners of the city of Brandon by 6.9 percent. But that doesn't matter to the Minister of Education. No, it doesn't matter to him because that's a—that's a revenue centre that the school division certainly has the ability to do, and they did.

We recognize that, as I mentioned earlier in the week, that the financials of this Province are in a shambles at the present time. The chickens have, indeed, come home to roost, and the Province is looking for every dime, every cent, so that they can have more photo ops and more cheque presentations. But they're running out of cash to have those cheque presentations and photo ops, so they have to find another alternative revenue centre, revenue source, for cash. And they see the TIF bill as being this golden egg sitting out there and they wish to be able to grab it and put it into their own financial opportunities.

The Finance Minister, under this piece of legislation, is going to have control of any of the revenues that are generated from the TIF bill. The Finance Minister, who has already proven his inability to look after the finances that he already has with the Province of Manitoba, is now gonna be given the ability to look after the funds that should go to municipal taxes and to school division taxes. That's wrong.

And what this—what this legislation does, and all it does, is make the provincial government accountable. It makes the program transparent and it makes it open to the public. And why—why would the government not want that? Why would they not want transparency? Why would they not want openness, and why would they not want to be

accountable to the people that put them into this Legislature? It's really quite astonishing that they will not allow the same people that put them here the ability to speak to the TIF areas that are going to be identified in the cities of Brandon and in the cities of Winnipeg.

Now, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) took great pride in saying that this is desired by the City of Brandon, this is desired by the City of Winnipeg, and, in fact, he's right. But desired only if and when it can be implemented in the proper fashion, not simply cash grab by a cash-strapped Province, and that's where we're heading with this and this piece of legislation.

I can not see one member of the government voting against this amendment. I hope they read the amendment. I hope they read the legislation. I hope they understand the concept of TIF, which I doubt if they do, but I do, beyond hope, wish that they could grasp exactly what is being asked for here from municipalities and school divisions.

Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation said, well, you know, it's gonna be for projects that—like CentrePort. We can accept CentrePort as being a TIF project. But should the people of Manitoba, the people of Winnipeg, the people of Rosser not have the ability to sit down and say, okay, let's see the plan. Let's see how much money is going to be generated out of the tax increment fund. Let's see how it's going to be expended. Let's see how it's going to affect—and this is—this is in—this is in the legislation. Let's see how it's going to affect the municipal tax base.

Municipalities, believe it or not, need cash just as bad as the provincial—no, I take that back; municipalities are better operated than the provincial government. They need cash, though, in order to take care of the services that they have to put forward for their constituents, those property-based services that are required by municipalities. They need cash. There's inflation. There's employment requirements. There is costs that are associated with operating a municipality in a school division. So they need—the only source of revenue they have is the property tax base. That's it. The only source of revenue from a municipality in a school division, with the exception of these supposed grants given by the Minister of Education, are, in fact, a property tax base.

So what happens when the Province takes the ability away from the school division and the

municipalities from generating that additional cash requirements from property? And here it is. So we go to CentrePort, and it's acceptable, but why not tell the municipality how much money is going to be taken with the TIF. How much is going to be generated? How it's going to be managed? How it's going to be operated, and, specifically, for that project. But, no, they don't even wanna do that. They don't want to have open public meetings. They don't want to be able to show what the project is all about. They don't want to know—they don't want to show what the financial ramifications are. They just simply want the minister to have control of the fund. Now, isn't that scary? That the Finance Minister is gonna have control of a fund that he isn't going to have to tell anybody what it's—what it's for. He can do whatever he wants with it, effectively, and that's wrong. There has to be a check and balance. There has to be a protection to the taxpayers of the city of Brandon and of the city of Winnipeg. There has to be.

We've already recognized, as they said earlier, that the provincial government's running into some very serious financial difficulty. The danger here is that they can identify any development that they would like to see and take the monies away from the municipalities and school divisions to fund that project. It could be a personal care home. It could be any project that has taxes associated to it.

Well, let's talk about the municipalities and school divisions. Okay, so now we know that the City of Brandon—or the school division in Brandon hasn't taken the largesse given by the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), so they've increased the property taxes by 6.9 percent. *[interjection]* By 6.9 percent, the tax base for the school division went up.

Now, let's assume that there was a TIF project in the city of Brandon, and it's a fairly large tax base that now has been assumed by the Province. But the cost will go up in the—in fact, costs are going up quite substantially in the school division because we have an extreme influx of students, influx of—influx of immigrants. We have other costs associated with the Brandon School Division and, unfortunately, now all we have to do is to pass those increased costs over a smaller tax base because the Province is going to be taking the cash that they could have got on the increment funding. School divisions need it; municipalities need it. Municipalities aren't gonna get it; it's gonna go to the Province. And what happens? Those costs are spread over the existing property owners in the community.

Now, all we're saying in this amendment, and it's a great amendment, an absolute great amendment. The but-for says, don't do a TIF if you don't need to, which, to me, makes a lot of sense. I mean, if you don't have to do it, don't do it, unless, of course, you need the cash, and the Province is gonna keep the cash for something else. I can see why you wouldn't want a but-for 'cause if there's a need there, and they have the ability to take it, believe me—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

The member's time has expired.

As a friendly reminder to all members of the House, we do allow members to use electronic devices in the House outside of question period to send messages. The use of electronic devices to take pictures in the House during the time the House is in session is not allowed. Is that clear? Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to say, very briefly, that we will support this amendment of the Conservatives. We think it's reasonable to have this kind of information, and we are a little bit surprised that the government is—it doesn't appear to be ready to support it. Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for—Carman? No, you've got two people standing.

* (15:40)

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): It was just my shadow behind me that I was—I, also, would like to commend the member from Ste. Rose for bringing forward such a well-crafted amendment to what is, essentially, in its—in its form the way it was brought in, it's a bad bill, because, as has been explained over and over, this is taking money away from schools to create a slush fund for this NDP government as the bill is crafted. If you would accept this amendment, then it would change that, and it would put some accountability back into the bill. The Minister of Education keeps saying that it doesn't take money away from schools. I wish he would stand up and tell us how it won't take away from schools when you're using a TIF on education tax. *[interjection]* They're going to keep increasing the funding only on capital funding. What about operations?

If you have the pleasure of owning property in Manitoba, you have noticed how your school taxes continue to rise year after year. So for the Education

minister to say that funding—of course, perhaps he has increased funding, but he hasn't kept pace with the cost of funding to the school boards which forces the school boards to increase their education tax portion on properties.

Ask any school division in this province whether they have enough money coming from the province so that they could decrease their school taxes, and I challenge you to find one school division that will say that, because the ultimate effect is that we continue to see higher and higher school taxes.

Now, if you put a TIF in, in a TIF zone—as I was trying to explain the other day and I'll try again today—if you take a TIF and use it on an apartment building that creates housing for a number of students, the school population goes up, it's the increases in the property—the school portion of the property taxes in that TIF zone will then go to the Province as this bill is written, and it will not go to the local school, which is going to need more funding because there's more students. If the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) would like to stand up and explain how that will happen, I would gladly sit down right now, but apparently he doesn't seem to want to do that.

So this amendment really is very strong in that it puts the but-for in here and we can have some control over this. It doesn't go into the Minister of Finance—whoever that may be under the new Premier—into their slush fund and disappear into the provincial government coffers to be used on their own pet projects throughout the province.

This amendment would, in effect, stop that ability. It would put more accountability into whoever is proposing a TIF, and TIFs are used throughout the United States in particular. The municipalities in Manitoba have the ability now to use a municipal TIF, and they have not touched the school portion of it, but this bill, in its original form, again would allow the provincial government to raid education taxes for their own private slush fund.

This amendment really does address that issue, and we would certainly support—we certainly support this. Obviously, we support this. The member from Ste. Rose spent an awful lot of time getting this amendment forward, bringing it forward to, to make a bad bill better, and, believe me, if they would at least consult with us to start with, we wouldn't have to spend so much time trying to make a bad bill

better because of the lack of attention to detail that this government shows on all their bills that they put forward. And they—through a lack of consultation, again, that's how we see poorly crafted bills, and it's a sign that they've been in government too long.

They think they know better than everyone else. The Minister of Education insists that he knows how to run schools much better than anybody else in the province and that they don't need to consult with Manitobans on this; they know better. It's that big government—big government is going to look at—Big Brother is going to look after you, and it's an arrogance that comes through over and over through a lot of these bills, through most of these bills, that—where they haven't consulted with Manitobans on them. There is lots of bills coming through. There's the election finance bill that's come through.

What they're trying to do is cover up for their own ability to hide—it's creative financing in The Elections Act, to use the former Minister of Infrastructure, pardon me, Intergovernmental Affairs—when he first introduced this, he called this bill creative financing, and I guess that's what they've—they've taken it to new lows now to take it to Elections Manitoba for creative financing in how to abuse the system, how to abuse taxpayers of Manitoba, to be able to bilk Manitobans out their hard-earned tax money. They have absolutely no regard for Manitobans when they bring forward a bill like this, because what it's going to do, it's going to line their coffers for their pet projects. All this government is interested in now is somehow clinging to power. They have no—they don't have the best interests of Manitobans at heart; if they ever did, they certainly don't now, and we see that in bills like this because they're saying, we don't need to make this bill better, this bill works for us.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this bill is very symptomatic of the entire government and how they operate. We're about to head into Bill 26 shortly here when we're finished debating this amendment and, again, that was—I could speak a lot on that one about the lack of consultation in there. They have totally dropped the ball on that bill, which I am very familiar with. They forgot to—they forgot to go back to the apprentice—people who do the apprentices just to see what was needed in this bill and, instead, they've tried to create—and this Bill 4 is exactly the same, it's the ability to create that top, central control. It's not about what is good for Manitobans in a TIF for rebuilding—for building projects throughout

Manitoba. This bill is about controlling power and it's going to put the power of finance, of TIF, using TIFs into a small select group within the Cabinet to decide on their pet projects throughout Manitoba.

This bill is—the government should seriously consider, if not withdrawing TIF, to come back and craft it how it should be done. At the very least, they should accept this amendment as it makes this bad bill that, at least, somewhat more plausible. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It's my pleasure to speak to the proposed amendments to Bill 4 and, of course, Bill 4 being The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act as brought forward by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the member from Thompson, back last fall and, of course, first brought in June 12th of '08, by the same minister, as Bill 46. And, of course, it's been mentioned Bill 46 gave the minister supreme power in being able to deal with all of the funds that were put together in this slush fund for the government.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have no problem with the use of tax incremental—of dollars to be used in areas of tax increment finance funding where they've been established for clear development of poor areas, for developmental areas, and a number of those items. But what the government has failed to realize here is that the City of Winnipeg and the City of Brandon and others already have that power in their jurisdictions to deal with it on their property taxes as they do today, as they're already established. And so what they're trying to put this bill over on Manitobans by saying that they have the ability as a province to give these urban areas the opportunity to do that. But it's not just urban areas; it could be anywhere in Manitoba. And once you set it up in the original bill—and there has been, as the member from Tuxedo indicated, some softening of this particular bill from Bill 46 to Bill 4, on the pressure that the member from Ste. Rose brought forward and our caucus, our leader, back at that time, brought some points to the attention of the government and they made some changes, brought the bill back. Very few changes, but made some changes.

* (15:50)

This is a situation where, as the minister said, we're on side, he's on side with those mayors. Well, we're on side with those mayors as well. And we're also on side with the school boards across Manitoba and the students who are learning in schools that this

bill will take money away from schools and students and their ability to supply the courses that they need to a top-notch education in the province of Manitoba. And that worries me as a father and a grandparent, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), and I mean—I understand that, you know, he may be a—hasn't been around as long as some of the members.

The member, of course, that's running from Thompson is the leader of the party right now and the Intergovernmental Affairs Minister ran rampant on the Cabinet when they put this bill forward, Madam Deputy Speaker, and sold them a bill of goods that I don't believe the Minister of Education understands all the implications of.

I think that—you know, the other day when this was being debated in the House, I heard him say—I asked him if he had been consulted. He told me that he had been consulted and he thought this was good legislation. I also heard him say just now that—how would you fund this, we said to him, and he said, well, we would keep increasing funding to education. Well, I think that says it all right there. This is the same party and same minister that was against funding education from general revenue and even looking at other opportunities to fund education at a part manner as we proposed in 2003, and he's yet to get the ball, if you will. I don't think he's caught on. Of course, maybe his objective here is to enshrine school taxes on property forever and ever and ever because that's what this bill would do. And I believe that he has vacated his responsibilities by not being more responsible in looking at the bill in a more forthright and objective manner.

And I only say this because, as I said earlier, we have no problem using these kinds of dollars for particular projects. And the government—and we heard the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) just stand up, and speaking to this amendment as well, state that they would use the bill for CentrePort and a number of other projects. Well, that's fine and, you know—and as the member from Brandon West said, if that was to be the case, that would be more acceptable.

But, as I've said in this House before, Madam Deputy Speaker, we pressed the government, or worked with the government, to get the CentrePort bill through so they could get a board of governors and put the operations of the CentrePort in place and hire a CEO which they've just done. I'm glad to see that deputy minister of Finance for Manitoba will

leave a great vacancy in the government's deputy roles, but Ms. Diane Gray has been chosen to be the new CentrePort CEO and president,

Madam Deputy Speaker, but I do believe that this was—if this is the only option put forward to people, to presentations in the city or to the R.M. of Rosser and others for the development of CentrePort, that you're kind of tied, your hands are kind of tied if you're the investors looking to develop those areas because the government hasn't come up with any other wisdom or ideas on how to move forward.

And I would say that—I would personally have less problem with this particular bill, Bill 4, that is, if the word CentrePort was to be found anywhere in the bill. But it's not, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's not to be found in the bill. CentrePort is not a term that's used in this bill and neither was tax increment finance funding, Bill 4's terminology of forming a community revitalization fund, in the bill that we used to pass the CentrePort incorporation. So, they're not linked, at least they're not linked in legislation in the two acts. And yet the government stands here and says it's the only way we can have CentrePort development.

So I think what the member from Ste. Rose has brought forward here is an excellent amendment because it allows for tax increment financing plans to set out the objectives of the plan and the risks of the benefits associated with it. It sets out the need for the plans, including substantiation that development or redevelopment will not progress significantly without it, and a number of other areas that I think are very important in clarifying what the money will be used for. And that's all we're asking in seeking here, is accountability on behalf of the government to move this bill forward in a responsible manner. But I don't think it's—it's not a responsible bill in the particular terminology that it's written in today.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just—I want to say, as well, that the—I guess, if you want, I just wanted to back up to what I'd said earlier about the minister saying that he was consulted on this particular bill and that he felt that the only way to do it is to keep on increasing the funding from the government. I just want to say that, you know, you have to be very, very clear that this bill is using the incremental increases in future education costs—or education tax that will come out of developmental areas, but, again, it doesn't define the developmental area in this particular case.

So, therefore, we have to assume that not the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) but other ministers in his government will have the ability—whoever that Intergovernmental Affairs Minister is, or maybe even Cabinet will decide some day that they want to use—or Treasury Board—that they want to use these dollars for some other project of which the Minister of Education would be completely not aware of today, and he would have no ability to stop them. He would have no ability to stop them from taking education funds away from him, away from his department.

Now, he might be placated by his Treasury Board or by his Cabinet members by saying, well, I need dollars and I need them to go to education. So the government says, well, you know, we can have a win-win here. We can look really good because we'll take money from the Treasury and make it look like we're increasing the budget for education. While we take it away on one hand, we'll fill it up out of general revenue, and then we'll take the incremental increases and put them into industrial development, instead of doing what government responsibly should do, and that is look at other means of funding these developmental projects in the first place and leaving the education system alone so that it can do the job that the minister is in charge of doing, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I think that's pretty clear. I think he actually gets it now, what's going on here, and I think that it's, you know—that's what he needs to go back and fight for, I think, internally, within his party and within his own Cabinet and caucus, and I think that, Madam Deputy Speaker, if we're going to just make the government look good by bringing a bill in like this to be used for developmental opportunities as opposed to funding education in a proper manner, that he would get much more support, I think, if it was the other way around.

I just want to say that this talks about and develops and particularly names the community revitalization fund, and, as I said earlier, the governments today have that opportunity to do that. They have the ability to tax on property taxes already and, the incremental increases, they're not taking away the education tax that's presently there. I must admit that, but in areas where there is no development already, or it could be others, it could amount to a huge amount of money cause the increases are very great in those areas.

And with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to give others the opportunity to speak to this amendment. Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

An Honourable Member: No.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Did I hear a no? Is it agreed?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No, it's not agreed.

Voice Vote

Madam Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Madam Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it. I declare the amendment lost.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Government House Leader): On House business, just a notice. I'd just like to announce that in addition to the bills previously referred, that Bill 37, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Limited At Large Elections of Trustees), will also be considered at the September 28th meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

* (16:00)

Madam Deputy Speaker: It has just been announced that, in addition to the bills previously referred, that Bill 37, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Limited At Large Elections of Trustees), will also be considered at the September 28, 2009 meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

* * *

Mr. Briese: I wish to withdraw the other amendment to Bill 4.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Does the member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted.

Bill 26—The Apprenticeship and Certification Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: As directed by the House leader, we will now consider report stage amendments to Bill 26. That bill is on the Order Paper and there are four amendments from the honourable member for Carman.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): I move, seconded by the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon),

THAT Bill 26 be amended in Clause 4(3) by adding, "The board must take into account the results of the consultation when preparing the annual strategic plan." at the end.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Proposed amendment to Bill 26, The Apprenticeship and Certification Act, moved by Mr. Pedersen, seconded by member from Carman—*[interjection]*—Emerson,

THAT Bill 26 be amended in Clause 4(3) by adding, "The board must take into account the results of the consultations when preparing the annual strategic plan." at the end.

Mr. Pedersen: This is one of four amendments that I've brought forth in consultation with the members who are of the public—who are involved in the apprenticeship trade. It is unfortunate that the member—the minister—previous minister, and the present minister, did not do the same because it is those people that are, so to speak, on the ground, that know this, The Apprenticeship Act, and not only knowing The Apprenticeship Act but have practical experience with apprenticeship that can provide some valuable insight.

And my whole concern with this bill—I have many concerns and Mr. Wightman, who came to committee, brought forth many of those, but what I, the real, the biggest concern that I have with this bill is that it's making it—again, it's making a bill top-heavy in terms of control by the minister, by the Cabinet, and it's not taking into account the people that are involved in the apprenticeship trade, both from the employers' and the employees' position.

This bill is centralizing power through the executive director to the minister and you have Cabinet involved in making decisions on things that should be decided within the workplace, and in consultation with the workplace, and when the suggestions should be coming from the workplace

and that—how there should be changes. Instead, this bill is doing the exact opposite. It's taking away from the apprenticeship board, from the PTACs, the provincial trade advisory councils, and it's taking away from the employers. And we've heard from a great deal of both union shops and non-union shops and from apprentices themselves. I have heard back from them saying that what has happened with this bill is that they're—they feel they're losing control over what has been a very successful plan. We know that the future needs for apprentices in Manitoba are great. I just got back the—Freedom of Information request on the number of apprentices and I haven't had time to go through those, but I just, generally, running through it I can see where this government is certainly not coming anywhere close to their targets that was one of their large campaign promises in the 2007 election. But I can't really comment on them specifically because I just haven't had that time to go through and get the numbers.

The other night in committee, Mr. Peter Wightman, did present to the committee, and Mr. Wightman is—represents the employers that are—have union shops, and he has—represents some rather substantial construction companies in Manitoba. We were somewhat concerned that he—he actually represents a construction labour relations association, the CLR, as he makes mention of it—and during the committee the minister promised to consult with Mr. Wightman. I am not sure that that has happened. In fact, given the time frame that—of this—of this bill and of the amendments, there was no amendments coming forward from the government to change many of the concerns that Mr. Wightman brought forward. So I can only assume, and I'm sure the minister will correct me if I'm wrong, that she did consult with him over the weekend and, perhaps she did consult, but I didn't see any amendments coming through. So, obviously, she did not listen to any of his concerns regarding this bill.

So it's through people like Mr. Wightman, there are other people that I've consulted with too that have concerns with this. In terms of—if you go farther into the bill where we never even got time to get into, there's the compliance section of this bill that is very onerous and it creates some rather grey areas because the minister, as both in her role now as Competitiveness, Training and Trade and also of Labour, there is an overlap in terms of compliance here. There's going to be some confusion within the industry as to who exactly is supervising what in terms of compliance. Is a labour inspector—an

inspector coming in from the Labour Department doing inspections on behalf of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, or vice versa? This is questions that we never even got to in committee. We've—because of the change in ministers here, we haven't been able to get any answers on this—on these kind of concerns, even farther down without even addressing this particular amendment.

But this—in terms of this amendment itself, what we were after was to have the board—to be able to have the board—to have the board to be able not just—to have the board consult on a wider basis, not just going back to the board only. What we want them to do was be able to go back to industry, have meaningful consultations with the industry, not just—not just the board, in terms of preparing strategic plans. How could you make a strategic plan if you don't go out and talk to industry and know where industry is at and what industry is planning? It's industry that drives the apprenticeship trade, not government that drives apprenticeships, and there's a clear distinction between that. At least there's a clear distinction to me, and there should be from the government that, while they set up the rules and how apprenticeships will work, how do they know what is coming down in the construction business without talking to the actual players out there? And that's what we meant by having meaningful consultations within the industry.

* (16:10)

We think that this—although it sounds like—the minister can say, well, yes, we're going to consult, but when it's not written in the act that's—we're only having it on, in this case, on her word. There is nothing written in legislation and if you're going to make—if you're going to change legislation, then change it to make it meaningful, not just to placate members within your own caucus, and that's one of the huge issues of this whole bill.

We hope that the minister will come back now and support this amendment. We think that it is worthwhile. And, again, as I reiterate, it's not necessarily changing the legislation dramatically but it's making it much more clear, both for government and for the industry players, so that they know, they know by legislation that they will be consulted on a regular basis and have meaningful input into any changes that are being proposed, because we only need to go back to this past winter when the member from Minto was the minister, the department made changes to the plumbing PTAC and it—along the

way, they forgot to talk to the industry, and they forgot to tell industry what was happening, and it created an uproar not only within—it created an uproar not only within the industry side but from the labour side too, because they needed to know, they were bidding on projects based on previous labour rates; suddenly the labour rates got bumped because they—bumped up because they had changed the plumbing apprenticeship from five years to four years and they had done this without consulting the industry.

This—that action, again, was representative of what has happened with this bill. They forget to go back to the people who really make apprenticeship happen in here.

We would like to see this amendment—as this amendment just is one small step towards making more meaningful bill that can be supported by industry.

With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would look forward to other comments about this amendment.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): It's a pleasure to speak today to the amendment that the MLA is proposing in regards to clause 4(3) of the bill.

I, first of all, would like to just touch base with him in regards to some of the concerns that he had in regards to consultation and I would like to ensure him that there was significant consultation with the stakeholders on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I'm sure he would appreciate knowing that the Winnipeg Construction Association, that their CEO, Vice-President Ron Hambley has had a thorough look at this legislation. And Mr. Hambley represents contractors, union and non-union contractors here in Manitoba and I'm quite sure that the member opposite is familiar with that organization.

So I can guarantee him as well that the, this legislation, Bill 26, came out of the Apprenticeship Futures Commission consultation and the legislation mirrors a lot of the consultation and the advice that we received from stakeholders when we did that consultation.

I'm sure the member's also happy to know that Mr. Peter Wightman was contacted immediately after the committee meeting last week. And we have

Scott Sinclair, who is the head of the Apprenticeship branch. He's got a meeting with Mr. Wightman, and I can guarantee you that that meeting will resolve all of the issues and concerns that Mr. Wightman had. I know there was a long list of them, and they have set that meeting up so that we can resolve the concerns that Mr. Wightman had.

The MLA also refers to the plumbing PTAC issue, where a decision was made by the PTAC that a wage rate was changed and it wasn't in accordance with The Construction Industry Wages Act. I can guarantee him that because of the changes that are made in this bill, Bill 26, that there will be consultation with those PTACs, and that that kind—if this legislation had been in place when that happened, that would not have occurred. So I can guarantee him that that issue will be resolved. And I've been asked by the MLA for Inkster what took me so long to bring in. I think that we have done an incredible job on our apprenticeship file since we made the announcement to increase apprentices by 4,000, and I'm sure once the MLA has an opportunity to look at the numbers that he has received, because of the FIPPA that he did, that he will be pleased with the numbers, and we will be able to, you know, continue to build our skilled labour capacity with this new legislation.

I'm sorry that we won't be supporting clause 4(3), the amendment that the member is making. I just want him to know that when examining the functions of the board as they relate to decision making, which is actually section 6(2) in the act, it must be taken into consideration that each member must be knowledgeable about designated trades or occupation or the needs of Manitoba's labour market for skilled and trained persons. As such, each member will come with an extensive and wide array of knowledge, perspectives and experiences, including those which directly represent employers and employees in the skilled trades.

The intent of 4(3) is to provide a mechanism for stakeholders to communicate directly with the board on issues, concerns and requests when developing their annual plan. The development of the plan should and will be reflective of a number and factors, including the public consultations but, also, the individual knowledge, perspectives and experiences of the board members, as outlined above, information and perspectives from Apprenticeship Manitoba and the minister.

While the public consultation will undoubtedly form a major part of the content of each annual plan produced by the board, compelling the board to take into account the results of the consultations may unnecessarily restrict the board's ability to include or not include the results of the consultation based on the other sources of information and expertise that inform the development of the annual plan.

So, with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that, unfortunately, we will not be supporting this amendment.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to this particular amendment. It's cold comfort that I hear that the minister will give us her personal guarantee, when actually the former minister that was in power at the time, or in the chair at the time when this was drafted, this particular legislation was put together—to hear what he has had to say in the last couple of days, he being the designate leader or handpicked designated leader or up-and-coming leader, and then says we will not—we will be open to discussion and consultation on the east-side line one day, and the next day he's not open to consultation at all. And that's exactly what would happen in this bill if this particular amendment isn't put forward, Mr. Speaker.

And this apprenticeship act is very near and dear to me, Mr. Speaker, as I've—I went through an apprenticeship program and I was the second person in—or in the second class of apprenticeship programs that were acknowledged throughout the industry, and they were the models for the industry of Canada and the United States and British Columbia in 1965.

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we have qualified individuals in all of our trades, and what this does here is it takes away that consultation process. And so I would suggest, in this particular—in this particular bill, without consultation, and if we were to give—and if I understand this right, under this Bill 26, what we have given is, the executive director has the authority to issue an occupational certificate to—in a designated occupation if they are of the opinion—if they are of the opinion—it's not that you went through an apprenticeship program, it's if that executive-designate, or executive director is of the opinion that the individual has met prescribed standards and requirements of certification of a designated occupation. Granting a certificate should require more than the opinion of one individual, I'm

saying to the minister. That's why you have advisory boards, and that's why you have an apprenticeship program. It's not just one individual and certainly not the minister in this situation.

The bill gives the Cabinet the power to add to the list of trades that require apprenticeship training, Mr. Speaker, and is this just a tool for the NDP? Is this a tool for them to achieve their 4,000 new apprenticeship that they—trainees—that they have talked about and that they were promising?

Mr. Speaker, this is the wrong way to achieve that. The proper way is through consultation and is through the—through the employers and with, as well, the unions, which you have been neglected, in many cases, which the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) just pointed out, with the plumbers' union, when they found out that they had shortened their apprenticeship program to four years instead of five.

And I'd like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that once you do these types of things, you start to dilute the quality of the tradespeople. The quality of the tradespeople to any union is very, very important. That's their bread and butter, is that they can go out and do a great job, and they know they have qualified people on the ground that can do that.

Elevating unqualified people creates issues. Serious, serious issues, Mr. Speaker, and if that is at the designate of one individual, of the opinion, of the opinion of the executive director, you start elevating these people into a position where it happens to be that they're working in a fairly dangerous situation of 200 or 300 feet in the air, and you have someone there that's not qualified, it creates a safety issue. If it's underground, you create safety issues. And any part of this, whether it happens to be working in a foundry or it happens to be working at Flyer Coach, or wherever else, if you have unqualified people they create a safety issue.

The other issue that's just as important to the society that we're in today is not just a safety issue—although to me, that's a very, very important, that's the most important—but it adds an expense. It adds an expense to the employer and to the business, which is very important. But, at the same time, it adds a huge expense to the customers. The customers are the voters in this province, and I would suggest that the voters in this province, when they see this bill and see that the minister didn't support this amendment, it's gonna punish that particular individual, and rightly so, Mr. Speaker. For that situation, for in this instance, there should be no

added expense to the employer; there should be no added expense to the customer. And I would suggest that it should be—that the minister should be taking this into consideration.

It takes away the power from the unions and/or PTAC to make decisions. Why would you want to take that power away from them? They've been supporting you for years and years and years, and yet you don't think they know what they're doing. And you know what? They don't if they keep supporting you. They don't if they support this type of legislation. That's what I say, Mr. Speaker. This minister, and the former minister that plans, or wants to be the leader of this province, is committing political suicide with this type of—not supporting this type of an amendment.

She says that she will give us—the minister says she would give us her unqualified guarantee that there will be a consultation process, and had this process or had this bill been in place, the issue that happened this past spring with the plumbers and with the plumbers union and with the employers not knowing for four months, after, after they had been doing jobs or completed jobs, that they had to go back to their customers or eat, or eat the loss. She says this wouldn't have happened in this situation, and yet she stood in her chair today and didn't explain how that would possibly happen.

The apprenticeship programs in this province, and as well in all of the provinces in Canada, are great programs. That's how we replace our aging workers; that's how we keep up with technology. These young people are—they just can't be stopped. They're unstoppable. They have the ability to learn new skills that some of the older members just don't have. They have the flexibility to move around that a lot of the old members don't have, and in the construction industry, Mr. Speaker, for example, construction workers are—they have to be flexible and they have to be portable. Construction is a boom-or-bust, chicken-or-feather industry, and one day it's chickens, the next day it's feathers, that's just the way it is. But you have to follow the jobs, and these apprentices, many of them with young families, that's what they do. They follow the jobs. Where you get to be old like, say, the member from Arthur-Virden, you get to be a little bit more stable. You want to stay at home. You don't care to travel. But, for the young people, they do that and that's how they make their living. And that's terribly important to the construction industry. It's important to have

qualified people that will be there when they need them.

Besides travelling, we have some large, large projects coming forward in Manitoba, large projects like CentrePort that we can thank—that we can thank the federal government for. We can thank them for making sure that CentrePort came to Winnipeg. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we have to have some very, very qualified people for that, to work on that project.

We don't need to shorten—we don't need to shorten the time of the apprenticeship programs. We need to have the full five years so that we can guarantee the employers that they have qualified people that come to the plate every day to work. That's very, very important to the economy of this province.

We also need to ensure that these apprentices receive proper technical and safety training, and Mr. Speaker, that is where the consultation—that's where the consultation process comes in, and that's where that extra year comes in.

And so, Mr. Speaker, too often—too often we have seen the NDP draft and implement different policies and legislation without the proper consultation and then have to withdraw them. Here you have an opportunity for a simple amendment that is well thought out, well drafted, with a good cause, and we have the minister—or the acting minister, I'm not exactly sure what—how to refer to her—

An Honourable Member: Minister.

Mr. Graydon: We'll refer to her as the minister, then—and she stands up and says, we will not support this because I can guarantee you—I can guarantee you that the consultation process is there. No, it's not there. It's very, very clear that there is no consultation process, that it actually goes back to one individual, the executive director.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the rest of the—of her colleagues, the minister's colleagues on that side of the floor, to at least support this amendment. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou).

Is the honourable member for Portage la Prairie speaking? I had recognized you.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: So you're not speaking to this one. Okay, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we will now move on to the second amendment.

Mr. Pedersen: I move, second by the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou),

THAT Bill 26 be amended by adding the following after Clause 9(2):

Merging committees

9(2.1) Despite subsection (1), the board may, by by-law, merge two or more committees set out in that subsection. The merged committee must perform all the roles assigned to the applicable committees under section 10.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Carman, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie,

THAT Bill 26 be amended by adding the following after Clause 9(2)—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

* (16:30)

Mr. Pedersen: When we had our bill briefing with the member from Minto, when he was Minister of

Competitiveness, Training and Trade—[interjection] Well, it's hard to keep track. They keep changing on me all the time, so I'm having trouble keeping up, but when we did our bill briefing on this bill, one of the first things I noticed about this bill was the language within section 9(1). If any of you have ever had any experience in organizations, you have committees, and it's good to have committees, but what you should have is the ability to form committees as are needed.

What this bill is doing, the way this bill is written, is that these four committees would be set out in legislation. So what happens if you don't need these committees? Unless you're making—unless you're creating these to have a make-work project so that people will be on committees that don't do anything, you need to have the ability in here to either merge—you can't dissolve the committees—but merge them into others so that they're not redundant. And the only way they could be done that was to have this amendment in here was giving you, by bylaw, to be able to merge two or more committees.

This is not changing the legislation. I believe that this is making the legislation even better and more useful. It's taking out, if you have committees that become redundant, it allows the board to be able to handle that redundancy rather than having them set out in and not doing anything. Now, unless you're paying people to show up at committee meetings, and you're trying to create work for them, that would be a reason to have them there. So they could go to a committee meeting, get paid their stipend to attend, but you don't—but if the committee is not needed, why do you have it, and this would give the board the ability to change the committees. And we've said within the amendment that those committees will still be there, but you will merge them with others so that you can make better use of people's time.

People are busy, and it's even within the people who are on the board that would be on these committees. They have busy lives—they don't need to be on committees that are redundant, and this allows them to be able to do that, to be able to be more effective in their time on the boards.

So I think I've made my argument on this. I would certainly like to hear from the minister why they shouldn't make them—why you should try to not have redundant committees. Perhaps she just wants to have more committees just for the sake of the committees. So I'll certainly look forward to her comments as to why, but the way the bill stands right

now, these four committees must be there. They must have person's name to them, even if they become redundant as time changes, as conditions change, which we know they always do. This is—I believe this is a good amendment to make this bill even more workable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to comment on the previous speaker's concerns about how the apprenticeship act is near and dear to his heart.

I just want you to know that this legislation is near and dear to my heart as well, because of the fact that I have a 21-year-old daughter who is an electrician apprentice. She's in her third year of her apprenticeship, and she is working right now for Comstock at the airport, and she also worked on the Manitoba Hydro tower for Wescan. So I have someone who is living in my household who is an electrician apprentice, and I have other apprentices coming and going, and to-ing and fro-ing, and work boots here and work boots there, and toolboxes here and toolboxes there, and so I just want him to know that this legislation is near and dear to my heart as well.

In regards to the member's concerns about the committee structure that is outlined in this legislation, he seems to have a concern about redundancy, and I can guarantee him that his concerns are not legitimate, and, hopefully, he'll understand it when I walk him through this.

The standing committees that are outlined in sections 9(1) of the legislation represent the core responsibilities of the board in conducting consultations in producing the annual plan, which he seemed to be concerned about in his previous remarks, and meeting with industry and other stakeholders on a regular basis, approving standards and appointing industry experts to provincial advisory committees. As such, it was considered absolutely critical to responsible governance and transparency of the apprenticeship system to specify these committees in statute.

Nothing in the act prevents the standing committees from being comprised of similar or same members of the board and meeting consecutively on the same day to conduct business for the purposes of efficiency or expediency, which was another issue, I believe, the member was raising concern about. You know, were we wasting taxpayer's money, are we having too many meetings, you know, what were we

doing? However, it is critically important to keep the committee structurally and functionally separate to ensure the importance and clarity of each committee's responsibilities is understood and appropriately carried out. So, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we will not be supporting this amendment.

Mr. David Faursehou (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the report stage amendment process in the Legislative Assembly this afternoon as it pertains to Bill 26.

I listened with a great interest how the minister replied to the amendment and I find it, once again, curious that the minister's basically saying, trust me. It is something that is really questionable when an individual such as Mr. Peter Wightman, who has the credentials and understanding of the industry and the supporting legislation probably better than anyone else in the province, and makes statements that this legislation was done without consultation and consideration of the industry. And the credentials of Mr. Wightman is one that we all should appreciate because of his dedication to the industry and to make absolutely certain that the credentials of those that are engaged in industry here in Manitoba, are well trained and understanding of their profession.

And Mr. Wightman—some of Wightman's credentials are that he is the caucus chair of the Labour Management Review Committee, which is, in fact, a government-appointed committee. He's also the chair of the Provincial Trade Advisory Committee. In addition to that, his responsibilities as executive director of the Construction Labour Relations Association of Manitoba, as well, and this government has seen and recognized these credentials of Mr. Wightman by engaging him on The Construction Industry Wages Act review committee.

And the minister acknowledges that his participation is one that she values very much. But for the minister to make a statement to the effect that Mr. Wightman does not know what he's talking about and all that is needed is that he take the opportunity to sit down with staff so that they can clarify—

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, on a point of order.

Ms. Allan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would just like the member to apologize. I have never ever said anything of the kind about Peter Wightman. I've always had, I said—

An Honourable Member: Greatest respect.

Ms. Allan: —greatest respect for Mr. Wightman and I would like the member to withdraw those comments.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On a point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, that's clearly a dispute over the facts. Let's continue with the debate.

* * *

Mr. Faurschou: I'm just reading by the minister's comments here, making the suggestion that, and in her own words, that none of the concerns that Mr. Wightman had at committee are, indeed, concerns. And all that we need to do, is to sit down with our staff, from our department, and then you will realize that each and every one of your issues is not really an issue.

* (16:40)

So, Mr. Speaker, I wonder, really, what the minister is speaking about when—when she makes statements even whether they be regarding the amendments or by point of order, because these are a quotation from her—from her own statements at committee.

So, Mr. Speaker, I really, really question the statements when the minister rises in the House and say these amendments are not necessary and we, as members of the Legislature, should only rely on trust.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again I commend the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) for bringing forward the report stage amendments that are indeed focussed on addressing the issues that were brought forward at committee. And the minister constantly also makes statements that this legislation has emanated out of extensive consultative process—as she has stated on numerous occasions. And when Mr. Wightman makes a statement that we were not formally consulted, we were not contacted by this current government or by any representatives of the apprentice branch at all, so you wonder why the minister can stand in the House and try and hoodwink all of us with the statement that she has had extensive consultations when the individual that we all recognized is—has stellar credentials and is

engaged in the industry and has dedicated himself to the industry and wants only the best for the industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am gravely, gravely concerned in regards to all of what the minister has to say in this House, and all of us should take those statements with a grain of salt and with a great deal of suspicion.

So, once again, Mr. Speaker, this government has indicated that they are not supportive of the honourable member for Carman's amendment to Bill 26, by statements in the House here, and it is indeed regrettable because these amendments have been well crafted and are well founded based upon consultation with industry, something that this minister, obviously, has not done. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable member for Carman.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we will now move on to the third amendment.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu),

THAT Bill 26 be amended in Clause 15(1) by adding the following after clause (a):

(a.1) to consult with employers, employees, persons who provide training and other participants in the apprenticeship system on matters under this Act;

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Carman, seconded by the honourable member for Morris,

THAT Bill 26 be amended in Clause 15(1) by adding the following after clause (a):—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, this amendment is fairly clear in that what we're looking for is for additional consultation, and I have met the executive director, Mr. Sinclair. He is very capable in his job, and there's no doubt that he has duties and responsibilities and particularly advising the minister, working with the board. But what we're asking for again is just clarity on this. We want to make sure that the executive director really does go back and consult with employers, employees and persons who provide training. In other words, industry people, both the employer and the employees. And this is not to say that the current executive director does not do that; I'm sure he does and he's told me that he does, but we're just looking for clarity here down the road to make sure that every executive director does this, because we're familiar with it right now.

We know what the bill says here and we know that the current executive director does, but let's make sure that there is clarity in this that the executive director down the road, whoever it may be, will go back into the act and look there, and anyone who questions whether he is doing this, it will—it's direction out of the act that he does consult with people other than the board and other than the PTACs and any other committees. What this is saying—it's written in there that he will—that the executive director shall assist them, assist the committees, the PTACs and other committees.

But what we want to make sure, again just for clarity, is that the executive director is indeed going out and consulting with employers, employees and persons who provide training. Those are the people on the ground who know the business. They're the ones who are on the job every day and they have the best experience to provide advice back to the executive director so that then the executive director can take that back to the boards and to the PTACs from those people who are on the ground and know this. This is not an intrusive amendment. This just helps to provide clarity for this entire bill, and that

was what the purpose of my four amendments are. This was just to provide clarity out of here, and if the minister chooses not to accept clarity, that will be her choice, I guess.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to—I've made my case for this. I think this is a good amendment, and it doesn't in any way, shape or form take away from the bill, it adds clarity to the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Allan: Well, I understand that the member is seeking clarity, but the whole issue around Bill 26, Mr. Speaker, is to strengthen the mandate and give the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Board a clear mandate to guide and co-ordinate a relevant and accessible and responsive apprenticeship and certification system. The board is responsible for providing industry input and oversight to the apprenticeship training and certification system, and they are responsible for the decisions and recommendations that are made by the board and by PTACs. Both the board and PTACs are required to consult with a wide range of stakeholders, including the industry.

The executive director is responsible for administration of the apprenticeship system and the co-ordination of the administration and the board's governance and policy-making responsibility. As part of the executive director's responsibilities, discussions with stakeholders, including industry, is a necessary and routine function.

We believe these changes in the legislation will strengthen the governance of the board and will strengthen the governance of PTACs and allow the executive director to do his job on a day-to-day basis building an apprenticeship system that will meet the skilled labour shortages of our employers and continue to drive our economic development here in Manitoba. So, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we will not be supporting this amendment.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I want to just speak on this amendment proposed by the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen), and just thank the member for Carman for actually doing some due diligence on this very important bill and doing some consulting because, as I believe, the minister herself admitted that she hadn't really done her due diligence on this bill because she's been in this position a very short time. And I just saw her consult just a few minutes ago with the former Minister of Competitiveness,

Training and Trade to get herself a briefing on this bill, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:50)

And I'm concerned when bills are brought into this House and there isn't a lot of consultation made because you have to wonder what the methods are and what the motives are for bringing in this legislation, because we always see there's some ulterior motive with this government. It's never just straight up front what's good for the industry, because, obviously, if that was the case, they would listen to what the industry and the stakeholders have to say. And what did they have to say? Well, we know that Peter Wightman and the member from Portage has outlined his credentials as a very qualified person within the industry. He did come to committee and he did speak, and he brought out at least 15 sections in the bill that he said he had concerns about. And, as the member from Portage la Prairie pointed out as he was perusing *Hansard* from the committee which was held last week, the minister, and I think it is as the member from Portage la Prairie did say, pretty much of an arrogant position to actually say, but I can guarantee you that once you've sat down with staff and had an opportunity to go all through the issues, that you will have a comfort level with this legislation.

But I really think she's just paying lip service to Peter Wightman because she hasn't sat down with him. She says she's going to but she's going to push this bill ahead before she sits down with him.

So she's going to pass the legislation. She's going to oppose all of our amendments and then she's going to sit down and do some consulting and say, there, there, there, everything's fine. Everything's fine. We've taken care of everything. And I just—I have issues with that kind of approach, the Big Brother kind of approach there. There, there, little people, go away. We know what we're doing and you really don't, so, you know, we'll take care of everything. Don't worry about it. You'll be very happy in the end when we're done. And I have some problems with that kind of attitude. It's really concerning, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the member from Carman has put quite a lot of effort into looking at what amendments can be brought forward here to strengthen the legislation and that's, I think, a very important part of the debate that we have in this Chamber is we can look at the legislation and say, okay, we see some things that are all right there, but we could perhaps

strengthen that legislation, and I don't think that the members on the opposite side should just vote against amendments just because they're brought forward by the opposition. I think they should look at all these amendments, consult with the stakeholders, and take a good, serious look at what the amendments propose.

And let's look at this amendment, Mr. Speaker. What does this amendment say? It says that Bill 26 be amended in clause 15(1) by adding the following after clause (a), and this is what it says: to consult with employers, employees, persons who provide training and other participants in the apprenticeship system on matters under this act.

Now, is the minister going to vote against consultation with employers, consultation with employees, and consultation with persons who provide training, and other participants in the apprenticeship system on matters under this act? Is that's what's going to happen here? That the minister is going to stand in her place and vote against consultation? I think we have a definite problem if we have a minister of the government that's going to vote against consultation. I want to thank the member from Carman for proposing this amendment, and let's see what they have to say about that.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll now move on to the fourth amendment.

Mr. Pedersen: I move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen),

THAT Bill 26 be amended in Clause 19(2) by striking out "executive director" wherever it occurs and substituting "board".

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Carman, seconded by the honourable member for Turtle Mountain,

THAT Bill 26 be amended in Clause 19(2) by striking out "executive director" wherever it occurs and substituting "board".

Mr. Pedersen: Now, before the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) jumps up—or Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade, sorry, jumps up and says I'm against the executive director, let me be very clear, the executive director is a very well-qualified person. Mr. Sinclair does an excellent job in his position. However, saying that, there is no way that the executive director should be given the exclusive power to issue an occupational certificate in a designated occupation to a person who, in the opinion of the executive director alone, has met the prescribed standards and requirements for certification in the designated occupation.

If this is in—if there's a trade and there are issues about grandfathering certain trades to workers, there is no way that the executive director should be doing this on his or her own person. Purpose of the board is to run the apprenticeship act. The purpose of the executive director is to consult with the board. The executive director should not be making these decisions on—by—in this case, by himself. That's the purpose of the board. If there's—if the executive director can actually present the argument to the board that someone should be designated a trade or occupational certificate in a—in a designated occupation, there is no reason why that cannot wait until you go before a board.

There is danger in this in that somewhere down the road that executive director can abuse that power and they're not consulting with the board. That is the problem with this—with this particular 19(2)—that's a problem with this subsection in this bill. There is no way that the executive director should have that power. Purpose of the board is to look after the apprenticeship act. Put the power of this apprenticeship program back in the board and not with the executive director. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, well, I just would like to inform the member that the language that he references in section 19(2) of the act is used consistently throughout this legislation in respect to the issuing of a certification of qualification in a designated trade. And I'd just like him to know that the same language is used in the current Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act in section 18(3). So I just want him to know that this is not a new power that is allocated to the executive director. So he doesn't need to be concerned about it. We won't be supporting this amendment.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I'd just like to put a few words on the record in regards to this amendment as well, brought forward by the member from Carman, and I thank him for his due diligence in regards to this particular effort to try and, I guess, defuse some of the power of any one individual as, in the words of this particular bill, the executive director. And to back up what the member from Carman has said about the individual executive director, it's not about the work that that particular individual can do because it's good, but to have that kind of power to do the—in the—as it's worded, in the opinion of the executive director, an occupational certificate can be issued, we feel on this side of the House that that is a decision that should be made by a broader panel. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable member for Carman.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

An Honourable Member: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it. The amendment has been defeated.

* * *

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, and maybe perhaps at this time since we have a little—a few minutes or maybe 30 seconds, in any event, before 5 o'clock, perhaps I can seek some clarification from the Speaker.

And I noticed when we were—we went out to Edmonton to visit some of the—the Legislature in

Alberta, that the comment was made several times in Alberta, and I noticed also in Victoria, and I also noticed in Regina, that the Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Sorry. The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, September 23, 2009

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