

Third Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Arthur-Virten	
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 2, 2013

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.

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: For the information of the House, I would like to offer a clarification regarding our processes with petitions. Last Thursday, December the 28th, the member for St. Paul—the honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) asked for leave to present a petition for the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat). At the time, I indicated that leave was not required. Upon checking our records, however, it was determined that, in fact, leave is required for one member to present a petition on behalf of another, and, for future reference, we will be following this established practice.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 210—The Centennial of Manitoba Women's Right to Vote Act

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Bill 210, The Centennial of Manitoba Women's Right to Vote Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I feel indeed privileged to be able to bring forward this private member's bill because it recognizes that January 28th, 1916, Manitoba women were granted the right to vote in provincial elections. I would also note that Manitoba was the first Canadian province to give women the right to vote.

And also, we know that Nellie McClung was very instrumental in helping to move this forward. She fought a dedicated and passionate fight to ensure

that women would get the right to vote, and for her efforts we were very privileged a number of years ago to be able to put forward a private member's bill that now has seen a monument to Nellie McClung and other women that worked very hard for equality in Manitoba and we are glad to see that monument on the grounds of the Legislature.

So what we would propose in this private member's bill is that January 28th, 2016, as it is the 100th anniversary of the day when Manitoba women were granted the right to vote in provincial elections, we would like to see it as a day to honour and celebrate the passion, inspiration and fierce determination of Nellie McClung and all the other women who were champions of equality. And it's also a good time to also have a special reminder to Manitobans to value this hard-won right.

So January 28th, 2016, would be known as the centennial of Manitoba women's right to vote. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

An Honourable Member: Question.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitoba families of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition's signed by R. Lazaruk, L. Hunter, G. Lysyshin and many more fine Manitobans.

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

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And this petition is signed by M. Snedden, W. Gillies, F. De Bruin and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition's submitted on behalf of L. Salmon, S. Williams, R. Scaife and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (13:40)

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by S. Bruce, T. Dinsmore, T. Bjornson and many other fine Manitobans.

East Selkirk Sewage Lagoon Site— Environmental Licence

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

And these are—the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) On August the 12th, 2013, Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship granted a licence for the construction of a sewage lagoon on the former CIL explosives plant site in East Selkirk.

(2) This site is located 1,100 feet from the banks of the Red River.

(3) Local residents are concerned that hydraulic pressure from the lagoon in instances of heavy rainfall could cause contaminants left over from the manufacturing of explosives at the site to flow into the Red River.

(4) Upon the review of a soil study conducted on the site, the Water Science and Management Branch of the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship noted that effluent from the site could negatively affect aquatic life in the Red River and may result in increased risks of cancer in fish.

(5) The chemical dinitrotoluene is present in the soil at the former CIL explosives plant site and is known—and is a known carcinogen to fish and other aquatic species.

(6) Soil testing done prior to the environmental licence being issued should have been done at a level consistent with the standards used by the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States, where they have more experience with testing for contaminants at former explosives sites.

(7) The Province of Manitoba has no available guidelines for the assessment of energetic compounds in soil.

(8) There are many other viable, non-contaminated sites in the area which would be better suited for the construction of a sewage lagoon.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship reconsider his decision to grant an environmental licence for the construction of a sewage lagoon at this site.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by R. Jakilazek, G. Cunday, G. Kozuska and many, many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the 2012-2013 annual report, Office of the Fire Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Chonny Sayapheth, who is the guest of the honourable Minister of Finance.

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And also in the public gallery we have from The King's School 23 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Tyler Hendren. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Inflation and Tax Increases Impact on Seniors Income

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it's been a big year for Mary. She retired this year, and then within weeks she became a widow as well. These are two of the most stressful things that a person can endure back to back, and because her husband had always managed the money in their household, she has now got the added stress of learning how to do that as well and adjusting to that.

Now, Mary's retirement savings are being supplemented by her husband's CPP benefit and so on. That means that she's able to support herself for now and she's able to stay in her home of 44 years. But because of high inflation and because of new tax increases, Mary is concerned about her financial future, and we are too.

And we're concerned about the future, financially, of all retirees like Mary. I want to ask the government if they're concerned as well.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, of course, we're concerned about all Manitobans, people who live on fixed incomes, people who've lost loved ones. We know how challenging that is, particularly at this time of year, for people to deal with the loss of family.

So, of course, we are concerned. That is why we have done things like continue to make—help make Manitoba an affordable place for people to live by making sure that home heating, that electricity rates remain low.

That is why we are joining with other ministers and governments across the country to push for an expansion, a reasonable and modest expansion of the Canada Pension Plan, not only for ourselves but for generations to come. We know that for many Manitobans having access to good retirement benefits in the form of the Canada Pension Plan forms the keystone of what they're able to do, and we'll continue to work with other—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Mary will need an increase in her pension income just to break even under this government, Mr. Speaker.

The PST hike is hurting her. It's hurting Manitobans like Mary. It's pushed up inflation. Manitoba's rate is triple the nation's and leads the country, and this pushes down the purchasing power of all Manitobans. It especially hurts seniors. It hurts middle- and low-income families. The average year-over-year wage increases last year were zero, and the NDP tax hikes give the government a 17 per cent raise. That's not compassion.

Mary's no longer working, and her income will rise somewhat with inflation-adjusted pension benefits but less than the NDP-backed inflation rate, which means that she is actually losing purchasing power, and with the biggest tax increases and fee increases in Canada, that's not helping Mary.

Now, why did the NDP give themselves a big raise and give people like Mary a big cut?

Ms. Howard: Well, we're absolutely committed to keeping life affordable for families like the ones the member opposite is talking about.

One of the ways that we're going to continue to do that is through investments in our health-care system, which we know affords people who are aging the ability to have care in their homes at no cost to them. That is almost unique in this country, and it is in stark difference to what was put forward when the member opposite sat around the Cabinet table, when they attempted to bring in fees for home care, when they attempted to sell off, to privatize, part of home care, and we know that he still believes in that kind of flawed thinking.

We know that just recently he committed to an American-style, two-tier health-care system because he thinks that's what Manitobans need. We think that

Manitobans need access to good quality universal health care and a government that is on their side.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the government needs to tone down the rhetoric and wise up and take a look at the bills on Mary's kitchen table. Her hydro bill is up 8 per cent last year. Her property insurance bill's up 8 per cent. Her hairstyle bills are up 8 per cent, her property tax up 3 per cent. Her gas tax and car registry bill's up 32 per cent, and let's not forget the NDP fee increase on her husband's death certificate, which went up by 20 per cent as well. So tone down the rhetoric.

I've got to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to stand up and answer now why he would break his promise to Mary when she's always kept her word throughout her entire life.

Ms. Howard: Well, our commitment to families and to individuals like Mary is to make sure that Manitoba has affordable home heating, has affordable electricity rates, to make sure that when you show up at a hospital because you need help that nobody is checking your credit card at the door.

The member opposite is perhaps alone in the western world in believing that the health-care system we should most copy is that of the United States. That is where he would take us. That is what he has said, Mr. Speaker. We know that for families like Mary's, having to pay health premiums, having to pay thousands of dollars a year in health insurance would make it very difficult for their family to continue.

So we will continue to stand for universal health care and for a Manitoba where everybody who lives here can afford to have a good life, and we'll stand for better retirement income. I wonder if they'll stand with us.

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

Tax and Fee Increases Government Promises

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The closed-mindedness and old rhetoric about two-tier and US-style systems just doesn't reveal an openness to look for new ideas and a better way to do things for people like Mary, Mr. Speaker. It reveals that they're putting ideology ahead of Mary and her best interests. And Mary and her bookkeeper have estimated that, thanks to this government, Mary's added yearly costs just with

broken promises, tax and fee hikes is \$1,086 for last year alone.

Now, she once thought that with her husband's passing she'd be able to live on half as much, but she's learning that that's far from true. Thanks to the NDP, her hydro bill is higher, her tax bills are higher, her home insurance bills are higher, her car and gas bills are higher, and now the Premier (Mr. Selinger) says, to put icing on the cake, that he is going to jack up her PST too and he's going to break his word to her and to all Manitobans.

* (13:50)

Now, all her life she kept her word. Why can't this government keep its promise to Mary and all other Manitoba taxpayers?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, the threat of an American-style health-care system is something that the member opposite introduced into the discussion, into the debate. He went on the radio and he said that he believes that a two-tier, American health-care system is something that we need in this province. He can explain that. I don't believe it is something that Mary needs. I don't think that we need to go the way of the United States where the No. 1 leading cause of bankruptcy for middle-class families is health-care costs. It's because people can't afford the care that they need.

We will continue to make those investments in our health-care system to make sure that Mary and all Manitobans can get the kind of health care that they need, that they deserve. We won't take his advice and go down the failed route of an American-style, two-tier health-care system. Those are his words; let him defend them.

Future PST Increase Provincial Election (2015)

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Most certainly not my words, and I don't need to defend them. I'm very open and our party's very open to learning from the practices, best practices of countries all over the world.

But one thing is certain: under this government, we lead in lengthening and reducing—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. I'm having difficulty hearing the question posed by the Leader of the Official Opposition. I'm asking for honourable members to please keep the level down a

little bit, the volume down, so I can hear both the question and the answer.

Mr. Pallister: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* Manitobans—go for it. Manitobans deserve—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. I've asked for the co-operation of the honourable members of the House, including the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton). I'm asking for co-operation of the House.

I regret to interrupt the honourable member.

Mr. Pallister: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 18, the NDP press release says that, quote, Manitobans deserve clear, fair, up-front promotions so there are no surprises after they're locked into an offer, pretty ironic. The NDP promotional campaign of just two years ago, pre-election, promised no new taxes, and Mary bought that promotional offer and she signed a four-year contract. And after she was locked in, the NDP broke their word to Mary. They gave her and all Manitobans the biggest back-to-back tax increases in 25 years, and now that same government says it'll protect her from cable and phone companies, pretty ironic. She deserves protection from this government, Mr. Speaker. She deserves security most of all.

Will this Premier promise Mary and other Manitobans who are increasingly concerned about their financial security and their financial future, will he promise not to raise the PST again before the next provincial election?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): You know, as I've said before, it was not an easy decision to make to raise the PST by 1 cent on the dollar. That was a difficult decision for us. We know that that affects people. We know that that affects families. But we also know that if we are to build this province, if we are to invest in things like better roads, bridges, infrastructure to protect us from flooding, if we're to invest in growing an economy that our kids, that our grandkids can stay in Manitoba and build a life, then we have to make sure that we have the revenue available to invest without taking it away from nurses and doctors and teachers.

You know, when the leader opposite, when the Leader of the Opposition had a chance to tell Manitobans what he would do, he went back to the '90s. He said, I will cut deeply into all of the areas that matter most to Manitobans. I will fire, I will lay

off the people that help them in their hospitals and in their schools.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Municipal Amalgamation AMM Annual Convention

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The member has an aversion to the truth.

Mr. Speaker, look, they say it's not easy, but it's a lazy decision for a government to put their decisions aside and put all the hard decisions on people like Mary. That's just wrong.

Now, in an embarrassing attempt at self-parody, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his Cabinet rolled themselves out to the Association of Manitoba Municipalities last week to some unidentifiable heavy metal tune. The response was silence and/or laughter.

Now, perhaps the NDP needs to encourage a better response next year with a better tune selection. And perhaps next year they could go with forgiveness, ask for forgiveness, play Human League's Don't You Want Me, baby, maybe do that, or Do You Really Want to Hurt Me by the Culture Club. These might get a better reaction from the AMM. Or maybe they could just keep going on the insensitivity-to-local-governments theme and play the Queen's classic Another One Bites the Dust as they eliminate a third of local governments in this province. Or perhaps the best one is Michael Jackson's classic Bad, because that's the way that government has handled this issue.

Wouldn't the Premier agree?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): It is sometimes a challenge to follow the pretend comedy of the member opposite.

But I will say this. Last week members were absolutely there talking to reeves and mayors and councillors from the AMM, talking to them about their desire to build the province, talking to them about their desire to make sure that when the Building Canada Fund is here, when the federal government is putting money on the table to build the infrastructure of our communities, that we have the money to match that, that we don't leave any of that money on the table and that we don't take that money from hospitals, that we don't take that money from teachers in the classroom, that we don't take

that money, as the members opposite tried to do, from home care.

I had grandparents who were able to stay in their home because they had access to home care, and they had access to that home care because when we had the opportunity to stand up to protect that system, we did that.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

PST Increase Request to Reverse

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Well, the problem with this NDP government is that they talk to people, they never listen, and that's the problem with this government.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have four more days to come to their senses and stop the PST hike. We all know that the PST hike was for one thing and one thing only, and that was to create a pre-election slush fund for a ribbon-cutting tour that we've seen them on.

So I'd like to ask this government to do the right thing today for Manitobans, stop feeling sorry for themselves and do something for Manitobans and stop the PST hike or at least call a referendum.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): I know that the members' opposite approach to governing when times were challenging was to take the approach to cut the services to Manitobans who most needed them, was to take an approach like trying to privatize, trying to sell off part of home care. I know that that was their approach.

That is not our approach. We took a difficult decision. We didn't say to Manitobans, you know what, we don't know what to do, you're on your own. We took a difficult decision to raise the PST by one point because we wanted to invest in growing the economy of the province while also protecting the things that matter to families, like health care and education. That is the choice that we made. It was difficult, but it is a choice that we stand by.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the approach of this NDP government was to lie to Manitobans in the last election. That was their approach. They made an election promise not to raise taxes, then they turned around and stuck Manitobans with the highest tax hike in a quarter of a century.

So enough with the rhetoric, because that's all that's coming from this government. It's all a bunch of bunk.

And I would like to ask them: They've got four days left to come to their senses. Will they do it and stop the PST hike?

Ms. Howard: You know, when any of us run for election, we know that should we get elected we're going to be faced with difficult decisions. We're going to be sometimes faced with decisions that maybe that we hadn't contemplated. We take on that responsibility. We run for that privilege and it is a privilege and we accept that responsibility.

And so we made that decision, Mr. Speaker, and we made that decision so that we would have the funds available so that when the federal government has money to invest in our roads, in our bridges, in safer water for our communities, that we are there to match that money and that we can do that without taking it away from hospitals, from personal-care homes. We are not going to be forced into the decisions that members opposite made to stop all building of any health-care capital in the '90s as they did. We believe that we can grow the economy. We can protect services for Manitobans and we can do it—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, last week Manitoba's small-business owners asked the NDP to vote no on Bill 20 because Manitoba now has the highest consumption and provincial personal income taxes in western Canada. They said, and I quote: The Manitoba government needs to switch tracks if small business is to survive and continue creating jobs in Manitoba. End quote.

So I'd like to ask this government: Will they come to their senses? Will they support small businesses and vote no against Bill 20 and stop the PST hike?

*(14:00)

Ms. Howard: We have supported small businesses by becoming the only small-business-tax-free zone in the country. Taxes on individuals and businesses are a billion dollars less today than they were when we took government.

So if the member opposite wants to talk about tax burden, I suggest she go back and talk to

Eric Stefanson about why he had taxes that were a billion dollars higher than they are today.

ER Service Provision Rural Municipalities

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, as of this spring, there were 19 emergency rooms across Manitoba that were either closed or experiencing reductions in their services. These are cuts to front-line services; they are hurting Manitoba communities.

Mr. Speaker, now a new freedom of information request shows that emergency services have also been suspended at Winnipegosis health centre. In fact, the request indicates that Winnipegosis has been suspended since June.

Will the minister disclose to this Chamber today how this situation just keeps on getting worse? And while she's at it, could she also indicate what residents in the Winnipegosis area are supposed to do to access emergency health-care services?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. It also gives me the opportunity to thank the folks at AMM. I had several meetings with several communities around the province. We had great discussion back and forth, discussing exactly what we're talking about here: doctor recruitment.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House the same thing that I told members at AMM: that we have a commitment to recruiting doctors, that we will continue to recruit doctors, that we have seen success in recruiting doctors and that we won't give up on any community, on this side of the House.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, Altona, Vita, Teulon, Boissevain, Killarney, Deloraine, Neepawa, Pine Falls, Beausejour, Minnedosa, are these all communities that the minister had meetings with, because they're all ERs that have been closed or reductions in services. I wonder what they're telling the minister.

Mr. Speaker, the same freedom of information request shows that Melita Health Centre services were suspended November 6th to 8th and November 29th to today, December the 2nd.

And I wonder if the minister could confirm: Is Melita Health Centre services closed today? Are there more closures coming for this community, and why is she cutting front-line services to residences of these municipalities?

Ms. Selby: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. There's only one party in this House that cut services to rural Manitoba, and it's across the House from us; the Tories are the only ones that cut \$37 million from rural health.

This member of the House may not actually believe in recruiting doctors, but I can tell you it's working. It's why we have 562 more doctors working in Manitoba, 120 of those working in rural Manitoba. And, Mr. Speaker, we will keep working with communities to ensure that they have the health care closer to home.

Perhaps the member missed it, but when we were in Brandon, we also announced the mobile clinic that will actually bring health care to people in very rural isolated areas because we believe that everyone deserves health care close to home, and we'll keep working with them.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, to hear the minister tell you, you'd think there were no concerns. I remind this minister that just recently an internal memo in Prairie Mountain RHA cited serious concerns about the sustainability of health-care services in communities along Highway 3.

Mr. Speaker, what does this new information tell Manitobans? There were 19 ERs closed or reduced in services, now 19 plus Melita plus Winnipegosis.

Mr. Speaker, at what point will the numbers stop going in the wrong direction, and what is the minister's plan to reinstate ER services to these Manitoba communities?

Ms. Selby: Well, I did meet with a number of those communities, and I can tell you they have a lot more respect for nurse practitioners and nurse-managed care than they do on that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, it's why we've also, besides bringing in 562 more doctors, and 120 of them working in rural areas, we filled over a thousand rural and nurse vacancies.

I ask you, why were there a thousand vacancies? Oh, right, they fired them.

Education Property Tax Credit Rebate for Farm Families

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): During the last election of 2011, this NDP government went door to door and promised hard-working Manitoba farm families that they would eliminate education tax off

farmland. Obviously, as we all know, this NDP government cannot be trusted.

I ask the Minister of Agriculture: Why is he not standing up for farm families that elected this government? They expect him to do just that.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): I think, as the member knows, we have provided 80 per cent relief to those farm families on those education property taxes. That wasn't in existence when members opposite formed government.

We've continued to find ways to affordably reduce property taxes for families, whether they be farm families or seniors, where we have seen that property tax increase time and time again, or for other families who are buying their first home and now when they look at their tax bill will see that there's a \$750 credit on their—to offset their education property tax credits. I know lots of young families who are buying their first home for which that is a tremendous help.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the First Minister and every member on that side of the House said they would keep their promises to Manitobans: they would not raise taxes, they'd spend more on infrastructure, they'd balance the books, they'd remove education tax for seniors and also promised to eliminate education tax off farmland.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Agriculture: Why not only did this government not keep its promise to farm families, but they also put a cap on their reimbursement, penalizing them even more?

Ms. Howard: Well, let's review what the situation was when the members opposite had their opportunity in government to provide tax relief to farmers. What did they do? They did nothing. There was no relief for property taxes in those days.

We took it to 33 per cent. We've taken it to 80 per cent. We are going to do that in a way that is responsible. We're not going to do it in a way that starves our schools and our teachers of the resources that they need to educate our children. We have made progress. We'll continue to make progress.

We're at 80 per cent now; that's 80 per cent better than it was under them.

Mr. Eichler: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll give the Minister of Agriculture one more time here. It's the last question in regards to the education tax.

When hard-working Manitoba farm families give or receive—financially, for that matter—a handshake will work. It's their bond. Farm families planned on receiving the rebate that was—and they budgeted in their financial plans for it. The government words mean absolutely nothing.

I ask the Minister of Agriculture, right this wrong, man up, stand up and keep the promise made. Once and for all, will he do that today, stand up for farm families, do the right thing, keep your word?

Ms. Howard: Well, I—you know, I feel like we've gone back in time here to the '60s with challenges like that coming from across the way. I assure members opposite that this Minister of Agriculture stands up for farm families. Thank you.

He is a member of a party that has seen tax relief to these families to the tune of 80 per cent. The member opposite is a member of the party that did nothing when they had the chance.

Crop Insurance Coverage Review Lake Manitoba Flood (2011)

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, recently I asked a legitimate question about crop insurance coverage on lands that were in the inundation zone of the 2011 Lake Manitoba flood. The Minister of Agriculture refused to address the issue. Producers in the zone have seen their—this coverage reduced through no fault of their own. This is not only a broken promise but very unfair treatment.

Mr. Speaker, if he's going to stand up for agriculture, will he commit to a review and address this issue?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate, first of all, that there were indeed some impacts in the member's area that we have been addressing in terms of the impact from flooding. There are some ongoing issues related to the impacts that can happen in terms of crop insurance.

We're also addressing some of the issues that came out of the technical work, which did show that in a very limited area there was actually flooding above natural, though the vast majority of the areas impacted around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin were actually below natural when the damage occurred.

* (14:10)

So I want to assure the member opposite that we are working on that, and I know the—certainly, the Minister of Agriculture is part of that, because we do indicate—we do realize, Mr. Speaker, that while we put in place eight separate provincial stand-alone programs going back to 2011, there are ongoing—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, I have to apologize. Under the Cabinet shuffle, I didn't realize crop insurance had went to MIT.

Mr. Speaker, crop insurance coverage has been reduced as—by as much as 50 per cent on tame hay. Wild hay, which most ranchers rely on, has been reclassified as slough hay and deemed noninsurable. Flooded fields have not fully recovered. The NDP continues to ignore promises made to those ranchers.

Will the minister commit to a review of the crop insurance coverage that takes into account the long-term impacts of the 2011 flood?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): I just wonder if these people would join the MTS Centre and cheer the Winnipeg Jets on like they are across. I almost feel like—*[interjection]*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, you know, first of all, here we have a scenario of rain events that caused the 2011 flood, and we want to minimize any additional damage that's come to the flood—*[interjection]* Yes, we have members who are opposite voting against the budget to put forward a flood control system on Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba and they choose not to support it, to not—the reoccurrence of the flood that we've had in 2011-2012. And they have the audacity to sit there and complain about our forward thinking for the cattle producers in the area to minimize any flooding for hay insurance and moving forward for the betterment of the cattle industry in the province of—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Provincial Out-Migration Prevention Policies

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, after growing up and going to school in Manitoba, our young professionals learn that after they graduate too many will have to go to another province because too often there are not jobs for them here. Since 1999, when this government came to power, Manitoba has suffered a net loss of almost 60,000 people.

I ask the government—Mr. Speaker, I ask the government: What are they going to do about the high loss of talented young people from Manitoba which has resulted from the poor policies of this government?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would just let the member know that Manitoba has grown to an estimated 1,265,015 people. That's an increase of nearly 15,000 people in the past year.

Further, we know that we are investing in the development of skills, we're investing in our educational institutions, we're investing in our teachers to ensure that our young people have the skills and the education that they need to get good jobs right here in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the problem is this: The net loss of people from Manitoba to other provinces is larger than the loss experienced by any other province in Canada. I table this information as gathered carefully by Statistics Canada over the last 14 years.

The government tries to deny that there's a problem or to pretend that what the government is doing is successful when it is not. The government has to realize that what they are doing and continue to do today is not working.

What is the government going to do to change the situation so that there will be quality long-term jobs for university and college graduates—

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

Ms. Oswald: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and again I would reiterate for the member—I thought I was speaking loudly enough, but I will again say that we saw an increase of 15,000 people last year alone right here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it's become crystal clear because of the words escaping the lips of the Leader of the Opposition, the Conservatives, that they pay absolutely no attention nor mind to the fabulous immigrant population we have here in Manitoba. We know that's Conservative policy; I have to admit I was not aware it was the Liberal policy as well. Does their new leader know?

Mr. Gerrard: Sadly, it is disproportionately first-generation immigrants who are finding that there are not the jobs that they're looking for here and they're moving elsewhere. The government may try to pretend it's otherwise, but their avoidance doesn't change the reality.

As I talk to young people all over this province, they are living the reality that all too often the best jobs available are in Alberta or Saskatchewan, and they're moving out of Manitoba.

Short-term infrastructure jobs are not the full answer. The government needs to start by acknowledging the problem which was—has resulted from the way they've run the province.

When will the minister acknowledge that she has failed and make the changes needed to address this important issue?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, well, two things, Mr. Speaker: No. 1, I just want to say very clearly that members on this side of the House absolutely celebrate and absolutely acknowledge the contribution that immigrants, newcomers to Manitoba are making in the province of Manitoba. Members opposite, Conservatives and Liberals alike, may disregard that. We on this side of the House do not.

And second, Mr. Speaker, I would say this should give the member absolute reason to stand exuberantly and vote in favour of budgets and Throne Speech: \$5.5 billion over the next five years investing in infrastructure, good paying jobs for our young people so they can continue to stay right here in Manitoba.

Highway 10 Upgrade Announcement

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): It's a great segue, Mr. Speaker, because I am proud to be part of a government that stands up for Brandon and western Manitoba.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, has built infrastructure at levels never before seen in the history of our region. The complete twinning of the

Trans-Canada Highway to the Saskatchewan border, the completion of the eastern access route, the rebuilding and twinning of 1st Street and 18th Street, the construction of the Thompson bridges and the massive dike construction that is protecting our community in Brandon are all investments that this government has made in core infrastructure in Brandon and western Manitoba, and infrastructure that members opposite have voted against.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the member for—Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation to update the House on a recent announcement made in Brandon with regard to Highway 10 between Riding Mountain National Park and the US border.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Brandon East for his unfaltering efforts to put forward—I can't even find the words to describe how much advocacy the member for Brandon East has put forward for Westman.

And, Mr. Speaker, we were pleased at AMM to announce that, in addition to the \$63 million we've already invested, I would tell you we're investing another \$67 million from the US border to Riding Mountain.

And there was no theme spot—song behind the announcement, but for the member—for the Leader of Opposition, who seems to be practising to be a deejay sometimes, I want to say that probably if there was a theme song that would go with what we're doing in infrastructure, it would be the words of the greatest Manitoban in terms of the music industry, because I think the theme song would have been Randy Bachman's You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet.

Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease Prevention Record

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about NDP promises. During the last election, the NDP promised to deliver a strategy to deal with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The NDP have not delivered, and yet another broken NDP promise.

Mr. Speaker, why has the NDP government broke their promise to Manitoba seniors and Manitoba families who are suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's disease?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

Of course, this is a very difficult issue that many people face with elderly family, and it can be difficult to watch a family member who once was a strong and contributing member not be able to function in the same way that they once have. And it's particularly difficult to watch somebody, unfortunately, be affected by this very difficult disease.

* (14:20)

Some of the things we're doing to keep in place is to make sure that we've got supports there for people, Mr. Speaker, important to make sure that for some of those particular seniors, perhaps early on, can stay at home. And that's why we have a very strong home-care system, to make sure that people who are in the early stages of the disease and just need a little bit of support can be there in their home, and we do that without charging them, something that, of course, the opposition—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Education Property Tax Credit Election Promise to Seniors

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, let's talk about another NDP broken promise. During the last election, the NDP campaigned to eliminate education property taxes for Manitoba seniors. The NDP have not delivered, yet another broken promise.

Mr. Speaker, why has the NDP government broke their promise to Manitoba seniors?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in our time as government, we have seen increases to property tax credits for seniors and all Manitobans go up year after year after year, go up to the degree that for some families now in Manitoba, they virtually pay no education property taxes. In fact, those rebates are starting to lessen their property tax bill.

We have made progress on that file to make it affordable for seniors to stay in their homes without threatening the quality of education in our schools, and we'll continue to make that progress.

PST Increase Election Promise to Seniors

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains this government has broken their promises to Manitoba seniors time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, this government said they would not raise provincial sales tax. This is the granddaddy of all broken promises. All Manitobans will be impacted by the PST, and Manitobans and seniors on fixed incomes will be impacted more than other Manitobans.

Why has the NDP broken their promise to Manitoba seniors?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, you know, what I consider a sacred trust with our seniors is making sure that we are investing in a health-care system that will be there for them when they need it, that isn't going to charge them to provide high quality home care in their homes, that we aren't going to do what members opposite did and decide that we have no choice but to stop building personal-care homes, that we have no choice but to try to sell off part of our health-care system in the form of home care.

I would challenge the member opposite that his concern for seniors should extend to him asking very tough questions of his leader, asking his leader why he went on the radio, on CJOB, and said, I think an American-style, two-tier health-care system is something we need in Manitoba. That would be a disaster for seniors. He should challenge his leader to aim higher.

PST Increase Referendum Request

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, this government has recently surpassed a hundred million dollars in illegally collected PST, through taxes, fees, which have been increased onto many things, onto the backs of hard-working Manitoban families.

Why does this new minister of culture, tourism and sport feel that hard-working Manitobans' money is better off spent by them? It's not too late, call an-call a referendum.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): It is not ever an easy decision to raise revenue. It is not ever an easy decision to raise even 1 cent on the dollar of revenue because you know that that affects families. But we did that, Mr. Speaker, because we believe, in Manitoba, we have to build the economy. We have to build an economy so our children and our grandchildren can build a life here, can have a good job, and we want to do that without taking that money away from the bedside, without taking that money away from the classroom.

That is why we made that decision, difficult as it was, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to invest in building the economy, to invest in services that matter most to Manitobans, and that's how we'll build a good future for all our families.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: It's time for members' statements.

Robert T. Kristjanson

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Mr. Speaker, today it is my pleasure to pay tribute to a great man of Gimli, my friend, Mr. Robert T. Kristjanson.

On December 7th, Robert will celebrate his 80th birthday. And, over many years, Robert has become an inspiration to my community. We all appreciate his wonderful spirit and contributions to our understanding of the challenges facing Lake Winnipeg. Robert, or Robert T. as we know him, has fished commercially on Lake Winnipeg since 1948. He continues to do so at age 80.

Robert is known as Lake Winnipeg's Fishing Ambassador to the World, and received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal last year on his 79th birthday, and it was very fitting that he received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, awarded to Canadians honouring their significant achievements. Robert was presented with the medal in celebration of his passion, his conduct, his achievements and his way of life, the life of a Lake Winnipeg fisherman.

Mr. Speaker, in Robert's family, there are three generations of Kristjansons currently depending on the health of Lake Winnipeg for their livelihoods, and, because of this, Robert T. is passionately committed to sustaining his livelihood and our community's traditional way of life. His service to our community is something that inspires me and is an inspiration to everyone who knows him. Robert is held in high regard for his passion about the environment, and Robert is no stranger to public forums and to the media as he often lends his voice to speak on the issues of conserving our fish stocks and lakes. He stands by his belief that good, clean water is required by all.

Mr. Speaker, I could say so many great things about Robert and the work he does for our community; however, above all else, I will say that he is a role model, a tireless advocate for Lake

Winnipeg and an inspiration to us all. Thank you, Robert T.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Roar of the Rings

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the 2014 Winter Olympics are fast approaching, and, for some athletes, Winnipeg is the first stop on the way to Sochi, Russia. This week, Winnipeg plays host to the Roar of the Rings, the Olympic curling qualifiers, to decide which men's teams and which women's team will represent Canada in February in Sochi, Russia, at the Olympics.

Sixteen teams, from around the country, including four from Manitoba, will be playing all week with the finals to be held on Sunday, December 8th. These teams have qualified from different tournaments around the country, such as the Scotties Tournament of Hearts and the Tim Hortons Brier and will have to bring their A game this week.

Manitoba is well represented with Team Jennifer Jones and Team Chelsea Carey on the women's side and Team Jeff Stoughton and Team Mike McEwen playing in front of the hometown faithful at the MTS Centre. These four teams have provided Manitoba curling fans with some great moments, and we're all proud of their accomplishments to this point.

This week should be exciting for Manitoba curling fans young and old, and there will be plenty of cheering for our hometown teams. Hundreds of local volunteers are required to pull off an event like this, and organizers have done a fantastic job recruiting. There is currently a wait-list just for the opportunity to volunteer, and Manitobans have embraced this event as their own. Manitoba has shown, as we always do, that our volunteer spirit is one of our greatest traits.

Many local sponsors have also signed on, showing the rest of Canada and the world that we are passionate about curling and our local athletes.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all the members of this House, I want to wish a very special best of luck to the Manitoba teams playing this week, and I hope we get to see one of them represent Canada this February in Russia, if not both—if not two of them.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

World AIDS Day and Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday, people across the world united as a global community to participate in vigils, demonstrations and other events in the fight against AIDS. Today, members wear a red ribbon in solidarity with those affected by AIDS or HIV.

The number of people living with HIV continues to rise in every part of the world. There are now more than 33 million people living with the disease worldwide. If we ignore the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we give it power. Global events like World AIDS Day are essential in uniting people in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In doing so, researchers, activists, patients and governments come together to fight for a cure. In Manitoba, Aboriginal people are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, a tragedy that we, as members of government, communities, families and individuals, must fight every day.

In light of this, this week also marks the first Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week. The HIV/AIDS epidemic affects First Nations, Metis and Inuit individuals at a rate 3.6 times higher than other Canadians. The struggles Aboriginal peoples have faced for decades contribute to this much higher rate of infection. Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week brings together national Aboriginal organizations, government partners, health-care providers and community members to build greater understanding of the key factors driving HIV infection rates among Aboriginal people and the best practices for response.

Mr. Speaker, we can all contribute to ending the AIDS epidemic. Awareness is the first critical step towards a future free from AIDS. Our thoughts today remain with all those affected by HIV/AIDS, and we will continue to work towards finding a cure. Thank you.

*(14:30)

Baldwin Centennial Farm

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to stand and recognize the success and continued viability of a family farm. Family ties remain strong for the Baldwin family, as they celebrated the centennial of their family farm in August. The milestone marker of the historical home was celebrated on August 24th, 2013, by more than 180 family members who travelled from across Canada and the United States.

Joseph and Agnes Baldwin bought the property north of Warren where they built their home for 14 children, all who contributed to make this house a home. The remaining Baldwin siblings received a Century Farm sign from Manitoba Agriculture, 'ood'—Food and Rural Initiatives. The Manitoba Historical Society also presented a plaque in recognition of this milestone achievement. The plaque is a reminder of generations of commitment as tenders of this land. Honouring the pioneer families is one way of recognizing the importance of agriculture growth of the province. The family's contribution to agriculture deserves appreciation for those who toiled and found resilience over the decades.

The family members celebrated the day by touring the hundred-year-old Baldwin home. Family members delivered speeches and sang in appreciation of the family's special occasion before heading to a family reunion dinner. Music and laughter is what really matters for this family.

It is a great honour and privilege to be among the selected group of individuals who are able to sustain the land that their ancestors homesteaded. Although many things have changed since, the Baldwin family continues to be committed to the province of Manitoba by raising their children on the ground of their ancestors.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the members of this House will join me in wishing the Baldwin family continued prosperity and success in their future endeavours. The Baldwin family truly does have something to be proud of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AMM Annual Convention

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, last week, members of Manitoba communities, municipal councils and the provincial government gathered in Brandon for the Association of Manitoba Municipalities annual convention. Recent debates involving the amalgamation of rural municipalities were a popular topic at the AMM convention, as this discussion has been marked with strong emotion from all sides.

This process of amalgamation means municipalities will become more modern and more efficient. By amalgamating smaller municipalities, local governments will be able to better invest in services like clean water and roads. By joining together, smaller municipalities can now share the cost of building and operating major assets like

recreation centres and water treatment facilities. Projects which may have seemed unattainable before are now within reach.

Amalgamation creates efficient municipalities better suited to attract business and create good jobs that will help young people stay in Manitoba. Amalgamating also means that the Province and municipalities will be better able to work together to build our municipal infrastructure which means better roads and community buildings for everyone.

All levels of government recognize the importance of investing in infrastructure, yet the last time the PCs were in government they froze or cut spending in the infrastructure department five times. Instead, we have invested over a billion dollars on infrastructure in the past three years alone. That's how much the PCs invested during the entire 1990s.

AMM priorities are the same as our province's priorities, and this was made even clearer during this year's convention. We all want to invest in the priorities of Manitoba families. AMM's resolutions have called for more funding for health-care facilities, child care, medical school training and community infrastructure. We are expanding health-care centres, building new schools with child care and increasing training for health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities have a major role to play in growing their communities. Amalgamation gives local governments the ability to invest in their communities to better suit the needs of families, farmers and businesses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances—order please. Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances, orders of the day.

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 20—The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended)

Mr. Speaker: The House will now deal with the recorded vote on the hoist motion for Bill 20 that was deferred from Thursday, November the 28th, as per the agreement in the House.

Recorded Vote

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

Order, please. Order, please.

The question before the House is the amendment to Bill 20.

Division

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

Yeas

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Mitchelson, Pallister, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.

Nays

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Braun, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wight.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 18, Nays 32.

Mr. Speaker: The amendment is accordingly defeated.

When Bill 20 is again before the House, the debate will remain open.

* * *

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, could you please call the following bills: first of all, debate on report stage amendments for Bill 27 and Bill 42; debate on third reading for Bill 11 and Bill 39; and third reading of Bill 13, Bill 19, Bill 24 and Bill 30.

Mr. Speaker: We'll call bills in the following order: Bill 27 and Bill 42, followed by bills 11 and 39, followed by bills 13, 19, 24 and 30.

**DEBATE ON
REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS**

**Bill 27—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Charter Bus Service)**

Mr. Speaker: Starting with Bill 27, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Charter Bus Service), and

I believe there—and the bill is standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan).

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Justice?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Leave is denied.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, the amendment that was introduced to the highway traffic amendment act is proposed to impose a licensing restriction on non-Manitoba charter bus operators that would not also apply to Manitoba operators.

I have taken the time, Mr. Speaker, to check in—as to whether this would contravene the federal Motor Vehicle Transport Act, and the indications are that it would. It also would contravene the Canadian Agreement on Internal Trade, and I know that members opposite would not want a provision that would do so.

Under the federal MVTA, a province can only license bus carriers based on other jurisdictions if this is done on the like terms and conditions and the like manner—this is a direct quote—as for carriers based in that province. Therefore, we cannot have licensing requirements and restrictions for non-resident charter bus operators that are different from those for operators based in Manitoba.

Under the internal trade agreement, charter bus licensing cannot be changed by any province in a way that makes it more discriminatory against bus operators based in other provinces.

Under our current charter licensing rules, Manitoba carriers and non-Manitoba carriers are treated the same. The proposed amendment would introduce a form of discrimination against non-Manitoba operators, and this change in approach would contravene the internal trade agreement.

The government is instead proposing that Manitoba move away from any form of economic entry test to an enhanced-safety approach. Now, we are listening to some of the concerns that were raised, Mr. Speaker, in terms of inspections. We are assessing changes to regulations and the programs such vehicle inspections and safety audits that would enhance the safety requirements that all inter-city bus carriers would have to meet in order to be licensed for operation.

I want to stress that the clear message from operators from within Manitoba is these are the type of restrictions that they would have no difficulty in meeting—the kind of inspections—and we will be looking at that through a memo. We are committed to consulting with bus operators and other stakeholders as we move forward on developing an enhanced-safety entry test.

* (14:50)

So, while we don't support this particular amendment, I think part of the intent, I could assure the opposition critic, will be included in regulations. There will be extensive consultation with industry in terms of regulations because I think there's a way of capturing some of the intent of this amendment without violating the AIT or the federal MVTA, and I think that's—in fairness, even though we're not supporting this amendment, I think it's well intended.

So, while we oppose the amendment, some of the elements of substance are reasonable. We will be consulting with the industry on regulations that will put that into place.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on the amendment to Bill 27? House ready for that question?

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: No? I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment will please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: Opinion of the Chair, the Nays have it.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On division, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

Bill 42—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Enhancing Passenger Safety)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 42, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Enhancing Passenger Safety), standing in the name the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan).

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of honourable Minister of Justice? Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Leave has been denied.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Bill 42, just to remind members of the House, it requires a person riding in or on a vehicle to be seated in a part of the vehicle that is designated and equipped for passenger seating, and prohibits the driver from driving unless the passenger is seated on a part of the vehicle design equipped for passenger safety.

I did undertake to review these amendments. I also want to thank the opposition critic for providing advanced copy of that. This amendment, it suggests exemptions for three particular scenarios: one is parades, second is farmers and farm workers and the third is for firefighters.

In terms of parades, Bill 42 does contain regulations making authority to provide for exemptions in regulation. It's our intent to exempt vehicles and trailers operating in parades from the requirements of section 146 of the bill, and the proposed amendment certainly provides some well-thought-out wording.

And I do want to indicate that we will be proceeding through regulation to implement something that is very similar in form. We are proposing—no—rather than do it through legislation to do it through regulation because that will allow us to consult. But I do want to acknowledge that.

In terms of farmers, the—currently farmers that employ workers is subject to the requirements of Manitoba's Workplace Safety and Health Act and regulations. The Workplace Safety and Health regulation, section 22.8, requires that where a vehicle is used to transport workers and is equipped with seats, with seat belts, the employees must use the seats and seat belts. Because the Workplace Safety and Health regulation order requires farm workers to use seats and seat belts when they exist—i.e., in a pickup truck—it would not be consistent to provide an

exemption under Bill 42. It's important to note that this deals with on-highway and it—we're of the view that this would create something that's quite inconsistent with the regulation.

In the past decade, as the member knows, pickup trucks with increased seating capacities, such as quad cabs, super cabs, have become widely available, and certainly we believe that the same kind of protection should be available. Farmers and farm workers should benefit from the same safety measures provided for others. The carriage of passengers in truck boxes, trailers and other cargo areas can be dangerous. We had a fatality a number of years ago in The Pas and that is the logic behind the current Workplace Safety and Health regulation.

In terms of firefighters, Manitoba's Workplace Safety and Health Act and regulations governs the transportation of firefighters. The Workplace Safety and Health regulation, section 42(5), requires employers of firefighters to ensure that firefighting vehicles are equipped with properly secured areas and seat belts and that every firefighter is seated and uses a seat belt when the vehicle is in motion.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Workplace Safety and Health regulation, it does provide exemptions to this requirement: if the firefighter is fighting a grass or a forest fire from a moving vehicle, so that does exist currently; the firefighter uses a straining device that prevents the firefighter from falling from the vehicle, where there's a means of communication—the firefighter and the vehicle operator; and the vehicle does not travel at a speed more than 20 kilometres an hour.

The regulations are—under Bill 42, are expected to allow for firefighters to ride in or on a part of the vehicle not designed and equipped for passenger safety if doing so is in accordance with the requirements set out in the Workplace Safety and Health regulations.

Mr. Speaker, we will consult with the Office of the Fire Commissioner—we have consulted, certainly initially—and the Manitoba Association of Fire Chiefs as part of the regulatory development process. So I want to assure the member that why we—while we may not be supporting the amendment in the current form, it's in, the intent of ensuring that there's not an undue restriction on the ability of firefighters to operate will continue, of course, within the context of the Workplace Safety and Health.

So, Mr. Speaker, I—again, very similar to the comments on Bill 27, I want to thank the critic for bringing forward some important issues of why we may have a somewhat different approach and disposition, we—in fact, we'll be voting against the amendment. I want to put clearly on the record that a number of the points that the critic has raised are important points. We will address them through regulation. We will have appropriate consultation with those affected.

So I do want to thank the member, and I also want to thank the—if I could one more time—the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) who brought in a bill on a similar topic, I believe in 2007, which dealt with not allowing people to continue to ride in the back of pickup trucks. So, again, while we may have some disagreement on the specifics, this is a bill that has a broad support base. I do want to acknowledge the member, I want to acknowledge the critic, and look forward to the passage of this, Mr. Speaker, through third reading so that we can have greater protection for Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on the amendment?

Is the House ready for the question on the amendment?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed?

An Honourable Member: No, no.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment will please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Nays have it.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On division, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: It's—I believe that concludes the bills under debate on report stage amendment.

**DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE
AND THIRD READINGS**

(Continued)

**Bill 11—The Proceedings Against
the Crown Amendment Act**

Mr. Speaker: And we will now proceed to debate on concurrence and third reading, and the first bill is Bill 11, The Proceedings Against the Crown Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard).

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Finance?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Is there any further debate on Bill 11?

No? Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 39—The Government Efficiency Act
(Various Acts Amended or Replaced to
Consolidate Boards and Agencies and
Eliminate Government Appointments)**

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 39, The Government Efficiency Act (Various Acts Amended or Replaced to Consolidate Boards and Agencies and Eliminate Government Appointments), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), who has 12 minutes.

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Paul?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Any further debate on Bill 39?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say that I certainly respect those who have contributed time and effort to serve under whatever government on boards and agencies, and it's important that that be recognized.

Second, I would like to indicate that I support, and Liberals support, activities to make government more efficient, to reduce boards and agencies where they are no longer needed or where there is duplication. That doesn't necessarily mean that I agree with every single change in this bill, but rather that the general approach is to be supported and we'll be supporting this bill.

* (15:00)

However, I would note that this really should be an ongoing process. This bill contains a very large number of changes which shows that the government really hasn't paid enough attention to this over the last number of years and is all of a sudden playing catch-up because they realize it was time to make a large number of changes all at once. And so it would be better to have this done, you know, each year with some changes rather than having everything all at once, but, nevertheless, ready to support this legislation.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on Bill 39?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the—question's been called—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

**Bill 13—The Fish and Wildlife
Enhancement Fund Act**

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call debate on concurrence and third readings, starting with bill number—to continue with concurrence and third readings of Bill 13, the fish and wildlife enhancement fund.

Any further debate?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship, that Bill 13, The Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Fund Act; Loi sur le Fonds de mise en valeur du poisson et de la faune, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put a few remarks on the record, largely kudos

recognizing that this is now at its second-last stage in this House.

The bill really owes a great deal of gratitude to the member for the Interlake. On being sworn in as the new Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship, the MLA for the Interlake came to sit down with me and talk about some of the issues that he felt very strongly about. He's an extremely well-informed member when it comes to many conservation issues. And on his list—and, indeed, I think topping the list was a suggestion that we look at the concept of a wildlife enhancement fund, which had been raised, I think, repeatedly, over the course of some period of time, particularly by the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, and which is an approach that has worked so well in terms of fisheries enhancement. So he was more than happy, then, to take on the responsibility of talking to the agencies and the organizations that have been looking at such a fund and would, of course, participate in how such a fund would operate. So I want to commend his leadership and his role in this regard.

I also want to, at this time, express my thanks to the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, which I listened to very carefully. I have a great deal of respect for the membership and their priorities. And, when it comes to an issue like this, the Wildlife Federation has very clearly put forward their case over some period of time. And so, we will continue to work hand-in-hand with the Wildlife Federation as we move to the implementation stage, assuming the bill now passes.

I also want to thank the Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association. I want to thank the Manitoba Trappers Association for their advice on this legislation. And, as well, of course, we will work very closely together as we look at the composition of the organizational effort.

What I want to really focus on, however, in my concluding remarks, is the tremendous role that we've seen with the fish enhancement fund membership. There's one individual that I want to celebrate, in particular, and that's Mr. David Carrick of Winnipeg. In the course of my tenure as the Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister, I have been absolutely inspired by some individuals across this province who really go out of their way, put aside so much of their own personal time for the well-being of Mother Earth and her bounty. One of the most inspiring individuals I've ever met, actually, in my whole life, is Mr. Carrick. And I want to say that here's an individual, he's a lawyer by profession,

certainly busy enough in his own—in his workaday but who puts aside so much personal time for the well-being of our fisheries. And it's a passion that goes back to his childhood and being raised in a home and with a father, particular, who brought David into the wilderness, went fishing. And, of course, it is that kind of experience of life that raises environmentalists and raises conservationists.

You know, it's been said before, and I'll paraphrase, but you will only fight for what you know and for what you love. And we see with Mr. Carrick that kind of family history inculcating in him a real passion and pursuit for the well-being of, in this particular case, fisheries.

It also speaks, I think, to the need for us as legislators to continue to look for ways to engage in youth and to get them into the wilderness and into the natural environment of Manitoba. Increasingly, children are being attracted to the computer screen, to the mobile devices, and less and less so to nature and to the love of nature that can come from, whether it's fishing or hunting or whether it's just walking in the bush or being with others, particularly the mentors in their lives and, most notably, their parents or guardians. We need, as I have said in my speeches, less screen and more green. We have to look for new ways to attract youth to camping, to understanding nature, its fragile existence here on our planet. When we turn a blind eye to this compelling case, I really do fear that climate change will wreak even greater havoc because we will not have a new generation of humanity that is prepared to fight for change and to do what is right for the continuation of, indeed, this planet.

So, Mr. Carrick, in my estimation, is one of those individuals who is a leader among us that has taken his insights and his experience to make a difference, and how has he done that? Well, Mr. Speaker, he has been leading the effort for fisheries enhancement for many, many years. He heads up the fish enhancement fund and Fish Futures. And when he has not held the leadership position, he certainly has been very close behind the leadership of the day to ensure that the values that he holds so dearly are shared by increasingly more Manitobans.

This legislation is, in no small part, of course, based on the very positive experience of the fish enhancement fund in Manitoba. It has gone, by way of a nominal surcharge on fishing licences, to invest in fisheries across this province, which, of course,

has not only made for greater fish stories, but it has attracted many families to the outdoors and has attracted people to Manitoba. I continue to hear of the tremendous offerings that our lakes in this province hold.

Just at AMM convention, I met with the Municipality of Roblin, and I heard about their Bug Chucker tournament that they have, the town of Roblin and, of course, I thought the phrase bug chucker was an interesting one. They explained what that was. We see here a community that understands the potential of marketing and celebrating the fishery—the local fishery to attract not only Manitobans to Roblin, but people from afar. And, by the way, people come from all over now, to Roblin, for this emerging great event. And I understand that the Roblin area, actually, is a still-water fly-fishing capital, perhaps of the world, and I think I'll want to look further into that to see how we as a Province can assist Roblin to celebrate that and to market that opportunity for anglers around the world.

*(15:10)

I grew up in a community that celebrated fishing; I grew up in Fort Frances, Ontario, on Rainy Lake, and of course we were about five minutes from my friend or to the lake. It was a great—and it was a great place to grow up for that reason, and I certainly know the importance, in terms of my quality of life of getting onto the lake in the boat or standing on the shore, and a lot of great stories that, I think, have enriched me and in some way have been able to pass on to my family. So this fund will continue to, hopefully, enrich the experiences of many, many others.

We have, then, the—imposed now, in terms of fisheries enhancement, and now anglers have taken on the funding role when it comes to the hatchery, and we've been able to increase hatchery production. But what is particularly new about this approach is the opportunity now for hunters to contribute to wildlife preservation and conservation. There are increasing pressures on so many species here in Manitoba and, of course, top of mind is our moose populations across the province. We have closures in effect; we have pending closures; we have other efforts under way in terms of wolf management, in terms of the need for surveys to make sure that we understand what the trends of our populations are.

But I fear that, unless we do have investments of this nature, we are going to continue to have these

population threats and this fund, I think, will go a long way to enhancing our efforts, on top of what our department is able to provide in terms of surveys and other efforts.

I think that one of the fundamental principles in the act is that that the monies are to be held from hunters and the fish enhancement fund in trust, and that was a very important feature, I think, of the legislation.

What is even more fundamental, though, is that this legislation signals to hunters, trappers and fishers, that we, as a government, are prepared to devolve or to share decision-making and responsibility with those who are on the land and who understand what is going on right out there on the lakes and in the forest. It is really an empowerment of hunters and trappers and fishers, because they are given responsibility for making decisions and recommendations about where the investments for fish and wildlife enhancement should be made. And that is a huge shift. This is not about government saying we know everything, because that will not work. It will not work because we have people on the land; we have organizations that are dedicated to the well-being of our fish and wildlife populations that we have to engage and we have to listen to and work with.

So that is the fundamental feature of this bill that I think is worthy of celebration by this Legislative Assembly. So I look forward to working with the organizations. We want to ensure that the—there is a good discussion and a consensus developed, in terms of how the committees will function, recognizing that there is a separate committee for fish and, of course, based on the well-established fish enhancement fund and, as well, though, the new grouping that will be focused on hunting and trapping.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the House adopting this unanimously and we can proceed to royal assent and then the promulgation of regulation. Thank you very much.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to raise—rise today and speak to Bill 13, the fish and wildlife enhancement fund.

There are a couple of small concerns with the bill, but overall it's a—I think it's a step in the right direction. I know the success of the fish enhancement fund has been quite noticeable and I know that the ministers of government want to pat themselves on

the back and say what a wonderful job they've done, but a lot of cases it's the people out on the ground that are making the difference and actually making these things work. The government may well have put in place the regulation to add a fee to each licence, but it's the people out on the ground and the organizations out on the ground that actually make these things work. I was—and I know most of you heard me, over the years, talk about the pickerel fish in lake Dauphin, and ran into a stone wall with both the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), the ex-minister of Finance, and the member from Riel, the ex-minister of Water Stewardship, trying to get some movement there.

The current minister at least put in place some of the things that we've been asking for for years up there. But, on the ground, out there on the ground, that—the intermountain fish Enhancement council, I've toured some of the facilities they've taken part in developing, and every year they have a project or two they're working on, and they've done a phenomenal job. They granted—the fish enhancement fund has given them seed money to do those things, and that's a good thing, but they have taken that money, and with volunteer work—and countless hours of volunteer work—they've made a lot of it work. They—something they've been doing recently is they've been tagging a lot of fish in lake Dauphin and monitoring their movements, and it's a really interesting project and I've talked to them several times about what they're doing with that. There are some concerns that the—board and subcommittee structure, of course—and I think that's something that's still to come, but the board really needs to be made up of the organizations of the people who actually do pay the fees on these licences, the ones who are actually paying into this enhancement fund should actually be the ones making the decision where the money goes in the enhancement.

I do agree with the minister, and I like the proposal, that the enhancement funds, those fees, are carried forward into future years; if it's not all spent this year it's held in trust and used at a later date. That's really a good thing. The minister, I know, has final say—absolute final say on where the money will be spent, but it will be done on recommendations from the board. And, if the board's got the proper makeup, I think it's important that the minister pay attention to what's being recommended to him and accept most of those recommendations because, obviously, the people out on the ground, as I said before, will have the best idea how to improve and

use the funds that are from the wildlife enhancement fund.

The other concern that I heard at the committee hearings was that the funds need to be clearly specified as to going to new initiatives and will not be utilized as replacement for any existing grants, incentives, bounties or subsidiaries already in place—or subsidies already in place. And that's something that I urge the minister to be very cautious about, because if you're starting to collect this—these levies and then use them to pay for some of the programs that are already there, you've accomplished nothing. These levies are new money and should be used for new projects.

So, with those few words, I do think this is a—the fish and wildlife enhancement fund, Bill 13, is a good bill. Thank you.

* (15:20)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this legislation. I think it is important that people who are on the ground have an involvement in monitoring and—what's happening with wildlife and in implementing actions which will help to improve the situation for fish and wildlife in Manitoba. Certainly, there are many, many examples of where people who are on the ground with traditional knowledge have recognized changes in wildlife populations before others have, and this knowledge needs to be used well and wisely and incorporated into the decisions that are made.

Too often this government has been slow. I can think of, as an example, what happened with the moose populations. The NDP were not monitoring the numbers of moose closely enough, and, as a result, things got away from them and all of a sudden the moose populations plummeted rather drastically in a number of areas. You need to be able to look carefully at the outcomes and measure what's actually happening with populations, and, of course, today there are some pretty sophisticated ways of doing that using, for example, a DNA analysis to count the number of caribou in a woodland caribou herd. But there are also, you know, a variety of more traditional methods for estimating populations, and couple this with the experience of people on the ground which can be tremendously important in understanding what has happened.

I think the, this measure and giving people who are on the ground, whether in fisheries or whether in hunting or trappers, input is important. The process

appears to have worked, in general, pretty well for the Fisheries Enhancement Fund. Certainly, there have been some long-running issues in fisheries which still need to be addressed; I would think probably Lake Winnipegosis would still be an example of that. But, that being said, you know, this is a step forward. It's important to acknowledge that, and ready to support this and are looking forward to it being implemented.

Thank you.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It is my sincere pleasure to rise today to speak briefly on Bill 13, and I want to preface my remarks by thanking the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh) for his kind words, and also his attention that he has paid to this file which is so important to myself personally, but also to many rural if, indeed, not all Manitobans, but principally rural Manitobans, people who live and make a living and in large part enjoy our rural landscape.

Myself, I've been a hunter for more than 40 years now. My father took me deer hunting back when I was just a young lad. I'm 54 years of age now, so it might be more like 45 years. I recall hunting rabbits when I was about 10 years old with a 22. So—and I've been a fisher, as well, going back as many years. My father bought a fishing lodge in northern Manitoba back in the mid-1960s and I was guiding American tourists for lake trout when I was, again, no more than 10 years of age. So it's, as well, something near and dear to my heart. I've caught four or five master angler fish over my lifetime, lake trout, rainbow trout, splake another unique species, northern pike.

So—and last but not least, I am a farmer as well, and I just started into farming not too long ago. Unlike members opposite who, when they become elected, they tend to walk away from their farms, I did the opposite and started farming after being elected. So—and it is a learning experience. But one thing I did learn was there are, especially being a rancher, is there's a lot of interaction with wildlife. You're always dealing with, you know, for example, elk tangling up in your fences or wolves, coyotes potentially playing—or preying on your flock. So, you know, farmers take a keen interest in managing wildlife correctly, and that's not to say that farmers want them all exterminated; that's certainly not the case. We respect and love and appreciate wildlife, but wildlife is a factor for us in terms of our

production, so it is of keen interest to us to see that these populations are monitored correctly and diligently, and this bill will be a step in that direction.

Minister made some reference to some of the people that helped us in this regard. David Carrick, I recall very well my meeting with him in my office, and it was a warm day as I recall and, of course, we have no air conditioning in this building. But Mr. Carrick is a tough negotiator, I have to say, and at the end of our meeting I was literally soaking wet, whether it was from the temperature, the humidity or how diligently he went at this particular proposal of ours. And he is to be credited in terms of his co-operation, but also the work that he did in designing the fish enhancement fund originally, the terms of reference and all that. That work was much appreciated and it's a good example of the value there is for us outside of our government resources.

I also want to acknowledge some of our current staff: our director of wildlife, Jim Duncan; Brian Joynt; Dr. Brian Parker. These are all men that, as well, worked on this, and I would look back to some past members. I should also make a special reference to Barry Verbiwski, who is with us still in the department today. He did a lot of work in assisting on the drafting—I know that—and has been a good source of advice to me over the years, I would go so far as to say a mentor to me over the years. Other people, my brother-in-law, Jack Kowalchuk, conservation officer for 37 years in this province, just retired recently, a recipient of a service excellence award and a man largely responsible for me standing here in the Chamber today—and my brother-in-law, I might add, was also very instrumental in me forming my views over the years.

And last, but certainly not least, a former director of wildlife, former regional director in the Interlake region, Brian Gillespie, who taught me so much about the importance of wildlife, the importance of habitat, monitoring our game populations. Brian Gillespie was a true pioneer in terms of this particular field, and I'll give you two examples of that, Mr. Speaker. When the elk herd, the Manitobensis subspecies of elk was re-introduced back into the Interlake, Brian Gillespie was in the field during that process and played a vital role, and one of the most successful ventures in modern Manitoba history, I would say, were—resulted from that. The elk herd in the Interlake is now a crown jewel of our province—I had to say I'd mention this. The unique subspecies, the Manitobensis subspecies,

found only in our province is now alive and well in the Interlake. I think our herd is probably in excess of a thousand animals. So well done in that regard, Brian. And also in the development of the wildlife management areas in our province, there are, I believe, 18 or 19 WMAs in my region, the Interlake, now, and a lot of that was expanded and built upon over the course of Brian's career as well, and we are following suit in that regard.

And I want to, again, acknowledge our minister who just a year or so ago was out in the Interlake, and we did cut the ribbon on a new wildlife management area in the Interlake, the Ewonchuk Wildlife Management Area, which was in acknowledgement of two ranchers, Bud and Morris Ewonchuk, both of whom are no longer with us but who were ranchers, cattle producers. And as I said earlier, a lot of ranchers, farmers work very co-operatively with us, and Bud and Morris were prime examples of that. Their farm was right on the periphery of the Sleeve Lake Wildlife Management Area, prime ground for elk.

And we did a lot of work with them in terms of intercept feeding in earlier years, but even more so, electric fencing, something this government has spent a lot of time working with producers to elk-proof their winter feed supplies. So just a few of the individuals that have played an important role over the years.

* (15:30)

This is also part of Manitoba's Green Plan, TomorrowNow, that also something that our Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Macintosh) has worked very hard on, and I take my hat off and acknowledge his good works in that regard as well.

Minister made reference to the fact that this is dedicated funding. This is very, very important, Mr. Speaker, that the monies gathered from this particular—call it, chuck off, if you will, on the hunting licence goes into a dedicated fund and will remain there. It will not be, for example, subsumed back into general revenues, for example, say, if all funds weren't consumed over the course of the year. This was something that organizations such as the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, the Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters Association, were very, very stringent on. They wanted this carved in stone, almost, and I think this legislation does deliver on that, albeit with some oversight because, ultimately, it's taxpayer dollars that we're talking about and the government

does have a role in that regard to oversee, to some degree.

I would also look forward, as we compose our boards, for some meaningful participation from the Aboriginal communities, our First Nations, our Metis people, because they are prime users of the resource. And to try and go down this path without having their feedback, without, in effect, having them at the table discussing issues as we go forward, I think, would be a mistake. So I would hope, as we're comprising these boards, that this is addressed. And I will actively engage myself personally in that regard.

Manitoba Trappers Association, as all, a very important entity that's going to play a role in this. Of course, also, primary users of wildlife, the resource. So their impact is much appreciated and we look forward to their engagement.

So, I will conclude on that. Once again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record. Indeed, it is a happy day to see this finally coming to fruition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on Bill 13?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: It's ready for the question.

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

Bill 19—The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment and Environment Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 19, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment and Environment Amendment Act.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship, that Bill 19, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment and Environment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réduction du volume et de la production des déchets et la Loi sur l'environnement, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Well, I have very few words in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, except to recognize that this legislation does provide a basis on

which we have to proceed with a much more aggressive recycling and waste reduction strategy in this province.

I think this is an area where our youth are simply getting ahead of not just legislators, but adults. They're coming home from school, they're saying to their parents, why'd you throw that banana in the garbage? Why did you throw that aluminum can in the garbage? Why aren't you doing something differently about the packages that you bring in the front door? Quite frankly, when it comes to water conservation, I think our children are much more attuned to the need to preserve that great resource. So we have committed, in TomorrowNow, the green plan, to acting on these expectations of the new generation of Manitobans and, indeed, the demands of this planet to better reduce waste and to provide leadership, not just in Canada but, I think, across the continent, when it comes to what Manitoba can do to reduce waste and enhance recycling.

The next big thing, when it comes to recycling, is got to be the management of organic waste, Mr. Speaker. We are seeing some examples across Manitoba. I think of Brandon, for example. I understand Steinbach is another. And there are many other municipalities that indeed are getting into the business of the collection of organics. And I don't mean just lawn waste or leaves but, as well, kitchen waste.

We are not achieving what we can in this province to reduce waste and to recycle. And indeed, among the OECD countries, Canada does not fare well at all. It is near the bottom. And, when it comes to the provinces of Canada, Manitoba and, indeed, the western provinces, do not fare well. So, in other words, we are really needing to rise to the challenge of enhancing our diversion of materials from landfills in this province, and that is what a new aggressive recycling strategy must tackle. So I can advise the House that the development of that is under way, and it will rely not only on the experience of some successful pilots and projects within this province, but will look for guidance from other jurisdictions and, indeed, jurisdictions even outside of North America.

This legislation does put in place, of course, a tweaking to ensure that composting efforts can be rightly supported. It gets rid of an advisory council that, despite the amendment of members opposite, was never put into place, because we have discovered through the actual practice of our

recycling and waste reduction efforts that engagement requires much more than an advisory committee. It's an ongoing engagement, particularly a partnership with our municipalities.

So there are other changes in the legislation, including an enhancement of the fines, which I know members opposite did not support, but it's very important that the producer organizations are backed up by deterrent fines and a clear message that there will be consequences for getting around the requirements in the legislation for producers to manage their own waste. This is absolutely fundamental to how we have to proceed in the future. The taxpayers should not be paying for the recycling and waste reduction efforts; it should be borne by the sectors that are producing that waste. It's a fundamental principle of polluter pay that has to be built on, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this legislation delivers. Thank you.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to bill—better move that—to Bill 19, the waste reduction prevention amendment act. We had a couple of concerns about this bill, which the minister has referred to both of them, I think. The removal of the advisory committee, I think, he says there was very little use of that advisory committee, but I think it's still a useful tool and should be part of what's going on here.

* (15:40)

The other concern we had, of course, was on the amount of the fines. It gets overbearing. What we had happen a few years ago, in my own municipality, and this is all part of the recycling, and it—once again, the rural is a little bit different than city—and we had fridges and stoves have to be decommissioned before they can go anywhere. And you have to—I think the fee is about \$40—\$40 or \$50 to decommission them. People wouldn't pay that. So, in my rural municipality, you started to find fridges and stoves thrown out at the edge of a field, on the side of a road; these fridges and stoves could very easily be coming from urban areas, and when you put the cost too high at one end of the spectrum, that's what will happen. You'll have—and when you start putting the cost too high—and the intents are all good. But people just say, I'm going to take a drive out in the country; I'll go two miles down that back road and I'll just throw it out, and that happens. Whether you believe it happens or not, it happens. I—

An Honourable Member: Done it yourself?

Mr. Briese: I—no, I had it on my own property, just about a quarter of a mile from my house. I found—I drove into the field, and there's all this garbage there, and usually garbage is fairly easy to identify. You get digging around in it and found a couple of envelopes with a name on them. So went back and phoned, and also phoned the police. This is private property and they're using it for a waste disposal site. And they—it turned out that they'd been doing some work around their home and they loaded some stuff in a half-ton and told a 16- or 17-year-old to take it to a dumpster, and he thought it was just a good idea to drive two miles out of town—and drive right past some dumpsters, by the way—and throw it out on the edge of the bush.

An Honourable Member: Tory youth.

Mr. Briese: So they came back and cleaned it up. I have to give them credit. They did come back and clean it up. But, no, I don't think it was a Tory youth in this case. I'm reasonably sure it was a Liberal youth, but anyhow, that—my point is when you put too many penalties at one end of the spectrum, you cause another problem back along the chain. So I always caution against—be very careful what you do.

I heard the minister say he wanted a more aggressive approach to recycling and organic waste management. By the way, my community does have organic waste management. We are part of a regional waste disposal site, and there's a lot of stuff goes into that regional site that probably shouldn't. But there's quite the costs, the dumping costs to the municipalities and stuff is very, very high so it does curtail a little bit the—by the way, on that fridge and stove issue, our municipality finally said, we will collect those fridges and stoves and we will pay the decommission fee. So that we'd wait until there were 20 or 30 of them at the disposal site. We'd get our technician in to decommission them. He'd do it, he'd do 20 or 30 of them for a hundred or two hundred bucks, which was a heck of a lot of cheaper and was a good solution to the whole problem.

So I think this is a bill that I do have some problem supporting. It's—I don't like to see the fine so high. You can actually put somebody out of business with fines of that level, and I don't think that's the intent of this type of legislation, but it could well be the outcome.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Mr. Speaker, just to say briefly that I rise to support this

legislation. It is important that we are moving forward and that we get up to speed in comparison with other jurisdictions in terms of waste reduction, including organic wastes, and so this legislation for waste reduction and prevention amendment act and the environment amendment act will be a step forward in this direction.

I think it is of interest that the minister acknowledged that after 14 years of NDP government, we are very much behind other jurisdictions in Canada and, certainly, in Europe, and that it's time that we move forward. And I look forward and hopefully this legislation will work well, but we'll be watching that.

And so thanks for the opportunity to comment and look forward to seeing this bill passed and implemented shortly.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on Bill 19?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of Bill 19, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment and Environment Amendment Act, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: Opinion of the Chair, the Ayes have it.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

Bill 24—The Endangered Species Amendment Act (Ecosystem Protection and Miscellaneous Amendments)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 24, The Endangered Species Amendment Act (Ecosystem

Protection and Miscellaneous Amendments), as amended.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 24, The Endangered Species Amendment Act (Ecosystem Protection and Miscellaneous Amendments), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development and subsequently amended, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: During the course of the passage of this bill some interesting occurrences came to the fore, and I think we can just reflect on those briefly now. But, first of all, just to remind ourselves of what this legislation is about, it is about attempting to prevent the further addition to the endangered species list of those species that are endangered because their ecosystem—the ecosystem that they live in is, in fact, endangered. We often find that endangered species that live in a habitat that is under threat are the likely candidates for a risk to their survival, and sometimes there are many species in one particular endangered ecosystem. So this is a more preventative approach to ensuring the survival of the species that thrive in Manitoba currently.

I was very pleased to see the support for this initiative, not only nationally and internationally, but as well from many diverse interests. This is legislation that is unique in North America. It is the first of its kind, I understand, and, indeed, only in New Zealand and Australia does some of the legislation go to work for species of the planet. So I trust that other jurisdictions will be looking at the implementation of this legislation here in Manitoba, and we certainly are very keen to see it work in a way that is effective and, of course, fair.

But the occurrence that I referred to earlier, actually, was the position of the opposition when it came to this legislation in committee. And I think that in a way that was quite unfair to the new critic, he was handed, I know, a raft of amendments by his leader. And I suspect that he went into committee grudgingly with the raft of amendments, because I know he is a steward of the Earth. He has been that way because it has been his livelihood to be such a steward. But he went into committee with, I think, about 12 amendments, and I think what is very unfortunate and is entirely contrary to, I think, the

public interest, amendments were made to, in fact, undermine our green agenda and, in particular, to undermine the investigation powers of our natural resource officers in Manitoba.

* (15:50)

The amendments actually focused on two enforcement powers of—and arose in Manitoba. First, was to make them second-class law enforcement officials unlike in any other province that I know of, by the way, Mr. Speaker, so that they could not enter onto private land in the course of their investigations. In other words, our conservation officers would have to stand at the side of the road, I guess, with their canine units while the RCMP went onto the land to further an investigation. What came over the opposition in putting this amendment together, I—I'm at a loss, Mr. Speaker, because that is entirely contrary to the interests of this side of the House, when it comes to the role and responsibilities and the importance of natural resource officers in this province.

They didn't stop there, though; they also brought in an amendment to eliminate the ability of natural resource officers to conduct covert investigations and, when it comes to the protection of endangered species, that can be a very useful tool. They also then did a third—took a third action, which is quite remarkable; they wanted to cut the fines in half that protect all things—endangered species and ecosystems, just when strong deterrent fines are called for. I think it was said best by someone in our department—extinction is forever, and this legislation has to be backed up by teeth. It has to be backed up by investigative powers.

This side of the House is currently working with Manitoba Justice and the natural resource officers to ensure that the investigation powers and, indeed, the entire status of natural resource officers is confirmed in law, is known with certainty, in terms of both their enforcement powers but, as well, their responsibilities and their oversight. We have seen remarkable improvements to how police are governed by legislation in this province and it is our belief that no less so our natural resource officers must have legislation accordingly.

So, Mr. Speaker, the other side of the House could be on the side of poachers if they want, but we're on the side of law and order, we're on the side of Mother Earth and her bounty. And, by the way, we're also on the side of landowners who, from time to time, can be besieged by poachers, and it is often

landowners themselves that call in natural resource officers to deal with poachers.

So it's absolutely critical that this legislation proceed to passage without being hampered by the amendments that the opposition brought into committee. I think that is very regrettable and I am certain that our natural resource officers, as well, regret that that is the view of members opposite. It would be, of course, their policy, God forbid, if they ever became government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, that was quite a little rant.

I didn't know this whole bill was designed to protect us from poachers. I—do they go out and do they poach some endangered species of plant out there? I think the minister more confused the bill than spoke to it.

You know, he talks about the rights of government to go on to private property and stuff, and I stand by my comments before on private property. He talks as if he's got all these conservation and resource officers out there ready to get right on this. They've been cutting positions in the resource department for a number of years, and it's getting worse and worse. And I know, in my own area, there's—you can hardly find a resource officer anymore.

But there is—there definitely is a private-land issue, and farmers are—and the minister did refer to it—farmers are the stewards of the land, farmers and ranchers, and we do take a key interest in what's on that property. To come along and impose massive fines, I would even probably be more supportive if the fine collection went to compensate the landowners who were being impacted by this. To go out there now, in essence, if there's an endangered plant or a species on a corner of a quarter section, you can pull the whole quarter section out of production and not compensate the farmer in any way, shape or form, and I don't think that's fair. If protection of species is good, it's good for everyone, and I think it should be—the costs of that protection should be borne by everyone.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

You know, they go on and on about what wonderful stewards of the—[interjection]—Mother Earth they are, and I watch right now. They're pushing a road through the boreal forest up the east

side of Lake Winnipeg, and that road leaves quite a scar on the landscape. It's a very significant breakout in that area. But then they turn around and they say, well, we got to protect the boreal forest so we can't put the hydro line through there.

Now, I just never got my—the Bipole III line, I've never got my head around that. Why couldn't you run the Bipole III line right beside that road you're building? It's the same area. Instead, they're bringing that Bipole III line down the other side of the province, through just as much boreal forest as there is on the east side, and also through the aspen parklands which is a very unique ecosystem and a very much smaller system than the boreal forest in this country. It's a very narrow band—actually, I live right on the edge of the aspen parkland area. So, you know the—like, you can't it both ways. They talk a great story the one way and then they actually are contradicting themselves. When it comes to something that the government wants to do, we'll just hack and slash and go wherever we want with it, and we'll make the environmental rules to suit ourselves rather than having to obey anything else that's out there.

I know farmers and ranchers are very conscious of not only endangered species, but of all the species that are out there and try and do everything they can to propagate and keep those species healthy and there for the enjoyment of all. But, if there's going to be restrictions, there's going to be fines, then they—the actual owners of the land should be compensated for whatever they will be losing out of these proposals.

I think that pretty well covers the concerns I had with this bill. I know the minister certainly appears not to be hearing very well what we're saying over here and doing a rant of his own, but that's his prerogative and that's what debates all about.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to put a few comments on the record with regard to Bill 24, the endangered—

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Excuse me, sorry. Honourable member, could you please just move your paper off the microphone for the benefit of Hansard. I know we're all getting used to this new system. Please proceed, thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: I rise to put a few words on the record about Bill 24, The Endangered Species Amendment Act, which deals with the protection and the recovery

of endangered species, but also the protection and recovery of ecosystems.

I think it is important that the bill contains within it the requirement for recovery strategy for species and for ecosystems which are endangered. I think that the importance, as I've stressed at the second reading of this bill, of integrating species and ecosystems recovery act is pretty important.

* (16:00)

I think it is also important to respect and to work with people who are private landowners, because in my experience that it is in working with people who are private landowners that you can make the most progress in these sorts of areas. And that there, indeed, may be and should be in some instances compensation where the conditions are such that this marks a, you know, major change in requirements for the private landowner. And I think that that may need to be determined as things move forward and as this bill is implemented, but I believe it would be important not to rule that out.

It is important to note, I think, that, you know, many species will, you know, move their habitat. And they may move their habitat in response to climate change as warmer temperatures move north and so on. There are, of course, birds which are migratory and use one habitat in the winter and one in the summer and, of course, migratory habitats in between. And being aware of these various habitats, these various ecosystems, becomes particularly important.

I think we need to—in light of what's happening with climate change at the moment, we need to recognize, as we move forward in implementing this act, that if, as a result of climate change, the optimum conditions for a particular habitat or ecosystem actually move north further because of climate change, that trying to recreate the ecosystem in the existing threatened ecosystem may be less successful than trying to establish a new ecosystem further north where the habitat is now more appropriate, may be more successful. And so there is a need for some flexibility, some common sense and some wisdom as this moves forward.

I think it's also important to talk a little bit about the need for having a very strong research base here, that when you're making decisions about threatened and endangered species and threatened and endangered ecosystems, that it's really important to have the scientific evidence and the scientific base on

which to make good decisions. And one of the problems under this government has been the lack of investment in that research base, generally speaking, but certainly in this area. And there needs to be more investment in understanding species and ecosystems so we have the research base in order to make good decisions under this act, and not to make arbitrary decisions which are not well-informed because there is not the scientific evidence and the research that goes along with making good decisions.

So, with those few comments, I am in support of this bill. Liberals are in support of this bill. And we just want to make sure that it is implemented with wisdom and with common sense as it moves forward, and in a—an effective way.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Question being concurrence and third reading on Bill 24, the endangered species act, ecosystem protection and miscellaneous amendments.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): I heard a no.

Voice Vote

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): All those in favour of the motion, please indicate by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): All those opposed to the motion, please indicate by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On division.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): On division, so noted.

**Bill 30—The Forest Health Protection
Amendment Act (Heritage Trees)**

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Now calling concurrence and third reading on Bill 30, The Forest Health Protection Amendment Act (Heritage Trees), recognizing the honourable Government House Leader.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 30, The Forest Health Protection Amendment Act (Heritage Trees); Loi modifiant la loi sur la protection de la santé des forêts (arbres remarquables), reporting from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development and subsequently amended, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Recognizing the honourable government—honourable Minister for Conservation and Water Stewardship.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): The concept for this bill came from some of the consultations that led to TomorrowNow—Manitoba's Green Plan, in particular some ideas that were brought forward by Rivers West, and I want to thank Ms. Turenne for her contributions.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I also want to thank the Manitoba Forestry Association that has developed an initiative to celebrate the diversity and the significance of many Manitoba trees and I look forward to the legislation coming into force.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate?

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to make a couple of comments on Bill 30. Once again, this seems like a—I guess it's fine to put in a heritage trees bill but I think there's more important things we could be doing in this House.

The—trees live and die and I doubt if you'd find very many—I don't know what constitutes heritage, whether it's 40 years or 50 years or a hundred years or 200 years, but the kind of climate that we have in this province, if it's a lot of years, if it's a century-old tree or something that would become a heritage tree,

it's—we would—we really don't have very many that old.

But I did have a concern on this bill, and I think it's been addressed on the private property aspect of it once again, and the entrance onto private property and also the—once again, all these things are great things and sound real good, but if they interfere with private property rights, and they may well be good for everybody in Manitoba, but if they interfere with a small segment of the population, then if it's good for everybody in Manitoba, that small segment of population should be compensated.

I think in this one, as in a couple of other bills I've mentioned, the fines are excessive. There's fines—maximum fines in place. I don't think any court would impose these fines, by the way, but the maximum fines—at least the maximum fines, but the maximum could literally put somebody out of business. They could literally cause somebody to lose their home. They could—you know, it's—they're excessive. It's simply—I know you need a disincentive, but sometimes the—as I mentioned before, the carrot is a lot better than the stick, and these fines are excessive and can have a detrimental effect on well-being.

With that being said, this is somewhat of a fluff bill and we're prepared to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak briefly on this bill, which deals with the preservation of heritage trees. I've spoken at some length at the second reading, and so I will have just some fairly brief comments now.

* (16:10)

Just speaking with the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), he mentioned that the only example he can think of where trees needed to be protected was when they had to be protected from the government itself, in the case of a tree along the highway, on Highway 1. And certainly, you know, we look forward to what happens in the future, and maybe that's one of the reasons that this is being 'brilled' forward, is to preserve trees from destruction by members of another department in the government. But, that being said, I think it is a worthwhile effort to preserve heritage trees, and, indeed, something that when we're talking about certain trees which may be a hundred or hundreds of years old, that it's good that we recognize the existence of these trees. And I think it's really

important to work with landowners and work with local communities who—very often when you have a heritage tree in their area, local people are very concerned about that and will come forward and be ready to act on behalf of the tree and to protect the tree.

I also think, as I said at second reading, that, you know, being proactive when you've identified a heritage tree is as important as just preventing it from being cut down, that there are a variety of other things that can be done to improve the health of a heritage tree, and, within reason, that's what we should be doing. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on Bill 30?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: House ready for the question.

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

House Business

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

Mr. Swan: On House business, to address the House for leave to a number of things as follows: firstly, as per the sessional order, could you ask the Official Opposition House Leader if he's agreeable to bringing Bill 2 to second reading today.

And would you then please ask for leave as follows: (1) that the House shall not see the clock today until Bill 2 has passed second reading and been referred to a standing committee; (2) notwithstanding rule 98 sub 8, the bill be referred to a standing committee for tomorrow evening; (3) assuming the bill is then reported back to the House on Wednesday, the bill should be available for consideration at report stage, if necessary, and for concurrence and third reading on Thursday; (4) Bill 32, the Manitoba institute for purchasing management association of Canada amendment act, shall be considered a third session specified bill and, as such, is not required to come to a concurrence and third reading vote before we rise this Thursday; (5) that the filing of any report stage amendments for Bill 2 be completed by 5 p.m., Wednesday, and that distribution of these amendments occur Thursday morning; and (6) the House shall not rise on Thursday until concurrence and third reading of Bill 2 has been completed. The concurrence and third reading of this bill will take place prior to the

previously agreed upon votes on specified second session bills.

Mr. Speaker: As per sessional order, is the honourable Opposition House Leader agreeable to bringing Bill 2 to second reading today?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Just for clarification, Mr. Speaker, I—the way I understood it—and my hearing isn't as good as it once was—I believe that the Government House Leader said rule 98 sub 8, when I believe it's 92(8).

Mr. Speaker: I have 92(8).

An Honourable Member: That's what you have?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

An Honourable Member: That's what you have written, but I understood he said—

Mr. Speaker: For clarification of the House, then, I understand that the honourable Government House Leader was intending to say rule 92(8).

Mr. Swan: That's correct, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Okay.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we asked for and received on Thursday of last week a series of answers to questions that we had regarding Bill 2. We were able to confer over the weekend with those who had asked those questions, and I had further conference with the Government House Leader this morning regarding removing one bill and replacing it with another to preserve the debate time, so we are in agreement to bring Bill 2 forward for second reading today.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, so there's agreement on bringing Bill 2 forward for second reading today.

And then, leave has been asked that the House shall not see the clock in—today until Bill 2 has passed second reading and been referred to the standing committee, notwithstanding rule 92(8), when the bill will be referred to a standing committee for tomorrow evening. Assuming the bill is then reported back to the House on Wednesday, the bill should be available for consideration at report stage if necessary and for concurrence and third reading on Thursday. Bill 32, the Manitoba institute for purchasing management association of Canada amendment act, shall be considered a third session specified bill as—and, as such, is not required to come to concurrence and third reading vote before we rise this Thursday.

And that the filing of any report stage amendments for Bill 2 be completed by 5 p.m. on Wednesday and that distribution of these amendments occur Thursday morning and, finally, the House shall not rise on Thursday until concurrence and third reading of Bill 2 has been completed. The concurrence and third reading of this bill will take place prior to the previously agreed-upon votes on specified second-session bills.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS

Bill 2—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety of Workers in Highway Construction Zones)

Mr. Speaker: Now we'll call bill—as I find it here—Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety of Workers in Highway Construction Zones).

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton), that Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety of Workers in Highway Construction Zones); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (sécurité des travailleurs dans les zones de construction), now be read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Braun: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to finally be able to present Bill 2, the highway traffic amendment act. This amendment is fundamental to government's commitment to continue to improve worker safety during road and highway construction projects.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put on the record my disappointment the way in which members opposite played politics with this bill. Every person working on our roads is someone's mother, father, son or daughter. Their families deserve to have their loved ones come home from work safe. That is what we are trying to accomplish with this bill, in partnership with industry, labour and local governments.

When we introduced the bill, the PCs told media they supported it. We honestly didn't expect this bill to become an issue with our members opposite. Every question they raised was addressed promptly. A technical briefing was held where the opposition had full access to departmental staff to address any technical questions. After that meeting, the PCs followed up with a letter on Wednesday of last week

and a written response was provided within hours of that same day.

On October 18, 2010, a life was tragically cut short when Brittany Murray, a 21-year-old flag person, was struck and killed by a motor vehicle while performing her work duties in a highway construction zone. Those who knew and loved Brittany Murray have suffered a profound and permanent loss as a result of an incident that could've been prevented. We need to make sure this does not happen to another family.

After thorough review in 2012, government implemented a number of safety enhancements through amendments to the Workplace Safety and Health regulation. Flag persons are now more visible to motorists as a result of improved requirements for high visibility apparel and the introduction of new, dedicated flag person signage. In addition, Manitoba now has standardized and accredited flag person training programs that ensure workers receive the training they need to perform their duty safely. The amendments in this bill build on our previous efforts and will further help to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future by enhancing safety for workers and motorists alike.

The Highway Traffic Act amendments will create an offence for speeding in a construction zone, regardless of the presence of workers, double the fine for speeding in a construction zone as compared to other speeding offences. It will enable regulations that will clarify requirements for marking and signage of construction zones by eliminating the use of speed limit signs indicating when passing workers and establish requirements for the management of traffic in construction zones. Making speeding in a construction zone an offence, regardless of the presence of workers, will clarify expectations for motorists travelling on a—in a construction zone and enhance the safety of workers. Clearly marked and effectively enforced speeds will also address other factors that warrant reduced speeds in construction zones, such as narrowed lanes, uneven surfaces and barriers. By eliminating the use of the when-passing-workers sign, we can ensure construction zones have clear and consistent markings.

* (16:20)

All Manitobans deserve to make it home safely at the end of a workday. The purposed amendments in Bill 2 will help prevent workplace tragedies and

ensure road construction zones in Manitoba are a safe place to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I want to express my disappointment in the minister for her initial comments. I would have thought if there was a time in this House that a bill wouldn't emit a partisan comment, it would have been on this bill. And sadly I was mistaken, after listening to the minister.

We are disappointed, and as our critic has said previously, that it's taken so long for this bill to come here. We know that the Manitoba Federation of Labour advised this government three years ago that there needed to be changes to the legislation, and the government did nothing in response to the request from the Manitoba Federation of Labour. Had there, in fact, not been a court ruling that brought up the challenges and issues around—of this particular situation, the government still might not have acted. We've not seen any action in 13 years of this regard.

Last session—this long, summer session that we had that extended to September, the government never brought this up as a priority. We sat here for five months or so, never heard from the government about this issue. Spoke to the Government House Leader (Mr. Swan) on more times than I can remember, for countless hours, Mr. Speaker; the Government House Leader never raised this issue or suggested that this would be a priority.

We had countless negotiations on a sessional agreement which is before this House and in place now, Mr. Speaker, that all parties agreed to abide by and that the Government House Leader of the time, of the day, signed on. I don't think she signed in disappearing ink. I actually looked this morning, her signature was still there, at least on the version that I have, and yet we heard nothing from this government on the issue. And yet, suddenly, after 13 years, three years after the Manitoba Federation of Labour raised the issue and after five months of sitting through the summer, the government, last week, decided that this would become a priority.

Now, we, I think, legitimately asked questions. Questions were being asked of us by stakeholders and municipalities. It is our job to ask questions, Mr. Speaker, and to try to ascertain those answers. They were, I think, thoughtful questions posed by our critic on this issue, the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat). They were delivered to the government, they were mentioned in a briefing, and

a week later those responses came forward in full and we received them and had a chance to review them on Thursday of last week.

And then over the weekend we had the opportunity, then, to consider those and to respond back to those who had asked those questions. And I wrote a letter on the weekend, on—yesterday, on Sunday I wrote a letter and delivered it this morning to the Government House Leader, suggesting three ways that this bill could come to a vote so that the provisions could be in place for the 2014 construction season. And the Government House Leader and I had further discussions this afternoon, and he agreed to the—one of the suggestions, one of the alternatives that I put forward. And I thank him for agreeing to one of the alternatives.

Now, I know that the minister is new, and so perhaps she saw an opportunity to try to pay partisan politics, and I would suggest to her that in her new role as minister she'll be well served not to play partisan politics on an issue that involves the lives of somebody whose family is deeply impacted. And I've had the opportunity, through my office, to speak with members of the family, and I've asked—and I understand that they're going to be here on Thursday, and it's why I asked that this bill come forward sooner on Thursday, not be the last bill, so it's not late into the night so that they can see the bill debated.

And I would hope that by the time Thursday comes around, that the minister will take a different approach, a different tack than she took this afternoon, and that she might see that this is not the place for partisan politics. There's lots of places in this House where partisan politics come into play; I play those games as well sometimes, and I'll admit those to you. Well, that might come as a shock to members opposite. But I think it's important that you pick your spots, Mr. Speaker. You pick your spots where it's time to be political, and where it's time not to be political. And I would have thought that this would be a clear time not to be political. So we asked a series of thoughtful questions; we have received the answers. They've been reviewed by our critic Government House Leader, which he accepted.

Now, if the minister wants to simply play politics, I will leave that to her, but, ultimately, Mr. Speaker, we are glad that we were able to change in some ways the sessional agreement because we were concerned. Obviously, we only have three days left

until Thursday, until this House is scheduled to rise, and we have some, I suppose, 20 bills that need to be debated over the next three afternoons, or in and about that range, and there's not a lot of time. And so I simply asked the government, made the proposal that the government could swap out one bill and put in this bill.

And I didn't, you know, had I wanted to play politics, or anybody in our caucus would have, we might have suggested the PST bill, or we might have suggested the BITSA bill, but we didn't. I actually said to the Government House Leader, my issue and my concern is about preserving the narrow amount of debate time that we have, not about trying to make partisan issue and taking a highly sensitive partisan bill and trying to wedge it against this bill. In fact, we did exactly the opposite. And so I was shocked to hear the comments by this new minister, the member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun), Mr. Speaker, that she would say those sort of things because I don't think they're reflective of what Manitobans would expect in this House and they're not reflective of the actions that we have taken to ensure that this bill comes to a vote by Thursday.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I was very pleased to be able to second this bill; it relates to an area that's of significant concern to myself. As Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, I want to indicate that this is a joint bill that was worked on under leadership of the Workplace Safety and Health section at the Department of Labour, and I want to, I really want to credit our new minister and our former minister for their leadership on this file. And I was very proud to stand at the announcement with family members of, I think, someone that is going to leave a legacy in terms of recognizing what happened.

I do want to stress to the Opposition House Leader that I certainly was one of the ones who expressed a great deal of concern, along with our minister, about the delays that took place. And I want to put on the record that earlier this year we had a bill on workplace safety and health, Mr. Speaker. I was in committee, every committee presenter came before the committee supporting the bill; members opposite didn't speak against the bill. This is Bill 31. And, lo and behold, when the final vote took place, they voted against it. So I don't know if members opposite would consider that to be political or not political, but I can tell you that's not the first time they voted against workplace safety and health legislation, I'm actually trying to remember how

many times they voted against workplace safety and health legislation in this province.

So, if they've come to their senses on this, Mr. Speaker, I think they should not lecture us, and particularly the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), in terms of it, because I don't what the politics are of voting against virtually every workplace safety and health initiative we brought in this government. In fact, we were kept here for much of one summer by the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler), who was the critic at the time, and when members opposite were fighting what? A workplace safety and health bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, before the member opposite starts getting into accusations that we are being political, I want to put on the record that, indeed, there's a good reason why we on this side of the House do have some skepticism when we see what happens with members opposite, and that is it's not what they say, it's what they do. They've consistently voted against strengthening the protection for workers. So, if this now is, if the actions of our minister and the actions of the negotiations have brought it to the part where they'll actually vote for something that's going to improve workplace safety and health, I say good on everyone that's exposed their real agenda on previous issues.

So, you know what, before they lecture us, let's see them stand up as we have, Mr. Speaker, because I think what you've seen, and this is a political comment if members opposite want a quote, and that is whenever we brought in legislation for, that deals with workplace safety, now that we've brought in numerous initiatives, it's this side of the House that stood up hundred per cent of the time to improve workplace safety and health, and members opposite can go look in the mirror if they want to see the politics on workplace safety and health. If they want to get politics out, how about if they stop voting against workplace safety and health initiatives, better protection for Manitoba workers?

* (16:30)

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to put some words on record with regard to Bill 2, the highway traffic amendment act. I do want to thank the member for Steinbach for the comments that he put on the record because it does clarify some of the issues that were a dark cloud over this bill. And I believe that this has to be said and it has to be put on the record.

I'd like to say to the minister that I appreciated the briefing. I indicated at the briefing that I had concerns with regard to liability and other issues with regard to municipalities, an important stakeholder. And I was told I would get the information. We waited several days. The next week there was still nothing coming from the minister's office, so I drafted a letter and requested that information because there was talk that this was something that the government wanted to try to present this session, knowing full well that there were discussions and there's rules to follow, Mr. Speaker. And I know it's disappointing when something doesn't—something—a piece of legislation that is so critical to your mindset and to the health and well-being of individuals, and one that actually pays respect to a family that has lost someone through legislation that was less than perfect.

We've brought legislation forward on this side of the House in the same manner. And often that legislation does not pass. So I, you know, I take exception to some of the comments made by the minister with regard to her feelings being hurt that the process didn't go as she would like. But nothing—nothing—in this place is going to go exactly as an individual would like.

Now, we would like to address two points with regard to this legislation. This legislation was brought to the government's attention three years ago by the Manitoba Federation of Labour. We sat for several sessions since that was raised with the government. If this legislation was as critical as the minister is indicating it is, there was ample opportunity to bring this forward over the last three years. It is a very important piece of legislation. But I think, when the government is told by the justice system that this individual is acquitted because their law is substandard, Mr. Speaker, that the restrictions for construction zones weren't sufficiently clear to enforce reduced speed limits and the family goes, you know, back to this government, it's their laws that were insufficient. This government that has been in power for 13 years had the ability to make those changes and especially in the last three years when their—the Manitoba Federation of Labour had raised it with them.

So I agree this is important piece of legislation, but I don't believe that the process can be faulted on our end, Mr. Speaker. I believe that there's a lot of guilt to share across the way as well as on this side. But, you know, it's interesting. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), you know, my first year of

being an MLA, I remember him having to come and—made a statement in the House with regard to a question and actually had to phone me and apologize.

Now, you know, for a member that has been in the Chamber for a number of years because he—*[interjection]* Oh, Mr. Speaker. And he—you know, and what I find is he didn't even mean it because he goes into the House the next day and continues to say the same things over and over again. So, you know, it obviously doesn't stick.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to this legislation, we have seen a number of Manitobans who have been injured or tragically killed while performing the duties of their jobs or near provincial highways. So we know that this legislation is very important. There have been many tragic experiences that have occurred directly as a result of drivers speeding through the construction zones, and we have seen, by the untimely death of Brittany Murray, that legislation needed to be stronger, that it had to be addressed, and the government had failed to do that.

So I believe that, while we believe this is a real strong and important piece of legislation, we believe the government could have been handling this in a very—a different way without blaming this side of the House for stalling something that they had every opportunity to bring forward over the last three years. I believe that Brittany Murray's family will receive some comfort in knowing that this is not—this legislation will come forward and provide protection for other young people or other—anybody working on a construction site that may be put into danger. And I believe that this government will do as it says it does and consult with stakeholders. But I believe that, when they say consult, I would expect that they will listen to Manitobans and listen to the concerns and listen to the comments made by stakeholders to ensure that this law actually does what it says and intends to do, is protect workers in workplaces.

Mr. Speaker, so, in conclusion, I believe that this piece of legislation, as I said earlier, took a long time to come forward. We're going to support this legislation because it's going to protect road workers, employers, drivers and others that—other individuals who have to be protected and ensure that there's a slowdown in construction zones for years to come, but a clear and enforceable piece of legislation, as was indicated by the judge in the case of Brittany Murray. So I believe that we will listen to the debate, we'll move forward, and I believe that this has been a

good process to see exactly where members opposite sit with regard to working through a process and respecting the legislation within this House that is enjoyed by all. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to put a few comments on the record on Bill 2. I'm certainly in support of this legislation and of moving it forward, and I'm glad that there's an agreement among all parties that we will be able to get this legislation passed this session and before Christmas.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that we need to make sure that the people who are working in highway construction at a location where there is, you know, construction or repair or other work going on, need to be adequately protected. I believe that, in addition to this legislation, that the government needs to pay very careful attention to the requirements for signage. Having really clear, well-marked signage can make a very big difference, and, in the past, this is not something that's always been paid enough attention to. This has been brought to the fore by a number of people in Winnipeg, where signage hasn't been always up to what it really should be.

And certainly, when we're looking throughout the province in terms of protecting people at the site of construction, involved in construction, that one of the things that's vital is that there be really a clear signage that can be seen very easily. You know, if you have more than one lane, two lanes, three lanes, what—going in one direction, it can sometimes be difficult to see the signage. And I know that there are requirements to have signage on the median, normally, when you have more than one lane. But, certainly, making sure that there is well-marked signage and that this is very visible and that the rules around the signage are clear and that this—these rules are followed, I think, is essential to ensuring the safety of construction workers. And so this bill, I believe, will certainly help.

We could, of course, as has been commented, have this bill earlier, and it might have even saved the life of Brittany Murray, but let's get it there as soon as we can, and let's move forward and try to make sure that workplaces in Manitoba are as safe as they possibly can be.

* (16:40)

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further—the honourable member for Spruce Woods.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): It's certainly a pleasure to enter into debate today on Bill 2. It's interesting why this particular legislation is coming forward at this point in time. I know we, all parties of the House, this fall entered into an agreement in terms of which pieces of legislation that were on the books would be passed in the session—in the spring and summer session, and then, you know, with that, we allowed 10 bills to pass and come to vote, and the remainder of the legislation was to be debated in this fall session. And certainly that was the agreement on all—by all parties going forward. We had an agreement, and there was no discussion at that time, to my knowledge, of any other urgency in bringing forward any legislation that would have to be passed this fall session.

You know, clearly, we knew there would be additional legislation introduced for discussion, for debate in this fall session and we anticipated that, but there was no expectation that legislation that was introduced this fall would, in fact, be voted on and be passed during this fall session. So, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly interesting that there is an urgency now on behalf of the NDP to pass Bill 2. And hearing the debate this afternoon in relation to Bill 2, it seems to me, the NDP were warned about this particular situation as much as three years ago, and, clearly, the NDP did not take that guidance at that particular time. They've waited, for some reason, to try to push this legislation through at this short fall session. And it seems quite ironic.

We know—we look at their legislation that was brought forward in the spring session. Clearly, that—a lot of that legislation is talking about different levels of taxation, and, clearly, that seems to be the priority of the NDP, is to get more money out of the pockets of Manitobans. And, clearly, with the signalling of the increase in the provincial sales tax on the broad range of goods and services, followed by the 14 per cent increase in the PST this year in the budget, then they have to go and look at changing legislation to make that framework fall into place.

So, clearly, that was the priority of the NDP throughout this past session. It's interesting they've found some—a new issue here under Bill 2, kind of at the last minute before Christmas break. It seems quite interesting this new-found interest.

Mr. Speaker, you know, clearly, we're all concerned about safety across our great province, and, obviously, we've had situations that have happened in the past that bring the issue forward to

Manitobans. And, hopefully, Manitobans will become more aware of safety issues, and, clearly, Bill 2 speaks to the issues around safety, around our highways and in construction zones.

I've been a volunteer firefighter for a number of years and certainly have had the unfortunate opportunities to work out on our highways, both in the provincial roads and municipal roads, and it is a very dangerous place to work. People do not always pay attention, as we think they should when they're travelling our highways and byways, and it's obviously—accidents do happen. But, when we're at a scene as both, you know, as firefighters working hand-in-hand with paramedics and treating people, there's—it's a very dangerous workplace there as well, because individuals travelling the highways don't always pay attention to what's going on around them. They're more concerned about, you know, stopping to have a look to see what's going on in a given situation, and quite often those situations can really lead to more serious situations where there's a lot of vehicle activity and people are out of their safety element. And certainly that gets more complicated at night as well, Mr. Speaker.

And I've had the opportunity to work out there and do traffic control, you know, when police officers either aren't on scene at this point in time, or whether they are, you know, tied up doing other things, and they have limited resources. So sometimes we use—you know, firemen will do traffic control. And it's—I've had some very interesting experiences over the years in terms of people not following guidance at accident scenes, and, boy, it really is interesting to see how people react and how they don't react and don't actually take direction as they should, and it's very unfortunate. I think we, certainly, as legislators, should be driving home the safety component, and I think we have to do a better job of educating Manitoba motorists about the—what's going on out on the highways.

And not only in construction situations, Mr. Speaker, but also in the situation I talked about where there's motor vehicle accidents. We have to do a better job of making sure people understand the issues around there, the severity of the situation, and the complications that are there when you're involved in those types of situations. And I know this particular legislation looks at increasing fines. I think, certainly, that's one component that will, hopefully, help reduce incidents around construction sites, but I think there's other things that we should have a look at in terms of making the public more

aware of safety situations as it pertains to workers on construction sites.

Just over the weekend, Mr. Speaker, I had a very interesting conversation with my middle son who is in his third year of agri-business, who is actually taking a transportation course, and they had an individual come in who is an expert in science and safety on highways, and it was a very interesting presentation he said. And what this fellow had done, he'd had a look at signage all around the city of Winnipeg, and he had a very comprehensive study done of signage as it relates to all types of signage around the city. And it was quite alarming to hear how bad the signs were in the city of Winnipeg. And he drew a very clear picture that it was very difficult for motorists to make sure they understand both the dangerous situations, speed limits, and other issues because the signs really are not adequate and they really don't meet the Canadian standards, because there are standards across Canada for signage, and, clearly, there's a lack of that degree of getting up to the standards in terms of the signage.

So this report that he did really indicated that we have a lot of work to do in terms of—as governments to make sure that we have proper and adequate signage to warn motorists of the dangers and the issues that are out there. And it's very important work that I think has to be done.

And I think the same thing can be said for construction zones. If you travel to other provinces they have different ways of indicating to motorists that construction zones are in the future and how they're marked and how they're flagged. I think we can maybe take some lessons from other jurisdictions in terms of how construction sites are marked. Clearly, we don't want to have any more situations such as the tragic death of the young lady not too long ago. So we should be looking at all types of opportunities to revisit, to make sure that the construction zones are clearly marked and make sure that they're safe for the workers involved there.

* (16:50)

Mr. Speaker, we—you know, we talked a little bit about the increase in the fines, and I know we, as Manitobans, when we're travelling on the highways, we don't necessarily think about the repercussions of speeding, and it might be a consideration if some of the—those fines were actually posted so that a motorist going down the road or coming up to a construction zone, in this case, would know what the repercussions were if they were 10, 15, or

20 kilometres over the speed limit. I would suggest if they were to recognize that they could face a two or three or four demerit surcharge and, as well, if they're looking at a five- or six-hundred-dollar fine, they may take special precautions and special attention when they're going through a construction zone. And I think that's just another opportunity that we have to look at all types of ideas that we could put forward to Manitobans to make sure that they're aware of the impacts that they have on the road.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, we, have to make sure that we are telling motorists, and we're training motorists, and we're each and every day we're trying to train motorists about their responsibility, and I think that's very important.

Clearly, the licensing process has changed quite dramatically in the last few years, so it takes a number of years for new drivers to actually get their full licence. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that that's been a fairly positive program in terms of educating our youth and our new drivers in Manitoba. By doing that, by giving incremental licensing to Manitoba drivers, I think they recognize, then, they have a responsibility as well, and it's something that they have to earn and they have to be responsible when they get it as they work through the process. So any issues that arise during that stage process will set them back in terms of achieving their licence. So that's something, I think, the youth now have a better appreciation of actually keeping that licence.

Certainly, when, in my generation and we went through the original licensing process, it was fairly straightforward. There wasn't a lot of training; there wasn't a lot of schooling; there was very minimal testing. We just had to, you know, have a fairly minimal test we wrote, a written test to write, and then from there we had a road test, and a fairly minor road test. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I was fairly fortunate, and I took my driver's test—it was actually winter, and, as a result of the winter and the snow we had, I was fortunate enough that I didn't have to have a parallel parking test. So I think that was, I was fair—I was lucky, I was one of the lucky ones in that regard. But nowadays you certainly couldn't get away with that at this point in time. So, certainly, things have changed. And I believe it's been a fairly positive initiative in terms of the training that goes along with that. And, clearly, having the incremental levels of licensing, I think, has been a fairly positive thing for Manitobans, and I think it teaches the new drivers the respect that they should have when they get

behind the wheel, and I think that's critically important.

But what something's that in there that we maybe we don't spend a lot of time on is the safety part of having people out on the roadways when they're doing work. I think we maybe have to, as governments, maybe there's more work we should be doing in terms of the training in that regard because it's very significant. And to have a situation arise where a young lady gets killed on the workplace is extremely troubling, but I think it's an issue that we should raise when we're going through the training process, and I think that's critical. And I think if we're teaching our young people that at the time I'm hoping that's something that will stay with them.

But, as well, I think there's other opportunities for us to really have a real look at what concepts will make a difference out in there in terms of safety, and I don't think that we always hear—we, I know we debate concepts here in the Legislature, but other jurisdictions are facing similar problems, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's—I would like to see us take some time and make sure that we are exercising all kinds of opportunities to have a discussion with other jurisdictions to see what they are doing.

You know, clearly, I know the government is interested in getting as much money out of Manitobans' pockets as they can. And we've seen that through taxation; we've seen that through various levies; we've seen the increase in fines, speeding tickets. And I know we're probably the highest level of fines in terms speeding in probably in any jurisdiction in Canada, and, clearly, that is a tax grab that the NDP are looking at. It'll be interesting to compare numbers to see if these increases in fines are actually translating into safer roads in our communities, Mr. Speaker, and that's—that will be the interesting part. Clearly, we hope that the increase in fines that are talked about in Bill 2 will be—will move in that direction and will provide safety to our people that are working out in construction on the road sites. But, the point being made, I think we can learn a lot from other jurisdictions that are going through the same issues that we have.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the families that are involved in this—I know it's a very tragic event, and there's a lot of families that have been impacted by these situations, not just in Manitoba but across the country, and it is troubling for all of us to hear of

those situations. And, certainly, our thoughts are with the families when this does happen.

Mr. Speaker, I think again an interesting process we're in here. I'm not sure what the, you know, the rush is in terms of providing this legislation at this point in time. And, you know, certainly, we look forward, if this bill does get to committee—I'm sure it will—we certainly look forward to hearing what Manitobans have to say on this regard. It sounds like there has been some issues brought to the government in the past. It's interesting that they had not taken any action on it until this point in time, but, obviously, they've had different priorities over that last few years. And I think Manitobans are becoming aware of what the priorities are of this government.

We certainly believe in safety, and hope that, you know, this legislation will make a difference at the end of the day. And that's really what it's about at the end of the day is making sure that we have safe roads in Manitobans—in Manitoba. And I hope that, as part of this debate, it'll be part of the learning process for Manitobans, and we can make sure that we're educating Manitobans about the safety issues out on Manitoba's highways.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the legislation moving forward in the process. I certainly look forward to hear what Manitobans have to say in this regard as well.

So, with that, I thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on Bill 2?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question for the House is second reading of Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety of Workers in Highway Construction Zones).

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Canvass the House. See if it's the will to call it 5 o'clock. *[interjection]* Oh, you're going to announce committee? Oh, I withdraw that request.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce the Standing Committee on Human Resources will meet on Tuesday, December 3, 2013, at 6 p.m., to consider Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety of Workers in Highway Construction Zones).

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Human Resources will meet on Tuesday, December the 3rd, 2013, at 6 p.m., to consider Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety of Workers in Highway Construction Zones).

Mr. Speaker: And I believe—Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Goertzen: At the risk of being considered not wanting to continue work, as there is only two minutes left, is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock?

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, December 2, 2013

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