

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

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

| Member | Constituency | Political Affiliation |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
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| ALLUM, James, Hon. | Fort Garry-Riverview | NDP |
| ALTEMEYER, Rob | Wolseley | NDP |
| ASHTON, Steve, Hon. | Thompson | NDP |
| BJORNSON, Peter, Hon. | Gimli | NDP |
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| PEDERSEN, Blaine | Midland | PC |
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| SELINGER, Greg, Hon. | St. Boniface | NDP |
| SMOOK, Dennis | La Verendrye | PC |
| STEFANSON, Heather | Tuxedo | PC |
| STRUTHERS, Stan | Dauphin | NDP |
| SWAN, Andrew | Minto | NDP |
| WIEBE, Matt | Concordia | NDP |
| WIGHT, Melanie, Hon. | Burrows | NDP |
| WISHART, Ian | Portage la Prairie | PC |
| <i>Vacant</i> | The Pas | |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 3, 2014

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 and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 10—The Municipal Amendment Act

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Municipal Government): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 10, The Municipal Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités, now be read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Caldwell: Cette loi est pour les municipalités francophones.

Translation

This legislation is for the francophone municipalities.

English

This bill is intended to ensure that French language services defined through existing municipal bylaws are maintained in the new amalgamated municipalities where one partner municipality was designated bilingual and the other wasn't.

This bill will apply to all municipalities with a French language services bylaw. This amendment recognizes the importance of French language services in municipalities outside of the city of Winnipeg.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Bill 12—The Water Protection Amendment Act
(Aquatic Invasive Species)**

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 12, The Water Protection Amendment Act (Aquatic Invasive Species); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection des eaux, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, these proposed amendments and the regulations will make Manitoba's measures to address the threat of aquatic invasive species, notably zebra mussels, the most comprehensive in North America.

The bill deals with the possession, release and transportation of aquatic invasive species. It allows for the establishment of control zones, control stations, provides inspection and enforcement tools needed to prevent the introduction of an aquatic invasive species or to control its spread. It has been developed in sync and to complement stronger federal regulations that are now pending.

I want to just thank the staff that are here today. They've done a remarkable, remarkable job in a very short period of time and I thank them.

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

Bill 204—The Cyberbullying Prevention Act

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I move, seconded by the MLA for Steinbach, that Bill 204, The Cyberbullying Prevention Act; Loi sur la prévention de la cyberintimidation, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ewasko: I am pleased today to reintroduce Bill 204, The Cyberbullying Prevention Act, for the third time, Mr. Speaker. This act is a step in returning power to young people and, for that matter, all people of Manitoba who have lost power as a result of cyberbullying.

Under the legislation those who are victims of cyberbullying would be able to obtain protection

orders against those who are bullying them. Youth as young as 16 would be able to apply for those—for this protection without parental involvement. It would also allow law enforcement officials to seize computers, cellphones and other instruments that are being used in the act of cyberbullying.

The legislation also establishes a separate civil tort to allow damages to be awarded to an individual who suffers damages as a result of cyberbullying. It is—it also places an onus on parents and those in care of minors to act when they are aware of a minor in their care is engaging in cyberbullying.

This legislation brings together parental involvement, police ability and power for youth. It's a significant problem, cyberbullying is; it requires a significant response. Thank you.

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.

Election Request

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) In 2015 the current provincial government will be in the fourth year of its mandate.

(2) There is a crisis of leadership unfolding on the government side of the House.

(3) According to media reports, the member for Minto stated that the Premier is more concerned about remaining leader than doing things in the best interests of the province.

(4) According to media reports, the member for Seine River stated, if you are in a position where you support the point of view of the Premier, your priorities and your projects move up the queue.

(5) According to media reports, the members for Southdale, Dauphin, Seine River, Minto and Fort Rouge stated that the Premier has stopped listening to our advice.

(6) According to media reports, the members for Southdale, Dauphin, Seine River, Minto and Fort Rouge stated, we can no longer work for a Premier who refuses to hear us; he refuses to hear us not just

on the leadership issue but also on a wide range of issues in our portfolios.

(7) The concerns over the Premier's leadership have not been confined to just government members. NDP provincial council member Darlene Dziewit has reported as saying, we have a crisis here in that I don't think the people of Manitoba trust our leadership anymore.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Premier to immediately consider calling an election so that Manitobans can decide who is best placed to govern in the best interests of Manitobans.

And this petition is signed by D. Watt, Y. Zhang, J. Long and many more fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

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

Grace Hospital Emergency Room Upgrade and Expansion

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised to upgrade and expand the Grace Hospital emergency department in 2011 and to complete it by 2015.

The Grace Hospital was left as the last of all Winnipeg hospitals to be slated for an emergency room upgrade.

The provincial government has broken another promise to Manitobans by delaying the start of this upgrade by three years, as failure to begin construction in 2013 has left patients and hospital employees facing long wait times, overcrowding and the risk of unsafe conditions and care.

This provincial government has allowed ER wait times at the Grace Hospital to become the worst in Canada at triple the amount of time that emergency physicians recommend.

Ambulances in Winnipeg, including at the Grace Hospital, continue to face excessive patient off-load delays that are getting longer every year.

Last year the Grace Hospital in Winnipeg had over 23,000 patients seeking emergency care through the ER department and over 2,000 of those patients left the ER without being seen because they became too frustrated waiting to be seen.

Instead of fixing hallway medicine, there are now numbered hallway spaces.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to keep their promise to the people of Manitoba and make the upgrade and expansion of the Grace ER an immediate priority.

This is signed by R. Timmerman, C. Gurba, C. McElheran and many others, Mr. Speaker.

**Residential and Vocational Service
Organizations—Standard
Province-wide Funding Formula**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Funding provided to organizations that provide residential and vocational services to individuals with physical and developmental disabilities in rural areas is significantly lower than the funding levels provided to similar organizations in Winnipeg.

This discrepancy in funding levels has affected the recruitment and retention of skilled staff, as average wages do not reflect the complex duties of staff that are similar to health-care aides.

Without increased funding, most organizations that provide residential and vocational services will be forced to close.

The closure of these organizations will severely impact the local economy, as these organizations are often large employers and provide necessary services in the community.

The value and quality of life experienced by individuals with special needs residing in a familiar and consistent environment is immeasurable.

Closing these organizations and moving these individuals will be incredibly disruptive to their lives and detrimental to their health and well-being.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Family Services consider implementing a standard funding formula across the province for organizations that provide residential and vocational services for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities.

This petition is signed by M. Giesbrecht, C. Larose, C. Dell and many more concerned Manitobans.

Election Request

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) In 2015 the current provincial government will be in its fourth year of its mandate.

(2) There is a crisis of leadership unfolding on the government side of the House.

(3) According to media reports, the member for Minto stated that the Premier is more concerned about remaining leader than doing things in the best interests of the province.

(4) According to media reports, the member for Seine River stated that if you are in a position where you support the point of view of the Premier, your priorities and your projects move up the queue.

(5) According to media reports, the members for Southdale, Dauphin, Seine River, Minto and Fort Rouge stated that the Premier has stopped listening to our advice.

(6) According to media reports, the members for Southdale, Dauphin, Seine River, Minto and Fort Rouge stated, we can no longer work for a Premier who refuses to hear us; he refuses to hear us not just on the leadership issue but also on a wide range of issues in our portfolios.

(7) The concerns over the Premier's leadership have not been confined to just government members. The NDP provincial council member Darlene Dziewit has been reported as saying, we have a crisis here in that I don't think the people of Manitoba trust our leadership anymore.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Premier to immediately consider calling an election so that Manitobans can decide who is best placed to govern in the best interests of Manitobans.

And this petition is signed by J. Hanstead, A. Schmith and J. Nasekapow and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Beausejour District Hospital–Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Beausejour District Hospital is a 30-bed, acute-care facility that serves the communities of Beausejour and Brokenhead.

(2) The hospital and the primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

(3) During the 2011 election, the provincial government promised to provide every Manitoban with access to a family doctor by 2015.

(4) This promise is far from being realized, and Manitobans are witnessing many emergency rooms limiting services or closing temporarily, with the majority of these reductions taking place in rural Manitoba.

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to ensure that the Beausejour District Hospital and primary-care centre have a primary-care physician available on weekends and holidays to better provide area residents with this essential service.

This petition is signed by K. Bialek, B. Boy, J. Martin and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister responsible for Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation): I'm pleased to table Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries' quarterly financial report for the six months which ended September 30th, 2014.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions—order, please.

Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today members of the Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh).

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

And also seated in the public gallery we have from Marble Ridge, Broad Valley Colony schools 19 grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Tim Bayette, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff).

And also seated in the public gallery we have with us this afternoon from Réal-Bérard community school 21 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Brian Martel. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

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

And I—just so I don't miss this, I'd like to also draw the attention to the public gallery where we have Mr. Cody Gaudreau, who is the son of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Immigration Agreement Resolution Rally Ombudsman's Report Findings

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): It was just about one year ago, Mr. Speaker, that the Ombudsman released a report which revealed to members of this House and to Manitobans that the MLA for Riel had falsely accused a civil servant, an assistant deputy minister, of perpetrating a partisan protest rally when she, in fact, had been involved.

* (13:50)

The Premier knew about the involvement of the minister and could've exonerated the assistant deputy

minister any time during about a 20-month period. But he did not, and in not doing that he failed to protect the integrity of the civil service, hid behind the Ombudsman's office and covered up the reality that his own government was responsible for.

Would the Premier admit that this demonstrates a failure of ethics on his part?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we fully co-operated with the Ombudsman's office and encouraged full disclosure of information when it became available.

And I can say today that we accept all the recommendations that have been brought forward by the Ombudsman's office. We think they play a valuable role in improving the transparency and the quality of our public service.

And I do want to note for the record today, Mr. Speaker, that the Manitoba civil service this year, for the fourth year in a row, has been declared one of the best employers in Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Mr. Speaker, covering a fact up for over a year and a half, as the Premier and his colleagues did, which would have exonerated a civil servant who was guilty of no wrongdoing himself, is hardly an example of proper leadership, hardly a respectful example in terms of protecting the integrity of a fine civil service.

But the Premier will have to live with the consequences of that silence that he engaged in. He and his friend—former friend the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), I guess, went together in this cover-up. And this turned out to be the case of a fair-weather friend, at least on the part of the Premier, when he dumped her from caucus.

He did not dump her from caucus for covering up. He did not remove her from caucus for lying, for misleading—I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, misleading—this House or Manitobans. He dumped her from caucus rather unceremoniously, and had the support of all the rebel, so-called rebel, caucus when he did it, because she told the truth.

Now, again, wouldn't this be an example of an ethical failure on the Premier's part and on the part of his colleagues?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite puts quite a bit of inaccurate information on the record.

The subject of the Ombudsman's report was whether or not records were deliberately withheld by public servants, and the Ombudsman makes it very clear on page 3 there is no evidence that the department deliberately withheld records, in particular, the email showing ministerial direction.

That is the conclusion of the Ombudsman's report on page 3, Mr. Speaker, and it speaks, once again, to the specific request that was made of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman has given a very thorough report here and responded to the request from the opposition for information on this email and has made it very clear that it was not deliberately withheld by any member of the public service.

Mr. Pallister: Well, of course, the Premier refers to members of the public service but not to himself, not to elected representatives who most certainly engaged in a cover-up, and, again, Mr. Speaker, this demonstrates the pure selfishness of the Premier.

The member for Riel knew that the civil servant falsely accused was innocent and she covered it up. That was bad. The Premier knew of the guilt of the member for Riel and he proceeded to cover it up. But then he proceeded to try to use her as a scapegoat for his own cover-up, and that is worse. Worst of all, all those who knew that the civil servant was not guilty of the allegations and that he had not acted without instruction from a minister, all of those failed to demonstrate the integrity that all civil servants desire to see in elected officials.

The civil service deserves to be respected as a non-partisan body, and when any premier stands aside from that protection and the responsibility of that protection for over a year and a half, I would ask again if the Premier is not clearly an example of an ethical failure.

Mr. Selinger: Again, Mr. Speaker, at all times, full co-operation was encouraged by my office with respect to the Ombudsman's investigation, and the subject of the report today was whether or not there was any deliberate withholding of records by a member of the public service in the department that's being reviewed here, the Department of Immigration. And it's very clear that at the bottom of page 3 there is no evidence the department deliberately withheld records, in particular the email showing ministerial direction. That is the conclusion of the Ombudsman's report.

We're pleased to see that, and the clerk of the Executive Council has moved already, before this

report came out, to ensure that in any event where an email has been overlooked, when it is discovered and sent to the Ombudsman's office, it is also sent at the same time to the people that have raised the concern and so that they will get a full record of it as soon as possible.

Civil Service Commission Ethical Conduct Reporting

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, again, in my previous questions, was referring to the Ombudsman's report of a year ago. The Ombudsman's report just released this week is a sequel. It could be called *Horrible Bosses 2*, in fact. It reveals ineptitude; it reveals, again, immoral conduct on the part of the elected members, and it is clearly, like the movie, a representation of very bad acting, Mr. Speaker. Children should not watch it.

Now, the fact of the matter is the Auditor General, in her report of this spring, said that the major problem we face in terms of the ethical constructs within our civil service is the lack of a proper tone at the top, and that is very clear today again. Now, several staff were given a FIPPA request to handle, but—that came from members of the media and members of this opposition, and several staff, coincidentally, missed only the incriminating emails. The actual wording in the report from the Ombudsman refers to the implausibility of their explanations.

Now, if the Premier can cover up things for a year and a half, isn't that a fine example of a bad tone at the top? If the Premier of Manitoba is silent in his responsibilities to protect a civil servant for that length of time, isn't that a horrible example for civil servants to follow?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Civil Service Commission has put forward, during our time in office, a code of ethics with respect to public service behaviour in the province. We have, at our level, put in place, for the first time ever—for the first time ever—an ethics commissioner, and the Ombudsman has done their job. They have investigated the situation as indicated in the report that was tabled, and as—before the report was even put in front of the Legislature, the clerk of the Executive Council moved with dispatch to ensure that this error was corrected.

The email, when it was discovered three weeks after the original request, was forwarded to the Ombudsman's office. It unfortunately was not

forwarded to the applicants for the information, and on June 4th, 2014, the clerk of the Executive Council put out an instruction to all civil servants that when they discover a record, they should forward it not only to the Ombudsman but to the applicants at the same time. That has been—that action has already been taken and, in addition, we have made it very clear that the other three recommendations that are contained in this report we entirely support.

Mr. Pallister: Well, entirely support by lip service but not by personal example, Mr. Speaker. Sweeping problems under the rug, as this Premier's done, is a horrible way to send a message from the top to the civil servants that you mean what you say. This is a government that does not—it talks the talk, does not walk the talk, and the character of the Premier, in covering this incident up for as long as he did, in failing to clearly exonerate an innocent civil servant, sends a horrible message to members of our civil service.

Now, his response when the facts came out was to punish the member who made the facts available, the member from Riel. How is that setting a proper tone at the top to other civil servants? The Scarth report released this year says that civil servants don't report wrongdoing because they fear reprisals, yet the Premier of Manitoba punishes a member who speaks the truth on this issue.

His priorities seem to always come first. It's never his fault, according to his own colleagues. He'd like to blame a civil servant; he did blame a civil servant by remaining silent when he could have cleared that civil servant of wrongdoing.

Will he admit that the ethical problems that we see on display here are at least partly due to his own failure to lead by demonstrating a clear tone at the top of ethical behaviour?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I have to say once again that the member's construction of the situation is quite inaccurate. This is the government, the first government in the history of Manitoba and the first government in Canada—first government in the history of Manitoba and the first government in Canada—to bring whistle-blower protection legislation of—through and pass it in this Legislature—and pass it in this Legislature—to allow protection for civil servants if they wish to bring forward a complaint. They can bring it forward to the direct supervisor; they can bring it forward directly to the Ombudsman.

* (14:00)

And we've reviewed that legislation now and additional recommendations have been brought forward on how to strengthen that whistle-blower legislation, and we have said we will follow up on those recommendations and bring legislation to this House which will again put us at the forefront of whistle-blower legislation.

So when the member opposite was in government and they had problems with the secretary to Treasury Board and ethical issues there, they had no remedy for it. They brought forward no whistle-blower legislation. They brought forward no sanctions. They did nothing about it.

We have brought forward whistle-blower legislation. We have brought forward a code of ethics. We have acted when the Ombudsman has made recommendations, and we've acted even before—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time on this question has elapsed.

NDP Leadership Candidacy Government Priorities

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, if the presence of the legislation guaranteed ethical behaviour, we'd hardly need to be speaking about unethical behaviour today, would we, Mr. Speaker?

Justice delayed is justice denied, and this civil servant and others wait for justice from this government and they will continue to wait. And it's apparent today it's never the Premier's fault if he can blame someone else.

And how does whistle-blower legislation work? If you actually blame your own caucus member and punish the whistle-blower, how do you send a message to civil servants that they can feel protected if they blow the whistle themselves?

Two and a half years of dragging this Premier reluctantly in the general direction of accountability still hasn't gotten him there, Mr. Speaker. The MLA for St. Boniface is now—of the mind, because he's got the authorization from a party apparently he's in control of, that he can be the Premier and be a candidate at the same time, that he can preside over \$16 billion worth of budget-making decisions while remaining neutral to the consequences in terms of his delegate advantages. We don't believe that and neither do Manitobans.

Will the Premier do the right thing—he has a bit of time left, perhaps a day—and put Manitoba priorities back in front for a change and step aside so he can be a candidate and stop trying to be premier?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, under the Westminster model of governance, we have a first duty to the people of Manitoba to provide them with the services that they require, to provide them with good government. That's the model that we follow and that's the model that we come to work to do every day. That's why we brought forward a Throne Speech which addresses the priorities of Manitobans in terms of good opportunities for young people to get education and training which will allow them to live and work in Manitoba, which is why we focused on infrastructure that protects communities from floods and grows the economy with strategic infrastructure which benefits all Manitobans, which is why we made improvements to health care to ensure that our parents and loved ones are looked after in Manitoba. That's the responsibilities we have as a government.

The members opposite have taken a different approach. They have said they would roll back infrastructure spending. They have not made any commitments to hiring teachers or nurses in Manitoba. And, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to education, they have not put forward any innovative ideas to improve opportunities for young people at all levels to have good jobs and training in Manitoba.

So we are addressing the priorities of Manitobans, and we will continue to do so every single day that we are the government of the people of Manitoba.

ER Services—Physician Shortage Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is playing Russian roulette with families in rural Manitoba.

Rural health care is in crisis because of a critical shortage of doctors. Twenty ERs have been closed, and more are on the brink of closure. Southwest Manitoba has been in a crisis for years and now so is the Interlake-eastern region of Manitoba.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell people who have lost their ERs: Where are they supposed to go if they're having a heart attack or an asthma attack or a stroke and time is of the essence when they're seeking emergency care? With 20 ERs

closed and more coming, where are these people supposed to go to get care?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, all Manitoban families deserve access to safe, high-quality health care close to home, and the care that is provided—if the members opposite would like to actually listen to the answer—has to do with working with communities.

And I have to say, it was quite nice to be able to meet with members from a variety of communities from the—at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities last week and talk to them directly about their health-care concerns. And what was really impressive in meeting with these community members and leaders was their willingness to work towards a solution and actually having progressive and constructive dialogue on how we work together as government, as RHAs and as communities to build a strong health-care system—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed. Order, please.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, there is now an extreme doctor shortage in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority. According to the latest freedom of information, the shortages include: Ashern, two; Gimli, two; Teulon, three; Selkirk, six; Beausejour, two; Pine Falls, three; Lac du Bonnet, one; Pinawa, two; Whitemouth, one.

People in these areas who don't have a doctor are afraid that they won't be able to get care when care is needed.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health to explain: How has her government allowed this doctor shortage to get to be such a crisis in rural Manitoba?

Ms. Blady: Again, it was wonderful to meet with the folks from the different communities, and some of the very communities that the member mentioned, and actually listen to them and talk to them about solutions.

And I can say that what we have done is ensure that Manitoba actually has more doctors practising in rural areas than in any other province west of the Maritimes, including more than our neighbours in Saskatchewan and Ontario. In Saskatchewan they only have 184 doctors per 100,000 people; here in Manitoba it's 204, and we are continuing to work

with these communities to make sure that they get the bells—best health care possible.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the minister needs to focus a little bit better. They're short 20 doctors in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

Over 2,300 doctors have left Manitoba since this government came into place. Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has one of the worst retention rates for doctors in all of Canada. We're bottom of the barrel in that area.

Mr. Speaker, Denise Jubinville, a retired registered nurse, lives in Pine Falls and she says that their health-care system is crumbling under this NDP government. Lorraine Henderson from Whitemouth said in a letter to this Premier (Mr. Selinger): We are in crisis mode. People are going to die if things don't change.

So I want to ask the Minister of Health: Why has her NDP government allowed this to become such a crisis in rural Manitoba?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, again, it seems that it's the member opposite that likes to live in crisis mode.

In having talked with these folks, the leaders of these communities, we are working towards solutions, and I—it was nice to actually speak to them and be thanked for the location of nurse practitioners in their communities. It was wonderful to talk to them about the progress being made.

Again, all of them—[interjection] This is the problem with members opposite, they like to talk, but they don't want to listen, and that's what I did with members at AMM. I actually listened to them, and we are working on solutions. It's unfortunate that the other side would rather fear monger than collaborate.

ER Services—Physician Shortage Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, under this NDP government Manitobans are paying more and getting less, and at most times they're getting nothing at all.

So far in Manitoba 20 emergency rooms have either closed or have been put on nurse-managed care by this NDP government. Pine Falls, Pinawa and Beausejour are three examples of these in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority. This means that patients are showing up and they're being sent somewhere else. This is yet another example of a collapse in services by this government.

Will the Minister of Health admit today that this situation is at a critical stage, and will she tell the House which hospital or ER will be closed next?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Again, thank the member for the question.

As I've said, we have been working collaboratively with the communities. It was wonderful to discuss with them the variety of health-care possibilities that are available to each community, whether that's been in efforts towards doctor recruitment and retention, which is an issue across the country, Mr. Speaker, and, again, one of those things where we're able to work with them in terms of nurse practitioners, my home health-care teams, as well as working with paramedics, knowing that front-line care in terms of emergencies are—*[interjection]* Again, if members opposite would only like to listen to the answer, I would gladly give it to them

* (14:10)

But, again, it's one of those things where we're working hard on this side. We're recruiting and training more doctors and nurses than ever. We're working with communities; they're just talking and complaining.

Mr. Ewasko: Since this NDP has been in power, there's been a mass exodus of 2,300 doctors. Mr. Speaker, 2,300 doctors have left this wonderful province of ours. Local community members and elected municipal officials have taken heroic efforts to try to recruit and retain doctors in their areas because they have lost confidence in this government's ability to do so.

In the eastern part of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority we have seen four more doctors either leave or get eviction letters, Mr. Speaker. Two steps forward by community members and three steps backwards by this now third in two years Health Minister.

Why is this Health Minister destroying essential services and not taking this matter seriously?

Ms. Blady: I would just like to, shall we say, put a few corrections on the record.

Again, we—in terms of doctors and the amount of doctors we've had, this side has actually been training and hiring them. We have already fulfilled our 2011 election commitment to hire 200 more doctors. In fact, we hired 210 since 2011 and, in fact, contrary to the numbers the members opposite are

pulling out of thin air, we've in fact, again, seen a net gain of 665 more doctors since 1999, which includes, by the way, replacing those that have retired out. So this is a net gain. This is more than were there at the time, including 250 more family doctors.

And we've also increased physician training by adding 22 more medical residencies, including new family residencies in Brandon, Steinbach, Morden-Winkler, and doubling the number of nurse practitioner—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, if this was true, they wouldn't be closing ERs all across the province.

Mr. Speaker, with over 750 days in 23 Manitoba hospitals outside of Winnipeg where the emergency room was closed and not available to those who have had emergencies, today I present to the Health Minister 515 names on petitions, in addition to the hundreds of constituents who have signed petitions which I have read in the House, on behalf of the community members, taxpayers of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority who are with us here today in the gallery.

What possible reason or assurances can this new Health Minister give to these people in the gallery that she will be able to stop the slide, the collapse of emergency room and essential health services in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority?

Ms. Blady: I can assure the folks in the gallery, I can assure them that I will be working with the eastern—Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority as well as all health-care professionals to ensure that folks in their part of the province get the health care that they need and that we are doing so by increasing the medical spaces from 70 to 110 in—replacing the 15 that were cut by Conservatives and adding another 25 more.

Again, there's a lot of work to do, but we're doing it by hiring more doctors, not by firing them. That's what should reassure the folks in the gallery because we're hiring; they fired.

Access to Family Doctors Government Commitment

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): The former Health minister, the former former Health minister and even the Premier (Mr. Selinger) made a

commitment that all Manitobans would have access to a family doctor by 2015.

Well, Mr. Speaker, 2015 is 29 days away and thousands of Manitobans still do not have a family doctor.

Mr. Speaker, will this new Health Minister admit their failure to Manitobans and that this is just another NDP broken promise?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Again, thank the member for the question.

And, again, as I've said previously, this is about training and hiring more doctors and we have done that and we have done that at a rate unheard of when the members opposite were running the show. We have been working collaboratively with folks. We've also been expanding the scope of medical professionals. There were no—the training spots for nurse practitioners did not exist the way they do now. We have more nurses. I was part of training the nurses that had to replace the nurses that those folks fired.

So, again, we've brought in more medical professionals. This is how we're helping folks. Again, we will continue to work, as my predecessors have, to make sure that all Manitobans get the quality care they deserve.

ER Closures Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Fifteen years and nothing.

We all know how important that the golden hour is to stroke and heart attack victims and those in accidents. It is crucial that emergency care be administered in that first hour. This new health-care minister knows that. Mr. Speaker, there're at least 20 ERs closed in Manitoba, and this number keeps growing.

Mr. Speaker, will this new Health Minister admit that this NDP government is failing Manitobans who need emergency care?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Again, like to thank the member for the question, and I'm wondering at which point I'll be able to give an answer that they might actually listen to.

Mr. Speaker, quality health care for Manitobans is a top priority and it has been a top priority of this government for 15 years.

And just to assure members opposite, I can tell them that 20,000 Manitobans in fact were connected with a family doctor last year thanks to our family doctor connection finder, 20,000 Manitobans, and that is, again, because we are training more docs and we are retaining more docs than they ever did.

Mr. Smook: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing more important than families receiving the health care they need regardless of where they live.

Manitobans have had to suffer with closed ERs, clinics with no doctors, reduced EMS services, wait times that are getting worse. Our health-care system is collapsing under this NDP government. They are now on their third Health minister in the last three years.

Today in the public gallery we are joined by concerned Manitobans who are witnessing the collapse of health care in their communities.

Will this new Health Minister admit to these guests that the NDP government has failed Manitobans?

Ms. Blady: What I will let the guests and every other Manitoban know is that we are committed to making sure that Manitoba families do have access to health care near their homes, and we have done so by opening our first rural QuickCare clinics in Steinbach and Selkirk. We have added new or expanded surgical services in rural areas, including cataracts in Swan River, Minnedosa and Portage; hip and knee in Morden-Winkler. We have new or renovated hospitals in Brandon, Swan River, Thompson, The Pas, Beausejour, Pinawa, Gimli, Morden-Winkler, Ste. Anne, Steinbach and Shoal Lake, with new ones on the way in Selkirk and Notre Dame de Lourdes.

We are adding three new mobile clinics, one of which is now seeing patients in the Prairie Mountain. Once in full service, each clinic is expected to be the primary-care home for over a thousand Manitobans, as well as 16 rural chemotherapy sites turning into full CancerCare hubs.

That's what we're doing for rural Manitobans and what we'll continue to do.

Mining Exploration Permit Wait Times

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, the facts are 15 years of NDP government and more than 20 ERs closed across rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it wasn't long ago I was asking this NDP government about their bullying tactics in dealing with the Manitoba Jockey Club and the subsequent lawsuits.

Just recently another \$5-million statement of claim was recently filed against this government. This particular claim outlines this government's neglect of their obligations to provide permits and their duty to consult in regard to the mining industry. The plaintiffs in this case made application for a soil sample permit in September 2009 and a drilling permit in March 2010. Mr. Speaker, after five years, no permits have been either issued or denied.

How could this government be so negligent in their obligations to these Manitobans?

*(14:20)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, I'm very surprised, but perhaps I shouldn't be, by virtue of the fact that there are only—there is no jurisdiction in the country—there's no—*[interjection]* Well, the members might make fun of the way I'm talking, but they shouldn't make fun of the fact that we've opened two mines in Manitoba this year, more than any jurisdiction in the country, and that's why I'm surprised. That's why I'm surprised members opposite have the courage to even talk about mining when we've opened more mines than any other place in the country.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we actually applaud the people at HudBay for the work they're doing in those two mines. Our concern is with the government and the 2,600 other areas that have been identified that this government hasn't addressed yet.

Mr. Speaker, we know exploration is the lifeblood of the mining industry. There is only limited investment dollars available and this money goes where it's wanted, and, unfortunately, Manitoba's share of the national exploration dollars have dropped in half over the last five years. In this particular case alone, \$1.3 million was slated for exploration here in Manitoba and had to go—it was diverted to Ontario because this government failed to get the permits in place in a timely manner.

We're asking: Why has this government failed in their responsibilities?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, just as the members opposite have no idea or understanding of what goes on in the health-care system, they clearly have no understanding what goes on in mining.

We have opened, in Manitoba, two new mines this year. I dare members opposite, any one of them, to stand up and suggest one place in Canada that has opened two mines, that's employing close to 600 people, with investments close to three quarters of a billion dollars.

In Manitoba we represent 12 per cent of Canada's nickel, 19 per cent of Canada's zinc, 5 per cent of Canada's copper, 4 per cent of Canada's gold, 4.5 per cent of Canada's silver, and in the member's opposite constituency, 100 per cent of Canada's cesium. And we're growing every single day.

Mr. Cullen: Well, I hope the minister takes the time to listen to what the mining companies have to say. We were, at one point in time, No. 1 in the world. The mining companies themselves tell us Manitoba's now 27, under their watch.

This particular lawsuit highlights this government's inability to attract investment. The lawsuit also highlights the frustration many in the industry are facing in their dealings with this NDP government. And this government has a constitutional duty to fulfill and it clearly is failing.

Why has this NDP government failed both First Nations, Aboriginal communities as well as the business communities year after year after year?

Mr. Chomiak: Perhaps if the member had come to the mining convention last week and saw a thousand people there, where 10 chiefs and all the mining companies in the province signed an agreement to work together on collaboration, on revenue sharing in the province of Manitoba, perhaps the member would've had a better understanding why in Manitoba we opened two mines this year.

Perhaps if the member had talked to some of the First Nations and talked about some of the discussions that are going on now, he would've found out that we have eight agreements with First Nations. Perhaps if the member had talked to the individuals who are involved in the item that is before the courts, he would've talked about some of the mediation efforts were there. Perhaps if he had taken the time to talk to First Nations, they would have found out, for the first time, we're meeting our constitutional duties.

And, for the Fraser Institute, I take no lessons from an institute that wants to privatize health care in this country, just like the Conservatives do.

Post-Secondary Education Graduate Student Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's Free Press, Lloyd Axworthy talked about today's NDP's poor approach to post-secondary education, including about the—them becoming the franchise of provincial bureaucrats. He also spoke of the failure of today's NDP to recognize the importance of graduate education in our knowledge-based economy and the lack of any plans to improve major support in this area.

Why has today's NDP forgotten about graduate students and why has today's NDP failed to bring in the major support needed for graduate students here in Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we do—we—last year we were the largest increase of funding for post-secondary education anywhere in Canada. That is—that was the increase in our grants, and we have brought in graduate bursary programs in Manitoba, and we do encourage our institutions to launch graduate programs. For example, there's a new program launched in Brandon University at the graduate level, never seen before.

So we look forward to all of our post-secondary institutions developing graduate programs, and those programs are passed first and foremost by their senates, which guarantees that they meet the standards of the academy, and then, of course, they come to us for consideration and we give them consideration when they do come to us, and many innovative programs are brought forward and we support them when they do.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, in comparison to other provinces, this province offers peanuts instead of substance when it comes to supporting graduate students. It's important to remember that.

Lloyd Axworthy also speaks of the need for today's NDP to improve public support for higher education. Funding for an arts or science degree in institutions bordering our province is on average two to three hundred—thousand dollars higher per student than in Manitoba.

On Monday I asked the government what—when it was going to catch up to Saskatchewan in manufacturing. Today I ask: What is the Province doing to catch up to Ontario and Saskatchewan in terms of support for higher education?

Mr. Selinger: As I said, Mr. Speaker, our funding increase last year was the highest in the country at 2 and a half per cent. We have consistently increased spending to universities every single year. As a matter of fact, since 1999 our amount of money that we have provided has doubled. We've provided more than \$240 million in grants, scholarships and bursaries since 1999 with \$24 million in the last year, 2013-2014.

So—and we've also, in the first time in the history, created the University College of the North, an institution that did not exist before. We've taken the St. Boniface College and we've made it into a full university, the Université de Saint-Boniface, the first and only French university in western Canada.

So we've made very significant investments in universities. If you look at the University of Manitoba campus, the physical appearance of that campus has been transformed: new engineering building, a new art lab, new student residence, many significant investments out there which have made a gigantic difference in the quality of education made available to people, and as a result, Mr. Speaker, we now see—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Lloyd Axworthy, who should know, as a former president of the University of Winnipeg, has highlighted the fact that today's NDP have offered a review of higher education by educational officials that excludes real public involvement, transparency, any serious comparative research or discussions with community organizations, businesses, labour or Aboriginal leadership.

Today's NDP government must be hiding something with their evasive approach to one of the most critical elements in our society, higher education.

Manitobans want to know: What is the Premier hiding?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Bjornson) has an advisory committee composed of all the folks that are interested in post-secondary education that is available to him and he can have input from all sectors of the community on post-secondary education. That is the approach we take. We're willing to listen to a broad variety of interests on how we could improve post-secondary education.

In the Throne Speech we talked about targeted growth, but I should also say, Mr. Speaker, that our commitment to post-secondary education is not just about ensuring that people are trained for job opportunities. It's also to ensure that they are trained to be good citizens, good citizens that can make a contribution to our community at a very high level, a very broad level. And some of those people have come to this Legislature as a result of those experiences, and we want to continue to have a good post-secondary system in the North, in Winnipeg, in Brandon, available in rural Manitoba.

One of the things we said in our Throne Speech is we would double the number of online courses available to post-secondary students from 500 to 1,000. This will give greater access to students all over Manitoba, no matter where they live, to post-secondary education. That is a major step forward.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for members' statements.

*(14:30)

Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble 100th Anniversary

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Since the early days of the 20th century, Winnipeg has been an important centre for the Polish community in Canada. The early Polish immigrants brought with them a rich culture and heritage as well as a desire to celebrate and preserve those traditions for future generations.

It's with this intention that the Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble began preparing its first public appearance at the Walker Theatre in 1914. The fact that the ensemble is still thriving today is a striking testament to the strength of Manitoba's Polish community and the vision and determination of all its members.

Mr. Speaker, today we're joined by representatives of the Polish—the Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble, and I congratulate them on this extraordinary 100th anniversary.

So, over the past century, the ensemble has performed at major events in Canada, of course, but around the world, from Expo '86 in Vancouver and the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton, to festivals in the US and in Poland. Their talent, energy and

dedication have made them exemplary ambassadors for this great province.

It was my immense pleasure to attend the 100th anniversary festivities of the Sokol ensemble this past September. The ensemble has developed a unique style and today is made up of a choir of about 40 singers and a dance troupe of about 20 dancers. It is rare for a performing arts group to have such a rich and unbroken history, but it is easy to understand why when you watch them perform, Mr. Speaker.

The Polish—the Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble's commitment to excellence has enriched Manitoba's cultural landscape for 100 years, and I wish them continued success on behalf of all members for many years to come.

I ask our community leaders from Sokol to stand, and let's congratulate them.

Reverend Monseigneur Mitrat Buyachok

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, on November 16th of this year, I had the pleasure of attending the 45th anniversary celebration of Reverend Monseigneur Mitrat Michael Buyachok's priesthood.

Monseigneur Buyachok was born in France and arrived in Winnipeg in 1948 with his parents. He was educated in schools in the North End of Winnipeg, and in 1964 started in St. Josaphat's major Ukrainian Catholic seminary in Rome. On Sunday, August 17th, 1969, he was ordained to the priesthood of Metropolitan Maxim Hermaniuk and has served as clergy for the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy since then.

He has served all over the province, having had assignments in Ethelbert, Dauphin and Transcona. While at Transcona he was instrumental in the construction of the 58 union-unit, \$5-million St. Michael's Villa seniors home and parish cultural centre. That amazing facility simply would not have been built if it wasn't for the hard work and dedication of Monseigneur Buyachok.

Since 2005, he has been the dean at the Ukrainian Catholic Metropolitan Cathedral of Sts. Vladimir and Olga. Monseigneur Buyachok has also organized a total of 19 world tours. These tours have gone to almost every corner of the globe from Europe, Asia, South America, Australia, the Orient and the Ukraine. Recently, he has also been an outspoken activist on Russia's current oppression of Ukraine.

Besides his work with the church, Monseigneur Buyachok has served his community in many other ways. He has been an active member of the Knights of Columbus for over 56 years; in addition, he has served on many boards, including 18 years on Transcona-Springfield school board. He also served as an elected public school trustee for Duck Mountain School Division.

In 1992, Monseigneur Buyachok received one of the commemorative medals made for the 125th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada. Twenty years later he was one of the few Canadians who received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. While these awards and medals are, of course, greatly appreciated, by no means has Monseigneur Buyachok gone out searching for recognition for the work he has done.

In closing, Monseigneur Buyachok is a pillar of faith and an integral part of the Ukrainian community in Manitoba. His work has gone to improve the lives of many Manitobans, and it is an honour to be able to stand up and recognize him today here in this Chamber. I ask members to please join me in thanking him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, today is the international day of persons living with disabilities. This morning I attended a presentation at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights on *Disabling Poverty, Enabling Citizenship*, by Dr. Michael Prince and hosted by the Disabilities Issues Office.

For many people with disabilities, poverty and underemployment are a stubborn reality. People with disabilities remain about twice as likely to live in poverty. Globally, more than a billion people live with disabilities. Today we celebrate progress like the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, and we focus our energies on the long journey to full citizenship for people with disabilities.

This morning, we heard many ideas on reducing poverty for people with disabilities. There were calls for the federal government to also introduce accessibility legislation and to look at ways to better support the income of people with disabilities by extending EI sickness benefits from 15 to 50 weeks. We also heard recommendations for provinces to modernize income assistance programs by allowing

people to keep more of the money they earn. Our government is responding through the introduction of new benefits like Rent Assist to help all low-income people afford decent housing in a way that continues to break down the welfare wall.

We know that people with disabilities have the skills and education needed to participate in Manitoba's growing economy. In 2012, our government proclaimed October as Disability Employment Awareness Month. This October, people with disabilities and Manitoba employers were able to participate in a number of events highlighting innovative projects that help people with disabilities find and keep good jobs. One example is the OPUS Project with the goal to expand the opportunities of people with disabilities in the workforce by providing supported training to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Winnipeg and Manitoba have long been known as an international centre for disability rights. There are a number of community groups whose goal it is to further the inclusion of persons living with a disability. Diversity World is an international organization with roots right here in Winnipeg. They provide workshops and seminars to prepare people with disabilities to enter or re-enter the workforce. The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce have also been partners for inclusive employment, recently hosting a breakfast highlighting the business case for hiring people with disabilities.

This morning, we were reminded that the rights of people with disabilities are no more or less than fundamental human rights. As we celebrate the work of activists that have created a more equal world, we also recommit ourselves to the vision of a society without barriers where we are all recognized for our abilities.

Thank you.

Reaching E-Quality Employment Services

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): It is my pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to recognize the 25th anniversary of Reaching E-Quality Employment Services or REES. Mr. Speaker, REES was created in June 1989 when two organizations, Reaching Out Employment and Equality Employment, recognized the duplication of their services and the benefits of amalgamating.

For the last 25 years, this not-for-profit organization has partnered with the federal and provincial governments as well as community

foundations such as The Winnipeg Foundation, the Thomas Sill Foundation and I can't forget the United Way, along with many others.

REES's mandate is to help persons with disabilities or health conditions find or enhance their employment. During the last 25 years, REES has literally touched the lives of thousands of Manitobans, not just the actual consumer, but their friends, families and neighbourhoods for providing information on resume writing, interview skills, basic computer skills and identifying one's individual skill sets. They provide these services in both group seminars as well as individual one-on-one counselling.

Mr. Speaker, I was very fortunate to be part of that organization for three years as an executive director and several as a member of the board. During my tenure, I learned first-hand the challenges many not-for-profits face, be it financial or regulatory. But I also had the opportunity to meet individuals who were born with a disability, have aged into a disability or, as a result of an accident or injury, have acquired a disability. Every single one of these individuals had one thing in common: a desire to achieve to their potential. Thanks to REES, a significant number have.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put on the record the value of hiring persons with disabilities and, as my colleague the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) noted, Mark Wafer was in Winnipeg recently and he noted, and I quote: Employees who have a disability work 70–97 per cent safer, have attendance records 80 per cent–86 per cent greater, stay in the job up to five times longer and increase morale to the point that non-'distabled' staff stay longer. End quote.

With one in six Manitobans being a person with a disability, the need for organizations like REES will not diminish anytime soon.

I would also like to welcome to the Legislature Lori Hurtig, manager of community relations, and wish her and REES nothing but success for the next 25 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Children in Care—Tina Fontaine

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to extend my condolences and deepest sympathy to Tina Fontaine's family and friends. Tina Fontaine was terribly distressed when her father, Eugene, was

murdered. After that, her life spiralled downhill. Her story haunts us all.

* (14:40)

This tragic story is about Tina, but also about Manitoba's CFS system. It deserves attention. I ask: Was it necessary to have Tina Fontaine put in the care of CFS in the first place? How could Tina and her family have been better supported? Was Tina provided enough counselling when her father died? Could better counselling and help have avoided Tina's downward spiral?

I ask, where was the best place for Tina? The NDP must face the shameful reality that in the hotel where Tina was placed, drugs and prostitution were present. Tina was literally put in a wolves' den. We must ask, when the CFS act says the best interests of the child are paramount, why did the NDP act in a way that appears to be in the best interest of the wolves?

There is a far better answer for not having enough foster homes. We have 10 times as many children in care as other jurisdictions. We must better support families. The Nisichawayasihk Family and Community Wellness Centre has shown the way, reducing the number of children in care in Nelson House from 300 to 80. Last year alone they reduced the number of children in care by almost 20 per cent. If this happened throughout Manitoba, there'd be more than enough foster homes, no need to put children in hotels and social workers would have lower caseloads.

Let us remember Tina Fontaine. Let's focus on learning from the approach of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation which would have involved immediate counselling for Tina on the death of her father and much better support for the family. There's a better way. It's a way that Manitoba Liberals speak of. It's a way that our province needs if we're to heal from the breakup of too many families and far too many children in care. Let us choose it, in memory of Tina Fontaine.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances, we'll move on to orders of the day, government business.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Government House Leader): I would like to call report stage for Bill 71

and Bill 70 and concurrence and third readings for bills 69, 70 and 71. After that, Mr. Speaker, we would like to call second readings on bills in the following order: Bill 6, Bill 9, Bill 8, Bill 5, Bill 2, Bill 7, Bill 3 and Bill 11. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: As has been announced, we'll be calling bills in the following order, starting with report stage on bills 71 and 70 and then moving on to concurrence and third readings of bills 69, 70 and 71 followed by second readings of bills in the following order: Bill 6 followed by Bill 9, Bill 8, Bill 5, Bill 2, Bill 7, Bill 3 and finally Bill 11.

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Bill 71—The Animal Diseases Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll start by calling report stage of Bill 71.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): Proposed amendment to Bill 71 of The Animal Diseases Amendment Act, moved by Mr. Chomiak, mister-minister of natural resources and seconded—*[interjection]*

I move, seconded by Minister of Mineral Resources (Mr. Chomiak),

THAT Bill 71 be amended in Clause 13 by adding the following after the proposed section of 9.1:

Biosecurity measures to be taken by inspectors

9.2 Before entering a place, area or vehicle for the purpose of any provision of this Act or the regulation made under this Act, a person—including the director and an inspector or another person—must take the biosecurity measures to comply with the biosecurity standards prescribed by the regulations in respect of the category of place, area or vehicle.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, seconded by the honourable Minister of Mineral Resources,

THAT the Bill 71 be amended in Clause 13 by adding the following after the proposed section 9.1:

Biosecurity measures to be taken by inspectors

Before entering a place, area or vehicle for the purpose of any provision of this Act or a regulation made under this Act, a person—including the director, an inspector or another person—must take the biosecurity measures or comply with the biosecurity standards prescribed by regulation in respect of the category of place, area or vehicle.

The amendment is in order. Any debate?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the new Bill 71 being brought forward, I think it's pretty evident in the discussions that we've had with the member opposite when we talked about the importance of bringing this bill forward, and I think the true reality is biosecurity is really becoming a new reality when we talk about food security, we talk about the opportunities to keep the industry viable and protected in all species.

Obviously, the Bill 71 deals with the situation that I can relate to of the PEDV virus that has hit the hog industry, and I need to compliment the industry, Manitoba Pork and our department, MAFRD, who have been very, very, vigilant of retaining the importance of the spread of the disease. I don't think we have to go very far beyond our provincial boundaries and go into the US side where we've witnessed millions and millions of hogs being devastated by the PED virus, and to the benefit and the professionalism of the Province of Manitoba and our CVO staff that have been very proactive to minimize the risk.

And, obviously, Mr. Speaker, we've had tremendous, tremendous support from the Manitoba pork industry. We have had tremendous support of this bill moving forward of the importance in the cattle industry, the turkey industry, the—all forms of livestock industry because today is the fact that we need to be on top of what we experience almost on a daily basis.

Quite evident, just announced yesterday, 'invian' influenza that's hit British Columbia on the importance of the biosecurity I think just reinforces our situation in the province of Manitoba and the importance of this Bill 71.

This bill will align Manitoba with national policies and new innovations, methods of collaboration, including one health initiative, Mr. Speaker. The one health concept is worldly wide strategy for expanding interdisciplinary collaboration with communications in all aspects of health care for humans, animals and the environment.

Some of the significant amendments are definitions are added to promote consistency between act and animal disease drug legislation in other provinces. The meaning of disease is clarified. A reportable disease system is modified to make it more responsive, including giving the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development the

authority to make regulations' designation-reportable diseases. In addition, a system for reporting hazards that may have threatened animal health or public health is established. Provincial animal disease officials are able to conduct animal health surveillances to better understand the health status of animals in the province and to anticipate disease issues and act proactively.

The amendment enhances the department's ability to share the information with industry, other departments and jurisdictions in order to promote the accuracy information to the public. Officials are given a broader authority to make orders, such as the quarantine orders, to prevent the spread of the disease and the threat to public health. This authority is to conduct testing and to collect samples, to clarify this potential spread of the disease, also to address the hazards and disease occurrence, proactively to redeem the steps towards biosecurity measures may be ordered. Regulations-making powers are strengthened including the ministerial authority to make regulations designating the areas; the Province, as an animal disease prevention, managing or controlling areas and regulating activities in relation to animals in those areas.

*(14:50)

Amendments to the bill will address the gaps left by changes in national priorities on animal health where the Province has become the primary responsibility to manage disease such as rabies.

The main message, Mr. Speaker, is The Animal Diseases Act has helped us protect animal health in the province. These amendments will improve the existing act by enabling the government to become more proactive in responding to emerging animal diseases.

The proposed bill establishes clear authority to Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Department to act proactively in dealing with the activities, practices and behaviours that may create a human and animal health risk to promote the spread of disease. As we've seen and discovered, the PED in Canada and Manitoba, early detection and proactivity, biosecurity measures are key to preventing the spread of the disease.

The Manitoba pork industry, from producers to transporters to processors, would be condemned for their efforts to contain the spread of the PED. By implementing strict biosecurity protocols the

industry is doing what they need to do, is to protect part of Manitoba's economy.

Few Canadians know that on April the 1st, 2014, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency stopped taking numbers of steps to prevent the spread of rabies, including collecting and submitting samples for testing investigating or quarantine domestic animals suspected of having rabies.

Pain and indemnity for livestock that die due to rabies is also a consequence that recently has been brought forward. As a result, the provinces, the territories have to pick up the slack. This legislation includes amendments that will fill the gap left by the federal government. Collaboration is one of the most important parts of preventing the spread of animal disease. These amendments will expand to existing policies to allow collaborations with farmers and their organizations to prevent and respond to significant animal diseases.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will also expand to existing policies to allow collaboration with farmers and their organizations to prevent and respond to significant animal diseases. The bill will provide necessary authority to regulate animal diseases, risks and hazards.

When the PED virus was concerned recently, our government acted quickly with the support of producers and put in place provisions to a similar amendments. The provisions we'll put in place for allowed to quick response which are very important in our hog industry, and we were fully supported by the Manitoba pork.

Our government has taken the necessary measures to ensure inspectors do not transmit disease from farm to farm. We will use science-based 'knowledge' of animal disease and apply to appropriate biosecurity standards.

The act does not confer powers to the government to impose biosecurity measures on anyone it wants. If a biosecurity measure has been issued, government can require that the measures be taken to prevent the introduction or the spread of the disease or hazard. There may be a case where there are no general acceptance standards. The proposed amendment ensures that the government can address the biosecurity gap by regulations.

The inclusion of the biosecurity measures allows for the recognition and implications of a biosecurity activities to prevent the disease, including the implications of national standards which, I will point

out, allows government now to recognize the industry lead standards.

The—Manitobans understand agriculture is an important part of our economy. The agriculture and the agri-food industry provides good jobs in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, 30,000 direct jobs and 32,000 indirect jobs. Agriculture and agri-food industries make up 9 per cent of the government's GDP and make it one of our biggest industries. We believe in investing in innovation, research and targeting farm infrastructure combined with strengthening insurance program is the best way we can grow our economy and create good jobs and added value in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude that we have moved forward with Bill 71 as we see the importance of added value, and we want to minimize the risk of the disease spread much like the PEDV 'irus' does and has potential to cripple our industry in the province of Manitoba. So I would ask for acceptance of Bill 71 to move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this amendment which addresses one of the important issues, and that is biosecurity. I think it's important to know that the hog industry has been out in front for probably 20 years or more in the issue of biosecurity. They have been very careful to make sure that people coming into their hog facilities have gone through very, very strict biosecurity protocols and that people going in one hog barn, then, are very, very careful in terms of the biosecurity protocols that they go through before going anywhere near any other hog barn.

And I think, first of all, the industry itself has to be complimented for the measures that they have taken over the last, I would say, 20 or more years, and it is not only a compliment to the industry, but it's also very important for our industry that this be the case, that we do have this attention—very close attention to biosecurity.

And I'm pleased that over the summer the NDP government has decided to bring forward this amendment which was not there to start with. Clearly, it is a step forward when this government finally realizes that the biosecurity is important enough that it be put in these amendments. And I want to, you know, say to the minister that this is a good thing that his government has finally

recognized the importance of biosecurity with this late-stage report stage amendment.

And so we thank the minister and thank the government for this. And, you know, I suspect that part of the reason for the attention to biosecurity may have to do with a lot of the comments and concerns, not only around PED and the hog industry, but also what Karl Kynoch himself, the—with the Manitoba Pork Council said at the committee stage. He said, at that time, we are conditionally supportive of this provision as long as inspectors are required to show identification and make it clear to the owner their purpose for entering into an owner's dwelling continues to be protected by the warrant process and the CVO inspectors entering the premises follow—and I highlight this—strict biosecurity protocols for entering and exiting the premises.

And I think it is an important step forward that the government is starting to listen to concerns about biosecurity. There have been in this Chamber over the past several years many, many times that biosecurity has been raised. It has been raised, for example, in particular, with attention to activities of Manitoba Hydro, concern over club root, a condition which affects canola and which there has to be very diligent concerns. And we hope that the Minister of Agriculture has communicated to everybody who works in Manitoba Hydro that the biosecurity is important, and, hopefully, out of the government's new-found attention to biosecurity there will be a much stricter approach to biosecurity, not just in the hog industry but all throughout agriculture.

And recognition of how important this is, particularly at a time when agriculture is not only a very important industry but farmers are investing large amounts of money in their equipment, in their land, in seeding, and in the case of the hog industry, in their barns. And the last thing that we want is to have anything put these investments or the future of farmers at risk in any way, shape or form.

*(15:00)

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I'm strongly in support of the attention to biosecurity and I'm ready to support this amendment.

Thank you.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Interesting this amendment came—wouldn't have even come if I hadn't approached the Ag Minister to consider biosecurity on—here. However, he still doesn't listen to me, and when I hear the Minister of Agriculture

stand up and say government prevented the spread of PED virus, I know he still doesn't get it.

It is not the government that stopped the spread of PED virus. It was the hog producers. It was the—Manitoba Pork, their biosecurity. Government likes to claim credit for everything, but you can't claim credit for this one. Doesn't matter how many spinners you put out there and try to do the press releases, you cannot claim that. It's the biosecurity invoked by the producers themselves that stopped the spread of PED—individual producers—in spite of this government trying to kill and decimate the hog industry in this province.

Just look what's happening at Maple Leaf Foods. They're running at 60 per cent capacity because of this government. And yet he stands up and says they prevented PED. Perhaps the minister needs to get in touch with reality here.

He also claimed that there was national standards for biosecurity. There is no national standards. He should have enough staff in his department to figure that out. There is—it goes by province. There's not a national standard.

Mr. Speaker, this—I—if he hasn't caught on by now, he can—he should be aware that I'm not supporting this amendment; our party will not support this amendment. I have a much better amendment that can be put into this bill, because what it does is it puts the biosecurity back in the hands of the individual producer, not government.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment says that they will write biosecurity measures in—as prescribed by regulation. We know what this government does with regulations, how they love to regulate and overregulate, and it does not take into consideration what the industry or what individual producers will have to say about it. Government does not know best in biosecurity, as evidenced—and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) actually touched on it.

Take the Bipole III. The surveyors working for the NDP-controlled Manitoba Hydro—no biosecurity on surveys—on survey crews entering properties without permission, without using proper biosecurity, risking the spread of clubroot in canola as well as animal diseases with PED present. How do you know that the survey crews—the Hydro survey crews—were not in contact with that? And yet there was no biosecurity involved in their actions when they went onto individual properties.

And yet this government seems to think that they know best when it comes to what should happen out there. You know, the Agriculture Minister, the other day in the KAP luncheon—just an excellent KAP meeting and—that we had downstairs. A number of the government members were there as well as a number of our MLAs were there. And we all have a great working relationship with the KAP organization—Keystone agriculture producers. They do excellent work, they work very hard to represent their industry, and I couldn't help but—when I was listening to the Agriculture Minister, he was talking about his experience within the cattle industry over the many years, and he kept mentioning having to pull calves. He mentioned it not once but number of times. There's a few of us that have a bit of experience in the cattle industry, and we could've explained the virtues of sire selection here because, apparently, he didn't catch on.

And now this is the same Agriculture Minister that says he knows what's best for the hog industry and for the spread of diseases. We could—you know, if the minister was really interested, we could explain a lot of that to him and we'd gladly do it, and I'm sure that he would find it interesting. And I know my colleague from Emerson, my colleague from Agassiz have lots of experience in that—my colleague from Portage la Prairie. We have a fair bit of ag experience and we could've helped the Ag Minister on such matters, but it seems that not really interested in understanding that individual producers are running businesses. And these are very high-tech businesses nowadays in agriculture and it takes professionalism on the side of the producers to make a go of their business, and yet this government constantly comes back and says they know more than the industry does.

And, again, in this amendment that he's brought forward, which I pointed out the shortfall to him within his own bill that it did not address biosecurity when entering premises is very important, his response is, well, government will decide in regulation. In other words, government will know better than what individual producers—an individual producer can have a biosecurity protocol in place, but if the NDP government doesn't like that, doesn't want to pay attention to that, they will just bulldoze their way in on an individual business.

Now, we all understand the seriousness of the spread of animal diseases, the food—the criticalness—critical of—nature of having safe food, but this goes way beyond safe food. This is government regulating

industry to suit their own purposes. And until this government starts to learn—I don't know if they can. Like, they've got a crisis in leadership; they can't even decide who their leader is these days. And then when they have a coup, they can't decide how to finish the coup. Like, it sort of starts out and then I don't know what's happened to it. But, you know—and they can't even manage themselves within there and then they're going to go out to a multi-million-dollar industry and say that they know better.

And, of course, again, all I have to do is reference Maple Leaf Foods. We know how government—this government has destroyed the hog industry within this province and put at risk over 2,000 full-time, permanent unionized jobs in Brandon, which would be a huge disaster to the—not only just to Manitoba, but especially to the Brandon area and throughout the province if that plant is—continues to face further peril because of this government's unwillingness or inability to address the issues within the hog industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've—I just—it continues to amaze me how short-sighted this government is, how they continue to think that they know best, that they can control—that they try to control all aspects of every industry and to the detriment of this province. We continue to see this throughout agriculture industry. We know that they—every time that there's a chance to take more money out of the ag industry, they did it, through increasing in the insurance—the PST on insurance, registration on vehicles, gas taxes, farmland education tax rebates. They've cut—they've taxed Manitobans and Manitoba agriculture industry in particular continues to pay more and get a lot less from this government.

And this amendment—while the bill itself is fine, this amendment does not address the shortfalls within this bill, and I would urge the government to stop trying to overregulate everybody, give the industry the credit that it deserves and not support this amendment, because I have a much better amendment in mind for this bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): It gives me great pleasure today to rise and put a few words on the record in regards to this amendment put forth by the Minister of Agriculture.

*(15:10)

First of all, Mr. Speaker, it would've done him a lot of good to have taken some advice from this side of the House. I don't doubt that he was in agriculture for 35 years. I know that he's had a tough 35 years pulling calves every year. All he had to do was ask a question. He probably wouldn't have hurt his back. He wouldn't have hurt his bank account, and he'd have probably been much farther ahead. He would have been able to give advice and pass that farm on to one more in the generations.

However, he chooses not to listen. He chose not to listen when they were collecting mega dollars from the beef producers to build a slaughter plant. He chose not to listen and, today, the producers of this province are looking to where their \$8 million went. Where did the money go, the \$8 million that this minister and the NDP government took out of the back pockets of the cattle people in this province, at the same time decimating the cattle herd from around 800,000 down to 460,000 cattle in this province? They would not take advice. He did not take advice. The NDP did not take advice.

And on top of that, we'll just stay a little bit in the cattle business because he didn't listen on so many simple things. He didn't listen when it came to flooding. He didn't listen and he didn't pay attention and he didn't stand up for the very people that he claims to represent—the cattle producers. He didn't stand up for them, Mr. Speaker; he stood on them instead.

It was a man-made flood. Many of them are not back on their place yet, and it's—and they're not settled. Their cases are not settled. Many of them have sold their cattle, some of the top producers in the province, and I point to an individual like Guy Johnson, who had spent 22 years developing a composite herd, which is like developing a brand new breed. And this NDP government threw that out the window. They broke his heart, broke his back and ended up that he gave away his ranch because it is nothing now but a chunk of water and slough, because they wouldn't listen.

They wouldn't listen when it came to the circle around Riding Mountain and TB. They wouldn't listen. Yes, we can say that TB is a federal responsibility but, at the same time, this provincial government had an opportunity to step forward and do the right thing. They knew where the contamination was coming from. They knew the hardships that this province was going through. After repeatedly calling from this side to help those

farmers, they gave them a pittance, but they did not address the serious issue. The farmers knew what to do. They knew that they had to keep those animals out of commingling with theirs.

Mr. Speaker, every hog producer in this province, every grain farmer in this province, every bird feather industry individual in this province, every dairy individual in this province and every beef producer knows what they need to do in order to stay in business, in order to keep their flock, their herds and their ground healthy and free of disease.

This minister wants to put something into legislation that's so rigid that someone has to pick up a book and read it and comes out and he says they won't contaminate anything. The more regulation they put in place, the more regulation cops that they put in place, don't protect, they don't protect the average individual. It does sound good, but the fact is my colleague from Midland has put forward a much more comprehensive amendment to this bill that will be well received by the industry, whether that's the hog industry, the grain industry and he has made that point many times in this House.

With the incidence of Manitoba Hydro firstly trespassing on private property—and no one wants to address that on that side of the House. That minister didn't stand up for agriculture. He didn't stand up for agriculture, and, of course, he wasn't one of the rebels. He didn't have the backbone for that either. Of course, they had no cause. They just needed to make a little bit of a scene to try and distract from the fact that the NDP government has Manitoba at the bottom of a barrel in so many different cases.

While Manitoba Hydro trespassed on some of the prime agriculture in-land in Manitoba to build a line that's costing \$4.6 billion more to the people of Manitoba, to the owners of this Crown corporation, it will cost our children and our grandchildren for years to come, \$4.6 billion and counting, unnecessarily, at the same time putting at risk the very, very backbone of this country. The—what this country was built on was agriculture. It was built on agriculture, and it has done a great job of policing themselves.

The hog industry has for years and years and years had a strict biosecurity that they brought in. They didn't need the government to do that. They didn't need that; they put in showers. If you wanted to come and work in that barn, you showered in. You walked out carrying a briefcase and you looked like a business man from Thompson, but, in fact, you worked with agriculture. You produced a clean,

healthy food for the people—not only of Manitoba, but for the whole world.

And they did that without the government telling them how to look after their business. And here we have a minister that didn't know anything about sire selection wanting to tell hog producers and put it in—just encrypted in stone that this is the only way—the only way—that you can do this. We know that the goalposts on that side of the House—first of all, there's overregulation, but then them goalposts move in every direction. Whatever direction the wind is blowing, they want to get there first. They want to get there, take credit for something that they've never done, and one of the things that they've never done is they've never stood up for agriculture or rural Manitoba. They've stood on their backs. That's what they've done, Mr. Speaker.

So, with those few words, what I would like to say is that even though there's not that many people in the House on that side of the House, I would hope that they will pass that word on to the rest of their colleagues that this was a bad amendment put forward by the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn), the Minister of Agriculture, this was a terrible amendment put forward and that they would encourage every person on that side of the House to endorse the amendment that is being put forward by the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen).

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to put a few words on the record with regards to this amendment put forward on Bill 71 by the Minister of Agriculture, the member for Swan River. I'm going to have to speak against the amendment, however, and I'm basing that on experience and an example from this particular government. And I can't help but remember The Save Lake Winnipeg Act which both sides of the House supported, and at the time we were told that regulations would deal with all the details.

And, Mr. Speaker, being involved in the agricultural industry at that time, we put our faith in good legislation. And we certainly were disappointed because when the regulations came out around that bill, it was—they were completely unworkable. They had zero relevancy to what was going on; in fact, they were based mostly on some aerial photo maps from 60 years previous and they contained very incomplete and inaccurate information and, frankly, would have put big chunks of the province right out of the livestock industry, and where—and often areas

where livestock was one of the most predominant industries. In fact, I suspect that if the minister checked his aerial photos from that vintage, he would find he would have been out of the livestock industry based on the regulations that came out at that time. So I do not easily trust the bureaucracy now to design the regulations that are necessary.

I think it's important that you put the right contact into the bill and that you make consultations take place between the commodity groups and the people that will do the regulation so that both sides understand what the intent is.

*(15:20)

And, in the case of the nutrient management regs, as they came out, they did a series of hearings across the province that got, frankly, extremely rowdy, because these—the Water Stewardship people didn't realize until they turned up at the meeting that they were going to put people out of business; they had no idea what they were asking for in—with their regulations. They knew the broad principles that they put forward in the bill, but then the regulations didn't relate to the broad principles. They got very specific and they got very local in nature and were not targeted and not interpreted as they should have been. So, by the time we'd done a complete round of industry—round across the province, where there was a considerable pushback and quite a bit of uproar—a lot of conflict generated by that—it was incumbent on the industry then, the commodity groups, to go to government and say, finally, what is it you really think you want? What is it you want from this bill?

And, once they sat down and said, okay, these are what we want, it was much more easily done by the industry. They came up with a set of guidelines and regulations that today basically are what we are using in this province, in terms of nutrient management regulations. It was the industry that did all of the work, the industry that knew what was necessary. It was not government nor the regulators for the government that could design this. They didn't have the relevancy; they didn't—they weren't current with what was going on in the industry. So we were very disappointed with that example, and I fear that we are headed down the road to exactly the same kind of thing.

Now, I realize this bill is strictly for the livestock industry, and new diseases, in fact, are always emerging in any industry. And we certainly hope that we don't have any more emerge in the livestock industry, but it's not that long ago that we had to

figure out how to deal with prion-type diseases such as BSE. With—any regulation that was in place before that was completely irrelevant to that. It was a completely different type of disease, spread in a different way and, in fact, also 'commuted' through the feed chain far more so than any disease we'd ever had before. And we didn't have the regulations in place around that. And consultation with the industry was what eventually led to some—as the science developed—led to some solutions that actually seemed to be working.

We're getting in a situation now with—we have another—I think it's another two years without any positives in Canada, we will be declared BSE-free as a country. We're certainly a country of low incident now, which is the next stage removed from that, so we're moving in the right direction. But it wasn't regulation that did that, Mr. Speaker. It was the industry working with regulators. And, if you do not have some type of structure to make that happen—and there's simply nothing like—in the bill. We—it's basically a trust-me type of situation, and I cannot support that. I think we need to put something in the bill to make sure that there'll be consultations take place.

And I cannot sit down without complimenting the pork industry, not only for the PED situation, which they dealt with, frankly, Mr. Speaker. It was not the regulators, it was not the minister, though I certainly have a lot of respect for his staff. It was not they that did it, because they are not in the industry, they are not current on all the situations. It was Manitoba Pork that did the biggest—showed the biggest amount of leadership in that area, and I credit them for that. And it is not, frankly, the first time that they have had to deal with disease outbreaks. They know what they're doing in regards to that.

And frankly, if a new disease emerged today—and heaven forbid we have to deal with one—it is the commodity groups that you should go to first to get the information on what's going on, and the science will be up to date because they're very current in the industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this amendment. I think, frankly, you need to go back and rethink what you're doing here. Had you had the same type of approach back on nutrient management regs, you would not have had 35 years in the cattle industry; you'd have had less than 30.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk about this amendment on Bill 71 and the impact that it may or may not have on the livestock producers across this great province of ours. And we know that the Manitoba Pork have done a fantastic job, and like the member from Portage la Prairie, it was very clear: when you want consultation, you reach out to those folks and you make sure that you get the best information that is available.

In fact, if we go back, we know when they 'brock' it—brought in the hog moratorium, they said, oh well, it'll just be for a couple of years, and we'll make it all just go away and everything is going to be fine. Everything is going to be just fine.

Well, we know that that's not the case at all. What we've found—that this government has just misled—a number of fronts in regards to health, safety, in particular, for farmers. We know how important that base is for our province, the economic engine. We know very clearly that the Manitoba pork industry is at least \$1 billion a year. It's bigger than Manitoba Hydro, and we saw exactly what this government has done with Manitoba Hydro. They went from a \$1.1-billion line, to a \$4.62-billion line, so this government has no accomplishments at all in regards to consultation with different groups.

I know that our family's been involved in the poultry business for a number of years, and we take security, biosecurity, very, very serious. We shower in, we shower out; we want to make sure that there's no chance of disease getting into these barns. However, we—all the best intentions in the world can be taken, we still have to make sure we check and double check.

When do we look at our records, we sign in. We sign into those barns so that we have a record of the time, the date and the reason why they went in—not just to work. There's also inspections that have to be done. These folks work seven days a week in order to make sure—24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in order to make sure that the biosecurity is there and in place so that they will be able to make sure that the herds are protected.

Now, I know in particular they're talking about a lot of this with the hog business, and we saw a decline at Maple Leaf. They've went back to running at 60-some per cent of capacity, which is not near—not near—where they need to be far as profitable in that sector. And we've seen Neepawa with

HyLife Foods, one of the best managed companies in Canada, been known in the top 10, and they take that business very serious. They don't need this government telling them what to do. They got this way because they are astute business people. They pay attention to what is going on within their business. They don't need more regulations.

We will not stand by and listen to this government ruin an industry that is bigger than Manitoba Hydro. We know the importance that it has on Manitobans, the jobs that it creates. In fact, with Brandon running at 60 per cent, it's going to have an impact on the city of Winnipeg because the finished product comes from Brandon to Winnipeg. That will have trickle-down effect. If you haven't figured that out by now, something's really wrong somewhere.

But what we need to do is drill down and find out really what this government is trying to do. When they bring in the regulations, there's no consultation on that. We have no 'documentation' that that has been the case. We know that not only the Minister of Agriculture but also the Minister of Conservation has this thing about Manitoba pork where they don't feel it's important for Manitobans to be able to be consulted and have their input put in. In fact, I know that Manitoba Pork takes their positions very, very seriously. They're in consultation constantly with their neighbours to the east, to the west, to the south, in order to ensure they're have a handle—they have a true handle on what is coming down the pipeline.

What happened in Illinois? What happened in California? What happened in Iowa? What happened in Colorado? What happened in Texas? They are drilling down and reaching out to all those producers in order to find out the best technologies, the best medication, the best feed supplies—those things that are going to make them profitable.

When you're talking about the margins, just the margins on a—in the hog business is very small, and it's—and whenever we know we threw more regulations at them, it's just another cost to be passed on to the producers through no fault of their own. And I know the government said and this is the best intentions to help the Manitoba pork producers, but we know for sure that it's not going to be in the best interests of Manitobans.

Now, later on today, we're going to be able to have the opportunity to look at the amendment that's going to be brought forward by the member from

Midland, and I hope the government takes a good look at that. I know they're—they got those rose-coloured glasses; they're probably going to be looking in a different direction and be able to say that that's not going to be the way to go, and we know they have a majority on that side of the House. Now, whether or not the—all the members vote in favour of this particular piece of legislation or not, well, time will tell, if we get to that today; we don't know. I know there's lots of people that want to talk about this piece of legislation, so we'll just stay tuned on that, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:30)

What we also want to make sure when we're talking about regulations and change and red tape, that we do it in a way that is sustainable for those in the industry. Whether it be the pork industry—and I talked a bit about the feathered friends that we know they're out there as well, but we also know in the cattle business when we look at those folks as well. So what is this going to do to the next livestock sector? What's the impact going to look like?

So we just don't pass a bill saying that this pertains just to one sector because that's not it at all. We know in the dairy sector how much pride those producers put into keeping their herds healthy, keeping them safe, making sure that there's no diseases are transmitted through the milk products. They take this business very, very seriously. They do the test on milk in order to ensure that it's safe, and we know we had a member's statement the other day on the new Bothwell cheese. They take their business very seriously, as well, and whenever they look at the products that they put into their cheese in order to make sure they're safe.

So, again, the ripple effect of those producers that will come out of not just this piece of legislation but every piece of legislation that we see as it comes forward from this side or that side of the House, we know that we have to listen to those folks in order to ensure that we get it right.

And so we will not be supporting this amendment as proposed by the minister. I know that he had some help with it from his department, but we also know that there's things that need to be changed in it. And, hopefully, we'll get to that later on today.

I know that, you know, the member from Emerson was talking about the beef numbers, the way they've declined. Again, we heard from the minister, the previous minister, the member from

Dauphin, in the 2011 flood that we'd have multi-year compensation for those folks. Now, surely this is something they need to be thinking about when they're bringing forward amendments to this particular bill, the impact that it's going to have, and whenever we looked and based those numbers that this government said yes, yes, we're going to have multi-year funding for those livestock producers. They took them at their word, just like they will be on this particular piece of legislation, that they would have dollars coming to them.

They could not afford to hang on, through no fault of their own, and the member from Emerson talked about the Johnson ranch up by Eddystone and the impact that it had on him and his family. He now lives in Winnipeg. He was forced to sell out, through no fault of his own. He was counting on that multi-year funding that the government promised him, the member from Dauphin that put that on the record, and not only once but several times across this great province. And those farmers through, again, no fault of their own, was misled. So those herds now have gone from well over 600,000 head in the province of Manitoba to around 450, 460 thousand head. That is going to have a significant impact on Manitobans.

We look at the beef prices. They're finally to the area where the farmers are actually making a bit of money in that particular product line, but we have to be conscious on all these amendments and legislation we bring forward.

So we're hoping the government will look at the member from Midland's amendment. We'll give him that opportunity here shortly, and hopefully they'll support it. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the proposed amendment brought forward to the animal disease act by the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn). You know, this is an amendment that goes down to—ends up by saying with biosecurity standards prescribed by regulation in respect to category, place, area or vehicle.

Now, I've noticed in the time I've been here, even before I was here, that under this NDP government we're seeing more and more bills that are leaving the actual meat of the bill to regulation, right. We see the legislation in this venue and we have a right to debate that legislation. We do not see the regulations. You have to dig them up. Sometimes you find out several months after they go into place

and too much is being done by regulation and not by legislation.

When it's legislation, we have a clear look at it. We have the right as politicians to debate what's done in that legislation, and it always scares me somewhat when things are left to—in the bill. And I know the water stewardship act was one of the worst ones I saw on that. Almost everything—it was an empty bill, everything was left to regulation, and regulation from many different directions. And some of those regulations aren't that good, but we don't even get to debate them.

You know, my background and the member for Swan River's background isn't a lot different. I'll claim a few more years farming than he does, but we both spent something like 20 years on municipal council, my—I think similar years; I think he might have been a little later starting at it, but I was a little earlier retiring from it.

I—when I was growing up we had a dairy farm, so I—I had the—yes—the—22 years ago, actually—yes—as I was growing up we had a dairy farm, and I—until I was through high school. I was in—about 20 years old when the dairy cows finally went down the road. And, when I started to farm, I got into a hog operation and I raised hogs for over 25 years. I was one of the first people to deliver hogs to the new plant at Springhill when it was built at Neepawa, which is now HyLife, and a lot bigger now than it was then. But I got to about 1990 or so, and things were changing in the hog industry. I had at one time what would've been a very good-size operation; it was becoming a small operation by that time and regulations and costs were making it either you had to go a lot bigger or you had to get out, and I chose to—I had a few cattle at the time; I chose to go to the cattle herd and expand it, and for the last, oh, 20 years I farmed, I had—probably a little over 20 years I had beef cattle.

Now, you know, when the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn) was first elected, I thought this is going to be pretty good for us, you know, we got a person that's coming off the farm going into a caucus that had no one with a farm background and a person coming off the farm that was going to go in there and stick up for agriculture in the province. Unfortunately, went in there and got named as Minister of Agriculture, and went right to his head and he deserted a lot of the beliefs and stuff he had before. He did a full about-turn and forgot about the things that he was arguing about when he was with

the AMM, forgot about the positions he had in agriculture and just started spouting party line, just passed the message as the message was told to him.

You know, it—I'm a little disappointed in that. I actually anticipated someone walking in there that was really going to start to stick up for agriculture on a grassroots level, and it hasn't happened. It just has not happened, and I'm not the only one that thinks that. I hear it all over the country.

You know, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) mentioned the drop in the cattle herds, and I think a couple of my other colleagues did too. I think he was maybe just slightly off on the top figure; it was just under 800,000 cattle—cows about five years ago, and now it's 460,000, and some of it is caused by the conditions around Lake Manitoba. And you heard the Johnson ranch mentioned a couple of times. There's another one up in the Reykjavik area, Joel Delaurier. Joel Delaurier had 600 cows. Joel Delaurier was about 45 years old, had 600 cows, the artificial flooding from Lake Manitoba rolled in. Joel's gone now. He's back in Alberta welding on the pipeline. The cows are gone. The land's sitting empty. That Reykjavik area—when I first became MLA in 2007, that Reykjavik area had about 2,500 cattle—cows and about seven—six or seven producers. There's two producers left now and probably about 600 cows, and that's disastrous. The economy just keeps getting ripped to pieces on the—when we lose that much out of our agricultural sector. The—this government, with regulations and legislation, has ripped the belly out of agriculture in this province.

*(15:40)

We've had the opportunity last year with a higher than normal crop, probably one of the best crops that's ever been grown, and some fairly good prices, to somewhat defer in the agricultural sector what's happening in hogs and cattle in the livestock side of it. This year, those yields are way down, considerably less. The prices are way down. The impacts are going to be monumental. Those are—the agricultural industry is at least 10 per cent of the economy of this province. Agricultural industry has always been there. It's been there before there was a province, and it's what has been able to drive—the agricultural industry creates the economy that allows us to have the health care that we have, that allows us to have the education system that we have. It's a big part of that economy. When it suffers, the others will suffer with it.

So, when you go out and put all sorts of regulations in place that we're not sure of the impacts of, all sorts of regulations that should've been talked over with the industry, with the stakeholders, with Manitoba Pork and got it right—try and make sure you've got it right before you arbitrarily go out there and put in place regulations that may actually tie the hands of some sectors of the ag industry in this province. Then you're not doing the things that you need to do, and the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn) would be well advised to have another look at this.

We will not be supporting this amendment. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put a few words on the record regarding this particular amendment. I don't pretend or suggest that I'm the leading expert on agriculture in our caucus. It'll come as a surprise, but it is certainly an issue that is important in my riding and it is in southeastern Manitoba, and it's also important for us throughout the province, including our two largest cities in Winnipeg and in Brandon. Agriculture is that important to our province in terms of employment and in terms of the economic driver of the province.

It's already been stated by a number of my colleagues, though, we are very concerned that the particular specifics of this bill are left to regulation and not left to—or not put specifically in the bill. And that's no small point, Mr. Speaker. I know sometimes, you know, the public might view the debate and think that these are distinctions without true differences, but this truly is the difference between having something ingrained in the legislation, which means that if there's going to be a change, it has to come back to the Legislature here. But it also means it's publicly discussed here in the Legislature as opposed to regulation, which means that it's decided at Cabinet. It's decided behind closed doors in the Cabinet meetings; the public's not privy to the discussions, and if there are changes, the changes happen very quickly within the Cabinet context and not in the Legislature. And something this important, I do think it is important to have it within the legislation and not left to regulation.

And we can only look at the disconnect and the dysfunction within the current government to know why that is important, Mr. Speaker. We don't always know what the composition of Cabinet is going to be.

And I know there's been some concerns raised about the current Minister of Agriculture, but he may not be the agriculture in two or three months; you know, it could be the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) or somebody else because of what's going on, and we would have even less confidence, I suppose. And the member for Wolseley, if he was the Minister of Agriculture—now, you know, some people might think that that's ridiculous, but I don't think two months ago people would've predicted that the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) would've been the Minister of Finance and making decisions over the finance issue. People wouldn't have predicted that the former minister of Education would now be the Attorney General (Mr. Allum).

So politics can be unpredictable, and when you leave things that are important to the unpredictability of Cabinet and what can happen within a Cabinet, you can end up with bad results. So it is important that it not be left to regulation.

I know that my colleague from Midland has another amendment that will be coming forward about ensuring that these important things are put in legislation, and I don't want to sort of presell anything. But I do want to say to the members that that is a much different kind of amendment and a more important or, I should say, a more appropriate way to deal with something of this significance. Not to put it into regulation and hope that whoever the future Ag minister is will do the right thing, and we say this knowing that it may bind our hands in a way as well.

Governments change; elections have results that often change governments. We won't predict the outcome of the next election. That's up for the people of Manitoba to decide at the time that the election is called. But, if there is a change of government, whichever political party ends up coming back in government, I mean, they have to live by that as well, and we are prepared to live by that. We're prepared to have this particular portion of the bill contained within legislation and not regulation.

We've seen far too many, and, you know, in the context of legislative debate, these are what we call enabling bills. These are enabling pieces of legislation. They set out a broader framework, and they enable the Cabinet or the Executive Council to make changes at a future time in the context of Cabinet behind those closed doors. And those are often, I think, dangerous pieces of legislation—dangerous to the people who are impacted by the

legislation because not only do they not get a say at the time that the legislation is passed and often as, you know, politicians were accused of only being concerned about the here and the now, but in the future when there may be future discussions within Cabinet, whichever government it is.

The changes can be made within the Cabinet context as well, as opposed to coming back to the Legislature here for the debate. And the context can change greatly; I mean, the issues that are happening in the agriculture industries are remarkably different. Now, often there's some common thread that goes through them. I know when, shortly after I was elected in 2003, the Legislature came back—and I'm testing my memory here, but I believe we came back for an emergency day to talk about the BSE crisis and I think it was only a one-day debate. At that time Premier Doer was still leading the NDP. So that was, obviously, an issue that is similar sometimes when we're talking about disease but a very different context. And to put something into regulation which has less impact, I think, in terms of having that public debate isn't the right thing to do.

So this isn't an amendment, I don't think, the one that'll come forward from the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) that should be considered anything but a friendly amendment, shouldn't be considered anything but something that the government should be able to support. I see the Government House Leader (Mr. Ashton) smiling, and maybe that's a positive sign or maybe that's a negative sign in terms of my suggestion. But I hope he looks at it as—*[interjection]* I hope that he now—oh, true, I mean some of the speeches may not have seemed so friendly, but, if he takes away the speeches on the amendment and simply looks at the wording, I think he'll realize that this is brought forward with all the best intentions, with all the right intentions. And I think that people send us here to work together on issues sometimes and to recognize that, you know, there are good ideas that come from both sides of the House, that, yes, there's a time for partisan debate in this Chamber, as there is in most legislatures across Canada or in the British parliamentary system, but there's also a time—so it's a very good time for parliamentarians to come together and to say, well, this is something that we should agree on.

Now there are more parties in the Legislature today than there normally are because there's us and there's the NDP and there's the Liberals and then there's the independent rebels on the other side, but I

think that the four caucuses could get together and agree on this particular issue. And I'm willing to sit down with the rebel members of the NDP and to talk to them about this and try to get an all-party accord. I think that all of the members of the government and of the rebel alliance would see that this is an important thing to ensure that we have confidence and that the agriculture industry has confidence about what is going to be actually put forward and contained in the law.

* (15:50)

So—and I don't want the government members to think that this is merely a matter of trust or lack of trust or anything like that. Again, this is, I think, more of a good way to legislate. A good way to govern is to have less in an enabling sort of an act and have it in regulation, and more where you can to have it in legislation.

Now, I understand that there are always going to be times—I'm not suggesting that there should never be anything in regulation, Mr. Speaker, because there are, of course, times when you need that kind of a flexibility and that kind of a flexible system. I get that and I think that that's important in the legislative process, but I don't think that this is one of those times. I do very firmly believe that, on an issue of this importance and of this significance, that there needs to be the containment within the act itself, so we can see it now and it would take a legislative act to change it in the future.

So, I mean, I'm trying to put this argument in—forward as a non-partisan way, trying to put it forward as a—hopefully, a bipartisan spirit, that all members will see it in that way and will see it as a friendly sort of suggestion. My hope would be that the Minister of Agriculture would withdraw his amendment and that we could move forward with the amendment by the member for Midland and pass that amendment. And, you know, then, we could leave the Legislature today and feel that, you know, something good was accomplished and that we did it together. And I think that, you know, instead of having the back and forth and the partisanship—you know, I grow weary of the partisanship sometimes, Mr. Speaker, and I would like, you know, to be able to go to my constituents and to say that we accomplished something together in a bipartisan way.

You know, we're only three days from the Christmas open house, Mr. Speaker, and think of the

way we could get together and sing on the steps of the Legislature—of the grand staircase—knowing that we passed an amendment together in a bipartisan way.

So I hope that the Government House Leader and his Minister of Agriculture will take my suggestion in the spirit of the season and in the spirit that it's been given. He should withdraw this amendment, Mr. Speaker. We'll move forward with the amendment from the member for Midland. We'll pass that unanimously, and all of us will know that we did good work in the Legislature today on behalf of Manitobans.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure to stand up today and speak to the proposed amendment brought forward by the minister from Swan River there, Mr. Speaker. I know, following the member from Steinbach, it's a tough act to follow, but I'm going to try to do my best here.

I know that in the future here—short time in the future that the member from Midland is going to be bringing forward an amendment to Bill 71, which, I think, states exactly what a lot of the agriculture producers—the farmers out there in this wonderful province of ours—wants to actually bring forward and what they actually want to see in this bill, Mr. Speaker.

As we've mentioned many, many times before, the PC Party realizes that agriculture and all the industries related to it are the essential part of Manitoba's economy and continues to be so and do so throughout—for many, many years to come. And I think we definitely need to protect those people that are putting a lot of their own dollars and cents at risk each and every year when they're going into this profession in agriculture.

Agriculture represents approximately 9 per cent of the province's GDP, totally 3 and a half billion dollars in fiscal—in the fiscal year 2012-13, and we wholeheartedly support agricultural production, processing and related manufacturing in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, recently, the diseases, such as the porcine epidemic diarrhea virus, or PED virus, pose significant risks to the vitality of an industry who is already struggling under the NDP's current regulations.

We know that farmers and producers are some of the best environmental and health safety stewards because their livelihood depends on the sustainable

and safe consumption of their products, Mr. Speaker. Yet the NDP—they do not understand this, and they continue to overregulate the many different industries and places heavy restrictions and burdens on farmers and producers. Their actions are putting thousands of agricultural and related jobs at risk in such industries as food processing, manufacturing, transportation and finance. This is a problem which must be remedied now, but the NDP are too slow to react.

The negative effects on agriculture caused by the NDP are most in evidence by events such as last spring's reduction of hours at the Maple Leaf Foods plant in Brandon. The plant cannot run at full capacity because of a lack of product to process. This is negatively impacting 1,800 Brandon-area residents or 80 per cent of the plant's workforce to date. The NDP has not been able to remedy this situation.

Mr. Speaker, Brandon supplies their products to Winnipeg for further processing. It's only a matter of time before the negative effects of this current government start to reach the St. Boniface plant.

Now I know, as I mentioned earlier, that the member from Midland is going to be bringing forward his own amendments to Bill 71, so I would strongly encourage the minister from—the Agriculture Minister from Swan River to withdraw his amendment because, reading over the amendment, the point within the regulation or the—or in the bill—sorry, Mr. Speaker, that he states, and I quote, says, must take the biosecurity measures or comply with the biosecurity standards prescribed by regulation in respect of the category of place, area, or vehicle.

So, as the member from Steinbach had mentioned, it's not that we don't necessarily trust the present government, but when we talk about when he puts into the—on the record that he is going to prescribe the necessary changes by regulation, well, why not state exactly what you're meaning right in the amendment, Mr. Speaker?

Another point that I'd like to bring forward is the point of trust, and it's trusting the government. I know that in the last provincial election the NDP, all 57 candidates of theirs, promised that school taxes on farmlands would be eliminated. This is one of the many commitments which were not kept by this government who, instead, claimed to have introduced an 80 per cent rebate. This is utterly false and untruthful to Manitoba farmers and producers. Mr. Speaker, the Farmland School Tax Rebate has

been capped at \$5,000 per farming unit, and this includes spouses or common-law partners. This means many families who depend directly on their farms and ranches for their livelihoods receive absolutely no rebates.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, this cap has affected almost 1,500 Manitoba farmers and has cost them almost 5 and a half million dollars. What a prime example of what happens under this NDP government: Manitobans are paying more and getting far less once again, and, as I mentioned earlier today in question period, at times getting nothing at all.

The hardship and the tragedy Manitoba farmers are faced with doesn't stop there. Under the NDP, farming continues to become more difficult and more unaffordable by imposing a strict Farmland School Tax Rebate application deadline. Starting last spring farmers must submit their rebate applications by March 31st every year or they will be denied their tax rebate. This is opposed to the previous two- to three-year given window. The fact that applications for the rebate were not released until last December surely indicates the NDP's intention for just another tax grab to feed a spending addiction which is out of control, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the agricultural industry requires the provincial government to take leadership and show its supports in the development and successes within the farming community. We should be working and partnering with industry to arrive at solutions for the betterment of all Manitobans.

And, with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to allow others to get up and share a few words—put a few words on the record, and I thank you for your time.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): And it's my pleasure to stand and put some words on the record with respect to Bill 71, The Animal Diseases Amendment Act, and, Mr. Speaker, as I've listened to my colleagues this afternoon, it becomes clear what the context really is. The context is it's a matter of trust, and all of us in this place take the job that we have been assigned very seriously, and the job is that through the passage of legislation, through the introduction of 'legislation'—legislation, through its study, through consideration of all of its details, through the contacts that we make on both sides of the aisle with the various stakeholder groups and experts in the field, and through our own deliberations, there is a process by which Manitobans, hopefully, ideally, get a good product, good legislation, legislation that serves

them, legislation that protects them. And that is no small matter. It is not a matter of little importance.

* (16:00)

And so, Mr. Speaker, when I see this proposed amendment by the honourable member across the aisle, yes, I share the concern of my colleagues, and it is not an inconsiderable concern that we are taking a matter of grave importance to farmers, to producers, to agricultural people, the idea that biosecurity measures must be taken seriously. Now, the member opposite is saying: Well, just trust us. We can do this. You can trust us to do this job. We will make sure that this will get done in a manner that will serve the public, that will serve the interests of the producer, that will serve the interests of the industry.

But, Mr. Speaker, in all honesty, where have we seen this same government say just trust us and it will get done? Now, I think about the many conversations that I have had with members in my community who come from the agricultural background, who are producers, who are landowners. They might have small operations. They might have incorporated farms. And I have to tell you, in the year since the NDP party broke their promise exactly on the farmland school tax, that issue has taken up a lot of my time because producers were told one thing but then what they—what was delivered to them was something far different, and producers have stood with me and said, the NDP made us a promise.

And then they came back and said: Well, we said that, but we didn't really mean it. What we meant was that we were going to cap the school farmland tax rebate at \$5,000. Now that has a real effect, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the members over there said, you can have that rebate because we really believe in you. But, when you apply that cap—and perhaps the members across the aisle just do not understand the industry well enough. But you must understand that this takes thousands and thousands of dollars out of the pockets of hard-working farming families, because you make immediately ineligible spouses, you make immediately ineligible members of a corporate farm structure. You make it more difficult—they even made it difficult for them to apply for the actual farmland tax rebate.

An Honourable Member: They didn't even have the forms. They didn't have the forms.

Mr. Friesen: As a matter of fact, my colleague reminds me that they didn't even have the forms

ready. So it was clear that this became a matter where the government was saying one thing, but they were doing something very, very different.

So, when we come back to the content of this amendment as proposed by the member, we should then expect as legislators that perhaps in this situation also, they will say one thing and do another. Mr. Speaker, how are Manitobans best protected in this instance? They are best protected if we have the ability in this House, in this context, through the legislative process, to make biosecurity measures part of this bill to ensure that those protections will be guaranteed through legislation.

And the fact of the matter is if it is done through regulation, we know it can be just as easily undone. And the fact is that even for those of us who are newer legislators in this place, who have perhaps only been here a few years, like the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) and myself and the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), we understand that the legislative process means that in order to undo something that somehow the government would come to understand perhaps wasn't in their best interest, it raises the threshold of what must be done to undo the original action. It means that it would require the government to reopen this act if they had some kind of new idea about something they would want to amend with respect to biosecurity measures.

The fact is that the legislative process protects us. It protects Manitobans. It also guarantees that the considerable debate that goes on in this place is not for nothing, but rather that the testimony that is heard, that the debate that is heard, that the good recommendations made by stakeholder groups and professional groups, that these things, hopefully, in a process that is functioning well, get housed; they get considered. The merits of those arguments get considered and those changes get incorporated. And the bill becomes better and it serves Manitobans better.

Mr. Speaker, that does not happen if the members—if this minister's amendment goes forward and if the Cabinet reserves the right to make these changes. And that's why my colleagues and myself cannot support this amendment. That's why, just like the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) called upon, the member should remove his amendment and he should stand in support of the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen).

And, with those few words, I will allow my other colleagues to put similar words on the record.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

* (17:00)

Order, please. Order, please.

The question before the House is the amendment to—proposed amendment to Bill 71.

Do the members of the House wish to have the amendment read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No?

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 33, Nays 18.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment carried.

* * *

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 3, 2014

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