

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 26, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Pembina Trails School Division—New High School

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Overcrowded schools throughout Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods, Linden Ridge and Richmond West subdivisions are forcing Pembina Trails School Division to bus students outside of these areas to attend classes in the public school system.

Elementary schools in Pembina Trails School Division have run out of space to accommodate the growing population of students in the aforementioned areas.

Five-year projections for enrolment in the elementary schools in these areas indicate significant continued growth.

Existing high schools that receive students from Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods and Linden Ridge are at capacity and cannot accommodate the growing number of students that will continue to branch out of these subdivisions.

Bussing to outlying areas is not a viable long-term solution to meeting the student population growth in the southwest portion of Winnipeg.

The development of Waverley West will increase the need for a high school in the southwest sector of Winnipeg.

The government is demonstrating a lack of respect for the students and families of Whyte Ridge, Lindenwoods, Linden Ridge and Richmond West by refusing to provide adequate access to education within the community.

The Fort Whyte constituency is the only constituency in the province that does not have a public high school.

NDP constituencies in Winnipeg continue to receive capital funding for various school projects while critical overcrowding exists in schools in Lindenwoods, Whyte Ridge and Richmond West.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to recognize the need for a public high school in the southwest region of Winnipeg.

To request the provincial government, in conjunction with the Public Schools Finance Board, to consider adequate funding to establish a high school in the southwest sector of Winnipeg.

Signed by Gillian Breckman, Cam Lowden, P. Quigley and many, many others.

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

Fort Garry Hotel

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

The Fort Garry Hotel was seized from its owner, Harvard Investments Limited, a family-owned Manitoba corporation, by the City of Winnipeg in 1987.

Due to deliberate actions of the City of Winnipeg, errors by the Municipal Board of Manitoba and a lack of clarity in provincial legislation, the due process and natural justice that must be associated with the property tax assessment and appeal process were denied to Harvard.

The result was the company was unfairly burdened with a grossly excessive assessment and tax bill that precipitated a tax sale and mortgage foreclosure, effectively bankrupted the company and caused Harvard to be dispossessed of its business and property.

The background to this petition was outlined more fully in a grievance presented to this Assembly by the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) on May 18, 2005.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith) to consider conducting a review of the circumstances outlined and to consider making a recommendation for redress to the Government of Manitoba.

Signed Judith Perrin, John Perrin, Sarah Perrin and many others.

*(13:35)

Coverage of Insulin Pumps

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Insulin pumps cost over \$6,500.

The cost of diabetes to the Manitoba government in 2005 will be approximately \$214.4 million. Each day 16 Manitobans are diagnosed with the disease compared to the national average of 11 new cases daily.

Good blood sugar control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50 percent, blindness by 76 percent, nerve damage by 60 percent, cardiac disease by 35 percent and even amputations.

Diabetes is an epidemic in our province and will become an unprecedented drain on our struggling health care system if we do not take action now.

The benefit of having an insulin pump is it allows the person living with this life-altering disease to obtain good blood sugar control and become a much healthier, complication-free individual.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider covering the cost of insulin pumps that

are prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor under the Manitoba Health Insurance Plan.

Signed by Bob Poitras, Laura Baldwin, Kara Unrau and many, many others.

Generally Accepted Accounting Principles

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba's provincial auditor has stated that Manitoba's 2003-2004 budget deficit was the second highest on record at \$604 million.

The provincial government is misleading the public by saying they had a surplus of \$13 million in the 2003-2004 budget.

The provincial auditor has indicated that the \$13-million surplus the government says it had cannot be justified.

The provincial auditor has also indicated that the Province is using its own made up accounting rules in order to show a surplus instead of using generally accepted accounting principles.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider adopting generally accepted accounting principles in reporting Manitoba's budgetary numbers.

Signed by Lyn Francisco, Judy Gabuna and Danilo Francisco.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 210—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Bicycle Helmets)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 210, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Bicycle Helmets); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (casques de bicyclettes), be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights, seconded by the

honourable Member for Inkster, that Bill 210, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Bicycle Helmets), be now read a first time.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides for the mandatory use of helmets for persons riding bicycles on the roads or highways of Manitoba. This law responds to strong evidence that education alone has only achieved 28% use of bicycle helmets in Manitoba, and evidence that mandating the wearing of helmets, as is done in other provinces, can dramatically reduce the number and severity of bicycle injuries requiring hospitalization.

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

* (13:40)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Phoebe and Oliver Altemeyer who are the wife and son of the honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer).

Also we have in the public gallery from Warren Collegiate 37 Grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Jake Wiebe. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

Also in the public gallery we have from Austin Mennonite School 7 Grades 6 to 9 students under the direction of Miss Margaret Wall. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

Also I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Michelle Rydz, the sister of the legislative page Kristy Rydz.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Safe Schools Forum Participation

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the

House were pleased to receive the news that the government has followed our advice and has set a Safe Schools summit date for June 13.

Mr. Speaker, I was interested to see in their release, however, that they somehow have left it fairly late in the school year to get something organized. I also find that when Manitobans know that bullying and racism is such a serious, serious issue that this Premier would not have opened it up and allowed more people to attend. I know that they are talking about one student, two parents, a teacher, a school trustee, a superintendent and an administrator.

Mr. Speaker, why would this Premier not take this opportunity to invite the public, all teachers, all students, all parents, all superintendents, those who are interested? Why would he not open it up? In fact, if there was such a response from the public then he should hold a second forum. Why does he not take this issue seriously?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): On the one hand, the member opposite wants to have the summit take place before the end of the school year, and now he is condemning it for being before the school year. So the member opposite has multiple positions on various decisions, Mr. Speaker. I guess that is his obvious style.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of bullying and the issue of pressure in schools and the other related issues are very important to all Manitobans. We now have a person in place in the Department of Education that has been hired since we were elected to deal with some of these issues. We now have in place some 96% plans on dealing with, and it may be higher by now, emergency plans in schools pursuant to the act that was passed a year ago. We have in place more counselling investments.

This is obviously a summit, a meeting. It is not the beginning or the end of discussions about education. As a parent, and I was at a school event last night, you are always out with other teachers, with other students, with other parents. You are out with your neighbours. I see work on bullying as an activity that takes places 365 days a year.

Bullying Zero Tolerance Policy

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I remind the Premier that

I brought this issue forward well over a month ago and I also brought it forward to him during the Estimates process. The fact that he would leave this so late and ensure that it is not open as a forum, perhaps that is his style. It is not what we would recommend on this side.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the incidents of bullying, violence and racism in our schools are more frequent, more disturbing and more serious. Last night's CKY News told the troubling story of a 15-year-old Manitoba boy who has been bullied for more than a year. These bullying incidents have been so awful, so terrible that this child has even considered suicide. These incidents are so serious that now the police are investigating.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that there are certain degrees of bullying, but what we are suggesting is that not all bullying incidents be dealt with in the same manner. However, for the safety of all students and all parents, will this Premier commit to zero tolerance on bullying today?

* (13:45)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have introduced a Safe Schools Charter. We have introduced more counselling, not less professional counsellors in our schools. We have introduced emergency plans at every school that were not in place before. We have hired a person to work with the school divisions on various strategies that will work.

I believe that the communities, the parents, the educators, the teachers on the front line that are very, very important to this issue are dealing with this issue as well with ideas to all of us. We are listening to those ideas. I see this, as I say, a 365-day activity whether it is bullying in the schools or whether you see any bullying in a playground or whether you see any bullying on the streets. It is a role for all of us to work with kids, and it is also important to have kids in more productive activity.

I think it is also very important in our society to recognize some parts of our communities that do not have any recreational resources, do not have any recreational opportunities, do not have places for kids to go after school where they can bond in a more positive way.

I was pleased in the renegotiation with the City of Winnipeg, for example, that we were able to negotiate more money for the inner city and the North End of Winnipeg because there is a sad lack of resources in those communities for kids after school that may be subject to bullying.

I just want the member opposite to realize that bullying and some of these pressures on kids do not stop at four in the afternoon. That is why I say, Mr. Speaker, you got to go beyond that.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, my question was very clear. It was about zero tolerance on bullying to the Premier. I asked him if he had a position.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, CKY asked this Premier's Education Minister about introducing a zero tolerance policy. He flat out said, "No, a policy like that would not work." We believe without a doubt that there should be a commitment to zero tolerance on bullying in our schools, yet this Minister of Education said flat out, "No, it will not work."

While we recognize that each school must deal with each bullying incident individually, Mr. Speaker, the Premier should be acknowledging that a commitment to zero tolerance on bullying is a goal worth striving for. For the safety and well-being of students and teachers we believe there should be a zero tolerance on bullying in our schools. Will the Premier commit to have zero tolerance on bullying in our schools discussed at the Safe Schools summit?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, as I understand the zero tolerance policy on domestic violence, it includes an automatic or very important referral to the Winnipeg or any police force dealing with domestic violence. If the member opposite is suggesting that in cases in schoolyards that can be dealt with peers, can be dealt with teachers and do not need the police to be involved as part of a policy, I think he should not be so simplistic in his thinking.

Bullying Zero Tolerance Policy

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Our caucus is opposed to any form of bullying, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans are opposed to any level of bullying. Teachers, school boards, parents will not tolerate any form of bullying in our school yards and in our communities, but yet this Minister of Education

has indicated that a zero tolerance is not something that he supports.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Education whether or not he is brave enough to stand before the parents of this province, and some of the parents who have unfortunately lost children, and tell them that, in fact, he does not support a zero tolerance policy.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, as a teacher, we began to lobby the government about violence issues and safety issues in the school in 1993. By 2001, this government, the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet and every member of this caucus were behind a number of initiatives to address the issue of violence, to address the issue of gangs, to address the issue of Internet safety, to address the issue of school response plans. We have committed as a government a number of different resources to a number of different departments to address this issue.

With respect to zero tolerance, Mr. Speaker, 13 years in the classroom, I have seen attempts at zero tolerance. Zero tolerance does not work. It was not part of the consultation process where teachers were engaged in this process and said we want intervention, prevention and education, not zero tolerance.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I could hardly believe my words or the words of the Premier (Mr. Doer).

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: I guess I have to say to the Premier and to the Minister of Education that you are looking at someone whose child was bullied. So, Mr. Speaker, I do not appreciate the antics of members opposite on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Education whether he thinks that bullying just appears or whether, in fact, it starts from kids shoving each other around and whether he thinks that a zero tolerance policy is the wrong approach for Manitobans to take for our schools and for our communities.

* (13:50)

Mr. Bjornson: We do recognize that bullying is a problem. That is why we have been engaged in the process since 2001. That is why we have Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet bringing forward initiatives like the Triple P program, like the Roots of Empathy program. That is why we have increased funding and resources for counselling in early years which was never done by members opposite. That is why we are engaged in education programs through the Safe Schools Manitoba program. That is why we are committed to bring forward legislation, as we have, and regulations, as we have committed, to address this very serious issue, Mr. Speaker.

As a teacher, I have seen applications of zero tolerance. It does not work. They are saying on one hand that we should not treat all bullies the same, but then they turn around and say zero tolerance is the only acceptable approach. Zero tolerance is treating all the bullies the same, and we need to educate, intervene and prevent. That is our philosophy.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about what form of discipline you take when bullying occurs. We are talking about not accepting any level, any level, of bullying in a school. That means zero tolerance. We are talking about teachers having the support of the Minister of Education to ensure that no level of bullying is acceptable in a school.

I want to ask the Minister of Education now is he prepared to stand in his place and say that no level of bullying will be tolerated in any of our schools.

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, our actions have spoken very loudly in our commitment on this issue. Again, as a teacher, we raised this issue in 1993 and apparently there was no need to address the issue in 1993. We recognized it very early in our mandate in the year 2000 with the announcements that were brought forward. We have addressed it in a number of different initiatives since 2001.

We are continuing to work with the stakeholders. When we consulted with teachers, Mr. Speaker, the stakeholders, the front-line workers, we had two options. One was very prescriptive, very punitive, The Safe Schools Charter. The other was one that dealt with education, prevention, intervention. That is the model that they chose, the people on the front lines that deal with this every day. That is the model we are committed to, and we

will continue to support the teachers in this very important issue.

Cancer Treatment Programs Availability in Rural Manitoba

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, downtown Winnipeg has been inundated by 62 giant polar bears commemorating the 75th anniversary of CancerCare Manitoba. Dr. Dhali Dhaliwal, the president and CEO of CancerCare Manitoba has stated, and I will quote, "The number of Manitobans living with cancer is expected to double by the year 2020," and that going on, I quote, "Community cancer care programs are critical to ensure the delivery of safe and appropriate cancer care closer to home." That was Doctor Dhaliwal.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, for rural Manitobans, this NDP government's failure to recruit and retain physicians in rural Manitoba has resulted in the downgrading of the community cancer programs in Russell and in Neepawa forcing patients to have to travel to Brandon and Winnipeg for treatment. This Premier has failed.

I would ask what his plan is to ensure that cancer treatment remains fully available to patients in rural Manitoba as Doctor Dhaliwal has recommended.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I was pleased to be with Doctor Dhaliwal again today with the excellent fundraising event that was unveiled over the last few days on Broadway. I think it will be very exciting as a fundraising activity. I want to congratulate the volunteers of CancerCare Manitoba.

I would point out it is interesting because I recall about a month ago Doctor Dhaliwal was the one person that was quite critical of the practice of reducing medical class sizes and its result in a lack of physicians years later in the province. He actually tied together through his research the decreased enrolment in medical schools and the lack of doctors available. So I am glad the member opposite is using the excellent research of Doctor Dhaliwal.

I would point out that we have announced a new chemotherapy unit in Deloraine, Pinawa, Mr. Speaker. There is a new unit in Steinbach. The unit in Neepawa—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on a point of order.

Mr. Doer: Yes, on Tuesday I was interrupted seven times. I really believe it is important to have the ability to ask a question and answer a question in this Chamber. That should be the courtesy from all sides of this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order?

* (13:55)

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I just regret that the Premier has such a thin skin because he is one of the worst when it comes to interjecting. He should maybe learn by his own actions. I suggest that if he cannot handle the heat in this House maybe he should get somebody else to answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on the same point of order?

Mr. Murray: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that in this House leaders have latitude and that is something that we all respect in this Chamber. Having said that, from time to time, and I acknowledge that you doing your job cautioned the Premier once already this session about relevance to the question. All we are asking for is when we ask a question that the Premier at least try to give some relevance in the answer.

We understand that latitude is available, Mr. Speaker. That is an agreement we live with, but the fact that the Premier from time to time wanders through the process without even giving any relevance, and, again, I note that you have cautioned him once on that, I think that this Premier has no point of order and should understand what your ruling was to him.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House for many years and have been in this House at the table. I have been in this House on the benches on the opposition and the government side. I think it is worthwhile for us to reflect on a serious trend in decorum. I certainly have noticed that over the years, but, more importantly, I think just even in the last several weeks we have noticed a decline in decorum of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I think, first and foremost, that is of concern are the interruptions and the level of heckling, particularly during Oral Questions. In fact, I recall there was only one day and arguably two in this Chamber in Question Period since we have come back into session where actually the proceedings were civil. That was the day that Lindor Reynolds was in the press gallery and members opposite knew that she was writing a story on the actual issue of decorum.

We should not have Lindor Reynolds in this Chamber every day in order for us to give respect to this institution and the office that comes with our election here to represent constituents of Manitoba. See it is happening right now, Mr. Speaker. They do not have the courtesy to reflect and spend a moment, just to reflect on the value of this institution and how we ourselves, every one of us, 57 of us, are responsible for what takes place in here and what is seen by people in the gallery.

Mr. Speaker, I see it too often where the students come down and they will come to my office and they will be following it up with correspondence. I recently had a student from Champlain School write to me and she said, I was surprised to see that even adults can act like children. This is not good for the institution. I am not saying anything partisan here. I am saying this as one member, and, in fact, the House Leader. We have to all do a better job of respecting each other on all our questions and our answers.

I do not think that this House can bear the stigma, Mr. Speaker, of what has been happening over the last number of weeks. I ask that you apply the rules fairly and we will do our part. I think all members though, when they leave Question Period today, should all think seriously about what we are doing to our institution here. We should uphold it. We should uphold the dignity of this. Heckling has a

place, but it is gone way beyond what this place should bear. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not going to let this turn into a debate. I have already heard from the House leaders, I have heard from the initial member that rose on a point of order, I heard from the leader. I am not going to let this turn into a debate. I have heard enough and I will give you my ruling. I have heard enough to make a decision here and I will make my ruling.

On the point of order raised by the honourable First Minister, I want to take this opportunity to ask all members to reflect on the decorum in this Chamber. Each and every one of us in this Chamber, we have a responsibility to the public that elected and put us here. We have that responsibility and people that come here to view our Question Period and the people that are viewing from the televisions at home, they have a perfect right, just as every member in this Chamber has, to be able to hear the questions and the answers. It is incumbent on each and every one of us to fulfil our own responsibilities.

On the second issue of relevance, I want to make this very, very clear. When I made that ruling, I made it on the basis that when a question is asked per se about education, if I hear a question pertaining to health that does not tie into the question, then that is totally irrelevant. If the question is on education, and the member is responding to it in the field of education, I accept that as the answer, and I will tell you why. I would advise any member that wants to question that to make a reference to *Beauchesne* 416 which is a member may put a question but has no right to insist upon an answer. Then I will also advise members to go to *Monpetit* and *Marleau* on page 432 and you will read the Speaker has no authority to compel a particular minister to respond to a question.

I am not the judge. If the answer is what a member expects or if the answer is actually pertaining to the question, if the question is on health and the minister responds in health, I accept that as the answer. I have no other choice as the Speaker. So, I want to leave that with all the members, and I think this an opportune time for us to reflect on our own responsibilities, not of another individual's. If we hold that true, we should have no problem whatsoever with decorum in this House.

* (14:00)

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a new point of order?

Mr. Derkach: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a new point of order. I do not mind being lectured by the House Leader of the government, but one needs to look in the mirror. Too often we ask questions in this House, and either there is political stalling by the government who I know are uncomfortable by questions that are posed sometimes, but in the words of the Premier, he said, "Remember this is not answer period, this is Question Period." He has said that several times.

Mr. Speaker, that just shows the disdain that this Premier has for the procedures of this Chamber, and that is reflected in the answers that are given by his ministers. He is one who condones that and so if we are going to start to lecture each other on decorum in this House, let us begin right at the top. Let us begin at the Premier's level where he can instruct his ministers to ensure that there is some level of decorum when it comes to answering questions that are posed on behalf of Manitobans, on behalf of the citizens of our province.

Mr. Speaker, when he begins with that then I am sure that he will not have to pause in his answers because he, himself, is guilty of abusing that very fundamental rule. When he is asked the question by the Leader of the Opposition, you wonder sometimes whether he is on the same page that the rest of the province is on in his answers.

So, Mr. Speaker, we all have a responsibility in this Chamber not only to uphold decorum, but to ensure that we respect the rules of this Chamber and that we respect Manitobans so that, indeed, when questions are asked that there is some relevance to the question when the answer is given and to ensure that we respect some of those fundamental principles of democracy that we should be respectful of as all legislators. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Mr. Doer: On the same point of order, the question that was posed just to precipitate my point of order was on CancerCare, Doctor Dhaliwal and rural services. If you read Hansard, you will find that I was dealing with each of those issues.

It is not up to the opposition to decide whether they like the answer or not. In fact, seven times I was interrupted two days ago when the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) was in the Chamber asking the questions, and it was on a simple issue of an editorial that was written. Now they may not like the answers that I am giving. That is their right and ultimately it is the public's right to decide, but they were basically on the question posed. Doctor Dhaliwal, rural services, were all on point. To be interrupted continuously as what has happened two days ago, seven times, and that has just gone a way too far, Mr. Speaker, in my view. That is why I raise it.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think it would be a wonderful opportunity for us just to take a deep breath and just look at our own responsibilities. For information of the House, I had just informed the House the parameters I use when accepting a question, and whether a question is accepted or not it is entirely up to the Speaker. I want to remind all members of that.

So the honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Where were we? Okay, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, with his supplementary question.

Mr. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do want to ask the Premier a question. I find it interesting when he talks about being interrupted seven times. It is very clear on this side of the House the only reason that we do not complain about being interrupted is because we try to ask the questions and try to talk over what comes from the other side. He chooses to sit down and that may be his style.

Mr. Speaker, on November 25, 2004, the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) released a glossy news conference announcing the expansion of rural community cancer programs in Deloraine and Pinawa. The CEO of the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority stated, and I quote, "An approved cancer care program in Deloraine will provide residents of the southwestern quadrant of the region

with this very important service." Unfortunately for rural Manitobans, the status of the program is questionable since the doctor in Deloraine is leaving. Once again this government has released a glossy news release about an important new program without ensuring that they have done their homework that the program can actually take place.

I would like to ask this Premier very clearly what his plans are to ensure that the promises made by his Health Minister about Deloraine and Pinawa will follow through, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Yes, I believe the program that was announced will be open shortly in Pinawa. I know that the funding is in place for Deloraine and we have announced the funding for both programs.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, they can announce all sorts of funding and glossy programs but if there is no doctor to take care of people what are the people to do? Do what he is forcing them to do and drive long distances into Brandon or Winnipeg for treatment? He likes to quote Doctor Dhaliwal. Why does he not listen to what Doctor Dhaliwal said about having care closer to home? That is important to this question.

Mr. Speaker, the minutes of the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority board meeting from March 16, 2005, state that, and I quote, "given the recent announcement about a community cancer program for Deloraine that will make Deloraine a priority for physician recruitment." This is unbelievable. It was not until four months after this government's announcement of expanded cancer care programs to Deloraine that this NDP government actually recognized the need to make physician recruitment a priority. This Premier has bragged all week about sending cancer patients to the United States for treatment. If he cannot provide services in Neepawa, Russell and Deloraine, is he proposing to also send those patients to the United States?

Mr. Doer: As I stated in my first answer, the Neepawa chemotherapy program will be open shortly, I believe in four weeks, Mr. Speaker, and that will be very important for the people in that area. The situation in Pinawa is similar and the situation in Deloraine, the funding has been approved and obviously the doctor is an important issue.

Mr. Speaker, the recruitment of doctors was one of the areas that we promised in the '99 election that we would start reversing the erosion of the loss of doctors by having more spots in medical schools. We thought the more people, especially for Manitoba, that went to the Manitoba medical schools, we would have more students graduating in Manitoba. We would have a greater opportunity of having more students and graduates of medical school recruited, first of all, and retained in Manitoba.

Subsequent to increasing the medical school spots, we realized that we needed more incentives so we put in place a bursary program so that some of the debt that is incurred while students go to universities can have most of that debt forgiven in exchange for services in particularly rural Manitoba for the benefit of all citizens.

These are not perfect examples, Mr. Speaker. We have not got perfection in health care. We have more doctors today as opposed to less doctors. We have more students in medical school as opposed to reducing medical school. We have more incentives in bursary programs as opposed to the past where there were disincentives. All of those measures will increase the number of doctors. There are 50 more doctors in rural Manitoba, but we are the first to admit there is more work to do.

Health Care Services Private/Public Partnerships

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the Premier seems confused about his party's position on the use of private health care delivery to bring down wait lists in this province. He says one thing while in Toronto and quite the opposite when he returns home to Manitoba.

The way I see it, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has two choices. Number one, he can stand up before Manitobans and Canadians and tell the truth that he misled the editorial board of the *National Post* who wrote that the Premier, and I quote, "implied he endorsed the idea that provinces should look to private providers to improve service within a single-payer system." Or, No. 2, he can come clean, inform his colleague, the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) that he is, in fact, in favour of what we have been calling for for quite some time now, the introduction of private delivery of health care services in Manitoba to help reduce wait lists. Which is it?

* (14:10)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The bottom line is, Mr. Speaker, we have sent patients to the United States when the cancer care treatment waiting list was eight weeks long. We felt that was an important life-and-death procedure that had to be dealt with in the most expedient way. I just want to explain this because it was dealt that way because there was a shortage of radiologists. There was a shortage of radiologists because there had not been any training of radiologists.

Mr. Speaker, what we did when we sent patients to the United States, we also started investing in training of radiologists to retain them in Manitoba so we could reduce the waiting list from eight weeks to seven weeks to six weeks to five weeks to four weeks to three weeks to two weeks to one week.

We also today still have patients in the Western clinic, but we also have taken a private clinic that had clawbacks of public money, called the Pan Am Clinic, and had that clinic taken from a private, profit centre and put it in the public sector where we have increased a number of procedures. This is an example of a government that is trying to do the best job it can for patient care.

The biggest obstacle on patient care, Mr. Speaker, is the same example I gave this House on cancer care treatment. We want more hip and knee operations. We need more orthopedic surgeons. We need more anesthetists. Just like we dealt with more radiologists, we are also working with more orthopedic surgeons and more anesthetists in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I recognize that in an agreement that we have a great deal of latitude that is given to the Premier of the province in regard to answering questions. I can honestly say I have heard speeches that are shorter on debate on second reading than I do with answers from this Premier.

I am concerned that there is a very small amount of time to pose questions in Question Period. I think

that there is some responsibility that this Premier has to take in giving answers to this Legislature that they be reasonable. We are not saying he has to be within 50 seconds. I suspect if we were to time them today, as we would have the other day, that what we are finding is it is consuming far too much time for Question Period where Manitobans should have the ability to see opposition members pose question given the shortness of time. Either that or lengthen the time of Question Period.

Mr. Doer: On the same point of order, I think the member is right. It was a question I wanted to answer about the whole editorial, but I will try to keep my answers shorter.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. I thank the honourable First Minister for that. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Inkster, he does not have a point of order and I think the honourable First Minister has taken care of the matter.

* * *

Mrs. Stefanson: The Premier (Mr. Doer) cannot have it both ways. He was either misrepresented by the editorial board of the *National Post* or he was not. He is in favour of private delivery of health care services in this province or he is not. Now Manitobans are waiting. They want to know. They are waiting on wait lists in our province. They want to know the answer to this question, Mr. Speaker. Which is it?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, we still have a contract with Western Surgical Centre. That is a private for-profit clinic. The Medical Arts, the Winnipeg Clinic, the Manitoba Clinic are all private clinics. They all provide services to Manitobans and have for many years. We are not ideological about whether care is given in a private doctor's office, a clinic owned by a group of doctors, or a privately owned for-profit clinic.

The problem is that they have only one solution to every problem in Manitoba and it has something to do with Maples. It has to do with a blind, ideological notion that if we simply buy some time in one or two or three more operating rooms everything will get better. I just remind the member opposite of the old saying that to every complex problem there is usually a simple solution, and it is usually wrong.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is obviously not willing today to deny that he is in favour of private delivery of health care services in our province, and I will give him one more chance to answer this question. He either denies that fact, or do the right thing for the sake of seniors who are waiting in pain for hip and knee surgery and children who are waiting in pain for dental surgery to allow them to meet with the Maples Surgical Centre, to allow them to help these people who have been waiting in pain and need surgery. Will they do the right thing?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I tried to help the member understand that Maples is not a hospital. Maples cannot do hip surgery, cannot do knee replacement surgery and, in fact, Doctor Godley, who is the part owner of Maples has not offered to do either of those procedures. So, I wish that the member would, if she does not believe me, she would at least believe one of the people she seems to think will save our medicare system, Doctor Godley. He has never offered to do hip replacements. He has never offered to do knee replacements.

As for the question of dental surgery, the 600 additional procedures that we are going to do at Misericordia hospital and are in the process of doing were late in starting because of anesthetists. Doctor Godley is offering operating rooms, not anesthetists.

Identity Theft Protection Private Sector Employees

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, identity theft is one of the fastest-growing crimes in North America making protection of people's personal information of utmost importance, but here in Manitoba we have a gap in the legislation which does not protect the personal information of employees in the private sector, only in the public sector. The risks of identity theft are the same for everyone.

The issue was raised last spring in the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism's (Mr. Robinson) review of the legislation, and yet he has done nothing. Why is this government ignoring what the Manitoba Federation of Labour said? Why is he not willing to protect all Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, identity theft was the subject of a federal-provincial ministers of Consumer and Corporate

Affairs meeting in Winnipeg last January. At that time they released a kit for both personal individuals in the country on how to prevent identity theft and they also released a kit for businesses on how to prevent and protect against identity theft.

In Manitoba we have consumer protection legislation which limits an individual's liability to \$50 when a credit card is stolen. We have increased the fines under The Vital Statistics Act for anybody that misuses personal identification that is not theirs or uses a legitimate piece of identification for a purpose not intended on behalf of another person. We have taken several initiatives to control identity theft abuse in this province and we will take further initiatives in the future.

Mrs. Taillieu: The kit that the member is referring to protects the information of consumers, and it does not protect the information of employees in the private sector. Mr. Speaker, 900 000 Canadians last year were the victims of identity theft in Canada. Today's headline, there may be 20 000 people in our city here or in Manitoba that may fall victim to identity theft and yet this government did not even speak to a private member's bill today that would ensure the protection of personal information for all Manitobans.

Why is this government burying its head in the sand? Why is it not protecting the personal information of employees in the private sector?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the opportunity to address Bill 200. Bill 200 has a major omission in it. It has the absence of any complaint or review mechanism, and unless a bill introduced into this Legislature is substantially the same as the federal legislation which covers the jurisdiction it does not allow itself to substitute for that legislation. The absence of mechanisms for review in this bill, the absence for an oversight mechanism in this bill would result in having two pieces of legislation in the province applying to the same businesses. It would create confusion and no additional protection for employees or consumers. That is why we did not address the bill. It is defective.

Manitoba Tire Stewardship Board Funding

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is vitally important that we protect and

preserve our environment. There are many programs that have initiated over the course of time and one of the programs initiated by the Filmon government back in 1992 was to establish a \$3 per tire levy on new tires, and in April of 1995 it created the Manitoba Tire Stewardship Board.

Now this Tire Stewardship Board has been doing an exceptional job of controlling by recycling of used tires here in the province of Manitoba, but this very same board is facing imminent insolvency because of this government's cutbacks. I ask today of the Minister of Finance whether he will restore funding to the Tire Stewardship Board.

* (14:20)

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):

Mr. Speaker, I have met with the Tire Stewardship Board and I have spoken with them in terms of some of the challenges that this board faces. This side of the government is very supportive of measures that will keep tires from appearing in landfills, keep tires from appearing in ditches, prevent tires from entering our waterways and the places that we have been finding tires being left.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely important for the municipal authorities in our province to make sure that we all work together with the stewardship boards that we have in place to make sure that these problems are dealt with.

Mr. Faurschou: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if this government really grasped the importance of the question that I just asked. There are tens of thousands of tires all across Manitoba today collecting water, excellent breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Mosquitoes breed and cause West Nile virus because of their being a carrier.

Manitobans' health is in jeopardy because of this government's cutback of more than three-quarters of a million dollars to the Manitoba Tire Stewardship Board over the last five years. They need that money to go out and do the job that they were tasked with.

I ask this Finance Minister today will he restore the funding to the Manitoba Tire Stewardship Board. Thank you.

Mr. Struthers: Well, the Member for Portage has got it wrong, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Portage

is not correct. The Tire Stewardship Board put forward to me a business plan that did not adequately address the problems that it faced. I have been working with the Tire Stewardship Board to make sure that they make improvements to the business plan that they put forward. I have authorized officials from my department to meet with officials from the stewardship board again to make sure that they patch up the holes that are found in that business plan.

This is a very serious issue that does not require just the throwing of dollars towards this. Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that we solve this problem in a long-term way, not just the short-term way that the Member for Portage is suggesting here today.

**Impaired Driving Legislation
Vehicle Seizures**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, you will remember when the Minister of Justice said we are going to get tough on those repeat drunk drivers. In fact, he gave Manitobans the impression that we were going to get hundreds of vehicles being forfeited as a result of this tough new legislation that this government is going to bring in. I wonder if the Minister of Justice can tell this House how many vehicles have actually been forfeited with this new tough approach at those repeat drunk drivers.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to get a question on impaired driving. It is an issue of concern to Manitobans and certainly to members of this House and the government.

The member is actually raising questions about the forfeiture plan, Mr. Speaker. I note that, just in the last several weeks, I think, last month, MADD Canada released a report. It is entitled *Manitoba's Government is Leading the Way - thank you!* I just quote from that report. It says, "Manitoba has shone as the best example of a government that is serious about putting an end to the deaths and human carnage as a result of drinking and driving." It says it congratulates the government for leadership and courage in taking the tough stands that it has been taking to counter impaired driving. We are prepared to continue that leadership role. Just because we are rated highly among the provinces does not mean that we should rest on our laurels. We will continue to do what we have to.

Impaired Driving Protection of Passengers

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the minister avoids the actual answer. He knows full well we are only talking a fraction of the actual numbers which he projected. It is that whole puff image that this minister tries to portray of being tough.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to something else which I would like to quote the minister, he had indicated that several departments are also working to make it easier to report incidents where Child and Family Services agencies, in some cases, could result in children being taken away from parents. This is in regard to children that are in the vehicles of a drunk driver. He was going to get Family Services involved so that Family Services would be able to take away a child possibly.

I wonder, from the Minister of Family Services, if she can indicate whether or not, in fact, she has had communication regarding this issue from this minister.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, Mr. Speaker, I was very proud to stand with the Minister of Justice approximately a month ago to announce that we are continuing to work together for the safety of the children. Where there is an impaired driver found or the possibility of an impaired driver found, and there are children present in the car, certainly Child and Family Services will work with the justice system to make sure that those children do not remain in a car with an impaired driver, or possibly impaired driver, and that they are, in fact, taken to a place of safety.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am concerned in which we have a Minister of Justice who has tough talk, but, in fact, does not follow through. I want to come up with the suggestion to the Minister of Justice that hopefully he would see fit to amend his legislation and acknowledge that it is not only children that are vulnerable with drunk drivers, there are other vulnerable people in our province.

I would ask the minister would, in fact, he be open to changing his legislation so that it encompasses not only children but all vulnerable Manitobans that are in a vehicle in which a drunk driver is actually driving. Would he at least do that?

* (14:30)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I certainly look forward to any recommendations the member might have on the particular bill, but we have to deal with impaired driving from many fronts.

Mr. Speaker, to quote MADD Canada again, they say, "We urge other provinces to review and follow the comprehensive approach that Manitobans are taking in curbing impaired driving." We are going to do exactly that, but when the member gets up and says, "gee, I have an idea," the last time he got up and said, "I have an idea. Let us have a separate tip line for marijuana grow operation complaints." He says, "I do not want to hear about Crime Stoppers." I want the Chamber to know why. It is because Manitoba Crime Stoppers last year alone received 176 tips about grow ops resulting in grow ops being shut down with a value of \$13.5 million. Perhaps the member should more carefully consider his good ideas.

Smartpark Government Support

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, Smartpark is an innovative research centre located at the University of Manitoba in the constituency of St. Norbert. Smartpark is quickly developing into a centre of excellence that aids researchers in their goal of bringing new scientific medical and agricultural products to market.

Could the Deputy Premier please inform the House about future plans our government has to assist this facility to fulfil its goals?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for St. Norbert for that question. I want to indicate that I was very pleased this morning to be at the University of Manitoba, at Smartpark, to announce the municipal rural infrastructure funding for Smartpark. This government will be contributing \$1 million so that we can see improvements to sewer and water and road infrastructure at Technology Trail. This is along with support from the federal government, \$1 million, and the university investing.

Mr. Speaker, these kinds of initiatives are very important for the agriculture community. As I look at

that area that was once a field where there was research on agriculture products being done, we are now moving to the next level of research in technology that I believe will help our agricultural community.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

École Crane

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight a milestone that is being celebrated in Fort Garry today. That milestone is the 50th anniversary of École Crane, a French immersion school for kindergarten to Grade 4 students that is located in my constituency of Fort Garry.

Mr. Speaker, École Crane has provided a structured and nurturing learning environment for students in Fort Garry for the past 50 years. School teachers and support staff stress a strong curriculum that includes language training, mathematics, music, arts and sports education. The school also promotes parents to actively get involved in volunteering, mentoring and participating in the students' schooling.

École Crane's commitment to the community is noticeable by such recent events as its fundraising efforts for the tsunami victims in southeast Asia and its important organizations like UNICEF and Winnipeg Harvest.

The school currently has approximately 300 students and 30 teaching and support staff.

Anniversary events will include a school open house, friendly sessions between École Crane alumni and current students, the display of a time capsule which was found in the school's cornerstone and the performances of two musical songs in front of the entire school body that were written for the school's anniversary. Students have also been busy decorating ceiling tiles which will commemorate this special event.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Principal Michèle Manaigre and the 50th anniversary committee for their hard work at organizing and making this event a success. I also want to thank all teachers for helping

to support and ensure our children have a successful future. Lastly, I want to wish all past and present students of École Crane continued success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bears on Broadway

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, the snow has melted, it is spring, and we hope it is gone for good. Spring has arrived and 62 bears have emerged from their winter hibernation at Kapyong Barracks and taken up residence in the streets of downtown Winnipeg where they will remain until October's cold winds force them back to their dens.

The Bears on Broadway campaign marks the 75th anniversary of CancerCare Manitoba. Throughout the summer, Manitobans and visitors are encouraged to venture downtown to Broadway to view the life-size bears, all of which have been lovingly decorated by 51 talented artists.

This project has been a collaborative effort between CancerCare, the business community, artists and individual Manitobans. Thanks to all of their efforts and to everyone who has been involved in this project over \$400,000 will be raised by CancerCare.

By 2020, the number of Manitobans living with cancer is expected to double. This unique event is designed to raise awareness about simple steps that can significantly reduce the risk of developing cancer and to raise money for cancer research. I strongly encourage all Manitobans to take in this vibrant event and support this very worthwhile cause. When you visit the Bears on Broadway this summer, remember to protect your bare skin. You can reduce your cancer risk by up to 50 percent.

Congratulations to Doneta Brotchie, the project director, and everybody involved in the CancerCare and the Bears on Broadway campaign. Thank you.

Cecil Rhodes School

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Wellington wishes to highlight three national awards won by students from Cecil Rhodes School which is located in the constituency of Wellington.

On May 2, 2005, students from Cecil Rhodes won three awards from Panasonic Canada's national

video award competition which is part of Panasonic's Kid Witness News Program. This program provides video equipment to schools throughout North America to develop students' interests in video production.

Mr. Speaker, the first award was won in the communications category. The second award was won in the anti-racism category. The third award was won for production design. Students and teachers travelled to Toronto to receive these awards. This is the third time since 2003 that students from Cecil Rhodes School have won awards from this program.

Mr. Speaker, the videos created are very innovative. The first video shows the value of communication technologies. It features a small girl moving away from Cecil Rhodes School. She kept in touch with her friends through Internet technologies and a cell phone. The second video shows students giving an anti-racism speech through different languages including English, Tagalog, Ojibway, Cantonese and American Sign Language. The films' production involved approximately 25 Grade 5 students and Grade 7 students.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the teachers, Andrea Powell and Keith Strachan, for working with students to produce these videos. I also congratulate all students that worked on both videos. Lastly, I thank all school staff for promoting innovative education. I wish all students good fortune in the future. Thank you.

Pastor John Neufeld

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a member in our community who was honoured last night in Steinbach. I was pleased to join, along with my wife Kim, our member of Parliament, Vic Toews, and the mayor of the city of Steinbach, Mayor Les Magnusson, to honour Pastor John Neufeld and his wife and for the 23 years of service that they provided to the Christian Fellowship Church.

Pastor Neufeld and his wife have decided to move on to other challenges within their lives. It was a good evening for members of that congregation to come together and express their thanks for the 23 years of service that John gave to those individuals and Anne as well. There were very moving comments made by people in the area about

people who have had premarital counselling from John and Anne and who have had counselling regarding family issues.

Certainly, we want to thank John and Anne for the contribution they made to our community over the last 23 years, also to their daughter Christal and their son Jeremy for the sacrifices that they have made as well within the community as both of them have gone about their important work at the Christian Fellowship Church in Steinbach.

After 23 years, we know that there are other initiatives and endeavours that they are looking to do within the community, within our province, and perhaps within our country, but we do want to wish them well with whatever challenge they take. I want to extend my thanks along with all members of the Steinbach community and the Steinbach constituency for the contribution that they have made to our community and wish them both well in their future endeavours as they go forward. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

*(14:40)

German-Canadian Congress

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the German-Canadian Congress will celebrate the 20th anniversary of their founding. I look forward to celebrating this occasion with other German-Canadian Congress members at a dinner and dance gala at Fort Garry Place.

German Canadians have a long history in our province. Many of the early agricultural settlers in Manitoba were German who came to our province with nothing except a desire to build a new life. Today German Canadians make vital contributions to many aspects of our society and are an integral part of our business and professional communities.

In Manitoba, we have a tradition of sharing our cultural roots with one another. The German-Canadian Congress has helped enrich the diverse identity of our province by promoting German culture within the scope of Canadian multiculturalism. The German culture itself is very diverse as Germans come from many parts of the world. Thanks to the selfless efforts of concerned parents and other members of the German community, these groups have been brought together to celebrate their commonality.

The success of the German-Canadian Congress in the German community in Manitoba is a testament to what a wonderful nation Canada is. In Canada we embrace immigrants with open arms while also allowing them to maintain their ethnic traditions. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the German-Canadian Congress for their accomplishments and I wish them continued success in the future.

I would like to thank all volunteers from the German community who have donated time and energy over the years. In particular, I would like to thank the Manitoba Parents for German Education which played an instrumental role in the founding of the German-Canadian Congress. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call debate on second readings until you interrupt the House, if you would, at four o'clock for concurrence? Debate on second readings, Bills 25, 17, 42, 43, 20, 24, 30 and 29. That will be followed by concurrence in the House, so would you please call Supply at that time?

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 25—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We will resume debate on second reading of Bill 25, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), who has 16 minutes remaining, and also standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

What is the will of the House, for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain? Stand?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, stand, and then standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina, who has 16 minutes remaining.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I have had opportunity to speak to the bill, but I do want to just put a few concluding remarks on record.

First of all, I want to congratulate the Member for Turtle Mountain, my colleague here, for having introduced Bill 209, The Firefighters Compensation Act. This is certainly something that would help to expedite the bill, but also would separate, as we see, the importance of this little bill. So I want to thank him for the work that he went to in separating the bill, Bill 25, and then we can deal with the rest of the bill. I believe that this is what the minister should have done right at the outset and have them in a separate area.

Again, as I indicated last time, in speaking to the firefighters back in my area, and I want to recognize the work, the head of the department, Garry Klassen, for the work that he does. He is the chief of the fire department, and so he does an excellent job there; Andy, as well, from Morden, Andy Thiessen.

So just with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap it up but, again, I want to thank the Member for Turtle Mountain for the work that he did in bringing forward Bill 209. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to put a few words on in regard to Bill 25 that is before the House right now, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act. I would just like to comment that the bill is the result of a fair amount of work that was put forth by a committee of Mr. Wally Fox-Decent, Chris Lorenc, Susan Rogers and Pete Walker in public hearings across the province of Manitoba last year.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

There were a fair amount of submissions brought forth and, from what I understand, there was a fair amount of discussion. Almost 100 unanimous decisions were brought forth to the minister for the review of The Workers Compensation Act. My understanding is that they were unanimous resolutions and recommendations received by the minister, that 22 of the 100 were developed and directed by the board of directors, and they would hope that these come into being.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that there is exception to is the fact that the new legislation states that there will be full coverage to all industries, unless they are excluded by the Premier (Mr. Doer) and Cabinet. I guess that is a bit troubling because

that is where it always becomes a very political intervention. Political decisions are made because of the government of the day, and whatever government is in power then has the ability to make those decisions.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it is fundamentally wrong in a sense because you have a workers compensation bill or a workmen's compensation environment that is set up with contributions by workers for the protection of their employees. I think that it is worthy, it is commendable and it is something that I am certainly not speaking against in any way, but I think that the ability for decision making should be within the board that is comprised of the people that sit on the compensation board, because there is a mixture of not only the workers but the employers, and there is a sense that the fair play can be addressed in that manner.

If it is left up to government Cabinet and government Cabinet ministers to make that decision, Mr. Speaker, it takes it out of the realm of accountability. The accountability can only be rectified possibly by a change in government and a change in Cabinet, and then it goes through the whole process again of getting certain industries either covered or not covered. So I find that a bit troubling that the government would go down that path of wanting to have total control of who gets coverage and what the amounts are in that.

I think that is totally against any other jurisdiction that I am aware of that is in vogue right now. It bothers me to an extent that, you know, this is the heavy hand of government moving into a lot of the areas where I think that reasonableness and the fact that the board itself has worked very efficiently, the amount of coverage and the premiums have gone down in relationship to when we were in government, when we first took over the Workers Compensation Board—or I should not say "took over," but when it was under our purview the rates were very, very high. Because of the efficiencies of working together between labour and management, the workers' and the employers' rates went down. The competitiveness of doing business here in Manitoba was enhanced. I think, to a degree, that is something that we have to recognize, help in the growth of the economy here in Manitoba.

What can happen now is with the interpretations of this, the way this government is interpreting it, it

opens up the possibility of a suspicion or suspect when decisions are made around the Cabinet as to who is covered and who is not covered in regard to Workers Compensation. The law then becomes on a political venue instead of on a common-sense approach as to what is best for the workers. I think that is very important, Mr. Speaker, that the relative safety and the relative security of workers in the workplace is paramount.

I believe there is a strong responsibility there for the Workers Compensation Board to be diligent. They have the ability, because of their expertise and their background, to make those types of decisions. When it is taken out of that realm and put around the Cabinet table, I think that it opens up too much suspect interpretation and the fact that the government then becomes the regulator and the decision maker. It takes it away from the people that are affected. So I have concerns about that.

* (14:50)

There are millions of dollars that go into the workers compensation insurance act, insurance if you want to call it insurance, Mr. Speaker. I think that it has been wisely handled, and it has been wisely looked after. It will be interesting to see how this unfolds over the next few years as to the interpretations that come out of the Cabinet room as to who is and who is not on the list. It will be just like a meat market. You go there and you sell your case. Then, if you do a strong enough case, why then you are included or you are excluded from the list of coverage. So it is something that we would be very concerned about.

The extension to the firefighters, no problem. That is a great initiative. There is the ability for the recognition for what the firefighters have been lobbying for. I feel that is part of The Workers Compensation Act that has been included.

With those short words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will let other members put their words on the record regarding Bill 25.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has already been standing in the member from Turtle Mountain's name, so it will continue to stand in that name.

An Honourable Member: In Turtle Mountain?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Turtle Mountain.

**Bill 17—The Regional Health Authorities
Amendment and Manitoba Evidence
Amendment Act**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The next bill that we shall consider is Bill 17, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment and Manitoba Evidence Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les offices régionaux de la santé et la Loi sur la preuve au Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan).

Is it to remain standing there or not?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is denied. Leave is denied.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 17 today.

We do agree with the intent of this bill. However, we do believe that there are a couple of components that could be added to the bill to strengthen the bill, things that are used in other provinces that we believe would be beneficial here as well.

First of all, this bill talks about critical incidences. A critical incident is defined in this bill as an event that was not expected or desired while caring for a patient, such as the wrong medication being administered, et cetera. This is essentially whistle-blower legislation and is a direct result of the pediatric heart surgery inquest that investigated how 12 babies died as a result of heart surgery in Winnipeg a number of years ago.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The inquest found that there is a culture of fear among health care workers that admitting a mistake will result in a law suit or disciplinary proceedings and improving the way critical incidents are handled and investigated was recommended by Associate Chief Judge Murray Sinclair and the pediatric cardiac surgery inquest in 2000 and echoed by the National Steering Committee on Patient Safety. We believe that it is important to provide incentives, or certainly do not hinder the ability for people to come

forward when mistakes are made. So we believe that aspect to this bill is very important.

In terms of the content of the bill, this legislation will encourage health care workers to open up about mistakes and will require hospitals to inform patients about these medical errors, which is great for the patients and certainly their families as well. Investigations will be carried out by critical incident review committees. Health care workers will be protected from being disciplined for coming forward with information about a critical incident or for participating on a critical incident review committee.

The bill requires that any facts uncovered during the investigation be reported to the patient or their family with no cost to them. This legislation also recognizes that many medical errors and mistakes are the result of flaws in the system, rather than the actions of individual health care workers. Mistakes that are the result of an individual will still result in that person being disciplined.

Saskatchewan was the first province in Canada to introduce formal reporting of critical incidences, I believe back in September of last year when it became effective. Saskatchewan's regulations establish a framework for critical incident reporting to Saskatchewan Health by RHAs and health care organizations. When a critical incident occurs in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the region notifies Saskatchewan Health, reviews the incident and makes recommendations to improve the system and potentially prevent similar occurrences happening in other areas of the province. Whenever the recommendations are made during a critical incident review that may apply elsewhere, Saskatchewan Health is required to send an alert to all of those regions. We believe that some sort of an amendment to this bill reflecting what is taking place in Saskatchewan would be beneficial for all patients and their families in Manitoba as well.

Another thing that they do in Saskatchewan is the data on the number and the type of incidents recorded is compiled and shared with RHAs and the public in Saskatchewan, and we believe that this should also be required in Manitoba. I think the public should have the right to know what is taking place in Manitoba with respect to critical incidences. Again, this is happening in Saskatchewan, and I believe that these types of changes to the bill would actually strengthen the bill. So we are going to look

to perhaps introducing some amendments later in that regard.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we agree with the intent of this bill. However, we believe it can be strengthened in certain areas, and we do plan to address those issues later, but certainly at this point we are prepared to listen to the people and to see what they have to say with respect to this bill. So we are prepared at this time to pass this bill on to committee. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I do want to put a few words on the record prior to the bill's passage to committee. Unfortunately, accidents do occur in health care institutions, whether it is hospitals or personal care homes and where we even have trained professionals. That is why they are called accidents. It is not intended to occur. We cannot necessarily prevent an accident from occurring, but what we can do is learn by accidents and, hopefully, take some sort of preventive actions in the future in order to minimize the numbers of accidents or incidences that do occur.

My understanding of the bill, as the previous speaker had indicated, is that, in essence, it allows for the establishment of committees to look into a critical incident that may occur where some sort of accident had taken place while that individual that is the recipient of the accident obviously was in care. It is something which we think is important for a number of reasons. Not only is it the right thing to do for the patient or the individual in question that, as I say, is the recipient of the misfortune, but it also is beneficial for that higher sense of professionalism. The legislation does alleviate the concerns that many have from within that industry in terms of, as has been pointed out, you recognize what has taken place but are somewhat reluctant to bring it forward because of legal ramifications and so forth.

So, with those few words, we think it is, in principle, a good bill that should go to committee, and we will wait to see if there are any comments on it in the committee stage from the public. Thank you.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 17, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment.

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

* (15:00)

**Bill 42—The Health Services Insurance
Amendment and Prescription Drugs Cost
Assistance Amendment Act**

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move on to Bill 42, The Health Services Insurance Amendment and Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan).

What is the will of the House? Stand?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: No? It has been denied? It has been denied.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 42. Again, we do agree with the principle of this bill, and we will be moving this on to committee today.

I would just like to say a few words. This bill would amend the act to specifically set out the authority of the Patient Utilization Review Committee to obtain necessary information it requires to carry out its mandate. The mandate of the Patient Utilization Review Committee, as I understand, Mr. Speaker, is to identify those patients who are possible abusers of our health care system, those who frequent our clinics and so on. We need to find out who those people are, and we believe it is prudent to identify who those people are and just see who they are in the system so we can do something about that. Certainly, this bill allows for the Patient Utilization Review Committee to obtain that necessary information. So we believe that is important.

The bill also allows regulatory provisions which will facilitate effective and reasoned decision making respecting the coverage for the costs of new and advancing technologies. It also talks about the powers of inspectors and makes them consistent under The Health Services Insurance Act to reflect those in relation to basically make them the same as those that are reflected in and are required for

personal care homes, Mr. Speaker. These things are things like allowing for the use of data processing machines as well as photocopiers within these institutions to allow the inspectors the use of those facilities to keep records on-site so they are not taking records off-site. We believe that is better for patient security as well, security of their records. So we believe that is important.

The bill also makes the inspection powers provided under The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Act consistent with the proposed amendments in this bill to the inspection powers under The Health Services Insurance Act. Again, it is just a bit of clean up and making everything consistent in those areas, Mr. Speaker, so we do not have much of a problem with that.

In reflecting recent changes in the law allowing nurse practitioners to prescribe drugs in certain circumstances, the act also recognizes the prescribing authority of extended practice, our registered nurses in our province, something that we believe is very important. We are very happy with the fact that there are nurse practitioners in our province right now, very proud of the work that they do, and this enables them to do their job even better. We believe that is an important component.

So, essentially, we agree with the bill in principle and are prepared at this point to pass it on to committee to hear from members of the public or from various stakeholders in the community who are affected by this bill to see what kind of comments they have with respect to the bill. We are prepared to pass this on to committee at this time. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 42, The Health Services Insurance Amendment and Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act.

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

Bill 43—The Regulated Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move on to Bill 43, The Regulated Health Professions Statutes Amendment

Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

What is the will of the House? Stand?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. It has been denied.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I am pleased to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 43. This act will allow regulatory bodies to waive the registration requirements of health care providers coming into the province to assist in the event of a public health emergency. I know they have done this in Ontario with respect to in the specific case of SARS.

In the event, and I certainly hope this does not happen and that we do not have epidemics of things such as SARS in our province, but, in the event that it does happen, this legislation will allow us to bring in nurses, doctors and other health care professionals from other areas of Canada as well as the United States, without having to go through the somewhat cumbersome process of registering them in our province and allowing them to come in and do the things that they were trained to do, that is, to help the people of our province.

So, certainly, in that regard, Mr. Speaker, we are in favour of the intent of the bill. We are looking forward to hearing from various stakeholders who are affected by the bill, as well as those in the community all around Manitoba to see what they have to say about this bill. So we will be passing this on to committee.

We do have some questions that I probably will pose at committee just to get some clarification on the bill, but certainly at this point we are prepared to pass this on to committee. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, just want to put a few words on the record prior to its passage.

The need for public health emergency situations at times can arise. We hear more and more about this potential, for example, of a flu epidemic that could cause serious problems. We saw the impact that SARS has had on many communities, in particular here in Canada in the province of Ontario. There is always the possibility. We see this legislation as a

bill that, in essence, will address in good part the need to be able to have the level of expertise so that the province would be in a better position to be able to handle any sort of emergency situation in the future regarding public health and general well-being.

There are some concerns that we do have in regard to the issue of privacy of information that is, in fact, gathered and how it might be dispersed, ultimately, Mr. Speaker. Having said that, as I indicated, it is a bill in principle that can be supported, and we have no problem in terms of it going to committee at this time. Thank you.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question for the House is Bill 43, The Regulated Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act.

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

Bill 20—The Life Leases Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move on to Bill 20, The Life Leases Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan).

What is the will of the House? Stand?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: It has been denied.

Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, we do have some comments that we would like to make on this bill. As we go through these bills, we find that sometimes we need to put some comments on the record which will at least caution government in terms of some of the things they may have left out of legislation. In this case, with The Life Leases Amendment Act, there is an issue here as it relates to where government has missed on some of the commitments that I think should have been made to the people who have life leases.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the minister has moved a small way in addressing some of the issues as they relate to life leases, but there are

still some shortcomings as they relate to this bill. I think that government should be conscious of the fact that those people who enter into life leases for their houses, for their future homes, what they do is they usually sell their holdings, and then the monies that are received from the sale of those houses they put toward a life lease.

* (15:10)

Mr. Speaker, that usually is money that you could consider as life savings that goes into the purchase of a life lease. When, in fact, that life lease is over, some of those people have difficulty accessing those dollars. When that life lease is done, if that couple decides to move on to different accommodation or, in fact, if there is a death in the family and the life lease has to be stopped, what experiences have occurred across the province, as I understand it, are there have been difficulties in accessing those monies on a timely basis. That becomes a burden, a financial burden on those people, and, oftentimes, money is tied up for months on end. Yet that money is required because the people who have these life leases are usually on fixed incomes. They do not have a lot of access to a lot of other dollars, so these are important dollars. Sometimes I am understanding that it is as much as 90 days and even six months for those monies to be freed up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that is something that needs to be addressed in this legislation more appropriately. I am sure that we will be hearing far more about this issue when this bill goes before committee. I am hoping that some of the people who have been involved in these kinds of circumstances will, in fact, come forward and let the government know and let us as legislators know where there might be some shortcomings.

I am hoping that the minister who is sponsoring this bill is going to be able to perhaps be open to an amendment or two, or be able to come forward perhaps with an amendment to ensure that we do not have to redo this legislation a year from now and bring amendments in just because there has been some short-sightedness on the part of government.

Mr. Speaker, life leases are becoming more and more important as we look across the spectra of the province. You find that communities as small as mine which have 2000 people or less are indeed

entering into, or people there are looking at life leases as an option for their accommodations. Usually, that is done in their later years, people who are sort of the middle-year retirement people who are, yes, people our age, for that matter, are looking at life leases, because it provides more flexibility in a person's life as well. That has become a modern way of people to find very good accommodation, but there are indeed some difficulties with it.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to just end my comments there. Hopefully, we are going to find that the government is going to be somewhat flexible in its approach here and will be open to an amendment or two when we hear the people come before this bill in committee.

So, with those comments, I will conclude my remarks.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I did want to again, put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 20. I think we should be very clear to indicate that there are many different forms of housing that are made available for people and life leasing is something that is fairly recent in comparison, obviously, to what has been happening over the last number of years in areas such as co-op housing and so forth.

I do believe that the future for life leases is very positive, and, as such, I think that there is a responsibility for us to ensure that there are certain things that are done in order to protect those monies that are invested, issues such as the member from Russell has pointed out, to a vested interest that you have as a resident in a complex that happens to be under the life lease type of a program.

Mr. Speaker, there are many different forms of life leasing in terms of where a life lease can actually apply. But, generally speaking, what I have seen is organizations in most part have been very successful in attracting, in particular, individuals that want to be able to have some sort of a sense of what income they are going to have to be able to have in their retiring years in order to cover the cost of rent. What I like about the life lease is that it does not operate on the same basis of profit unlike, let us say, a private sector apartment complex.

Where you have a life lease situation, you are looking at individuals who will look at it and say,

well, here is how much it is that I can invest and, as a result of investing that, they are looking at a certain dollar in terms of rent payments which would be considerably less, in all likelihood, than they would pay in the private market setting renting from, let us say, a shelter corp, or a company of this nature. So I do think it is a viable housing alternative.

The bill that we see, I will just point out a few parts to it, Mr. Speaker. I think in most part, in principle, it is good to see it go to committee because there are some very strong positives. I suspect that there is some interest possibly to see some modifications to the legislation, but generally speaking there are some things such as the audited financial statement, you know, I used to live in a condominium, and as a condo owner there are certain things that you are, in essence, guaranteed. In a life lease situation, I would have thought the expectation would have been that you would have been entitled to have the audited financial statement. My understanding of this legislation is that it deals with that in terms of legislatively, which is a positive thing.

It also deals in terms of representation, Mr. Speaker. Again, from a condo owner's perspective, you have to have the owners involved in things such as their annual general meetings and their boards and so forth. No one would question that. Again, what is nice is it would appear as if through the legislation what we are doing is we are saying that individual residents in the life lease situations do have a vested interest, and they too should have representation in a very tangible way at annual general meetings. I see that as a positive thing.

There are some areas in which, you know, I do have some concern in regard to areas such as rent increases and how rent increases are in fact put into place. In the private sector, we have the Rentalsman's office, as an example, setting through rent control certain percentages that you are able to increase. If you want more, there is a certain process that you have to go through. There has been a bit of a question mark in regard to the life lease and how rent increases should be passed on.

I understand once again this is an attempt to be able to deal with it in the sense that I understand that they will be eligible for—or not eligible. They could be subjected to a second rent increase in any given year. That is why I say, you know, there are some

positives. There are some areas in which we do have some concerns, but all in all, it is a bill in which in principle we could see going to committee in anticipation that there could be some possible changes recommended from presenters or even possibly from us or other members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, I understand that there is a will to see the bill go on to committee, and I will leave my comments at that. Thank you.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to put a few words in the record in regard to Bill 20, The Life Leases Amendment Act. Of course, it is the intent of the bill to provide for increased communication between tenants and property landlords, as well as providing for earlier refunds of entrance fees when people move. That has been very clear in the preamble of the bill.

I want to just say that there are a few areas that we see in regard to concerns that I might have with this type of a bill, Mr. Speaker. While life leases are becoming a much more common form of housing than what we have had in the past, they are used in many circumstances by many modes of people today, but of course age is a factor in regard to a life lease. In most cases, they are only eligible to those who are 55 years of age and over. This does not necessarily mean that it is for the full life of the individual. It can be for a specified term as well.

* (15:20)

I want to go to committee, Mr. Speaker, and I would recommend that we move this bill through second reading, get it into committee so that we can hear from individuals across the province in regard to what their views are on whether they feel that it should be for the life of the tenant or a specific term. I would particularly look at leaving that open to an individual because of course they can make that decision. I think there would have to be a minimum term in that.

There are some of these issues that I think it is very important to hear from the citizens of Manitoba on before we pass this bill into law in the province. Mr. Speaker, a bill like this would make Manitoba one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to have life lease legislation and I think that is why it is so important to make sure that so many of the seniors,

the citizens of Manitoba, in fact, all groups dealing with accommodation in this province have the opportunity to make presentations at the second reading or at committee on this bill. It is important that we take into consideration as many of the pertinent issues as might be necessary in order to provide, I guess if you will, a priority for this type of legislation to be followed across the country of Canada.

The proposed changes give life lease tenants more involvement in the administration of non-profit complexes by allowing them under section 18(1) up to two representatives to attend landlords' board meetings. I think it is imperative that these types of meetings be open and I am surprised that they were not already. There might have been some infringement by not allowing at least two persons to go to a board meeting on this type of a process. The only way that a good program of this kind of accommodation can work, well, I believe, is if there is co-operation amongst all of the persons involved in such a facility.

The legislation will also require an owner representative to attend the annual tenant meeting to help strengthen the communication between those two groups, and I think that is a plus. There is a concern that I thought would have been there in regard to around entrance fees and a number of those areas. In regard to the entrance fees, to cover damages, rents and arrears, I know that this bill is set up to prohibit the landlords from making such deductions unless awarded by a final order of the director of the Residential Tenancies, which, of course, Residential Tenancies would have the right to be able to, just to make sure I guess, I just wanted to check this in regard to the award by Residential Tenancies. As I was going to say, the Residential Tenancies certainly has the authority, of course, to resolve these kinds of disputes.

I know when I was younger and you were renting apartments and looking at the opportunities that were there, Mr. Speaker, I do know that the circumstances around such issues required that an entrance fee be put up front, that those damages, it was another term for a deposit, I guess, in that regard. If there were any damages or cleaning that needed to be required that was not done when the individuals vacated the premises or were finished in this case at the end of their life or the specific term, then, of course, those funds were returned.

Within the circumstances like this where you have to wait for the Residential Tenancies to declare whether they can get that back, it may be a concern, I guess, for landlords in those kinds of circumstances, although I think that they are very well protected under the type of legislation that would be there under section 24.3(1).

To allow a second rent increase within a year to cover revenue shortfalls, subject to review by the Residential Tenancies Branch, as well, is something that I was a bit surprised to see. Whether inflation could run that rampant, or what the reasons are for that kind of a clause to be put in this kind of a bill, I know you can always have the power of adjustment, but surely an issue of once a year would be enough to make these kinds of rental increases. I would be open to hearing what the citizens have when we come to make their wishes known at second reading in this type of a bill as well.

In order for landlords to refund entrance fees at the end of that three-month term and, of course, in a bill like this it does require three months' notice which is somewhat longer than the regular rental leases, Mr. Speaker, it requires that you give a three-month notice to terminate their tenancies, and then it requires that landlords refund those entrance fees, providing the funds are available in the refund fund. I think that is a concern to those who are making their entrance fees up front and in this type of action, because the act currently gives up to six months from the date notice of termination is given. I do not have so much a concern with the shortening of these fees, but what is the tenant to do in the case where there is no longer funds in the refund package?

So I raise a couple of these issues in regard to this bill. I would recommend that we move it along to second reading. I think it is important that we move it through second reading, get it into committee, so that we can hear the concerns on this bill, and with that, Mr. Speaker, I will end my comments and pass the time to others who may wish to speak on this bill. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 20, The Life Leases Amendment Act.

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

**Bill 24-The Consumer Protection Amendment Act
(Cost of Credit Disclosure and Miscellaneous
Amendments)**

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move on to Bill 24, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Cost of Credit Disclosure and Miscellaneous Amendments), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan).

What is the will of the House? Stand?

Some Honourable Members: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand. Okay. It will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Carman.

The honourable Member for Fort Whyte, to speak.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to spend some time on this Bill 24, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, and just in starting out I do not really have a particular problem in the principles behind this bill. It certainly sets out some more in-depth regulatory requirements and the higher standards to be met, certainly, on behalf of the companies and institutions out there that are in the business of advancing money to individuals and to consumers across this province.

It puts some more teeth in federal legislation in terms of dealing with some of the issues that we have seen arise in the innovations that have taken place in the financial services industry that have arisen out of a need to fill in some of the holes that have been left due to the fact that the banking industry has been contracting, particularly in lower socio-economic neighbourhoods. The results of that retraction of the banking industry has meant that many consumers and many individuals out there are left with fewer and fewer options in terms of where they can go to for financing, and we have certainly seen a large increase in the so-called payday loan business. While I agree to a certain extent that, as with the growth of any new business, as legislators we need to look at how those industries and those businesses practices need to be controlled for the betterment of consumers all across our province. So, on that basis,

I believe, most of the issues that the minister has attempted to address within this bill are certainly ones that in principle I can agree with.

* (15:30)

What I do disagree with quite strongly are the principles of this NDP government, particularly in regard to the hypocrisy of the statements made surrounding Bill 24, and particularly those statements made publicly and outside of this House by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). I refer particularly to comments made by him with regard to the payday loan companies and how they are somehow taking advantage of people on the lower end, I guess, of the income levels, and how he is going to rise to their saving and, you know, be a champion for all of those people.

I think if we look back we would see that the growth of this type of industry, it mirrors two, I think, very significant occurrences within society in general. One, as I mentioned, is the retraction we have seen within the banking industry and the decrease in the services that the traditional lenders have provided in these types of neighbourhoods. But even a bigger factor in terms of the growth of these loan companies has been the government's, and particularly this NDP government's continued and ever increasing reliance on gambling and VLTs as a form of taxation for the people of Manitoba.

We have seen on many, many occasions how this Finance Minister and this government have looked at gaming, gambling and in particular, has looked at VLTs, not in terms of the socio-economic damage that it causes within our province, but in terms of a cash cow. That really seems to be all this government is interested in and all this Finance Minister is interested in is how much money they can take out of the hands of everyday Manitobans. The most regressive tax that we have in this province in terms of consumers and in terms of individuals is the gambling tax, something that this government is becoming more and more and more reliant upon.

First of all, and I will just give you a few examples, we saw this government stand up and say, "Well, we are going to open the beverage rooms and the bars in the hotels on Sundays." So they did that, and they extended the hours. Sure enough, as we predicted on this side of the House, within a year we saw that they also said, "Well, it does not make any

sense to have the bars open unless we have the VLTs running." So they extended the VLT hours to mirror the hours that the bars were open and to mirror the Sunday openings.

What was the reasoning behind that? Was it for the betterment of Manitoba? No, it was so they could get more cash, plain and simple. It was so they could prey on the weakest in our society and get more cash out of their pockets. Then what did we see from this government? We saw that when that did not seem to work to their satisfaction, when as the result of another move, and a good move for this province, I believe, that was initiated by members on this side of the House, and that is the ban on smoking in public places, they started to see their VLT revenue dwindle.

Lo and behold, we saw what we have seen from this government since 1999 when they first came into office. They could not resist the need or the demand for more and more cash from the people of Manitoba. One of the easiest ways they could see of getting it was to, once again, increase their dependence, the government's dependence, on VLT revenues.

So they went out and they spent \$75 million, \$75 million not of their money supposedly, but of money that they forced the lotteries commission to go and borrow \$75 million to buy new VLTs which, at the time, the member from Brandon West, you know, stood up in this House on a number of occasions and said, "Well, you know, they are going to be newer and they are going to provide more features that will limit gambling and restrict addictions and they will be the latest technology," all under the guise that we are going to help those people out there who are addicted and who are spending too much of their income on gambling.

But what did we see instead? We see the gambling revenues of the provincial government increase from what would have been in the neighbourhood of probably 125 or 135 million. This year will quite likely be closer to 160 million.

So at the same time that this Finance Minister stands up in this House and gives the old public relations speech that he is going to stand up for the little people in Manitoba, and he is going to get out there and crack down on these payday loan companies that may be charging an interest rate that

he thinks is too high—that is what he says at the front door—out the back door, he and his other Cabinet members come sneaking out the back door and say, "What we are really going to do is we are going to take another \$20 million or \$30 million out of the pockets of Manitobans by increasing the technology around VLTs, by putting faster machines in, by getting more people addicted, by taking a greater percentage of their income."

That is the type of duplicity we have seen from this government from day one. They stand up publicly and try to pretend that they have some moral conscience and some moral fibre to stand up for everyday Manitobans. In the meantime, through the back door, they are doing everything possible to pick their pockets.

This is an issue that this government needs to take very, very seriously, and every member of Cabinet, quite frankly, needs to be taking this issue seriously. They should stand up and admit that they are ashamed of what their government has done. This is the same Cabinet, the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) and the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford), who had the brilliant idea that Manitobans would be better off with keno in Laundromats. I mean this is a party, this is a government that is supposed to care for people, and yet they are the most cold-hearted individuals that one could ever run across. In their actions, they care nothing about people in Manitoba who are addicted to gambling or addicted to VLTs, whose lives are at risk.

The former Minister of Health would not even conduct a study that was recommended by coroners across Canada while he was the Minister of Health, the member from Kildonan, would not even stand up and have his department conduct a study in terms of the relationship between suicides and gambling. As we have seen from studies that have been undertaken in many provinces across Canada, particularly in the Maritimes and Ontario, those statistics and those numbers are simply appalling, more and more Canadians and more and more Manitobans. I would remind them today that Manitoba has the highest addiction rate in all of Canada, the highest addiction rate to gambling and VLTs in all of Canada, which, when translated, the obvious out of the studies that have been done indicates that that would also mean that Manitoba has the highest rate of suicide that is related to gambling of all of Canada.

Yet this Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has the gall, and his Cabinet colleagues have the gall, to stand up behind him and say, "Yeah, you know, we are going to crack down on that payday loan industry. We are going to make sure that, you know, they don't rip anybody off. We're going to make sure that they aren't able to roll over loans." These are things, these are steps that, as I said in my opening comments, I do not disagree with them, but I think it would be important in this case for the government to follow its words with actions, something that is foreign I think to members opposite.

When in opposition, this is the same party that brought in a private member's bill demanding studies be done on the socio-economic effects of gaming and VLTs, and yet when in power, when in government when the very same bill is presented to them, they will not even speak to it. They will not even allow it to get into second reading. They do everything in their power to block it. This is in spite of the fact that they have been the recipients of more than \$1.5 billion of increased revenue from federal transfer payments over the course of five years.

They say, whenever anyone mentions, "Well, we should cut down on the VLTs." "Oh, we can't afford it. You know, we can't afford the money. We'd have to cut back services." Well, certainly, in a budget of a \$1.5-billion increase, they could have found a way to reduce their dependence on gambling to the tune of \$125 million or \$130 million. Less than 10 percent of the increase in money that is flowing from the fed—and that is just the money that flows from the federal government. It is less than 10 percent of the money of the increase in funds that have flowed to the provincial government on an annual basis.

This NDP government and these ministers do not even have the strength of character to stand up and say, "Well, we need to study this issue and we need to do something." Instead, you know, they spend all their time—and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), quite frankly, as a member of this Legislature, I am embarrassed by the comments he has made outside of this House.

* (15:40)

To a certain degree, he has been a little more timid in the House because I think he understands what type of trouble he would be in if he made those comments in the House. He makes them outside the

House. He makes them at the NDP convention and stands up and says, you know, puts a fist in the air and says, "We're standing up for the little people here. We are standing up for those Manitobans who can't stand up for themselves because we are going to regulate this industry."

Well, you know, they ought to look at themselves first. They ought to, every morning, look in the mirror and see what pain and what hardship they are causing. It is far greater than any pain or hardship that has been caused by a payday loan company. I can assure them of that. It happens every hour of every day that those VLTs are up and running.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) shakes her head. If she knows different, if she thinks it is different in her community, if she thinks there is no pain in her community from VLTs, if she thinks for one minute that payday loan companies in her community are causing more harm than VLTs in her community, then let her stand and put it on the record. Let her stand and defend the actions of her Finance Minister, or the inaction of her Finance Minister on this VLT file, and I will listen to her argument. I do not think she will be able to build a case but if she can, I will listen to it and I will take that into account in my future speeches on it.

Mr. Speaker, that is really just one aspect of this bill, but I think it is something that the government needs to finally, once and for all, start to take seriously. This issue of payday loan companies in particular, as I said, this is a new industry, relatively new industry, started in the nineties. We saw the odd one pop up, usually in areas where banks had moved out of the area and there was a need for people to get access to cash. These payday loan operations do not just provide loans. They do not just give people money. They provide ancillary services that are needed within the community. For example, you can take your Hydro bill in. You can take your telephone bill in, the same way you could at one time take it into the bank branch before it closed. These types of services are being provided by these companies.

Like any new industry, it takes some innovation to get involved in it, and there are some people who, maybe as a result of being the first ones in, take advantage of certain situations, and I think we have seen that here. We have seen situations where the regulations have been too lax, and in some cases

people have gotten into trouble by rolling over loans and have ended paying somewhat usurious interest fees, but I think we have to look at the underlying root cause of why that industry has grown up.

I daresay if the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) took the time, or the Minister of Agriculture took the time, to fully investigate why these loan operations are growing up in parts of our city and increasing in numbers, they would find that there are some very valuable services that are provided. They would also find that a number of the customers of these operations have become reliant on sort of that transitional payday-to-payday funding in order to meet the requirements that their families have for food and shelter and the other basic necessities of life.

Probably what they would find even more prevalent is that a lot of people that use the services provided by payday loan companies are there because the money they had worked for, the money they had earned, the money that they had garnered to live their lives had been sucked out of them by gambling, by VLTs. And I daresay, if the government really wanted to somehow restrict, if they were serious about restricting the growth of these types of operations, then the first thing they should do is look in the mirror and get out of the VLT business.

I realize it is a real stretch for members opposite to think about how they could possibly live in an environment where they were passing up the opportunity to rake in \$150 million or \$160 million a year through this, basically, tax on individuals who spend their time in front of the VLTs, but, you know, if they worked at it, if they took it seriously and really worked at it, they could probably figure out how they could run this province and continue to provide service levels that meet the needs of Manitobans, without having to be reliant on gambling and, in particular, on VLT income in order to meet their needs.

There are some issues, as I have said, with regard to the rates that this industry has charged. As we are seeing more and more competition in the industry though we are seeing less and less of these usurious types of rates. So this is something that, over the course of time, would, I believe, regulate itself. The market would take care of it and, as more competition, as in any situation like this, as we see

with the banks and the credit unions, the more competition in the field, the lower the rates are driven down, because consumers by nature will go to where they can get the best deal possible.

It is not really, I think, so much about protecting individuals as it is another soapbox for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) to stand up on and try and get that nice press release hit that this government seems to be addicted to. That adrenaline rush from a minister standing out and saying, "We are standing up for the little people." Follow some of those words with some action. That is what Manitobans need. That would be good government.

It sort of reminds me today of the Premier (Mr. Doer) standing up and saying, "I was interrupted seven times on Tuesday." We all know what really happened is that seven times on Tuesday notes were sent to him by his staff, and he stopped to read them before he continued with an answer. This is from the same Premier who told in the state of the city address to the Chamber of Commerce a couple of years ago that he had to get back to the Legislature because it was Question Period, and, then, I use his words, quote, "It is not answer period, it is Question Period." The same thing he said to a group of visiting—well, and again, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) shakes her head. I would ask her if she was at the speech, Mr. Speaker, through you, because I was there, and it was said just as it was said to the group of legislators from the United States that visited us a couple of years ago.

I know the Premier likes to make these off-the-cuff remarks and pretend like it is just a one-liner. It is just a little joke. The trouble is his ministers take it seriously.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would ask the honourable member to maybe tie this in to relevancy somehow. I am sure he was just about to do that.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you—and I appreciate the applause from members opposite, because I can understand their sensitivity to this issue, but I was merely getting back to the point that we see this bill, like many other bills before us, is more of an opportunity for a press release than it is an opportunity for good governance. That is the real problem that I see coming out with regard to this bill.

I will say again it not so much the principles behind the bill. It is the principles behind this

government, or the lack of principles, I guess, that I see on a daily basis. Now certainly, the individual items that are being dealt with here by the minister in terms of disclosure of fees, the disclosure of rates on mortgages, the fact that disclosures are going to be needed in terms of annual percentage rates and a number of other issues, particularly, as he indicates again, in numerous statements made outside of this House, a lot of this is going to be taken care of by regulation. That, we will have to wait and see.

Like so many other pieces of legislation that are brought before this House by the government, we read the act and we see what is in the act and we see what is in the pieces of legislation that are brought before us, but we never get a chance to see the regulations that underpin the act. Once again, that is the case with Bill 24. There are certain clauses in the bill which make sense, and people who go to committee to make comment on the bill again will be faced with a situation that they do not know everything about how the bill is going to be applied because they are going to have to wait for the regulations. Who knows? We have seen bills come before this House where the regulations are two and three years, four and five years later and the bill is not even proclaimed.

* (15:50)

We are asking individuals in Manitoba to come forward and give us views at committee stage on bills such as Bill 24 when we have no idea, really, what the bill entails because we have no idea what type of regulations are going to be applied to this bill by the minister. So, again, I would urge the minister, if he is so interested in this bill, by the time he gets this bill to committee, he should stand up and have a press release on each and every regulation that he is going to put forward to accompany this bill.

I notice one other aspect of the bill is that the minister is promising, and again it is not something he says in the House but it is something that he stands up at an NDP convention in Brandon and tries to appease the masses, so to speak, the brothers and sisters that attend the convention and tell them that he is going to ban rollovers, he is going to ban rollover loans so that the loans will not be able to roll over from one pay period to the next. This is the same minister that decided that rollovers were a good idea in the case of the Crocus Fund. His government brought specific legislation to this House which allowed people who had put money into Crocus,

when it came due, to simply roll it over and get another tax credit. So on the one hand he is saying rollovers are not good, we should not do this, but he is in direct contradiction of what he and his Cabinet have done in this House in previous legislation.

They have seen the effects of that. They should understand that rollovers do not work well. They have seen Manitobans lose \$60 million as a result of their inaction and inappropriate oversight of the Crocus Fund. So, again, I just say to them, Mr. Speaker, if they feel strongly about this and they feel it is necessary to apply it to one industry, well then, they should have the courage of their convictions, and they should apply it to the industries that they are in charge of as well. But, again, we have a double standard that we see from this government.

Certainly, the clauses in this bill that conform and assist in harmonizing the agreement on internal trade that was negotiated in 1996 by the previous government with other provinces in western Canada that dealt with some of the other newer industries that have grown up around the Internet and telemarketing and some of the advertising issues that have come up with there, we certainly do not have any problem with those parts of the act that deals with this.

We have seen other provinces, of course, move much quicker and, again, we wonder why now. Why did it take so long for this government to act on this particular issue? Other provinces were acting in 2000 and 2001, but this government decided to postpone it. They are even talking now that I think we are the fifth or sixth province to bring in this type of conformity in the legislation. The government is now even talking about it is going to take until sometime in 2006 for them to proclaim it. Are they so busy when, the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) is here, maybe she can tell us, are they so busy inventing keno schemes that they cannot deal with the real issues facing Manitobans? Is that what they do in Cabinet, they spend all this time on how they are going to increase their VLT revenue, how they are going to get more Manitobans addicted to gambling, that they cannot pay attention to the details of agreements that were signed in 1996?

So, again, I throw out to them as a challenge to get busy, get down to the real issues that are affecting Manitobans. Live up to your commitments as a party, and as individuals to stand up for the less fortunate in this province and to protect them against

government because, when you look at it, the minister stands up and says, "Well, I am going to protect Manitobans against payday loan companies." What Manitobans really need protection against is this NDP government. They are the ones that are picking the pockets to the tune of \$150 million or \$160 million, year after year after year, as a result of their dependence on gambling.

They should do the right thing. They should work with the hoteliers. They should work with the industries affected. They should figure out a way to reduce and, over time, eliminate their dependence on VLTs. Other provinces have. There are no VLTs in Ontario. There are no VLTs in B.C. They are not dependent on this type of gambling. They are not dependent on picking the pockets of the most vulnerable in their society in order to keep their governments running, in order to balance their budgets. So why should Manitoba settle for any less? Why do we have to keep raising the bar in terms of how much money we decide that we are going to take from Manitobans in forms of gambling as opposed to setting the bar lower year after year after year? I put that out as a challenge to all members of the NDP caucus, and particularly to all the ministers within this government.

The bill which is designed to protect consumers, Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a few more comments on some of the aspects of the bill. The issue of open credit calculations, again, is something that needs to be addressed, and it needs to be addressed in a reasonable fashion so that the industry can continue to survive and continue to make a reasonable profit. They do not have to make a usurious profit as this government seems to need to make on its VLT and gambling operations.

I will close by saying this is an important industry in Manitoba. This industry provides valuable services. While we need to see that consumers are not put at risk and that consumers' rights are not trampled and that consumers are not abused during this process, we need to understand in this Legislature that this is now a necessary industry in many, many communities in our province. They provide a valuable service not only in terms of advancing money but in terms of financial services, bill payments, and other types of financial services that individuals have become reliant on.

In closing, I will say, Mr. Speaker, that while in principle we certainly agree with this bill, we

definitely disagree with this government's continued and growing reliance and dependence on gambling revenue to balance the books. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I do have a few words that I want to put on the record in regard to Bill 24. First of all, I must indicate that this is something in which it is not necessarily this particular provincial government that is really taking the lead on in bringing better protection for our consumers. My understanding of it is that there is a group that is actually getting together and leading and lobbying Legislatures right from Ottawa down to the provinces across Canada to ensure that there are better laws and regulations. In fact, this piece of legislation, in part, comes out of that. One could almost say it is in good part. Many aspects of it are of a federal initiative in which other provinces are saying, "Here's what's happening in Ottawa. Here's the dialogue that's been occurring, and as a result of that, here's the legislation that we're proposing."

So it is not entirely being driven by the Province, that others could, in fact, assume some credit. In some areas maybe credit is not warranted.

What I do want to comment on is the principle of the bill in terms of the whole idea of advertising and credit, interest rates and so forth. I have always found it amazing, if you get a chance, you watch a bit of TV and you see these commercials, or you see these bulletins that come out, and they will say, you know, you do not have to pay till 2008 or 2007, literally 12 months down the road. It is used as an enticement. A lot of people buy into it.

I, for one, think "consumer beware" is an important almost theology. One could almost call it a theology of sorts, I guess, Mr. Speaker, but the consumer does need to be aware. You have to read that fine print.

* (16:00)

Quite often what happens is you get caught up in the enthusiasm of making a purchase, and when you do not have to put down a dime and you do not have to make any payments for a great deal of time, you better watch that small print—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Inkster will have 28 minutes remaining, and it will also

remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan).

As previously agreed, it is 4 p.m.; we will now move into concurrence. The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): The Committee of Supply has before it for our consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was asking the minister the other day questions in regard to university fees and the cost of being able to go to university. I thought it was interesting the way the minister answered the question by, in essence, saying, "Well, you know, we do not necessarily know what sort of courses they are taking and so forth, so it is hard to be able to make a comparison in terms of, well, what would it have cost."

So what I thought I would do is I would come up with a more specific example, and that being this. Let us say there is a constituent of mine, and I have many constituents that are of that university age, and university age, I must say, people go to university at all ages, having said that, a typical individual leaving high school today that says that, "Look, I want to take a first year sociology course, economics course and maybe a first-year poli science, a basic computer course and a first year history," which is really a full load academically.

Does the minister have an actual cost of what it would have been, in order to be able to be a university student at the University of Winnipeg or University of Manitoba and to be able to take a course load like that back in 1999?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Mr. Chair, I would certainly like to answer the question for the member, but I just wanted to take this opportunity to correct some misinformation which was put on the record.

Those of us in the Legislature might remember that when the member from Inkster and I last spoke an issue arose as to whether, during the period of an election, an MLA is an MLA or not. The Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) was quite vociferous in his claiming that you were an MLA, and he rose to his feet on a point of order, but my colleague from the Interlake had the wit to ask of our table staff whether an MLA was an MLA during the election or not. I would like to table the information, if I could read it into the record.

The answer to the question is no. During a general election, the member is considered to be a member for pay purposes only. When the Assembly is dissolved for an election, all persons who were MLAs are no longer members. If they are seeking re-election and are successful, they become officially members of the ensuing Assembly once they take the oath of office.

So I just wanted to correct that. I think it is important that a member who has been here as long as the Member for Russell, or the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), although there was a bit of a hiatus there, I think it is important that these people have the facts. So I am very pleased to help with that.

However, getting back to the question of tuition, I do not have encyclopedic knowledge of each and every course costing at our institutions, but I believe that at the University of Manitoba, I believe that currently the tuition for a set of five courses in first year, the tuition costs would be about \$2,800, and it would have been about \$3,000 in 1999. My figures are not exact because, as I say, the best place to find the information is really in the university calendar.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, now, the temptation to respond to the minister's comments in regard to when an MLA is an MLA and when an MLA is not an MLA, I think I will resist that and just indicate to the minister that government and ministers continue on in making decisions even during elections. I think that is an important point to take into consideration. Government does not disappear. Anyway, I do not want to get off topic.

The minister indicates, and I am going to take her at her word, and I am sure I will get the chance to do a follow through in terms of the numbers, the University of Manitoba, she said approximately \$2,800 today, compared to \$3,000 in 1999. I think that is encouraging, approximately. Having said that,

can the minister indicate what other costs are incurred for a university student, to the best of her knowledge, that go beyond the registration for the actual course itself?

Ms. McGifford: It depends on the student. As I am sure the member knows, there are quite onerous costs for books, depending on which course the student is enrolled in. Having been an English student myself, where I had to read a novel every week in five different courses, the cost of books was staggering. If a student is living in an apartment, then there is the room, the apartmental cost, and then there is the cost of food. Student Aid, in my department, has an estimated cost, of cost as an entirety for students. I could ask my officials, if the member wished, to forward information on this matter to him.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would, in fact, be interested in finding out from the department in terms of what sort of cost increases there have been for textbooks. Again, I would like to compare apples to apples. If someone is registered for an Intro to Economics course, there is, generally speaking, a well-purchased Intro to Economics textbook. What sort of a cost would it have been back in '99, compared to today?

More importantly, what I am interested in is the other fees, such as libraries to auxiliary fees. We hear in the news a great deal about our universities saying that they are going to increase fees substantially. I wonder if the minister can give indication to that. That is really the last question I would have of the minister. So, if she can just be as precise as possible, I would appreciate it.

Ms. McGifford: I want to correct the impression that I apparently gave the member. People on student aid do not go out and cost textbooks. What they do is have an estimate of the total cost for a student to attend university in a year. That would include their estimated cost of living quarters, of food, of textbooks, of tuition, clothing, personal hygiene needs. That, we can provide the member with. There have been some very positive changes, I think, both federally and provincially, so that a student is now entitled a more generous student loan for these purposes.

* (16:10)

Now the member is, I believe, asking questions about ancillary fees. I do not know what, oh, just a

second. I will have to get the department to compile information on ancillary fees and forward it to the member. It varies a great deal, Mr. Chair, from faculty to faculty.

For example, in a faculty like science, where there are quite staggering costs on laboratory equipment, in a faculty like engineering where there are demands for all kinds of equipment, those kinds of fees tend to be more onerous than they may be in a department like the one I studied in, English, where there was cost for textbooks, although there are now language lab costs, regardless of your faculty. I will endeavour to provide further information to the member through my staff.

Mr. Lamoureux: I do have maybe just one more question. Can the minister indicate, when we make reference to the cost of textbooks—I know, for one, as a former student a number of years ago at a university, one of the frustrations that I had was that the availability of second-hand books, because they were substantially less in cost, was scarce. As a result, quite often you get university students that would have liked to have gotten the used textbooks, but end up having to buy the new ones because of the issue of availability of the used.

What I had thought back then, and still hold to a certain degree today, is that if university textbooks were kept minimal time periods of keeping textbooks, especially at that intro level, it would be a positive thing. I guess I would just be looking for the minister's thoughts on that specific issue.

Again, to be very specific, an Intro to Sociology textbook, I know they update them virtually every other year type of thing, but does a university today have a minimum number of years that a book is supposed to remain in use at a typical university, or is it up to the professor to say which books and what edition it has to be?

Ms. McGifford: According to The University of Manitoba Act, The University of Winnipeg Act, The Brandon University Act, academic matters, and I think textbooks are an academic matter, are the purview of the university.

Now the member may have a very good idea for the reuse of textbooks and, if he does, I think students would appreciate any suggestions that he has. Perhaps he would like to contact the student unions of the various institutions.

I think the future use of textbooks varies with the individual. Again, to refer to my own specific circumstances as a student of literature, I kept all of my books because I knew I wanted to reread them. The member has, I think, rightly pointed out that some subjects change so rapidly that a textbook is not very useful after one or two years, for example, engineering, mathematics, presumably others of the sciences. I certainly endorse the reuse of textbooks and would urge the member, if he has good ideas, to share them with student unions.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I have some questions of the Minister of Family Services and Housing.

I want to thank the minister for her help in the Estimates process in understanding some of the issues within the department. I just want to ask a few more questions though, just to be clear on some things.

I wonder if I could ask the Minister of Family Services where on the organizational chart will the four authorities fall once the devolution is complete.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): The four authorities fall on the organizational chart. The authorities are already functioning as we move through the devolution that occurred, the proclamation on the 24th of October, I believe it was 2003. They would be not directly reporting into the department, per se, but they would work with the Child Protection Branch.

Mrs. Taillieu: Am I to understand then, Mr. Chair, that the four authorities do not report directly to a deputy minister or to the minister?

Ms. Melnick: They have a certain autonomy, and I would be happy to get a chart for the member if that would maybe help explain the situation.

Mrs. Taillieu: When the minister speaks of autonomy, then, if they have a certain amount of autonomy, are they not accountable then to the Minister of Family Services?

Ms. Melnick: Ultimately, they would be. However, they do function as several of the other agencies that we do fund. Again, I would be happy to get the chart for the member.

I am just looking through a package that I think we may have provided the member, "Promise of

Hope, Commitment to Change," and I am looking to see if I can find an organizational chart as we are chatting, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chairman, we recently recognized the devolution process of one that will maintain a culturally appropriate backdrop, if you will, to Child and Family Services and adoption services, but we just still have some questions in regard to the accountability, the reporting structures and the uniformity of policies within the province in terms of protection of children.

I wonder if the minister can tell me if there is an assurance and is there an agreement in place with the authorities that they are accountable to the minister and will adhere to provincial standards and policies.

Ms. Melnick: Sure, I will be getting the chart for the member. It is not in the document that I had, but I will be getting that to her as soon as possible.

As for provincial standards, throughout the development of the devolution it was agreed that there would be, for the first time in the history of Manitoba, provincial standards that would have to be met by the agencies. This, I think, is a very positive move because it means that there will be a standardization of experience, of education, of life experience, a combination of those to meet one general standard across the board. Now, an organization may choose to exceed that for any position that they are hiring, but it would not be accepted if they chose to not meet that standard.

So, in answer to the member's question, we are developing the standards, and again it will be the first time in the history of Manitoba. So I think that is another positive aspect that we have brought forward in the devolution process.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Taillieu: In the booklet I have just received, "A Profile of Child and Family Services Authorities and Agencies," on page 5 it says, "The most fundamental change is the delegation of responsibility for the delivery of child and family services"

We recognize that there is a devolution into four authorities for culturally appropriate care. When there is a delegation of responsibility, it implies that the agencies will then be on their own and

responsible, but I want to be assured that these agencies do answer to the minister and if the minister changes policies that they adhere to these policies, or is that recognized?

Ms. Melnick: Again, we can go to the provincial standards and the standards would be applicable throughout the province.

Mrs. Taillieu: Also, just another point, the booklet recognizes the cultural diversity of Manitoba but there is nowhere that really recognizes the multi-cultural mosaic of our province of Manitoba. It seems to be we do talk about the Aboriginal authority, the Métis authority, the general authority, and there is a Jewish agency in here as well, but there is no other mention of any other culturally appropriate agencies, and I wonder if that was considered in this process.

Ms. Melnick: The Child Welfare Initiative was one of the recommendations in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, which was a very broad document that was a response to several very concerning events around the treatment of the people of the First Nations and the Métis people of Manitoba. His Honour Justice Murray Sinclair chaired the commission and did a very thorough review, not only around the areas of child welfare, but around, for example, probation, which we are also seeing the Department of Justice take action on in devolving probation.

So, when we talk about devolution, we talk about a northern First Nations, a southern First Nations, Métis and then the general. There certainly can be work done in the general in which, as the member mentioned, the Jewish Child and Family Services resides. That has been, I believe, ongoing for—1912 is coming into my mind but that may not be the right date, so I will not stand on that.

As we had talked about in Estimates previous, this does not mean that there cannot be sensitivity to other cultures. Again I will use the same example that I used when I was in Estimates. Because my name is Melnick I will just use the example of a Ukrainian placement. If a Ukrainian child was brought into care there could be, if it was deemed that it would be beneficial to the Ukrainian child, to have more of a Ukrainian placement than, perhaps, a Polish placement. I am using that as another example simply because I am also Polish in my own heritage. So the devolution, as we speak of in general terms,

does not mean that there is an insensitivity to other cultures.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chair, in the vision statement on page 5 of this booklet, "A New Approach to Child and Family Services in Manitoba," it recognizes First Nations and Métis peoples as having unique authority. I wonder if the minister would explain what unique authority means.

Ms. Melnick: Well, again, when we talk about the devolution, I do not have the booklet in front of me that the member is referring to, but we do talk about, throughout the devolution, children being placed in culturally appropriate care.

My understanding is that, when we began the devolution process, the discussions did talk about would the First Nations people have one authority, would there be a number of different authorities, and there was a general agreement that there would be a northern and a southern authority, and a Métis as well as the general. So I think that what the member is reading is referring to that sort of discussion on a very broad, broad level.

Mrs. Taillieu: How is the authority unique for First Nations and Métis people? How is that different from the general authority, then? What makes it unique?

Ms. Melnick: The northern First Nations authority would deal mainly with agencies, many of whom have been in existence for, I believe, 20 to 25 years, that are, in fact, operated by northern First Nations people. The southern authority would also have agencies under them that are, and have been in operation for, I believe, the same amount of time that are operated by the people of the southern First Nations. The Métis authority is the newest of the authorities, and I include general in this discussion, in which there has not been a Métis agency in existence. So that is the agency that has been new to develop, but they all deal with the cultural perspective of their respective areas.

Again, I would just point out that these agencies are not geographically limited. For example, the northern First Nations, we are not talking about a geographic place in Manitoba. We are talking about all of Manitoba. So any child who it was agreed would be best placed within a northern First Nations cultural agency would be placed there regardless of where they reside in the province, and that would be

the same for any of the children who might be best placed in the remaining three authorities.

Mrs. Taillieu: Under the Métis Child Family and Community Services, they plan to offer an alternative method of intervention and prevention. Can the minister explain what alternative method of intervention and prevention would be, and how that would be different from provincial standards?

Ms. Melnick: Well, again, when we talk about provincial standards, as I had mentioned previous, provincial standards would have to be met regardless of any sort of hiring that was happening and practices that were going on. I cannot speak to the details of the specifics around the Métis authority that the member has asked but, again, I will certainly get information to her as soon as I can on that, but I think it is very important to note that any activity would have to be within the provincial standards. If it were to exceed the provincial standards, that would certainly be acceptable but it would have to certainly meet the standards.

Mrs. Taillieu: It seems that the Manitoba Métis Federation has taken exception to the minister speaking to staff within that department and has directed her to speak directly to the president or vice-president, and I am wondering if the minister can comment on why she has no control over the Manitoba Métis Federation and what is going on there.

Ms. Melnick: I think I will just have to correct the record that there are discussions ongoing at various levels on a regular basis with the Métis authority, with the Métis agency, and on other levels with the MMF and that is a normal practice for any agency that the department would be working with, and that discussions would be held, perhaps around particular placement, perhaps around particular other discussions, and it is not unique that different levels of different organizations would be talking to each other at different times.

* (16:30)

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, the point is does the minister have authority and control over all of the devolved authorities and, therefore, the agencies that fall under them.

There does not appear to be a very defined chain of command, if you will, or authority in terms of

how they relate to the Department of Family Services. It seems that they have been delegated complete responsibility, but, if they are to be funded and programs delivered through the Department of Family Services, then they certainly have a responsibility to answer to the minister. It is still not clear to me that this is actually what is going to happen.

Can the minister confirm that all of the four authorities relate directly to her?

Ms. Melnick: As the authorities act states, the minister does have the ultimate authority, the authorities do function on a day-to-day level as with any other agency that we would be funding. There are discussions. There is communication at various levels dealing with various issues with the Métis authority, with the various authorities, with the many agencies that we fund on an ongoing level. The act is there that the minister has the ultimate authority and that is very clear. I do not think that there has been any confusion on that at all.

Mrs. Taillieu: What type of signed agreements are in place between the Minister of Family Services and the four authorities?

Ms. Melnick: Well, the law, the act itself proclaims how the communications will be, pardon me, talks about the authority of the minister and the authorities. There is discussion ongoing. There are meetings ongoing. There is the day-to-day functioning. The roll out is happening right now in Winnipeg. There is a lot of activity with not only the Métis authority, but with the northern and southern First Nations as well. So there is a lot of discussion going on, a lot of signing off on cases. There is a lot of transferring of cases, a lot of discussion on intakes, discussion on many different levels.

Mrs. Taillieu: If the four authorities have been delegated responsibility, there should be an agreement in place as to what that responsibility is and what the terms of the funding agreement are. I would ask the minister what kinds of signed agreements, whether you call them service purchase agreements, or whatever you call them, what kinds of agreements are in place, and how will she ensure that policies and programs that are delivered through the department and money that is flowing to the authorities that that is accountable to the minister.

Ms. Melnick: Okay, I understand more of what your question was there. Again, I will refer to the act. We are negotiating service purchase agreements with the authorities. There is ongoing monitoring of all the authorities on a regular basis. This is a time, as the member knows, of roll out. The funding is based on the number of cases that each individual authority is getting, so as we are working on the roll out, our final phase is ongoing right now in Winnipeg. We are funding according to the number of cases that each authority is having, and we are working with the authorities at very high levels as well as on front-line levels.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chair, so the minister is saying there are no formal signed agreements in place?

Ms. Melnick: The negotiations on SPAs are ongoing as we are rolling out. The signed agreements will be based at the end of the roll out on the number of cases that each authority will be assuming, but there is continual monitoring and continual discussion of the number of cases.

Mrs. Taillieu: Just for clarification, is the minister saying then that funding will be determined by the number of cases that each authority has?

Ms. Melnick: In the social services area, money is assigned to the individuals who need the services, so this is not a unique situation. For example, funding through the various organizations that house or have day programs for vulnerable people receive the funding based on the individuals that they are caring for. So, when we talk about funding to the authorities based on the number of cases that they are handling, we are talking about money again being assigned on the basis of need by the individuals that these agencies, because it is the agencies that deliver the front-line care and report to the authorities, are actually working with.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chair, I believe the minister first said that it would be based on the number of cases, and then she said it would be based on the need. I am wondering which it is, and I am wondering if it is based on numbers if that sets up a competition between agencies and authorities.

Ms. Melnick: Well, again, I talked about the number of cases and the needs of the individuals receiving the services, so there is quite a continuum of care there. I do not perceive that this is a competitive type

of exercise that we are carrying out. What I have certainly seen within the authorities and within the agencies and within the department is, as The Child and Family Services Act states, "The best interests of the child will be the determining guideline."

I have seen tremendous co-operation throughout this devolution, and I want to point out that this is the first devolution in North America and one of very few around the world. So it is not as though we are going by a cookie cutter step 1, step 2, step 3 sort of workbook on how to devolve child welfare. We are going very much on, this is a very, very good initiative to be carrying out in the province of Manitoba, and I have seen a lot of discussion, a lot of co-operation and a lot of care for the children for whom this devolved system will be serving.

I would like to commend all of our partners and all of the people in our department who have worked so hard figuring out how to do this in the best way. I believe that that spirit will continue long after the rollout because we recognize how important it is for children to get the best care that we can give them. So I would like to commend the good work that has happened so far and believe that it will continue.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chair, I do recognize there has been a lot of hard work. The questions that I am asking simply relate to the minister's role in this, simply trying to get answers regarding accountability so that we can understand who these agencies are accountable to and how long they will remain accountable to, if they are accountable to the minister.

I would like to ask the minister how many board members there are on the Métis Child and Family Services Authority, the Métis authority and who appointed the board members.

Ms. Melnick: I do not have the lists in front of me. I can get that for the member. It is the agency. There is only one agency and one authority. I think you might have mentioned Métis Child and Family Services Authority. It is the agency which actually reports to the authority. I can get that list for her. I know that members come from different avenues to be on the board, so I can also get that for her.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chair, it is my understanding that each of the authorities has a board, and, in fact, the

general authority is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Minister of Family Services and Housing for the province of Manitoba. So I will ask the minister who appoints the board members to the other three authorities.

Ms. Melnick: I will undertake to get that. Rather than misspeak, Mr. Speaker, I will undertake to get that to the member as soon as possible.

Mrs. Taillieu: It is obvious that the general authority has a board that is appointed by the minister. The minister does not know who the other board people are or who appoints them, so I guess it cannot be her. So I would simply ask, she must know, I mean she has been dealing with this devolution process, she must know who appoints the board members of the three other authorities. If you have a responsibility, if you have authority over these authorities, you must know who is in charge of appointing the board members.

Ms. Melnick: I have answered that question, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, perhaps I can tell the minister the First Nations of Northern Manitoba Child and Family Services, the First Nations have full power status and capacity with respect to governing, protection and development of First Nations peoples. So they have the authority. Sorry, I have taken it from the wrong place here. Sorry, I cannot find it. The agencies, okay, sorry, I am talking about one of the agencies, the board of directors, and I will not be specific about the agency, but the board of directors is going to be comprised of people from the tribal council and the chiefs. So I am wondering if this is what is going to happen throughout all of the agencies and authorities, that the board members are going to be comprised of the chiefs of the bands, or their delegates.

Ms. Melnick: Again, I have answered the question three or four times now. Just to put on the record, I have undertaken to get the specifics to the member on the question as soon as possible, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, thank you. I guess the minister does not know who the board members are going to be, who appoints them. I guess she will not know if they are paid or not, or how long they will sit on the board, or what their role will be. So I will look forward to her providing me with that answer later. It

seems to be an answer of a question that she does not want to answer.

Another one of the agencies that falls under the southern authority, the board of directors is comprised of five appointed band members of that particular First Nation. I will ask, though, if the minister can answer, what criteria would there be around being a board member.

Ms. Melnick: I am not sure now, Mr. Speaker, if the member is asking about agencies or authorities, or which particular agency or authority she would be asking about, so I think I will, again, undertake to get the information to her.

I believe she was asking about authorities a minute or so ago. I think the last quote that she read was about an agency. So, again, I will undertake to get the information about the boards and the current members as soon as I can for her for the authorities.

If she has any follow-up questions after receiving that information, I will be happy to get the information for her in regard to her follow-up questions then, as well.

Mrs. Taillieu: There are boards for the authorities and then boards for the agencies. Perhaps within the agencies there will be a different structure for the boards than within the authorities, but we do know that the board has already been appointed by the minister for the general authority. So there must have been some criteria for selection of board members there. I am wondering if this is a provincial policy in terms of who is eligible to be on boards of the authorities.

Ms. Melnick: Again, I have answered that question, and I will get the information to her as soon as possible.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell me what is the current status of the preservation and reunification unit?

Ms. Melnick: During the rollout, people have really stepped up to the plate and taken on some very good initiatives and are working very co-operatively. My understanding is that, the cases that are coming forward, work is being done by people who are taking on extra work, taking on doing tasks under supervision and that people are working together

throughout this. So I am not exactly sure what precisely the member is asking about, but I do know that there has been a concerted effort by the management at Child and Family Services and everyone involved in the devolution to work with special co-operation during this time, recognizing the importance of the devolution.

Mrs. Taillieu: Does the minister know how many people are presently employed in the preservation and reunification unit?

Ms. Melnick: I do not have that number, but I know that people are moving in different, sort of, paths right now, and that I do know that there is a system that has been put together on a temporary basis to meet the needs at this time.

Mrs. Taillieu: Are there any people currently employed in the preservation and reunification unit?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I have answered the previous question, Mr. Speaker, in that I do not have the number of anyone in any particular unit on this particular day. If the member is interested, again, I can get that information for her.

I do know that a great deal of effort has been taken to make sure that, during this time of quite a different time in the Child and Family Services world through the devolution in Winnipeg, people are really stepping up to the plate to help each other out to make sure that, in the best interests of the child, the devolution goes well.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chair, it is very frustrating. We come to concurrence hoping to get some answers to some questions. I think they are reasonable questions and I am really just seeking some answers here. I certainly wish the minister had come more prepared and been able to answer the questions.

From the Estimates book which I just received on going, walking into the first Estimates meeting, I just want to go through a little bit of it because I did not have much opportunity between the 10 seconds I was handed the book and the time I sat down to ask an opening question. There are a few things that I would just like to go over here.

I am wondering, and I can refer to page 70, if that helps, in the Estimates book under Child and Family Services, Strategic Initiatives and Program

Support. I would like to know what exactly Strategic Initiatives is, how many people are employed there and what their role is.

* (16:50)

Ms. Melnick: Strategic Initiatives is an area of the department that was set up to deal with particularly important new initiatives—all initiatives are important—but particularly big, and the focus of the Strategic Initiatives area right now is in fact the Child Welfare Initiative. Again, I could get an org chart for the member, but certainly that falls under Assistant Deputy Minister Peter Dubiński. Working with him are people who have been focussed primarily on the rollout and have worked in other areas of child protection as well. Primarily, the focus for Strategic Initiatives is, in fact, the Child Welfare Initiative, as we are seeing rollout now.

Mrs. Taillieu: Once the process is complete, where will these people that have been employed under Strategic Initiatives be employed?

Ms. Melnick: Many of these people are long-time members of the department, employees of the department. We can see that they will, for the most part, remain within the department. We know that, even though the rollout is scheduled to be completed, we hope, sometime this summer, there will still be ongoing monitoring. There will be ongoing development of the system as it stands now, and there will still be areas that we will have to work through in the devolution. So it is a really top team of people with a lot of great experience. It certainly is my hope that they will choose to stay with the department and that they will certainly see this Child Welfare Initiative rollout through to the point we can say the system is fully functioning.

As I have suggested here, we do not have sort of a set date for when that will be complete. We have set different time frames to have different parts of the Child Welfare Initiative completed. Sometimes that has had to be extended because, as I mentioned before, there is not a sort of a cookie cutter way of dealing with this because we are the first in North America. So we just have to make sure that we are working through the process in a way that will allow the new system to really stabilize, and I certainly hope those folks will stay with us throughout that period.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chair, would the minister be able to provide a list of the people employed under the term "Strategic Initiatives" and their job descriptions in terms of what they are doing with the Strategic Initiatives?

Ms. Melnick: I had undertaken to provide a chart, and I will be happy to also provide the descriptions that go with the positions.

Mrs. Taillieu: One of the Expected Results under Strategic Initiatives is the implementation of service purchase agreements with agencies. How many service purchase agreements with the agencies are in place right now?

Ms. Melnick: We have had service purchase agreements with the agencies. The agencies now report to the authorities, so there is a different reporting structure there. Again, while we are going through the devolution, we are going through a different reporting structure, so we would not have service purchase agreements with the agencies. They would be going through the authorities.

Mrs. Taillieu: Okay, is it my understanding then that, if the agencies have service purchase agreements with the authorities, then what kinds of agreement, service purchase agreements, are between the minister and the authorities?

Ms. Melnick: We are currently negotiating SPAs. Again, as we go through the devolution, we had talked a bit earlier about the final case loads being determined at the end of this rollout period. So right now we are negotiating. We are monitoring on an ongoing basis for funding, and when we reach the end of this devolution—again, Winnipeg is being devolved right now—then we will have the final service purchase agreements in place.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister detail the funding arrangements between the provincial and federal governments?

Ms. Melnick: Is the member asking about in regard to children in care?

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, I am speaking about the funding agreements that there may be for Aboriginal peoples who may be designated under federal legislation and certainly under provincial legislation. How is the funding going to flow both from—what is

the agreement between the province and federal government in terms of funding, in terms of Child and Family Services, to the authorities and agencies?

Ms. Melnick: I think we are talking about all children in care, is the question. We would be funding according to the provincial children in care who fall under the provincial responsibility which would be off-reserve children. The federal government would fund in regard to on-reserve children, and that would flow directly to the agencies, which is not a change from the way it has been since the agencies were established about 20, 25 years ago. So the federal funding does not flow through us for children in care. It flows from the federal government. I believe it is INAC to the agencies, again, I believe based on the number of children in care and the needs of the children who are determined to be on-reserve children, and ours would be the off-reserve and that would be the federal funding that would flow, as I had spoken of earlier.

Mrs. Taillieu: So am I to understand then that all children that would be on-reserve children in care, they would be funded then through the federal government?

Ms. Melnick: Their status would be deemed on-reserve whether they physically reside on-reserve or not, just to be clear about that, but the funding for those children would, in fact, flow through INAC.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Chair, just to be clear then, if a child is deemed to be on-reserve but not living on-reserve, what assurances do we have that the funding is flowing from the proper source there?

Ms. Melnick: The agencies would have a system with the federal government for children whose status is deemed on-reserve whether they reside on-reserve or not. The agencies would also have with the provincial authorities communication as to funding needs for children whose status is off-reserve. So there are, if you will, within the agencies, two different systems of funding depending on the status of an individual child.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, I guess if there are two different systems of funding, and we do not have any service purchase agreements in place with the authorities, how is it going to be determined how the money is

actually flowing, and how is it going to be accounted?

Ms. Melnick: Well, the monies flowing to the authorities would be the provincial monies, and I spoke a couple of times today about the negotiations for service purchase agreements that are well under way. Through this period of rollout there is ongoing monitoring which is based on the number of children. When the rollout is complete, hopefully later this summer, there will be final service purchase agreements put in place, again, based on the number of children.

* (17:00)

Now that is money that would flow through the provincial government to the authorities, to the agencies, and it would be the authorities and the agencies that would be working with the provincial funding there. There is another stream for children whose status is determined to be on-reserve. That would flow through INAC to the agencies themselves.

This is not a new arrangement. When the agencies were set up about 20 years ago, this was the funding arrangement then, and I believe it has not changed with the devolution provincially.

Mrs. Taillieu: Under the general Child and Family Services authority, one of the roles is to fund agencies under its jurisdiction for regional and community-based programs and to ensure compliance with legislation, regulations and standards. This does not appear anywhere under the other three authorities, so does the minister, then, still maintain jurisdiction over the authorities in terms of funding over the other authorities or is this all, then, just a federal authority?

Ms. Melnick: Could you please repeat your question?

Mrs. Taillieu: Under the general Child and Family Services authority, the role, it says to fund agencies under its jurisdiction to regional community-based programs and services and to ensure compliance with legislation, regulations, and standards, but these comments do not appear anywhere else under the Métis and/or the southern or northern Aboriginal authorities. It is clear here the line of authority in terms of funding and compliance with the legislation

in the general authority, but it is not clear to the other authorities, so in terms of legislation it is not clear what authority the minister has over the other authorities and it is not clear exactly how the funding is flowing. I wonder if the minister can comment on how it is going to be determined and how there must be some kind of a funding arrangement between the authorities and also with the federal government.

Ms. Melnick: The federal government would be funding directly to the agencies, as has been the funding method since the agencies were established about 20, 25 years ago. The provincial funding will go from the province to the authorities, based on the number of cases each authority is responsible for. It would then flow to the agencies based on the number of individual cases and the various needs of the individual children who would currently be in care under that agency and cumulatively under the authority.

Mrs. Taillieu: With the agencies, are the agencies the determiners, if you will, of what the best process for the children they have under their care, or is this to be directed by the band that the child belongs to? Or are they the same thing?

Ms. Melnick: Is the member speaking of the point of intake?

Mrs. Taillieu: I think it is just delivery of service I am referring to. If an agency is determining what support systems will be put in place for a child in its care, who determines that, the people within the agency, the band, or are they the same?

Ms. Melnick: Well, agencies are autonomous from chief-in-council, if that is the question there. The care of each individual child would be determined by the agency. Now it is also important to recognize that agencies do not sort of exist in their own world away from the rest of the support networks. So there could be discussion with the department. There could be discussion with foster parents, if a foster placement, to determine the best foster placement for the child. There could be discussion with people with professional expertise as to the care that an individual child might need.

That is why, when I talk about the funding models, I talk about not only the number of children in care, but also the needs of a child based on the individual needs of that child. If there is special

medical attention needed, if there is children's therapy of any type, speech therapy, physiotherapy, et cetera, needed, all of that would be determined ultimately with the agency, but also in co-operation with the various areas of expertise that would be needed and would certainly be available, so that we are making sure we are doing our best by the children.

Mrs. Taillieu: I believe the minister said that the agencies and the band operate autonomously, but I would just like to point out in this book that this particular agency operates under the direction and control of a board of directors comprised of the nine chiefs of the nine member First Nations. So all of the authority of the agency, then, comes from the band chiefs.

Ms. Melnick: Well, certainly there is a difference between the operation of the board and the day-to-day work that is being done by the employees of the agency. It is that area that I was talking about when I talked about determining the care needs of each and every individual child. I was talking about the front-line staff at the agency. There could be communication between a front-line worker and their supervisor within the agency. Certainly, I am sure that, particularly when a child comes into care, there would be discussion as to what the needs of that individual child would be. So, when I am talking about the care of the child, I am talking about at the agency level, not at the board level of the agency.

Mrs. Taillieu: Under one agency, the identified services and objectives are, "To place children who are coming into care back with their own communities, or with other native families as directed by the child's band." So, again, I would ask the minister who has the authority for children in care. Is it the agency? Is it the board? Is it the band?

Ms. Melnick: Well, I think what the member is referring to is the key point in the devolution of child welfare in which for a very long time, well, first of all, children were taken into residential schools. They were taken from their communities, from their support systems, from their cultural worlds, and placed into residential school systems. There they were not allowed to have their own culture. It was not allowed to speak the language, or dress had to be changed. But then those schools gradually closed. The last one, surprisingly, closed just a few years ago. But then the child welfare system developed out

of that, and, again, children were taken mostly from their support networks, their home communities, families, kin and friendships, and placed in different cultures.

So one of the key focuses of the devolution, again, is culturally appropriate care that could be, as sort of suggested in what the member has read, kinship care where children are not taken out of their families, where if there is a problem in a particular family unit a child could be placed with an aunt, with a grandparent, someone who knows them, someone who knows the family, and that the child could also be placed with family friends, for example, in the same community, so that there is not the cultural shock of being apprehended, being taken out of your community.

So, again, I believe that the front-line workers and the agency staff would make the determinations as to where the child would best be placed.

*(17:10)

Mrs. Taillieu: I do recognize that Aboriginal people, Métis people, anybody, really, we would want people to have the authority over their children. Certainly, we believe that children should be in a safe environment; hopefully, that would be their home environment. But, if that is not the case, we recognize the need to protect children, and universally protect them with provincial standards, and that is, hopefully, what we are doing here.

But, again, my question really is just to be clear here because what has been stated in this booklet and what the minister is saying seems to be a little different because these agencies, either under the northern authority or the southern authority, it appears that band members will direct where the children are going to be placed. The minister is saying they are going to be the staff of the agencies. In some cases, it appears to be that board members are going to have control.

Again, she has said that there will be provincial standards and policies in place. So it becomes very muddy here because it does not appear that there will be because she is even saying that she does not really know if it is the band or the agency or who is going to be responsible for delivering services to children in need.

Can she clarify that? Who has really got the authority here?

Ms. Melnick: That is a bit of a misrepresentation from what I was saying. I was very clear in saying that, when I talk about children being in care, it is under the individual agencies. I was very clear in saying that there are boards on agencies. But, when I talk about the care of children and determining what the needs of the child will be and determining where the placement will be, as the member has been asking, I have been very clear in saying that, in fact, it is the agency.

When I talk about the agency, I am referring to the front-line workers. I am referring to the supervisors. But I am also including, in the determination of placements and in the determination of meeting the needs of a child in care, the various professionals that would be consulted as to particular needs that the children have. There could even be discussion with the department about needs of individual children.

So I think we have to be very clear on the record here that, when we are talking about children in care, we are talking about the agencies who are taking care of the children for whatever authority it is, but that they are also working with the support networks that are around, which, I think, is the reasonable and responsible way to help children.

The member herself has talked about that it takes a village to raise a child, in another context. Certainly, we can both agree that it does take a village to raise a child, and the responsible thing to do for children is make sure that all the people who can be contributing best to the care of the child are taking part in the care of that child.

So, again, I am talking about the agency and the supports that would be around that would make sure that we provide, as is the key principle in The Child and Family Services Act, that we are all acting in the best interests of our children.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister then deny that the child's band will have any direction as to what will happen with the children in the agencies under their control?

Ms. Melnick: Well, I do not know that we are talking about children under control. I think the spirit

that we are speaking in is children in care. When we talk about all the support networks, I do not know that we would be excluding any particular group at any particular time, as long as the focus is on what is best for the child.

Mrs. Taillieu: Perhaps I chose the wrong word to use, "control." I do agree that it is children in care. But I am really just trying to get some clear answers here because it is very unclear. From what the minister says, and from what some of the literature says that has been provided to me in several instances, which I have already stated, again, here is another one in the northern authority where the board of directors is comprised of band members. Band members, will they direct the functioning of the agencies? With the functioning of the agencies, will they direct then where children will be put in care and how the care of that child will develop? I am not saying that it will not develop just in the way that it should; I am just asking for clarification as to who is really controlling the agencies. Is it the authorities? Is it the board? Is it the band members? I am just seeking clarification.

Ms. Melnick: As I am sure, the member knows when there is an agency, whether it is a First Nations, northern, southern, Métis, general, or even not an agency dealing with children in care, or if it is an agency dealing with adults with vulnerabilities, the agency functions on the day-to-day basis as to the needs of the individuals that they are caring for. The function of a board is to set policy; it is not to get into individual cases. The authorities will also be working with the agencies, but, again, when we talk about the care of children, I do not think it is appropriate for us to be excluding any particular group as long as the focus really is on the best care of the children. So, although that may be a frustrating answer to the member from Morris, it is the reality of dealing with children in care, or with vulnerable people, that there can be many different sources of that care. To determine the fullest care, it may be just within the agency; it may be within the professionals around. There may be policy development that would come from a board; there may be discussion with the department.

We cannot be here sort of painting little boxes about who can and cannot be involved. I do not think that is the spirit in which we have worked up to this point. I certainly do not think it is the spirit that we will work in once devolution is complete.

Mrs. Taillieu: I appreciate the answer. I appreciate what the minister is saying. I still feel that there is a need to have definitive lines of reporting, to know exactly what services are being provided by whom and to whom, and certainly that we would ensure that policies and programming are similar. I would say not just similar, but that are the same throughout the province. So I am seeking clarification on that.

Can the minister tell me what the Manitoba Children's Agenda – Leadership Council is?

Ms. Melnick: Just on that last note, again we will go back to the provincial standards, and that is the overarching standard of care for children in Manitoba. So we have talked about that a few times today. *[interjection]* Sorry, what was the question?

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister tell me what the Manitoba Children's Agenda – Leadership Council is? Who is on it, and when was it struck?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that specific information. I can get it for the member.

Mrs. Taillieu: Can the minister tell me what the spirit of this board is? It is a partnership initiative with the department and the Manitoba Children's Agenda – Leadership Council. It is in the Estimates book, Mr. Chair. The minister must have a sense of what this board is, or this council is.

* (17:20)

Ms. Melnick: Again, I do not have it before me, Mr. Speaker; rather than misspeak, I will get the information for the member as soon as possible.

Mrs. Taillieu: Has the minister heard of this Manitoba Children's Agenda – Leadership Council?

Ms. Melnick: I have had some discussion about it, but not in-depth discussion, and I will be happy to get the information for the member as soon as possible.

Mrs. Taillieu: What discussions has the minister had regarding the Manitoba Children's Agenda – Leadership Council?

Ms. Melnick: Again, there has been very broad discussion, but, rather than misspeak something, I will be happy to provide the member with the information as soon as possible.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I want to refer back to April 11, and there was information which came out in the *Free Press* then, which I will just read: "Former Family Services Minister Tim Sale was warned of financial irregularities at Hydra House April 2000, seven months before he—"

Mr. Chairperson: Order. The minister is actively referred by their title, even if you are reading from an article.

Mr. Gerrard: "Former Family Services Minister . . . of the time was warned of financial irregularities at Hydra House in April 2000, seven months before he said he first heard complaints about the agency. Until now, the province has maintained it did not become aware of allegations of misspending at Hydra House until November 2000, when James Small, the agency's former CEO, asked for an investigation of the organization's books."

In Question Period later in the day, the minister has, I understand, indicated that the concerns which were raised at that point actually dealt with issues which had been in the time period of the previous government. Can the minister tell us just a little more about what time period under the previous government these concerns related to?

Mr. Chairperson: There is a request that the committee take a recess so that we can go to the House. The honourable Opposition House Leader wants to table some names: sequence of ministers for the next round. We are taking a break.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to be interrupting proceedings this afternoon, but I would like to table the list of ministers that we would like to have before concurrence when we meet next. I know that the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) and the critic may not be finished their exchange, but I think there is a rule that says that we are supposed to table these at least 24 hours prior to requiring the ministers.

I would like to table the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) and the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk).

Mr. Speaker: Okay. That should conclude the business of the House. That request for ministers for concurrence has been tabled.

Now, the House will resolve into Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Continued)

Concurrence Motion

(Continued)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Committee, come to order.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The issue was raised of information which was brought forward before November of 2000, and when the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) was asked on April 11, the minister said, and I quote, "These were concerns of what had happened during the administration of the previous government."

My question is when during the administration of the previous government did these issues pertain to.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I am not sure exactly what issues the member is referring to, and I think there would probably be more to what the response had been. There had been issues raised by the individual quoted previously, I believe, by the member from River Heights around the use of monies by the Hydra House corporation. Because I do not have the full quote in front of me or the full story that he referred to, I think I can just answer in general terms in stating that concerns were raised about the use of funds during the nineties that were looked into.

Mr. Gerrard: We are saying that prior to 2000 there were some issues dealt with in the article in the *Free Press* which had been raised in April of 2000, and that that material, which was raised in April of 2000, actually dealt with problems which had been under the previous government. Is that what the minister is saying?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I do not have the actual document in front of me, but we know that there had been concerns about the use of public monies by Hydra House. There was an Auditor General's report that we are all very aware of that detailed from a certain period of time, which covered both the late nineties and the early 2000s, specific misuses of money. As a result, I accepted the report in its entirety. The latest movement in that is that on May 16 we formerly ceased any relationship with Hydra House. St. Amant Centre has taken over the care of individuals previously under the care of Hydra House. So, because I do not have the documents in front of me, I think I can only respond in very broad terms there.

Mr. Gerrard: Let me go back to what the minister said that the concerns came previous to the government coming to power. They were concerns previous to September of '99. Can the minister tell us any more about the nature of these concerns that were raised and whether they were financial concerns or whether they were other concerns?

Ms. Melnick: Well, again, I think we can refer to what was in the Auditor General's report, concerns around the misuse of funds. There were certain examples of that in the report. Some dealt with Cadillacs and other business. It is all out in the Auditor General's report.

Mr. Gerrard: In view of the inference and the concern that this issue had been raised under the tenure of the previous government, can the minister indicate when under the previous government that these issues had actually been raised?

Ms. Melnick: My understanding is that through the discussions around Hydra House there was a response from the previous ministers, what I understand, that concerns had been raised. I do not have the exact documents in front of me, but we do know that those concerns were followed through by the Auditor General. The result is this government is no longer doing business with Hydra House.

Mr. Gerrard: We know that there were concerns raised in the spring of 2000 and that these were before the issues that were raised by the Auditor General. We know that the Auditor General, when he

did his report, right, was not aware of, and did not have access to, the concerns which were raised in approximately April of 2000, which in his report the first concerns that had been raised were in November.

* (17:30)

The issue that I am trying to get a better understanding on is the—

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5:30 p.m., the Committee of Supply will rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on House business, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Tuesday, May 31, at 6:30, to consider the following bills: 2, 3, 6, 7, 14, 20, 36.

Also, the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, May 31, at 6:30, to consider the following bills: 15, 17, 18, 21, 26, 27, 32, 42, 43.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Tuesday, May 31, at 6:30 p.m., in order to consider the following bills: Bill 2, 3, 6, 7, 14, 20 and 36.

Also announced, the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, May 31, at 6:30 p.m., to consider the following bills: 15, 17, 18, 21, 26, 27, 32, 42 and 43.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being past 5:30, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 26, 2005

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
		Impaired Driving Legislation Lamoureux; Mackintosh	3018
Petitions			
		Impaired Driving Lamoureux; Melnick	3019
Pembina Trails School Division–New High School Loewen	3007	Smartpark Brick; Wowchuk	3019
Fort Garry Hotel Rocan	3007		
		Members' Statements	
Coverage of Insulin Pumps Goertzen	3008	École Crane Irvin-Ross	3020
Generally Accepted Accounting Principles Lamoureux	3008	Bears on Broadway Loewen	3020
		Cecil Rhodes School Santos	3020
Introduction of Bills			
Bill 210–The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Bicycle Helmets) Gerrard	3008	Pastor John Neufeld Goertzen	3021
		German-Canadian Congress Schellenberg	3021
Oral Questions			
		ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)	
Safe Schools Forum Murray; Doer	3009	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
		Debate on Second Readings	
Bullying Murray; Doer Derkach; Bjornson	3009 3010	Bill 25–The Workers Compensation Amendment Act Dyck Reimer	3022 3022
Cancer Treatment Programs Murray; Doer	3012		
Health Care Services Stefanson; Doer Stefanson; Sale	3015 3016	Bill 17–The Regional Health Authorities Amendment and Manitoba Evidence Amendment Act Stefanson Lamoureux	3024 3025
Identity Theft Protection Taillieu; Selinger	3017		
Manitoba Tire Stewardship Board Faurshou; Struthers	3017	Bill 42–The Health Services Insurance Amendment and Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act Stefanson	3025

Bill 43—The Regulated Health Professions
Statutes Amendment Act

Stefanson 3026
Lamoureux 3026

Bill 20—The Life Leases Amendment Act

Derkach 3027
Lamoureux 3028
Maguire 3029

Bill 24—The Consumer Protection Amendment
Act (Cost of Credit Disclosure and
Miscellaneous Amendments)

Loewen 3030
Lamoureux 3036

Committee of Supply

Concurrence Motion 3036