

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

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The Honourable George Hickes  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Eighth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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.
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.
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ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
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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.
Vacant	Fort Whyte	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 21, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### PRAYER

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 4—The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Amendment Act

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines (Mr. Rondeau), that Bill 4, The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la manutention et le transport des marchandises dangereuses, be now read a first time.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Struthers:** Bill 4 contains a number of amendments to The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act to improve industry regulation, public safety and environmental quality. These changes will reinforce the polluter-pay principle and harmonize Manitoba's law regarding dangerous goods transport with that of other Canadian jurisdictions.

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

### PETITIONS

#### R.M. of Piney Windstorm Damage

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for the petition:

A severe windstorm swept through the Rural Municipality of Piney on July 31, 2005, causing severe damage to approximately 60 residential properties of the Sandilands forest.

The R.M. of Piney was forced to declare an immediate state of emergency in response to this storm.

The estimated cost of cleanup is estimated to be between \$360,000 and \$1 million.

The R.M. of Piney can only afford to allocate \$20,000 toward the recovery and cleanup effort.

Individual property owners and residents have been forced to incur significant costs related to the cleanup of their property, which they cannot afford.

The Province of Manitoba has not declared a state of emergency in response to this storm.

Provincial road restrictions in this area are limiting the access of vehicles required in the cleanup and recovery effort.

The R.M. of Piney has contacted the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux), the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Smith) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) to request temporary lifting of the road restrictions and the provision of provincial aid for the cleanup of the area but has received no commitment for assistance.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider the temporary lifting of road restrictions on the road in the storm-affected areas of the R.M. of Piney.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider providing aid to the R.M. of Piney and to the individual property owners to assist with the cleanup and the recovery efforts.

\* (13:35)

This petition is signed by Peter Myrchak, Rose Henrie and Victoria Myskiw 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.

#### 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 control of their blood sugar and become much healthier, complication-free individuals.

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 Carla Hatherly, Brian Hatherly, Krista Kastner and many, many others.

#### **Crocus Investment Fund**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Government was made aware of serious problems involving the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

As a direct result of the government ignoring the red flags back in 2001, over 33 000 Crocus investors lost over \$60 million.

Manitoba's provincial auditor stated "We believe the department was aware of the red flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way."

The relationship between some union leaders, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP seems to be the primary reason as for why the government ignored the red flags.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider the need to seek clarification on why the government did not act on fixing the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

Signed by Lorraine Chyzy, Gabrielle Wozniwich, Julia Pannell and many, many others.

#### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Mr. Speaker:** I am pleased to table in accordance with section 16(3) at 28 of The Auditor General Act, the Auditor's Report of Environmental Audits.

#### **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 from Assiniboine Community College, Parkland Campus, 13 second year Business Administration students under the direction of Mr. David Simmonds and Mr. Kent Wieb. This school group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers).

Also in the public gallery we have with us today fourth year nursing students from the University of Manitoba. These students are under the direction of Linda West.

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

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Court Facilities Gang Prosecutions**

**Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, in 1999, this NDP government had available to it a state-of-the-art courthouse, the Fort Garry courthouse, specifically designed for the handling of gang mega-trials. This Premier and this NDP government chose not to make use of this facility. Instead, this NDP government is going to spend \$100,000, at least \$100,000, to renovate another courtroom to handle gang prosecutions.

\* (13:40)

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. Why did this Premier order the gang courthouse mothballed in 1999 when he knew that it was going to be needed in Manitoba?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I would refer the member opposite to Madam Krindler's court decision in the, I believe it was post '99, but it was certainly in the period of time under which the courthouse was developed on Chevrier Avenue, just off McGillivray, I believe.

I also would point out to the member opposite that there have been other cases in Alberta since that time, federal prosecutions. I would point out that the

federal prosecutions office is acting consistent with the court decisions in Alberta and in Manitoba in dealing with some of the criminal alleged gang activity now in Manitoba.

The renovation to an existing courtroom that is attached to the existing Remand Centre is a much more cost-effective way of proceeding, and it has nothing to do with—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Maybe, Mr. Speaker, members opposite that were in Cabinet want to study how many sheriff's officers, how many security staff, how many vehicles, how many other operating costs were necessary to operate the Chevrier house facility. This courtroom upgrade, that does not just deal with multi-accused personnel, also is adjacent to the Winnipeg Remand Centre, a lot more secure a setting for all concerned.

**Mr. Murray:** Well, the Premier likes to make reference and asks us to think about what took place when he talks about making reference. I would like the First Minister to reference, and since he has been the Premier, since 1999 we have seen the Hells Angels move in, the Bandidos, the Mad Cowz, the African Mafia. They have all taken root under this Premier's watch. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because gangs know that, under this NDP Premier, this government is soft on crime.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are issues involved with the levels of gang violence in Manitoba. Frankly, under this Premier, gangs know that the hug-a-thug policy of this government is one that welcomes gangs into the province of Manitoba.

I would ask this Premier how many more victims will there be before this Premier realizes that being soft on crime, particularly with violent gangs, does not work.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, the pathetic rhetoric of the member opposite—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Dealing with issues of gangs, there is an article in the *Free Press* from, I think, 1997 or, I will find it and send it to the member opposite. I am sorry, it was June 15, 1998. It talks about the Hells Angels in terms of Manitoba. That, by the way, Mr. Speaker—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of the fact that—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would remind members opposite that last year we announced the largest increase in police officers in the history of Manitoba, and today we just announced, along with the City of Winnipeg, on top of the 23 police officers in Winnipeg, an additional 23 police officers. Members opposite talk a good game. We act on the public priorities.

\* (13:45)

**Mr. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, I know it is a sensitive issue to this Premier, as it would be with any premier, that their legacy is that the Hells Angels have set up shop under their watch. The Bandidos, the Mad Cowz, the African Mafia, that is the legacy that this Premier has to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, when the previous government was building a courthouse that dealt with mega-trials for gangs, members across on the other side were ridiculing that government. Today, when gangs have set up in the province of Manitoba, this government is running up white flags with respect to dealing with gangs.

I would ask this Premier: Why does he put partisan politics, Mr. Speaker, in front of Manitobans instead of admitting that he made a mistake by mothballing a courthouse that was specifically dealt to deal with mega gang trials? Why did he do that?

**Mr. Doer:** Maybe it is intelligent to put \$4 million into police officers instead of putting \$3.5 million in a courthouse that the courts will not use, Mr. Speaker. That is our priority. That is why they were wrongheaded. That is why they were thrown out of office. People would rather have money for police officers on the streets rather than public relations exercises that took place pre-'99.

### **Court Facilities Gang Prosecutions**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Justice admits that if there are ever more than 10 people charged with a crime, particularly a gang-related crime, the current

courtroom being built would be too small. Perhaps, he has been assured by the Minister of Justice that there never will be more than 10 people charged in this province for gangs.

Last month, Mr. Speaker, and the Premier wants to listen to this, Edmonton charged 16 gang members and their associates as part of a sting operation. Has Manitoba given up on these large-scale gang prosecutions? Is that why they are building a courtroom that is too small?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I regret, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite have been left out in the dark for some reason in terms of what that Chevrier courthouse was all about. It was only designed, and they should know this, as a temporary facility, and it has very serious shortcomings.

Unfortunately the member opposite does not even know what the law is, Mr. Speaker. There was a direction given in this province, a guideline, that there be no more than eight or ten accused in any trial.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister wants to talk to the former government services minister who said that there were other uses in terms of courts and justice that it could be used for. Montreal's secured courthouse was used after 17 gang members affiliated with the Hells Angels were charged in 2004, a permanent courthouse. Nine other Hells Angels were tried at the same location the year prior.

The Martha Stewart makeover of the courtroom that is happening now across the street sends the wrong message to gangs. Why did he close a high-security, multi-accused courthouse and then decide to build something that is going to be too small and is not going to have the security if we ever truly went after gangs in the province?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, I heard the opposition leader call the Chevrier courthouse a state-of-the-art courthouse. That facility is obsolete. They do not understand the law. The guideline in Manitoba is that there should be no more than eight or ten accused, and, indeed, the federal prosecutions division, in terms of a grow op, my understanding is that they are, in fact, making sure that there are no more than eight or ten accused in any one trial.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite seem completely oblivious to the fact that that courthouse out in Fort Garry had serious shortcomings when it

came to logistics, transportation and, most important, public safety.

**Mr. Goertzen:** The Minister of Justice, immediately after being elected, stripped the courthouse. He emptied it out. Of course, it is not usable now because of what he did. Prior to botching his only attempt at trying to prosecute Hells Angels, in the province, Mr. Speaker, he said, the Minister of Justice said they would have to spend a half a million dollars on security for this courthouse if they were ever going to go and proceed with that particular prosecution. That was before the Hells Angels got into their limos and toasted the minister with their champagne and drove away to commit more crimes and to deal more drugs.

We had a high-security courthouse here in the province. It was built for multi-accused, Mr. Speaker. It could have been used to put Hells Angels away in jail but he mothballed it. He put his public spin ahead of public safety. Why will he not admit he was wrong in 1999 and he is wrong today?

\*(13:50)

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, members opposite, they want their courthouse out. That does no good. It is obsolete, and I do not know but members on this side are concentrating instead on organized crime and prosecuting them with greater flexibility in a more secure environment in the courthouse, in the justice precinct. That is what our focus is.

It is on more police, Mr. Speaker, 23 more for Winnipeg today. It is on expanding the capability and security in our courthouses. Members opposite can live in the past. They keep looking behind them. They are going to walk into something and it is called public safety.

### **Workers Compensation Public Hearings**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, we have just learned that the Workers Compensation Board will be holding hearings to look at expanding industries currently covered by Workers Compensation. This announcement appeared on the Workers Compensation Board Web site on Friday, November 18. Hearings are scheduled to start Monday, November 28.

We simply ask the minister responsible for Workers Compensation why these hearings are being held with virtually no notice.

**Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have said many times that any expansion of coverage in regard to Workers Compensation would be instigated by the Workers Compensation Board. I was not consulted in regard to the time frame. Those—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Ms. Allan:** Excuse me. The Workers Compensation Board is an arm's length agency, Mr. Speaker, with a tripartite board of directors represented by labour, represented by employers and represented by the public interest, and they are having public hearings and—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Allan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Workers Compensation Board is an arm's length board that is represented by a tripartite board, and they are represented by employers, public interest and labour.

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I should remind the minister that her brand-new legislation says that the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his Cabinet are now responsible for who is going to be covered. These hearings are scheduled to end on December 8.

I want to remind the minister the November 11 release from Workers Compensation states, and I quote, "This means the defining coverage has not been thoroughly reviewed since 1959." Now the WCB wants the consultative process to be completed within three weeks. What is the hurry? What is this government trying to hide?

**Ms. Allan:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the WCB for putting the information about the consultations on their Web site and being forthcoming with the community about any kind of expansion of coverage. We have made it very clear that any expansion of WCB coverage would be led by the WCB and that is what is occurring.

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, does this Premier (Mr. Doer) expect that every business in Manitoba would follow the WCB Web site on a daily basis? I do not think so.

This government promised consultation for any expansion of coverage. This consultation comes at a time when consumers, employers and the business community are very, very busy. Why is this NDP government ignoring the consultation process?

**Ms. Allan:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to remind members opposite that we were very pleased to have their support on the passage of our WCB legislation. I want to thank them for that. I am quite sure that they are just as interested in having more workers covered by WCB legislation and coverage and we are consulting on that.

We all know the stories about the outside window washer and the inside window washer, Mr. Speaker. We all know those stories and the WCB is starting with the high-risk industries, and we do not believe that there is a short time frame on this. We are very confident that the WCB will do due diligence in regard to any expansion of coverage.

\*(13:55)

### **Employment Standards Code Review Public Hearings**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** That answer was very disappointing and the news only gets worse. During the 2005 Throne Speech, this Doer government called for a review of the Employment Standards Code. Then, on November 10, a press release was issued announcing public meetings for the ESC review. Finally, today, the discussion paper was released on the ESC code report, Mr. Speaker, two weeks prior to the public meetings. Is it the intent of this Doer government to set the public meetings up for failure?

**Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to talk about the review of the Employment Standards Code. The Employment Standards Code in the province of Manitoba has not been reviewed in over 30 years.

In Alberta, Mr. Speaker, the Employment Standards Code is being reviewed. The federal government is reviewing their Employment Standards Code. There are other jurisdictions in Canada that are reviewing their Employment Standards Code. I would encourage the member opposite to have a look at the discussion guide because I know he will agree with me when he reads that discussion guide that what we are doing here in Manitoba is looking at the changing face of the workforce and the new economy, and we will do what is best for Manitobans.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, public meetings were announced for an Employment Standards Code review for December 1, 6, 7 and 12. Workers Compensation review dates are November 28,

December 1, 5 and 8. These meetings will be held in the middle of the Christmas season, the busiest time of the year for retailers, wholesalers and restaurateurs. Who exactly came up with this plan? Does this Doer government expect retailers to walk away from their business during their peak business season?

**Ms. Allan:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that the members opposite will agree with me that it is time to review the Employment Standards Code. I think it is important to look at all of the issues that we are faced with in the new economy: the changing face of the family today, the fact that it is not just two-income families any more.

Also I am the Minister responsible for Immigration. We have a lot of new immigrants in our community today, Mr. Speaker. We have every confidence that this timetable is workable. We are accepting any recommendation until—[interjection] The time frame on receiving recommendations and concerns and reports from the public is January 16, 2006.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, December 1 to 23, the Santa Claus Village is on Provencher. St. Vital Centre welcomed Santa November 13. Polo Park welcomed Santa November 19; Portage Place, November 20. November 19, both St. Vital and Polo Park extended their hours from 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., Monday to Saturday. When exactly is retail supposed to find the time to come to these hearings? How much more antibusiness can this Doer government get?

Mr. Speaker, now is the time for the government to get up and delay the public meetings. This is the wrong time, putting it in the busiest time for the retail, wholesale and restaurant industry in Manitoba. It is doomed to failure, and that was probably the intent in the first place.

**Ms. Allan:** Well I am so glad to be informed, Mr. Speaker, by the Labour critic opposite when Santa is coming to town because I know that is very important. You know—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Allan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The deadline for receiving information from stakeholders is the 16th of January, 2006. Perhaps the member did not hear me say that in the previous answer to the question, and we have every confidence that that

time frame is long enough and that Santa will have done his work by then.

\* (14:00)

### **World Trade Organization Meetings Commodity Groups' Concerns**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, for months commodity groups have been discussing their concerns with the issues to be raised at the upcoming WTO meetings in Hong Kong.

My question for the Minister of Agriculture is what recommendations and concerns will the minister be raising on behalf of Manitoba producers when she meets with her federal and provincial counterparts on Thursday?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Speaker, the member is accurate that I will be meeting with the federal minister on a wide variety of issues that relate to agriculture.

With regard to the WTO talks, Mr. Speaker, it is the federal government that takes the lead on the discussions. Provinces are all involved and, as provinces, we consult very closely with the industry to put together a position that we will be taking to the WTO. As members opposite know, a Canadian position has been put forward. That position will be discussed with the industries and that is the position that we will take, but I will definitely be listening to the producers of Manitoba.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, WTO meetings will set the stage for Canada and Manitoba's ability to compete on a level playing field with other agricultural markets. These meetings have the potential to significantly reduce the ability of our agricultural sector and to compete in a global market. Why has this Minister of Agriculture waited until the eleventh hour to engage in consultation with Manitoba commodity groups on an issue of such importance?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Although the member opposite may not know about previous meetings or previous discussions that I have had with people in the industry, I can tell him full well that I have had discussions with the supply management industry, with the people that are concerned about the Canadian Wheat Board and with those people who are also concerned about additional access. The member may not have had those discussions with the industry, but I have and I will continue to have them.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to meet with the commodity groups and will continue to do so.

This minister has been aware of the WTO meetings for months. She has had months to formalize a well-thought-out plan and obviously has done nothing. Mr. Speaker, why is this minister waiting until the last minute to develop a plan, a resolution, for an issue of such significance?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I do not believe that the member opposite understands the process that takes place. These processes do not just take place within the province. There are discussions at the international level. Manitoba producers have been involved at the international level, and our province has been involved with the federal government as we prepare to move forward to the next round of the talks. I can assure the member that the issues that are important to the Manitoba producers are important to Manitoba, to this government.

**An Honourable Member:** What are they?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Issues of more access, issues of reducing subsidies in other countries, issues of ensuring that we can continue to maintain supply management and issues to ensure that the Canadian Wheat Board continues to exist.

#### **Rural Ambulance Service Inter-Facility Transfers**

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Speaker, rural Manitobans who require the use of an ambulance for inter-facility transfers are being hammered with costs that they cannot afford. Patients are being assessed huge inter-facility transfer fees because they cannot access those services in our rural hospitals.

I want to ask the Minister of Health, who has had an opportunity to address this issue, why it is that he continues to stall and not agree to address this very cumbersome problem that is hitting Manitobans, especially rural Manitobans, in their pocket books.

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, let me remind the member opposite of a little bit of very important history. When we formed government, we had the oldest ambulance fleet in Canada. By this year, we will have 160 state-of-the-art ambulances on the ground in Manitoba. When we formed government, there was no co-ordination of the ambulance fleet. There was no co-ordination of dispatch. There was no co-ordination of training. There were no provincial standards for training. We

now have the MTCC going up in Brandon which will allow us to dispatch ambulances efficiently, effectively, quickly to any place in Manitoba, using state-of-the-art dispatch technology.

The question of the access to transport, Mr. Speaker, in almost every significant rural community, there is a new ambulance garage. There are new, full-time people on the ground so we are providing ambulance transport to Manitobans in a way that the former government never made possible.

**Mr. Derkach:** The reality is that there has never been a problem with access to ambulances in rural communities. I live in one. I know, Mr. Speaker. But the other side of coin is that today rural Manitobans are paying through their noses to access facilities in Winnipeg.

I want to point to one case, Mr. Speaker. Doug and Joan Knapp, who are my neighbours, recently received a bill for \$1,245 because Mr. Knapp had to be transported to Winnipeg to address an aneurism. This is a cost they cannot afford. The minister has been advised. He has been asked to address it. He has not.

When will the minister agree to cover these costs of inter-facility transfer in the province of Manitoba?

**Mr. Sale:** Let us talk about access, Mr. Speaker. Let us talk about access to services. Let us talk about a new MRI in Brandon so people do not have to come to Winnipeg. Let us talk about a stroke program in Brandon so people do not have to come to Winnipeg. Let us talk about CT scanners in six rural hospitals so that people do not have to come to Winnipeg. Let us talk about 400 dental surgeries in Thompson so people do not have to come to Winnipeg. Let us talk about Boundary Trails hospital with an MRI scheduled to go into that facility so people do not have to come to Winnipeg. Let us talk about hip and knee surgeries in rural Manitoba: 1400 more surgeries in Selkirk, surgeries in Ste. Anne, surgeries in Steinbach, surgeries in Russell. Let us talk about arthroscopic surgery in Minnedosa so patients do not have to come to Winnipeg. Access to services in rural Manitoba has never been better.

**Mr. Derkach:** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about patients. I want to talk about real people. I want to talk about people who are suffering under this government because they cannot access services in their own communities. That is who I want to talk about, people who are forced onto the highways of

this province at their own cost because this government refuses to address the inter-facility transfer costs.

Mr. Speaker, Douglas Knapp has had to pay \$1,245 for a trip from Russell to Winnipeg, one way, in order to access services because those services are not available anymore in rural facilities.

I want to ask the minister whether or not he will agree to start covering the cost of inter-facility transfers between Brandon and Winnipeg and between rural hospitals and the city of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Sale:** Mr. Speaker, a couple of things. First of all, aneurism events have never been able to be treated outside of a tertiary care hospital. That was the situation when they were in government; it is the situation today. It is very complex surgery, very high-risk surgery.

The policy of transports and the policy of costs for transports is the same as it was under their government. They had 11 years. They did not put any ambulances on the road. They had no dispatch capacity. They had no standards for training for paramedics and they had no policy in regard to fees. We dealt with three of those four issues, and if he would read the Throne Speech he will know that we are studying carefully the fourth one.

#### **Winter Heating Cost Control Act Justification**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Energy has indicated his intent to take surplus money from Manitoba Hydro's hydro-electric operations to set up a slush fund. This slush fund will have politically driven decisions made about the expenditure of these dollars to subsidize the cost of purchasing natural gas, but over the fiscal years '03-04 and '04-05 combined, Manitoba Hydro had a net loss of about \$300 million. Even if this year's projected net income is included, this means Manitoba Hydro's net income for these three years will be close to zero.

I ask the Minister of Energy where is the huge surplus he is going to raid to put up this slush fund.

\*(14:10)

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology):** During the course of three hours of committee hearing this morning, our member did not mention this issue. I should indicate to the member opposite that the federal government, the party of which he represents, is taking money and

paying money to low-income natural gas consumers to protect them against the rate shock of natural gas prices that have tripled since 1999 and are up 44 percent this year.

The decision about limiting the cost to residential consumers was made by the Public Utilities Board, an independent body, and not by like the member from Inkster who suggested that we should let market prices determine what people pay for the natural gas prices all the time. That would mean a lot of people in a lot of places in Winnipeg or a lot of places in Manitoba would not have the ability to heat their homes, a necessity in our winters.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The Minister of Energy would do well to try and work with the markets instead of trying to fight the market at every turn.

I ask the Minister of Energy given that the Conservatives were talking the other day about this magical \$193-million surplus and given that, over the last three years when you include this year, the net income for Manitoba Hydro will be close to zero, I ask the minister to explain where is this huge surplus that he is going to raid to set up his slush fund.

**Mr. Chomiak:** If the member would read the PUB ruling and the PUB directive, I know it is 99 pages but if the member would read it, it is fully explained that there is a deferral of the cost over the winter season, Mr. Speaker, because of successful hedging by Manitoba Hydro. The market is around 11 cents a gigajoule right now. They hedged it somewhere between \$7 and \$8, so there is a gap right now that Manitoba Hydro has in order to cushion the rates on customers.

Secondly, Manitoba has the rate account positive balance of millions of dollars to go to that rate cushioning so there is not even a need for the fund. If the member read the PUB ruling made by the independent third body that rules what rates are in this province he would have understood that, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** The Minister of Energy stated, "All natural gas customers of Centra Gas are also electricity customers." Mr. Speaker, the minister loses the point. There are over 200 000 Manitoba consumers that use electricity, no natural gas. He is asking those people to cross-subsidize. That is the idea here.

The former NDP Premier, Ed Schreyer, says that it is stupid. I agree with the former Premier. It is a

stupid idea, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Minister of Energy is why is he shafting the 200 000-plus electrical consumers in our province.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, there are over 500 000 consumers of electricity in Manitoba, firstly. Secondly, they have the lowest electrical prices in North America, if not the world. Thirdly, this year, Manitoba Hydro withdrew its 2.25 electricity rate increase to prevent rate shock in the wintertime. Fourthly, the federal party of which the member is a part has put in subsidies back to all consumers with respect to energy costs. The member said on Friday that markets should dictate. If the market dictated, our electrical costs would be double and triple. If we listened to the Liberals, our natural gas prices would be double.

Mr. Speaker, I think that narrow marketplace position is not what the majority of Manitobans want. They know we want to shield them from price spikes and that is what we intend to do without having to draw money.

#### **Wind Energy Government Initiatives**

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** Mr. Speaker, talking about energy, today the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology announced with Manitoba Hydro an expression of interest to develop 1000 megawatts of wind energy over the next decade.

This clean energy initiative is so unique and futuristic. Could the minister inform the House what this means to the development of our energy capacity in the province?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology):** Mr. Speaker, not only did we announce the first portion of a sale of hydro to Ontario, not only is an ethanol plant expanding in Minnedosa, not only are we doing four biodiesel projects in Manitoba, but we announced an EOI for 1000 megawatts of wind which potentially could benefit \$2 billion in capital investment, potentially over \$7 billion in value of energy sales, \$1 billion in ongoing operating expenditures, \$100 million in wind right payments to the landowners, \$150 million in property taxes, \$200 million to provincial taxes, 250 to 300 ongoing operational jobs, plus the possibility of related manufacturing with investment that could range from \$20 million to \$100 million and create possibly 100 to 500 direct jobs in the energy sector. I think that is not too bad for a province that is leading the way in Kyoto and going

to the climate change conference showing it can do what it says.

#### **Physician Resources Recruitment/Retention Strategy**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Citizens in Manitoba have no faith that this NDP government can fix health care, and as a prime example of how they do not care about rural Manitoba they have allowed both Boissevain and Deloraine to fall to the level of one doctor, losing their emergency status.

Mr. Speaker, I demand of the minister: What is this government's plan to provide doctors in these towns?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is what we have been doing for the last five years. We are increasing the enrolment in the Manitoba Medical College.

Mr. Speaker, what we have been doing is to increase enrolment in our medical school. They cut it from 85 to 70. We have raised it this year. It will be up to 100. We are looking at over 220 more doctors in Manitoba today than there were in 1999. We have recruited specialists. We have opened, for example, Gimli is back in business, Ashern is back in business. We will continue to work with our RHAs through our centralized recruiting Web site which we announced last week, and the additional resources we are putting into a much more effective method of recruiting using central co-ordination with Dr. Chris Burnett in charge of that. We think that we will continue to grow our doctor population as we have for the last four years.

**Mr. Maguire:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is darn cold comfort to the citizens of southwest Manitoba. The town of Melita and the citizens of that southwest region are concerned about the lack of support for developments needed to meet the future plans of even the Melita Hospital.

In a letter sent to the Minister of Health in early November, Dick and Helen Harmes [*phonetic*] of Melita wrote, and I quote, "We would like to see more attention given to retaining the existing doctors and treating them with the respect they deserve so that we are not always in a position of trying to recruit new ones."

Mr. Speaker, when will this minister provide a commitment to rural hospitals like Melita, or is this just another rural hospital that the NDP government is planning to close?

**Mr. Sale:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, look at Minnedosa, arthroscopic surgery, a wonderful facility that was initially planned under the Pawley government and opened under the previous government. Look at Rivers, an older hospital that is now an acute rehab hospital for people recovering from hip surgery. Look at the 18 CancerCare Manitoba sites across rural Manitoba that are evidence of the confidence that we have in rural Manitoba's capacity to deliver better care sooner, closer to where people live. Look at the expansion in the capacities in rural Manitoba, in Boundary Trails, in Steinbach, in Brandon. Look at the 32-slice scanner in Portage la Prairie that was just opened so that citizens there get excellent health care.

**Mr. Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, citizens in Deloraine are trying to raise funds themselves to attract doctors to take care of their own general practitioner needs. This NDP government has let this hospital fall to one doctor.

When will this government get serious and provide enough doctors to meet the needs of these communities, particularly when this is the government that raises people's expectations by promising a cancer clinic for a community like Deloraine and then lets it fall to one doctor?

**Mr. Sale:** Mr. Speaker, the member will know that across Canada there were decisions made in the early 1990s, in the mid 1990s, to reduce enrolment in medical schools. The undergraduate course in medicine is four years long. The first graduates that will be from the full 100 course that is opened this year will be four years from now. That will just get them into their intern year. That will not train them through their residency program which, by the time they are simply qualified family practitioners, eight years will have elapsed.

\* (14:20)

When the previous government cut enrolment in the medical college in 1994 and 1995, eight years hence is when that damage shows up, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, they made some bad decisions a long time ago. We are repairing those decisions but there is no instant cure for bad decisions made eight years ago.

**Mr. Speaker:** The time for Oral Questions has expired.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Prior to moving on to Members' Statements, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from the International Institute for Sustainable Development 15 visitors from China and Winnipeg under the direction of Ms. Karen Goulding and Ms. Rachel Perry. On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Culinary Arts Program

**Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with members news of a very pleasant dinner I recently attended in Brandon. The dinner was hosted by the ACC Foundation and students of the culinary arts department of Assiniboine Community College to support the new and expanded space that the culinary arts department will be relocating to at the architecturally outstanding former Brandon Mental Health Centre site. The dinner was themed Ports of Call and provided guests with the opportunity to sample culinary delights from around the world.

Mr. Speaker, enrolment in Manitoba colleges and universities has increased by more than one third since 1999. This is the largest enrolment increase in Canada. It is exciting to see so many young people pursuing post-secondary education in our province. However, record enrolments have created challenges for Manitoba's universities and colleges.

Mr. Speaker, our government is determined to support Manitoba's young people by providing them with affordable tuition and new facilities. In recognition of the central role that Assiniboine Community College plays in western Manitoba's economic future, we recently announced that we will be moving ahead with the substantial and full relocation of Assiniboine Community College to the historic BMHC site on Brandon's North Hill.

The announcement of this post-secondary capital project is one of the highlights of the 2005-06 Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to working with the City of Brandon, ACC officials, the private sector and the community as a whole to ensure that the move is effective in meeting the needs of future students.

I would like to congratulate the students of the culinary arts department on the success of this event and thank them for providing their guests the

opportunity to sample exquisite cuisine from around the world.

I would like to thank my colleague, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith), as well as the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) and the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat) for attending this event and for lending support to the students of the culinary arts program at Assiniboine Community College.

#### **Barbados Association**

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, I had the pleasure of attending the Barbados Association of Winnipeg annual independence banquet and dance. The Barbados Association has been active in Winnipeg for 28 years. This year was the 39th anniversary of Barbados' political independence.

Every year the association honours one individual who has truly committed countless volunteer hours to the Barbados Association. This year, the president, Mr. Rupert Forde, was the recipient of this award for volunteerism, and I would like to congratulate him. Mr. Forde told me he spent hours on the road driving into Winnipeg from his home in Steinbach to work for the Barbados Association. Mr. Ford also said it was gratifying to see the younger generation become involved in the organization so that it would continue into further generations. Two young women, Faith Neblett and Camille Vaughan, recent graduates, emceed the evening.

I appreciated the message of the guest speaker, Mr. Edward Best, whose message was that we must be an inclusive society where there are no traces of racism. Diversity of cultures might be better replaced by inclusivity of all cultures as Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Barbados Association on 28 years in Winnipeg and celebrate with them the 39th anniversary of political independence of the home country of Barbados. May we always celebrate our cultural differences and enrich others' lives with the sharing of our traditions, but may we also embrace all people who reside in our province and our country simply and inclusively as Canadians.

#### **Association of Manitoba Municipalities**

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Mr. Speaker, today the Association of Manitoba Municipalities kicks off its seventh annual convention. This is the

largest event hosted by the AMM, an organization that represents all municipalities in Manitoba. This convention gives municipal officials an opportunity to meet and discuss issues that affect Manitobans and they work with local councils and community groups. Municipal officials work tirelessly on behalf of their communities to make Manitoba a stronger province.

Mr. Speaker, our government is pleased to work closely with municipal officials and the AMM to further the goals of rural Manitobans. We recognize that our agricultural producers are facing difficult times. This year, in Manitoba's Speech from the Throne, the Province announced that it will further reduce farmland property taxes by 10 percent, bringing the total tax reduction to 60 percent.

We are working co-operatively with municipal officials to provide better health care sooner and closer to home for rural Manitobans. New chemotherapy services have been designated in Neepawa, Pinawa and Deloraine, and new CT scanners and ultrasounds have been placed in rural communities across Manitoba. Working with municipal officials in the AMM, our government hopes to further innovation and economic development in rural Manitoba.

For example, the coming year will see the completion of Manitoba's first wind farm at St. Leon. This project adds 100 megawatts of emission-free electricity to Manitoba's supply base, invests \$210 million in new capital and generates a total of \$9 million in landholder payments.

The Province and Manitoba Hydro are currently taking the next major step in our wind development strategy by requesting proposals for new projects that will total up to 1000 megawatts of wind generation over the next decade. The estimated capital investment for these projects is over \$2 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all municipal officials for their hard work on behalf of rural Manitobans. I commend them for their willingness to work with the provincial government in moving Manitoba forward. I wish all delegates and attendees to the seventh annual Association of Manitoba Municipalities Convention a fruitful and enjoyable week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Aleaha More—Miss Rodeo Canada**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Manitoba Legislature today to congratulate an accomplished young lady, Miss Aleaha More, who was born and raised in Virden, Manitoba, and was recently crowned Miss Rodeo Canada 2006 in Edmonton on November 11.

Being crowned Miss Rodeo Canada is no small feat. The Canadian Finals Rodeo, which has been held in Edmonton since 1974, brings the best rodeo competitors from the Canadian professional rodeo season together for a five-day event. More than 94 000 fans have taken in the Canadian Finals Rodeo where this Miss Rodeo Canada competition is held.

Miss Rodeo Canada is not your ordinary beauty pageant. It is a competition that tests contestants' skills in horsemanship, public speaking, modeling and personal interview competitions. Miss More entered the competition as Miss Medicine Hat Stampede Princess where she currently lives and attends college. After competing against six other queens and princesses, Miss More was crowned Miss Rodeo Canada 2006 and will act as an ambassador for the sport of rodeo and participate in numerous events across western Canada and the United States.

Miss More has been riding horses since she was a young girl. Her father, Dr. Everett More, is a local veterinarian and is part of a practice that includes horses in virtually all of southwestern Manitoba. He is renowned for his organizing and announcing of rodeo events and has for many years announced many of the equestrian events at the Royal Winter Fair in Brandon. Aleaha's mother, Gwen, has also been very instrumental in her daughter's horse riding, providing endless encouragement as well as designing Aleaha's riding outfits.

On behalf of all the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, I would like to extend my congratulations and best wishes to the queen of rodeo, Miss Aleaha More who proudly holds the crown of Miss Rodeo Canada 2006.

### **Fall Suppers in Radisson**

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House the huge volunteer effort that goes on this time of the year in the Transcona area of Radisson constituency. Fall suppers are put on by the churches in the area to raise money. The flurry of activity goes on almost every Sunday from the middle of September until

November. This is a community effort, and I enjoy participation in this particular event.

Mr. Speaker, this proud tradition comes from the days when neighbours helped one another, and I am proud to represent an area where people still know and love their neighbours. In Radisson and Transcona, people have a history of sharing good times and the bad, and the fall supper is a reflection of that. People gather to give thanks for a good year or work together to make a better year to come.

\* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker, at fall suppers guests are treated with great homemade food and good conversation. Families spend quality time together enjoying their supper. I am so happy to attend these events with my wife, Raj, who loves the Ukrainian food the most. I also enjoy eating the perogies and cabbage rolls so lovingly prepared by the mothers and grandmothers of the community.

Thank you again to the volunteers who work so hard each fall to put on these great suppers raising, in turn, funds for community development and institutions and programs that contribute year round to our lives, our families and our neighbours. They truly exemplify the Transcona neighbourhood of Radisson. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if there is an agreement for the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations to sit concurrently with the House this afternoon, starting at three o'clock to continue consideration of the 2003, 2004, 2005 Hydro annual reports? That would be with a no-vote, no-quorum rule in the House. Also, if consent is given, the meeting will be moved to 254 because of prep for the meeting tonight on Bill 7.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there agreement for the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations to sit concurrently with the House this afternoon at 3 p.m. in order to continue consideration of the March 31, 2003, 2004, and 2005 Hydro annual reports and no quorum or votes this afternoon? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Also to advise the House that the meeting will be moved over to Room 254, given that Room 255 will

need to be prepared for the committee meeting this evening on Bill 7. So that is to advise the House.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, would you first call adjourned debate on Bill 11, The Winter Heating Cost Control Act.

### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

#### Bill 11—The Winter Heating Cost Control Act

**Mr. Speaker:** Resume debate on second reading, Bill 11, The Winter Heating Cost Control Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

What is the will of the House?

**An Honourable Member:** Stand.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

It will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell, and also standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), who has eight minutes remaining.

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, once again I am pleased to provide some comments in summary with respect to The Winter Heating Cost Control Act and again to speak to the fact that there are two parts to this legislation that is very critical for Manitobans: first of all, protecting customers from rate shock; and, secondly, providing long-term solutions to help all Manitobans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, imagine you are a fly on the wall in a rural Manitoba home where perhaps the members opposite are visiting a constituency in rural Manitoba. They come into the house and they are having a chat with the family, and they say, "Well, no, actually we were not the members that introduced the equalization of Manitoba Hydro rates for rural Manitoba. That would be the NDP government that did that"—because I know that they would be truthful with their constituents—"and, yes, it was the NDP government that equalized the rates in rural Manitoba."

The conversation goes on: "Well, no, no, we were the party that sold MTS and watched your telephone rates go up by 68 percent. That was us. That is correct, but you know at least when you are on the Internet, you know that your Hydro rates are low to provide that service. Oh, you do not have Internet service in this part of rural Manitoba. Oh,

that is right. MTS is now a private corporation, and if it is not profitable, they will not provide the service. That is right, I am sorry. But you do have equalized Hydro rates and that is thanks to the NDP government.

"You do have protection for the Centra Gas rate shock, and that is because of this government. You do have programs that are designed to encourage efficiency, and that is because of this government. You do have a long-term vision and a long-term plan for the future of Manitoba with respect to energy efficiency. Bill 11 is just another part of that commitment to Manitobans with respect to public utilities and what is in the best interests of Manitobans."

If they were to continue to have that conversation with families in rural Manitoba, it is very clear that this is not, as had been suggested by some of the members opposite, exclusively a part of the city of Winnipeg that this is geared to. There are certainly lots of communities that were very progressive and very aggressive in seeking gas heat for their communities, some of which include communities in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. So this is not a bill that is specifically geared towards some select constituencies, as pointed out by some members opposite, suggested by some members opposite. This is something that benefits all Manitobans.

We are very proud of this legislation in that it, again, provides protection. It is what the consumers deserve. They did not have protection from a privatized utility in the Manitoba telephone system when the rates went up 68 percent. They did not have that protection. This process has served Manitobans well through the Public Utilities Board, and the Public Utilities Board will continue to serve Manitobans well.

Our government is acting on recommendations to address the issue of rate shock. Manitobans do not want rate shock. We have been fortunate, very fortunate so far in November to have only a few days where the mercury has dipped to considerably cold weather, but we know in this province that we are guaranteed to have a few weeks where the mercury will be dipping considerably lower than it has been. Manitobans should not have to compromise their personal comfort and safety in their homes because they cannot afford to pay.

Members opposite keep saying, "Let the market handle it. Let the market handle it." Well, we saw

what the market has done with MTS. We saw that MTS has abandoned certain markets because they question the profitability of Internet access, so there are areas of Manitoba that do not have Internet access because it is now a private corporation that does not see any value in addressing Internet access in these areas. That is really unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, because some of those areas in question are in my constituency and neighbouring constituencies.

But we do not abandon constituencies in Manitoba. We look to work with the recommendations of the Public Utilities Board. We work with Manitobans and we work to protect, as the bill is designed to do, ratepayers from rate shock and to provide long-term solutions.

I will reiterate what I said when we last met, Mr. Speaker, that this provides for the expansion of the Power Smart program. It has been referenced a couple of times that the Suzuki Foundation recognizes Manitoba as leaders, but members opposite, they have no interest in being leaders on this issue. They say, "Let the market do what it may," but we are leaders at so many levels and in so many initiatives that we have brought forward with respect to energy in this province that we are recognized by a world-renowned scientist. That is Dr. David Suzuki and the foundation.

So we will continue to go the course with respect to initiatives in Power Smart that encourage Manitobans to make good use of their resources, to find ways to conserve resources, and, of course, the fact that the more we save in energy here in Manitoba, the more we can export to foreign markets. We have done a heck of a job as a province, a heck of a job as a public utility with respect to some of the exports of hydro that we have seen and the recent announcement that members opposite must recall with the \$500-million sale of electricity to Ontario.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important that Manitobans take a look at The Winter Heating Cost Control Act and recognize what it has stands for. It stands for protection. It stands for long-term solutions. I cannot emphasize that enough, that Manitobans deserve protection from rate shock, the same that was not afforded to them with MTS, as I said, and they deserve a long-term solution. That is what he are committed to do. We have long-term solutions through the support of the Power Smart expansion and through encouraging exploration alternatives to natural gas; again, more

announcements coming, more announcements around wind energy, more announcements around calls for proposals on different initiatives that will achieve that end.

So I think it is very important that members opposite take a look at this, not as let the market decide. We want to let the people decide. We have talked to many Manitobans who have said that they need the rate protection, and many Manitobans value the programs that we have brought forward, including the Power Smart initiatives.

We will continue to work that way, Mr. Speaker, because that is our commitment to the people of Manitoba. I thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 11.

\* (14:40)

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** I am very excited to rise today and speak some thoughts on Bill 11. So often we hear in public discourse that there is no difference between the different political parties that exist in our province or in our country, that everyone governs the same way, and that you cannot make a difference by entering politics.

*Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

This legislation fundamentally blows that theory out of the water. We have in front of us here a progressive, sustainable, excellent piece of legislation which addresses, not just environmental, not just social, not just economic needs, but all three of them together. This, I would suggest, is a prime example of sustainable development legislation. It is just the latest chapter in many phenomenal accomplishments of this government in this particular area.

Now I want to give some context to my detailed comments on the proposed act, on Bill 11. I want to start with that context in looking at the energy situation that we face here in Manitoba. The opportunities that our government has capitalized on already are just the tip of the iceberg. When we came to office, there were no wind power turbines anywhere in Manitoba. Everyone who lives in Manitoba knows that we have a wind resource, but the collective brain trust and the opposition party did not think that that was particularly important or interesting. They did not pursue it. They did not accomplish anything. Then Manitoba Hydro has a phenomenal drought where if they had had a different source of energy as a backup, which is what

wind can do, it would not have been as financially troublesome a year as it ended up being.

This government, with its foresight, with its efforts, with its collaborative approach to working with Manitoba Hydro and working with Manitobans, rather than against everybody, has found a solution, and quite a phenomenal one at that. The first wind turbines in Manitoba now comprise one of the largest wind farms in the entire country, 99 megawatts going up in St. Leon, Manitoba. They are beautiful, and there is more to come. Just today, as coincidence would have it, our Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak) has announced that, building on that 99 megawatts, Manitoba is now going to pursue 1000 megawatts of power for electricity in Manitoba.

This contrasts with our overall power grid which stands at around 5000 megawatts. So, to put that into context, we are looking at a 20 percent increase in the capacity of Manitoba to generate electricity through wind power alone. It is a phenomenal vision and one that I am very excited to be part of moving forward.

On top of this, with wind power, we also have a very sustainable approach, a very sensible approach to energy conservation. Manitoba Hydro's Power Smart program has conserved 250 megawatts of energy. To put that into context, Mr. Speaker, we have, on proposal right now, a new, low-impact dam in northern Manitoba called Wuskwatim. If it ends up being approved by the local community, and if it reaches construction stage, and when it operates, it will generate an additional 200 megawatts of power.

So, through simple conservation measures, we have been able to achieve a remarkable Power Smart saving, and I might add that Manitoba has gone from ninth place in the country to first place in overall energy efficiency. This is not our own government's assessment of the position. This comes to us from the Canadian association for energy efficiency. They are the ones who do the objective independent analysis each year of how appropriate governments' actions are in the area of energy conservation. Manitoba, this year, I am very proud to say, ranks No. 1 in the country, stark contrast to the policies and procedures that were in place prior to our government coming into office.

So there already, Mr. Speaker, you can see quite a few dramatic differences between our political party and the political party that inherited government in Manitoba before we did, and 1999. I

might also add that the Liberal Party members, the independent members, since they do not have enough members to constitute an actual official party in the Chamber at the moment, they have taken exactly the same position on Bill 11.

Other success stories that our government is very proud to pass on relate to a 13-fold increase in the production of ethanol in Manitoba due to the expansion of Husky's plant in Minnedosa, which is now underway. We also have four very exciting proposals for biodiesel.

All of these, Mr. Speaker, relate to reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, all of which are imported from Alberta. So not only do we have an environmental improvement when we manage to use less fossil fuels, we have reduced the size of our ecological footprint in our contribution to global climate change, but we also are improving the economy of Manitoba. When we have to purchase gasoline whether it is for our cars and when we have to purchase home-heating fuel for natural gas, where do folks think that energy comes from? It does not come from Manitoba. It comes from Alberta. That represents millions and millions of dollars going out of our province and into the treasuries of other jurisdictions.

Now, the Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau) has just kindly reminded me that, in fact, we do have oil exploration operations that are happening at a historical rate as well in southwestern Manitoba, and I certainly wish the lucky folks who live on top of those oil reserves the best of luck. I do not think they will need it in the years ahead, but the fossil fuel economy is being transformed right before our eyes. Manitoba is leading the way in that leadership role, not just in our own country, but across the globe.

Of course, we also were the first province to bring in a hydrogen strategy exploring the enormous potential of that power source for the future. Again, a fossil fuel free source of power when you consider that Manitoba's electricity required to generate the hydrogen would be coming from fossil fuel free energy sources like wind and like hydro. The success stories on this front, Mr. Speaker, are numerous, and, as I pointed out, they are not just environmental, they are not just economic, they are not just social, they are all three wrapped together. This is a balanced approach and it is very appropriate. It leads to good policy which benefits Manitobans and the planet now and into the future.

Then we have Bill 11. Bill 11 has been brought in, and we are here at the second reading stage. I am sure there will be quite a few commentaries about it over the weeks ahead, but what everyone should recognize is that this is an example of what a government can achieve when it has the political courage and the capacity to help its residents in the face of adversity. If we were to just step back, as both opposition parties and as some spokespersons for other political entities outside of this Chamber have advocated, if we were to just step back and allow the market to take its magical course every single person using natural gas in our province would be facing, according to the Public Utilities Board, again, an independent arm's-length entity, a 44 percent rate increase. This is simply not acceptable.

A person has the capacity to change their lifestyle so that they use fewer fossil fuels when it comes to driving their car. You can choose to use alternative transportation and, in fact, just this morning, as it happens, I was at Mulvey School in my constituency of Wolseley where that school won the provincial contest for Walk to School Week held back earlier this fall. All of us will remember the hundreds of students that came down to the Legislature to celebrate the launch of that event, and we all walked around the inside of the building many times since it was very cold outside. That is an example of the type of lifestyle change that people do have control over.

When it comes to heating your home, though, particularly if you are a renter, you do not have any control whatsoever over the price of natural gas and what it does to you. That price in some parts of our own country and in other parts of the world is set by the free market and the results are devastating. Low-income people, working people, middle-class people, high-income people, everybody feels the pinch when the global price of natural gas is such that we face rate increases like 44 percent.

\*(14:50)

Remarkably, members opposite from both the Progressive Conservative and the Liberal parties are advocating for exactly that. They do not believe in the public good. They do not believe in making a difference for people using policy measures that are readily available. They want the market to set the price for a basic necessity like natural gas for heating, and I find that absolutely appalling. How on earth would members opposite be able to look

anyone in their home communities in the eye and say that they took that policy position when people would not be able to afford to pay for their gas bills, when the schools and hospitals, the health care facilities which might be running on natural gas, when those were unable to afford the price increases? How on earth would members opposite or anyone else taking the position that markets should set the rate for natural gas, how on earth could anybody justify that position to the people who were going to be most affected by that decision? I find it an absolutely appalling policy stance. I am eternally grateful that none of those commentators are currently in office in Manitoba, and I sincerely hope that that does not happen any time soon, given the type of policies that these people would bring in to the devastating impact on Manitobans, our economy and our environment.

We should also, I think, take pause to note that none other than David Suzuki has applauded Manitoba as having the very best climate change initiatives and programs in the entire country. It is a fairly powerful endorsement from someone that I have admired for many, many years and whose opinions I had enormous respect for, but David Suzuki, it seems, is not someone that Conservatives or Liberals or others are prepared to listen to.

I might also point out that Manitoba Hydro has done a phenomenal job and should be congratulated as such for hedging. For those who may not know what hedging is, this is where you attempt to reduce the risk of future expenses by purchasing a quantity of natural gas, in this instance, in advance and then having those reserves available. Manitoba Hydro was able to purchase its natural gas well in advance and at a price which is several dollars lower than what the price spikes are currently calling for on the open market. This, as we heard from the Energy Minister during Question Period just now, has had a remarkable impact on Manitoba Hydro's fiscal capacity to avoid the dramatic price spikes that would otherwise be happening if members opposite had their way and privatized the Crown corporations in Manitoba, which we know full well if what they would do.

Anybody who still thinks that a Tory or a Liberal is going to give you a better Manitoba or a better bottom line should take a look at Bill 11 and the positions being adopted and they will see full well that that is patently false. It always has been, but here is another prime example of just how false that really is. Under a privatized system where Manitoba Hydro

is just operating in the market, same as anybody else, where market prices are just set by the market, the people who can afford it are able to purchase electricity and able to purchase natural gas. They are able to stay warm but for people who cannot afford it, for the public institutions that need electricity and who need natural gas in order to run the schools and run the hospitals, well, those entities are really going to have a tough time with that type of a future, which, I hope, never happens.

That is the policy position that they have taken. They are accountable for it, and I have absolutely no problem standing here in this Chamber and pointing out the immense superiority of what our government has brought in in stark contrast to their vision. We should also, Mr. Speaker, acknowledge that, when we talk about the difference between commercial customers and residential customers, that distinction is not based on the type of activity that is actually being done using the power that is purchased from Manitoba Hydro for electricity or from Centra Gas. It is a question of scale. So, when I talk about schools and hospitals being affected, that is the absolute truth. It does not matter. There is no special rate for a government entity. There is no special rate whether you are a non-profit daycare or if you are a local community group providing services to local citizens. It all depends on the scale and quantity of the resource that your operation is using.

When the phrase "commercial rate" is used, it is important for us to remember that those large consumers may well be part of the public sector and they may well also be part of the business sector. What this legislation does is it enables all of those users to avoid the enormous market-driven price spike that is going to occur if their policies were implemented. They actually want to hurt businesses. They would put businesses out of business. They would have a devastating impact on low-income people.

We know full well from the experiences of the nineties what the previous government did to low-income people, what they would continue to do if they ever had a chance to do it again. There has been no policy change over there, and their position on Bill 11 is yet one more reflection of this. Our government, our political party, believes in the public good. We believe in the common good.

We believe in protecting the common good through legislation such as bans on bulk water, through legislation such as requirements of

referendums should any future government get the insane idea into its head that it wants to try to privatize a Crown corporation, through proper funding support for our public entities, health care, education, rather than advertisements in schools and privatization of home care, all of which were not so brilliant ideas from members opposite and which get added to a very full closet of skeletons that they get to lug around with them.

The fundamental difference between our political party and our ability in government to achieve something like Bill 11 and to propose it is that we start with the premise that the public good has value and that it merits protection. Members opposite do not care about Manitoba as a whole. They do not care about Manitobans as a whole. They want to divide everyone up into little pieces and set them against each other, which is what the market does and what it is doing right now in places in our own country outside of Manitoba who do not have the protections that we are proposing and which we already have in place.

The other aspect of Bill 11, and there are two primary themes to what Bill 11 will do. On the one hand, it will delay the price spikes that are happening with natural gas on the world market until a spring hearing of the Public Utilities Board will step forward with a ruling. This, of course, will provide relief for natural gas users throughout the winter, which is the most important time of year when you are a natural gas user.

The other benefit of Bill 11, and the part which I am equally excited about, is this legislation will enable Manitoba Hydro under its own auspices to establish a fund which will be used to reduce the consumption of natural gas by Manitobans. Add to this the other recent announcement from our Energy Minister, who has been very busy of late, that he is pulling together a review of commercial code for both commercial and institutional settings. The building code and electricity code will be reviewed with an eye to improve energy efficiency. The recent announcement is also from his office that, through Manitoba Hydro, homeowners with natural gas who may wish to reduce their environmental footprint and save some money will be encouraged to do so. If they wish to install some additional insulation in their attic or in their walls, Manitoba Hydro will cover a portion of the cost for that insulation purchase. These are just a couple of the possible uses for the fund which this act will enable Manitoba Hydro to establish.

So we have here a piece of legislation which economically makes great sense because it reduces our reliance on fossil fuels coming in from out of province and which will then lead to additional financial benefits within Manitoba when funds do not move away from our jurisdiction. Socially speaking, this is a progressive piece of legislation because it benefits everyone in Manitoba.

It allows all of us collectively to work together through our provincial government and through our Crown corporation in order to avoid the price spike which the market place would impose on us otherwise. Environmentally, we not only managed to recognize the enormous achievements that Manitoba has made already in the area of energy efficiency, but we have now given Manitoba Hydro, through Bill 11, the capacity to put more resources into demand-side management, an area where Manitoba Hydro is already recognized as a national and international leader and, as I mentioned before, where Manitoba finishes first in energy efficiency.

\* (15:00)

When you put those three pillars together, the environment, the economy and social well-being, that is when you have created a piece of sustainable development legislation. It is an excellent, excellent example of taking a balanced approach, not putting the blinders on and saying, "Oh, we've got to only look after the environment" or "We've got to only look after the economy." There are ways to address issues in all three areas. This piece of legislation does it.

I have no idea why members opposite are speaking against it. I think that is a bad move politically. This is a very popular piece of legislation. It is going to hang around your necks for years, and we are going to make sure of that. I will take this piece of legislation door-to-door in my community or any community around the province, and it will be very easy to talk to folks on the doorstep and say, "Do you believe in avoiding natural gas price spikes? Do you believe in energy conservation? Do you believe in a cleaner environment? Do you believe in a healthier economy? Well, guess what? The Tories and the Liberals are opposed to it. The NDP is in favour of it. We brought it in. We are going to pass it. We are going to make it happen." Manitobans will remember that for years to come. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives

me great honour to speak to Bill 11, The Winter Heating Cost Control Act. As others before me have mentioned, first, it is certainly something that we agree with on this side of the House and certainly something former Premier Ed Schreyer had mentioned. Certainly, it is wrong to subsidize fossil-fuel rates with renewable hydro energy. That, certainly, is something that we believe in on this side of the House.

Bill 11 does not cross-subsidize, Mr. Speaker—

**An Honourable Member:** Yes, it does.

**Mr. Smith:** As the member opposite likes to say, incorrectly, that it does subsidize, Mr. Speaker, Bill 11 provides for price increase in natural gas to be deferred and paid back over time. This does prevent hardship of sudden rate shock and does mean using Hydro profits to reduce rates. Bill 11 provides for some Hydro profits to help Manitobans reduce their consumption and to switch to alternatives. The member from Wolseley had mentioned many of those areas, that it, certainly, does help reduce the energy levels that we are using here in Manitoba and utilize that energy and most profits to assist Manitobans for the future.

With that goal in mind, Mr. Speaker, based on economics and, certainly, based on energy consumption reduction in the province of Manitoba combined, we have seen, since the early 1970s when the Schreyer government was in and expanding hydro in the province of Manitoba for the benefit of Manitobans, I might mention, many rural Manitobans that we have certainly addressed over the last period of time to have equalization of rates not only throughout the large urban centres but, certainly, throughout all of the rural Manitoba for our producers, for our small businesses, and for our consumers in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, you can take the analogy, I guess, by saying that Alberta has oil and a lot of dead dinosaurs under the ground; in fact, I would go so far to say many dinosaurs above the ground in their provincial government, but that Manitoba, I believe, is looking at the future and looking at what we see as, certainly, the utilization of an energy source in many forms, utilizing hydro-electric power in many forms, both in hydraulic development of hydro and in, now, wind power. We heard the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak) talk about some of the positives that we can look forward to as we develop our hydro-electric energy power

source in Manitoba, to all the benefits of all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the rate shock and what may happen with using market-controlled rates, and the member opposite, certainly the Liberal Party's view, I guess, is not to assist Manitobans during a time of increasing high energy. What the potential impact that would have, not only on Winnipeg, that he seems to only recognize, but a lot of rural Manitobans, and certainly in northern Manitoba, is, when you have instant fluctuations of market-driven rates, the impact that that has on small rural economies and long-term effects on the reduction of those businesses within rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the member may want to get out of the Perimeter Highway once in a while, and consider the impact of not having large market shares and the impact of slight reductions of market share over a short period of time and the impact, the long-term impact, to rural and small communities of those businesses reducing and shutting down, not only on the producers' side, but on the business side and the large business side for that matter in rural Manitoba.

When you look at the strategy of what this bill is bringing into force, it is to not have cross-subsidization, but deferral for a period of time. Now, when we look at, and we consider the development of what this bill addresses, keeping in mind this time of year when large increases can have devastating impacts over not just the economy in Manitoba, but how quickly that happens in rural Manitoba, this bill certainly addresses a number of things. One, Mr. Speaker, is to have a deferral for a period of time and a stabilization of energy costs going through the winter and into the spring, something that people can look at and have a focus on what their costs will be over a period of time, utilizing a reduction in the use of the fossil fuels and the potential deferral costs and the investment on some of the capital side for a cost reduction for better energy in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, when we look at fossil fuels as not being a renewable energy source and the shortness of supply that we are starting to see and the impacts that you can have on market-driven costs from events that can happen, emergency events, for instance, what we have seen through the Gulf of Mexico over the last period of time where a lot of the energy for North America comes from, it is very hard for stability when you are dependent, so heavily dependent strictly on fossil fuels within a society, and a society that we have here in the north

could certainly be one that would be impacted as much or more than anybody in North America.

People have to heat their homes and people have to continually run their businesses. They have their transportation systems and loops set up, and it is dependent too heavily on fossil fuels right now, unfortunately. But this bill does start to address some of that. It starts to address that over 230 000 homes in Manitoba that are very dependent on natural gas. The alternatives are out there. I believe that this bill addresses sustainability for long-term planning and looks at geothermal and geothermal potential. It looks at alternate energy sources or double energy sources that we could utilize here in Manitoba and start to look at better energy efficiency and what that will result in over the long term.

Where a price in natural gas can leap by 10 percent, sometimes it is something that people can take into their planning, their business planning. When it leaps 20 percent, it begins to become more difficult. When it leaps 30 and 40 percent, it starts to become unmanageable. When you have these rate increases and you have no stability in predicting what those rate increases might be, you have to look at alternative energy.

\*(15:10)

I believe that this bill addresses that. We look at the fund that allows the export of our power, Mr. Speaker, as we, the only government that has ever developed hydro-electricity in this province, begin to look at again long-term planning and the strategy for long-term planning through the hydraulic development of energy here in the province of Manitoba, something that actually is not new, but something where action been taken by this government and, certainly, with the investment of private business in the province of Manitoba, with the development of wind power.

Mr. Speaker, wind power is something going back many years, decades, in fact, along with solar power. It was first developed or not first developed but certainly driven on the southwestern coast of the United States in California, and some of the reports from Berkeley going back to the mid to late seventies addressed the potential for the development of wind power.

At that time, I guess, along the lines of the new leader of the Green Party, the press talked at that time, and some of the Republicans at that time talked, about not listening to the long-haired radicals

and university students and people in college. I hear a lot along the same lines from the new leader for the federal Green Party, unfortunately, which was, to my understanding, with Manitoba Hydro. So I am dismayed by those comments that were made similarly along the lines of her wanting to remove long-haired university students and certainly people who are going to college and university as being left-leaning.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the left-leaning people that she talked about certainly were the people from 30 years ago, and now it does not look like such a bad idea. In fact, it is economically feasible to do so. It is a strategy for an alternate fuel for consumption with renewable energy and combined with the hydraulic development of hydro-electric power in the province of Manitoba as a good alternate source.

Along the same lines, Mr. Speaker, when people a number of years ago talked about an energy strategy of utilizing solar power and the possibility and potential of solar power, I recall and I remember very well the same lines coming from I guess you could term it right-wing radicals that said, "Well, that will never work. It is economically non-feasible. It will never happen. There will not be any development of this power, that we should not be considering it and we should not be looking at it." Well, all you have to do is walk about a 10- or 15-minute walk from where we are privileged to be debating this issue today to Red River campus downtown and look at the state-of-the-art solar power that is being generated from that project that we have there.

So, Mr. Speaker, the stabilization of energy and the stabilization of energy costs and certainly to look at the reduction of the utilization of fossil fuels used so prevalently and so heavily in a market like ours is only good planning. It is good economic sense. It looks at commercial rates that have been increased, you know, from 12 to 18 percent. Basically, we have been able to cushion that, and we have been able to cushion it through having this energy supply divided up into many sources.

When you consider that it has been about 44 percent in market increase on the commercial side in rates, I daresay in a residential situation when you have a 44 percent increase, we know how that impacts our household income. We know how that impacts having to divert some of the other necessary expenses that we have in our own personal lives, but just think of a business or an industry that has

probably, oh, Nexen Chemical uses hydro-electric, but you take something along the lines of Simplot chemical company that has one of the largest input costs in their cost structure being natural gas.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Simplot chemical company in a community like mine, in Brandon, if there was a sudden flow of 44 percent on the largest input cost that they had, it could be devastating for hundreds of workers in a community like Brandon. You could take many other examples throughout rural Manitoba. Certainly, you could find a lot of examples here in the Capital Region. You could find examples right in the city of Winnipeg, not to mention the municipal portion that we have, and having to pass on those costs to consumers in other forms or other ways. When you can adjust and look at rate shock on a deferral plan as this bill does, it does bring stability, and it does bring the ability to develop affordable energy and the benefits of that a couple of years out.

The previous government had a strategy through the nineties. I think many Manitobans started to see that strategy, and I daresay if we would not have been elected in '99, we may have had our energy company or Manitoba Hydro sold off by now. A good example of that and certainly, Mr. Speaker, I will let people develop their own outcomes, but they thought it was a great idea to sell, probably, one of the best technological advantages and companies that we had here in the province of Manitoba employing some 6000 people. The members opposite, I know, want to put their heads down and not be reminded of this. Now the Manitoba Telecom Services we have here in Manitoba or the old Manitoba Telephone System that was developed, built over a period of 70 years in this province by people in every corner of every part of this province—you had line people, "linemen" at that time, it was called, working in every small and rural community, building that corporation, building those lines for the benefits of all Manitobans.

We had some of the lowest costs, lowest rate access to communications in all of Canada, in fact, I daresay all of North America and literally all of the world where it was expected that someone that was in a community would have a telephone. It would be affordable, they would have the ability, and people would not have to pencil it in as being a major expense into their household budget. That worked well. It worked extremely well on not only building the amount of jobs that we had and the spin in the economy that that had, but, Mr. Speaker, it had

seniors in their homes that had a \$13 bill for a telephone that, just in case, when they were shut in their homes or they could not get out, they had the comfort of knowing that they could contact in an instant some help if need be.

When we look at the tripling of those rates. and we look at the tripling of those rates along the lines of what we are talking about with this bill on being able to stay in your home and have it as the lowest cost for the benefit of society for Manitobans, I have now heard many times from seniors, I have heard many times from people that are disabled, I have heard many times from single-parent families, I have heard many times from people that have been students or impoverished, a phone is no longer something that is a right. In their mind, a phone is something for people that have wealth. Mr. Speaker, how terribly unfortunate that is for our society in this day and age where we have phone bills that are \$40 and \$50 a month on minimum pricing when they were \$13, as little as \$19.98. That will not happen to Manitoba Hydro. That will not happen to Crown corporations under this government, and the difference in philosophy, I think, between our side and the other side of the House, is that—

**An Honourable Member:** We care.

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I heard a member say, "We care," and yes, we do care, but we care on two fronts. We care on the front of developing a long-term strategy as the dinosaurs in Alberta begin to be sucked completely out of the ground and the environment is blackened by the overuse of fossil fuels. Renewable energy and what we will have in Manitoba will be the future. It is an economic benefit. It employs a lot of people, but, as well, it allows people socially to have a source of energy, a proud source of energy, a world-leading source of energy and an affordable source of energy.

So, Mr. Speaker, going back to the early seventies and the Berkeley days where Republicans—I compare Conservatives to Republicans—talked with the long-haired radicals with the ideas of new technology. I know the member from Steinbach certainly hits my view of a Republican, but I know, in talking to many members in his community, and more and more, and more so, people within his constituency are connected now with the Internet. They are connected to modern-day practices, best practices that are out there. They will not for much longer be fooled by the Republicans or the

Conservatives of the Manitoba flavour that is along the same flow as the President Bush flavour. But, you know what, the more information that people have—and I know they sold off the MTS, the telephone company, so they tried not to allow every single household to have access and to get their information out, but Manitobans know that Manitoba Hydro is a publicly owned corporation, is the future.

It is what Alberta will run out of and, Mr. Speaker, I give Alberta full credit, they utilized the only large revenue source that they had. Certainly, through the eighties, it went into a disaster; now they are lucky enough to be sitting on those dead dinosaurs that they are sucking out of the ground. They are utilizing that money, certainly, to their benefit for the citizens that they have, but they sold off in Alberta a large part of their hydro corporation, their company. They split it generally pretty much in half and that was narrow sighted.

The energy costs in Alberta, and you look at the electrical side it, were good for us, though, because actually we are looking at a lot of those companies, Alcan comes to mind, a sodium chloride plant that moved out into the member from Arthur-Virden's area. It brought with it jobs; it brought with it some economic benefit for Manitoba. We saw Canexus, where the old Nexen plant in Brandon had two expansions over the last period of time—Ontario just shut down their operations with Nexen or Canexus, and they are now looking at Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to look at what protects Manitobans, certainly, with rate shock with this bill. We will look at what protects all Manitoba families throughout the entire province of Manitoba, but we will look at it with the future of developing an energy-efficient system that will work into that as well. This bill does address that. It encourages alternatives to natural gas use or overuse. Certainly, the geothermal technology that will be looked at moving ahead in Manitoba, certainly as we look at Waverley West and the vision for Waverley West and the investment in Waverley West in heading toward a geothermal community and a well-planned community, is good sense. It is good economic sense, and it is good sense for people living there for cheaper cost for their home fuel and taking that money and reinvesting it down into the inner city will be of benefit as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, our energy strategy in Manitoba is something that is moving ahead. It is, I know, quite a difference from the energy strategy

that the flat land party on the other side would like to address, on the Alberta strategy, the Republican right-wing strategy, of "use it all now, damn the torpedoes, do not worry about the future, do not worry about the children of the future, do not worry about the society that is coming up," the overpackaging society on the opposite that would like to look at, certainly, living for today, spending everything for today, having everything reduced and the cost reduced for themselves.

Our philosophical strategy certainly does not involve that. It involves planning for the future, as the Schreyer government planned for the future, which comes to another issue along the lines of what this bill does. I recall the right-wing Republican Party from the opposite side on auto insurance, going back, again, to the Schreyer government while they were building and planning and developing hydro-electricity for the Province of Manitoba and the benefit of Manitobans, along with MTS. They talked about the utilization of, certainly, a publicly owned automobile insurance company that members opposite seemed to have—oh, well, their heads are down again. If they would look up for a minute. There they are.

You look again, and, now, as the mistake they made with selling off one Crown corporation and looking at a couple of others, now their view has changed. They sit there and they go: "What a vision that the New Democratic Party had for long term, not for tomorrow, not for next week or the month after, but years ahead for our children, and, certainly, the benefits of Manitoba."

Now, Mr. Speaker, as with our hydro-electric, which is recognized right across the nation as being one of the premier corporations and well-run corporations, auto insurance, certainly, was something that the members opposite seem to have changed their mind on, their views on.

The Liberals, of course, Mr. Speaker, change their mind every couple of days, but the party opposite, the Republican or the Conservative Party opposite, certainly, has a view of selling off Crown corporations. The New Democratic vision for Manitoba Hydro reflected in this bill, I think, speaks for itself, the economic benefits for Manitobans, the stability for planned strategy of our producers.

I notice many of the rural MLAs that I see across sitting in their seats in the Conservative Party that we have here with us this afternoon are nodding their heads, I believe, in agreement that the benefits of our

decision to stabilize and have rates for all of Manitobans, our producers certainly, was a good move.

Mr. Speaker, it would have been a good idea to keep MTS for those same rural members, and certainly our producers and our farmers and our rural Manitobans, but when you think about it, whom do you trust when it comes to the sale of Crown corporations in Manitoba?

Do you trust the Republicans or, I mean, the Conservatives, opposite, or do you trust the building of the New Democratic Party's vision for our Crown corporations on an economic basis that will be beneficial for society in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker?

It will be even-keeled, Mr. Speaker, no surprises from this side of the House. We are the only ones that have ever developed one watt of electricity in this province of Manitoba over the last hundred years. Certainly, we will continue to do that. This bill is something to be proud of.

This bill is something I know that members opposite would like to speak to, I believe. If their caucus would only allow them they would do it and support this bill, support the positives in this bill, support this for Manitobans, rural Manitobans, urban Manitobans and certainly for the future of our children and for Manitobans. With those few words on the record, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for this limited time.

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to put a few words on this Bill 11 because I think it speaks to the philosophy or the basic beliefs of the different parties. We have here a bill which is investing in the future, planning for the future, and it has got a win-win-win situation.

The first win is it is providing conservation, it is providing saving energy and allowing people to conserve long-term energy resources because what it does is it allows people to put money into their homes, into insulation, into new windows. It expands the Power Smart program. The Power Smart program is one of the best programs in North America as far as establishing the long-term vision that energy savings is an important focus in our province.

So an example is, in the Power Smart program, we have been able to have loans to people who own homes from \$3,500 to \$5,000. What happens is that these loans allow people to get new windows, new

doors, better insulation and that then saves money. It does not just save money today; it saves money for the long term. This becomes really important because what it does is it allows middle- and low-income Manitobans a chance to save money forever. So it is not just a one shot deal like in Alberta. What they do is they give you \$400. The \$400 is great for one year, but what we are trying to do is a multi-year vision, a vision of building.

\* (15:30)

The second win is to local contractors. I am surprised at the members opposite, because what this does is it employs local contractors, small businesses, medium-sized businesses. I am surprised the members opposite do not support small and medium-sized businesses. You hear the screams from members opposite about how much they hate businesses, and it is terrible that the member from Steinbach keeps on blurting from his seat that he does not want to support local businesses of any kind.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Point of order being raised. Please state your point of order.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** As you well know, *Beauchesne* says that all information needs to be factual in this House. In fact, what I was saying is while this minister gives loans to porn shops, we do not believe in giving loans to porn shops. He misunderstood me. I wish he would correct the record.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** On the same point?

**An Honourable Member:** The same point of order.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** On the same point of order, the honourable minister.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Industry (Mr. Rondeau) was talking about business and the positives of this bill for businesses, it appeared to me that the member opposite from Steinbach was not agreeing that the benefits for business are important for Manitobans.

He appears to have no point of order. I would have thought by sitting in my chair and watching him that he was, in fact, saying that he did not care about the businesses in Manitoba. Obviously, that there were spike increases for business in Manitoba did not seem to matter.

So, Mr. Speaker, I was along the same line as the Minister of Industry on that. He does not seem to have a point of order. If he was not heckling so loud and would listen to what the minister was saying, we may be able to understand what he was saying.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Everybody knows that a dispute over the facts is not a point of order. The honourable member has no point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Rondeau:** Mr. Speaker, it is a shame that the members opposite continue to throw accusations at all businesses and are so anti-business. Again, I talk about the philosophical nature of our party.

The members opposite proposed to be a business party. Well, here is what happens. Since the members opposite say that they are going to be a business party, they are not supporting, they slag the comments against giving businesses a better shot for energy. They are shooting down the philosophy of support of small, medium and large business. They do not think that government should support or assist any businesses. They think that businesses should be left to anything.

We believe that we work in partnership with business, and I see a sad day that the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) continues to say that we should not support business in any way, shape or form. I also—

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** A point of order is being raised. Please state your point of order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I will continue to stand on a point of order as long the member continues to misrepresent me. Again, I talked about the issue of porn shops, and his former premier, Ed Schreyer, who finds this to be regressive. If he wants to put misinformation on the record, then he should apologize for continuing to do that, Mr. Speaker.

**An Honourable Member:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, he continues to put this information on.

**An Honourable Member:** You are abusing the rules of the House.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

The points of order are not to be used for debates. There is no point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Rondeau:** In spite of the members opposite continuing to interrupt the speech, on behalf of all Manitobans, including the business community, of which the member opposite must know very little, what we have is a government that is supporting the business community as far as the builders and those. I know that, when I met with the manufacturing companies, they mentioned that they really appreciate the Power Smart program. They appreciate our efforts to avoid rate shock.

When I talked about the conservation issues, I think it is really important to mention that we are a leader in the geothermal heat pumps. It is interesting that the member from Dauphin-Roblin and myself both have geothermal heat pumps in our houses because we believe in conservation. I know the member opposite from Steinbach may believe that we should burn fossil fuels to warm up the entire province, to warm up the environment because he does not believe in Kyoto. But we do believe that it is important to leave a positive environment for the future generations.

It is also interesting that the members opposite, the Liberal Party and the Tory Party, also are against seniors. They are against people who are on fixed incomes. I look at this: "We believe as the New Democratic Party the following:" and I ask you to listen to the quote, "Woodsworth once said, "What we desire for ourselves we desire for all." We believe that. We believe that we need a house that has heat in it. We believe that all Manitobans need a house that is safe and warm.

What you do is you are believing your philosophy. What you do is you put your political philosophy in front of compassion and caring for others. So what you said is that you do not care about the seniors. You do not care about those on fixed income. You do not care about those who might be affected by rate shock.

What we are saying is we are going to assist the seniors and the low-income people by providing them with some assistance on rate shock and some assistance to fix up their homes and their environments so that they can have a safe and warm environment.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

Now, the Liberal Party might bleat and say, "Oh, it is important that we let the market control." I am shocked that the members from the Liberal Party, or, actually, they do not have an official standing, but I am surprised that the members opposite continue to say, "We do not care about the seniors. We want the markets to completely take over and we do not care about those parts of our constituency that cannot afford the rate shock."

What we believe is we should concentrate on those people who need support. So what we have said is that philosophically we are going to stand beside the seniors. We are going to stand beside the low-income people. We are going to stand beside the moderate-income people, and what we are going to do—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Emerson, on a point of order.

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** A point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think the honourable minister is making an assumption that people simply do not understand. I think what he needs to understand is that we simply fail to understand how this NDP government can utilize the cleanest energy in the world to subsidize non-renewable fuels in the marketplace.

Most of that money will end up in the pockets of Ralph Klein, the Premier of Alberta, and we simply cannot understand how this government is going to try to portray itself as being Kyoto friendly, trying to save the environment, supporting the green programs by subsidizing fossilized fuel.

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

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Ever since the introduction of the government's plan to contain home heating costs, we have both the independent members and the opposition opposing that plan last Friday, I suspect prematurely, and now they are trying to get out of their position that is on the record and that is not in the interest of the public. I know they are trying to get out of that mess, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps they can get out of it by standing and debating this matter, not standing on points of order and abusing the rules of the House.

It is a matter, Mr. Speaker, that should be the subject of proper debate. I do not hear them speaking whatsoever to the bill.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before making my ruling, I just want to remind all honourable members that points of order are to be raised to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure from our Manitoba practices and should not be used for debate.

All members who wish to speak will have the opportunity, and if they disagree with something I think that would be the appropriate time to be addressing it because points of order should not be used for debate.

So the honourable member does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Rondeau:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I only hope that the members opposite would get up and speak to the bill rather than continuing to interrupt and raise points of order inappropriately. What I am trying to do is say how this bill is good and it is good for businesses, which I explained. It is good for the construction industry and the renovation industry. It is good for low-income Manitobans. It is good for moderate-income Manitobans.

\*(15:40)

What I want to explain to the members opposite is that this is not using more energy. What this is doing, Power Smart, which saves energy—and I say it slowly so the members opposite can understand—if you look at wind energy, wind energy uses the wind. It is renewable energy, and it creates renewable energy. So we do not have to use fossil fuels. Geothermal energy, geothermal is a heat pump that uses heat from the ground and then you do not have to use fossil fuels. I have it in my house. My energy bills are less because we use a renewable, environmentally friendly heat source. Biogas, which is part of our recent initiatives, is using renewable resources rather than non-renewable resources to create gas, and the same with diesel.

The member opposite, from Emerson, is very confused about whether these are renewable or non-renewable energy. What this is doing is we are creating renewable energy sources to save energy. What we are doing is we are creating Power Smart initiatives, and what we are doing, it has been a very successful program, Power Smart, what has been

able to happen is people who are on electrical have been able to conserve energy.

The conservation that we have done has saved millions of dollars, of which we can then export to the States at a higher price to benefit all Manitobans. It is a simple, simple understanding that you should be able to get. So I will say it slowly. What we want to do is we want to take the energy sources that we are saving and conserving and sell them to other jurisdictions, like the recent power sale to Ontario, like the other one to the States. What we will do is we will sell this energy to the States and make extra revenue which will benefit Manitobans. What we want to do is also extend that same benefit to gas users, because Power Smart has been very effective, and I think Manitobans understand that what we could do is invest now, give them a Power Smart where they can environmentally change their habitat so that they can conserve energy and so that the saving is not just for this year. It is for multiple years. Now I know that businesses get it. I know that most groups get it. I hope that members opposite will soon be able to get it.

The other one, when we start talking about market-driven, I want to take note of what has happened in the past, MTS. I will explain it to members opposite, we have Hydro, Manitoba Hydro, has not had huge rate increases. We have been considered very, very low-cost for electricity for businesses and for consumers. So what we have done is that we have managed to moderate the increases in Hydro because of export sales. So what we have done is that we have used to our benefit as far as businesses, and I talked to a lot of businesses that say they are located in Manitoba partially because of our hydro rates. They are also located here because of our tax rates and I find it passing strange that members opposite keep talking about taxes, taxes. We have lowered the tax rate. They raised them.

So it is interesting that in 1998 the tax rate was 9 percent; in 1999, and if you look now what we are doing is, we actually have a tax rate of 4.5 percent—we recently announced it—and 4 percent for small- and medium-sized businesses. That is really nice because what has happened, it has dropped by 50 percent; under our regime it has dropped by 50 percent. So the members opposite who keep on professing to be friends of business want to raise the energy costs; they want to raise the taxes; and they do not want to provide any assistance or support to keep the jobs here. I do not know what they want to do for the industry, but I know under our watch, it

has grown by \$10 billion in five years. Under their watch it was pretty well stagnant.

So now I look at the other issues. When we start talking about what we are trying to do, it is we are conserving, we are planning for the future. Now we look at the seniors. Members opposite, when they sold MTS, the rates went up 67 percent, 67 percent. What that is is that is not protecting seniors. What that is is that is hurting seniors. What we want to do is allow people a long-term benefit of the utility. So it is not a huge benefit to the ratepayers when you sell the MTS shares. What happens is those people who are shareholders, of which members opposite may hold shares, but those people who hold shares received the biggest benefit. The people who paid for that benefit are the consumers. What we are saying is that all consumers of gas and electricity in Manitoba should benefit from our natural benefits and advantages.

I think what we want to do is look at where we are as far as support. I wanted to talk a little bit about corporations. Under the former government, of course, they did not drop taxes. They did not drop taxes at all. It is only under our government, the first government since the Second World War, that we actually dropped corporate taxes, and I am pleased to see that. We are also moderating the rates for gas for these large consumers of gas. So here we are, the NDP party, who is helping the seniors, helping small business, helping the construction, helping corporations, helping moderate income and, again, helping all Manitobans by conserving.

When you talk about Kyoto, and I noticed that members opposite would scream as if Kyoto is a bad word, I think what we have to do is make sure that we plan for the future. Members opposite, including the Liberal Party, wanted us to give money back to each consumer and look at what happened. During the Liberal government, the federal government home heating rebate fiasco of a few years ago, they gave cheques to prisoners. They gave cheques to people who had never paid that money. What we are trying to do is we are trying to create the Power Smart program so all Manitobans can conserve energy and save costs. What we are trying to do is do it so that it makes sense.

Now I know the members opposite might leap from their chairs that it is important to have the rate shock and change it so that they hurt poor people. They believe in market value except when it benefits

themselves. I know that we believe on this side stabilization and affordable energy is important.

Now I want to tell a story that actually scared me during the first election, about two years after the first election, and I was out canvassing. It was kind of cold, it was late November; I was knocking on some doors, and I knocked on this older resident's door. It was kind of cold in her house and she was dressed up in a coat and all this. I talked to her, and I said, "Why are you doing this?" She was basically on a small, small pension, and she was trying to stay warm. What happened was she did not know about the guaranteed income supplement from the federal government because you had to apply for it. What I did was, that day, we went out, we got the forms filled out, we got all the things done and sent it. She ended up with a guaranteed income supplement, and she actually could almost heat her house. From that day on, I tried to do some canvassing because I think it is important for people to live in a house that has some heat.

Now members opposite may think it is more important to have the prices go with the world price. I believe it is important for all Manitobans to live in a house that has heat. I would be with the government that does believe in that. If I hear criticism from it as we do here, I would stand up for a government and a society that allows people to have a standard of living and an ability to keep warm before I would say we had to go to the world price. That is the type of government we stand for.

I also believe that we need to look after our businesses. When you start talking about our climate, we are often in competition with all places in the world. One of the costs we have in Manitoba, whether we like it or not, is heating costs. What happens is businesses come and say they are in a world market, they have to compete globally, et cetera, and so, lately we have had a huge increase in the American dollar to the Canadian dollar. Our dollar has appreciated because we do sell a lot of energy to the States and other countries so our dollars have gone up. Because the dollar has gone up, our companies are experiencing a great deal of pressure. Now, yes, we have expanded the economy, and, yes, we are working with business as partners to develop more technology. We have worked in the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative. We worked in the composite initiative. We are working with the Transportation Institute to work together to bring up technology, but we also have to work with our

businesses to make sure they are competitive worldwide.

\* (15:50)

So it becomes important to work with them so they have time to adjust their business practices. We do not want to have hundreds of people thrown out of business. We do not want absolute quick changes. So what we want to do is we want to moderate the prices; not control them totally. What we are trying to do is have a buffer so people have time to adjust in their businesses so that they can stay in business while they compete globally.

So what this does is it provides a buffer, a time where people and businesses can adjust. I know it is only two years. But that becomes an important two years.

So, when we have specialists from Manitoba Hydro who go as Power Smart, and businesses also have a program where you have experts go in and work with the businesses to figure out how to adjust their energy costs and figure out how to incorporate special technology, that gives them a chance to buy that technology, a chance to integrate that technology so that businesses can adjust and compete.

So, with our weather and our climate, we do not have a choice. We do have to heat the buildings. So what we want to do is make sure the businesses do not get a 44 percent rate shock that the Liberals want to give them. We do not want to give the businesses a 44 percent increase on that, because I know it would hurt our steel industry.

I am going to Ottawa to talk to the steel industry about the cost of energy, et cetera. I know my Liberal friends opposite may want to shut down the Selkirk rolling mills because of the cost of energy or other institutions that use a lot of energy. But I think it is important to keep them operating. I think if we can moderate the cost and work with Power Smart, work with the industry, then they will stay in business, and that is part of my goal. That is not to prop them up forever; it is to allow a transition time. I look at what we can do.

Now, the member opposite may say that the seniors should get a 44 percent rate increase. I ask the member opposite to talk to the federal people and give the seniors—the Old Age Security, the Canada Pension Plan do not go up by 42 percent. I would encourage the member opposite to talk to his federal cousins and give the seniors a decent increase, maybe not 44 percent, maybe 20 percent or 30

percent. But the member opposite says they should get a gas price increase of 44 percent. Maybe he should encourage his federal cousins to give seniors more of an increase. That way maybe more seniors will eventually vote for you.

I must add, you do not have to just give the seniors an increase in manila envelopes. They can get it by normal cheques and I am sure they will accept it.

The member across is talking about environmentally friendly. This does deal with geothermal. It does deal with conservation, new windows. I would like to point out that when you are talking about the program, you actually can get a 100 percent of, I believe, it is \$500, yes, 100 percent of \$500, or \$500 worth of insulation as part of this program, and that will save money for a long, long time.

So what we want to do is, as our founders would say: "What we desire for ourselves, we desire for all." Here it is. We desire seniors to have a comfortable, warm place to live. We believe that we should give low and moderate, all Manitobans in fact, a chance to be able to moderate their rate increases so they can invest in insulation, they can invest in home improvements, new doors, new windows, so that they can save money for long term, forever, by putting money into their home at a decent program.

We believe, this government believes that we need to support businesses, small, medium and large businesses, so that what we do is, not only do we have a competitive tax regime, but we allow them the time and flexibility to accommodate the 44 percent rate increase in gas. Those businesses, I know we have decreased their taxes considerably, but we also have to worry about their input costs. So we will continue to support the businesses.

I know we will also look towards future generations. When we are talking about future generations, I know that we are talking about putting in geothermal as far as Waverley West. I know the Air Canada hangar has geothermal heating for one of the larger facilities; I know a lot of people are doing new green buildings, like the new Hydro headquarters, which is a wonderful green building. The Red River College is another one that is very energy efficient, that is a new state-of-the-art building. In fact, if I went through all the new buildings that are being built in Manitoba using high technology or energy efficiency, it would take too

long, so I cannot do it. So not only do we have the lowest energy rates, we are working with businesses and individuals to conserve and be environmentally friendly and that is very, very important.

So I know members opposite may figure out whom they are supporting when they vote against Bill 11, because, if they are not supporting any of those groups, we wonder how many will be sitting as members in this Chamber in the future. We believe that we should be a government for all Manitobans, for all people, and we believe that our role is not to believe in the world market where we have to push the instant that things go up, that we have to force the seniors to pay it instantly. What we believe is we have a role in government and our role in government is to continue to support seniors, citizens and business in our economy and that does not mean a handout. That means giving them assistance, a hand up to continue to compete, a step up to compete. So we believe philosophically in Manitoba, in growing the economy and in Manitobans. I hope that the members opposite can see the light, feel the heat and come over to our side of the Chamber and vote in favour of Bill 11 for the benefit of all Manitobans. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, no more speakers? Okay, when this matter is again before the House—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When this matter is again before the House it will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach)—

**An Honourable Member:** Who?

**Mr. Speaker:** Russell.

#### House Business

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, would you canvass the House to see if there is unanimous consent so the House will adjourn after Routine Proceedings on Wednesday? This is regarding the AMM convention, and further discover if there is unanimous consent that on Thursday there is no votes and no quorum?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent so that the House will adjourn after Routine Proceedings on Wednesday, and is there unanimous consent that Thursday there will be no votes and no quorum requirements? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, would you please call second readings, Bill 15, then Bill 12, and then debate on second readings, Bills 5, 6 and 9?

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. May I ask the assistance of the House when we are dealing with House business, because it is very, very difficult to hear, so I ask the co-operation of all honourable members when we are dealing with the House business.

#### SECOND READINGS

##### Bill 15—The Emergency Measures Amendment Act

**Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines (Mr. Rondeau), that Bill 15, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

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

*Motion presented.*

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Speaker:** His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of this bill and the bill has been tabled.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act is a progressive legislation—

**Mr. Speaker:** A correction. The message was tabled, not the bill. Slight correction.

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act is progressive legislation that provides practical and useful tools for emergency managers in Manitoba. With these amendments, Manitoba will be the first jurisdiction in North America with legislation to specifically encourage disaster mitigation. Our research has not found any jurisdiction in the world that creates special statutory authority for disaster mitigation activities which are so important.

Mr. Speaker, the creation of emergency prevention orders provides an interim step before a

state of emergency to enable effective disaster mitigation activities by municipalities.

Municipalities have two options when faced with an emergency now, the normal state of business or the state of an emergency. This all-or-nothing approach does not recognize that there is often an interim period when a disaster is possible but not yet probable. The powers resulting from a state of emergency are not available during this period as a present or imminent emergency does not exist, and therefore the conditions for declaring a state of emergency are not present.

Emergency prevention orders will enable proactive mitigation work by providing additional powers to municipalities but not the full powers available in a state of emergency. These powers include ability to control or limit access to an area, order evacuations of people or livestock and access private property with an order from council.

Mr. Speaker, in 1994, the UN adopted the Yokohama Strategy to reproduce and reduce the impact of disasters in the 21st century. This included a call to adopt or modify, where necessary, legislation to support disaster risk reduction.

Manitoba will be the first jurisdiction in North America and one of the few in the world to create separate legislative authority with powers around disaster mitigation. The amendments clearly explain that EMO's role is to co-ordinate, direct and manage emergency management in the province with provincial departments.

The language recognizes that the on-site management of an emergency is the job of municipal or provincial first responders, and EMO's work is to manage those aspects of the emergency away from and in support of the rest of the emergency operation.

This does not amount to a change in EMO's work. This mandate is consistent with their job historically and the role of the provincial EMOs in emergency management in Canada. These functions and the mandate need to be crystal clear in the legislation to ensure there is no confusion or disagreements on the roles between or during emergencies.

The amendments will require provincial government departments to develop emergency programs including business continuity plans. Planning of this nature is prudent and a valuable requirement of and for an emergency such as a

pandemic, where planning shows the importance of business-continuity planning in particular.

Presently, offences for failing to comply with an order under the act are a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or one year in prison. These amendments will create a separate penalty for refusing an evacuation order whereby the penalty will be a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or one year in prison.

Refusing to evacuate complicates the management of an emergency and could put first responders at risk when trying to rescue a person from a more dangerous situation. The seriousness of this offence should be dealt with more severely.

There is a new requirement for municipalities to provide situation reports or impact assessment to Manitoba EMO when they request this information. Timely and complete information is perhaps the most critical component of effective emergency management. This amendment will allow EMO to gather information and ensure a province-wide understanding of an emergency and to effectively co-ordinate the emergency at a province-wide level.

There are also a number of housekeeping and clarification or organizational matters dealt with in this bill. These amendments are minor in nature and do not represent significant changes to the present requirements in the act.

Mr. Speaker, emergency planning and emergency management is critically important to Manitoba. These are more up-to-date incentives for doing that and, as mentioned, some of the first in North America.

These have been brought forward by the Manitoba Chiefs' association, the AMM and, certainly, many emergency providers in the province of Manitoba. This legislation will add to the positive EMO that we have in the province of Manitoba and give municipalities more tools for doing their job. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that we adjourn debate.

*Motion agreed to.*

### **Bill 12—The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act**

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Intergovernmental

Affairs and Trade (Mr. Smith), that Bill 12, The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable minister will have to use a different seconder, because the honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs—

**An Honourable Member:** He is sitting in his seat.

**Mr. Speaker:** Well, he is in his seat, but you said the honourable Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Trade, but it is Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade.

It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Transportation and Government Services, seconded by the honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade, that Bill 12, The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

**Mr. Lemieux:** I would like to put in just a couple of comments on the record with regard to this bill. Mr. Speaker, as I have said, I am pleased to rise and speak today on the amendments that my department is introducing into Bill 12, The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act. There are two primary issues addressed under this bill: No. 1, improvements to the process for removal of unauthorized structures from provincial highways; and No. 2, an update to the antiquated penalty provisions of this act.

Number one, with regard to the process for removal of unauthorized structures, the proposed amendments will allow the department to respond quickly and effectively to signs and structures placed illegally on provincial highways. Illegal signs and structures on highway rights-of-way often pose a threat to the public safety due to the design characteristics and inappropriate placement and construction materials used. They create problems for motorists' visibility, highway maintenance crews and general traffic safety of on-road and off-road vehicles. The act prohibits the placing of materials and structures on a departmental road except as permitted in the act or with consent of the minister.

However, the current process for removal of unauthorized materials is based on whether the minister knows who owns the object, not whether it was authorized to be there. It is only after the owner has been given a notice to remove the object, time to remove it and then fails to comply can the

department take action to remove the unauthorized object.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is an inordinately generous process, given that the material was not supposed to be placed there in the first place. The proposed amendments simplify and re-orient the process to focus on whether the material or structure was authorized for placement.

Where an object is placed without the required permission, an authorized employee of the department can give verbal direction to remove the sign immediately or by a specified date. If the owner does not comply, the object can be removed without further notice. Where the object has been authorized for placement, formal notice to repair or remove the object will be given before any action is taken.

New authority is provided in this bill which authorizes the department to immediately remove an authorized structure without notice where the object poses an immediate threat to the safety of users of the highway and right-of-way. The amendments were developed in response to numerous complaints from the public and requests from numerous municipalities to deal with the increasing number of signs that are cluttering up the provincial highways rights-of-way. We have talked about the many different pillars with regard to our transportation vision in the province of Manitoba, and safety is one of those pillars. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that we adjourn debate.

*Motion agreed to.*

\* (16:10)

## DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

### Bill 5—The Dental Hygienists Act

**Mr. Speaker:** Resume debate on second reading of Bill 5, The Dental Hygienists Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Penner).

What is the will of the House?

**Some Honourable Members:** Stand

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina? *[Agreed]*

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to

put some brief remarks on the record. I am certainly aware first hand of the efforts that have been made by dental hygienists in Manitoba over several years which has resulted in the introduction of this legislation. I want to commend the involvement of those dental hygienists because they have worked tirelessly. They have been involved in some extensive lobbying efforts and, of course, the design of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this legislation speaks highly to the importance of dental hygienists as, indeed, a profession. This legislation will now recognize them as a distinct profession that would be given the power to protect the public interest by way of a self-governing professional statute.

Mr. Speaker, I think this legislation also speaks to a gender issue, quite frankly. For all of those reasons, I look forward to having the input of members opposite in seeing this matter go to committee and passage. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any other speakers?

Okay, when this matter is again before the House, it will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina.

#### **Bill 6—The Dental Association Amendment Act**

**Mr. Speaker:** Bill 6, The Dental Association Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Penner).

What is the will of the House?

**An Honourable Member:** Stand.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina? *[Agreed]*

It has been agreed to. It will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina.

Any speakers? Okay.

#### **Bill 9—The Farm Practices Protection Amendment Act**

**Mr. Speaker:** We will move on to Bill 9, The Farm Practices Protection Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

What is the will of the House?

**An Honourable Member:** Stand.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave it remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain? *[Agreed]*

Okay, it has been agreed to and will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain. It is also standing in the name of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), who has 18 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I put most of my comments on the record already about my disappointment with the government using a lot of lightweight legislation. Notwithstanding that it needs to be done and that there are some valuable aspects to the legislative agenda that is before us, but really, in terms of the meat of debate, we find this agenda somewhat lacking. Certainly, in relationship to this act, which also needs work to be done, it is of a housekeeping nature.

I want to point out that at the very time that we are debating whether or not there is liability for the directors, the board of directors who administer the farm protection act, at the very time that we are discussing this, the board of directors and the management of Ranchers Choice are touring Manitoba, advertising heavily, attempting to pull together the investors that they need to get on with what is a very important project within the context of the large number of agricultural producers and their desire to establish a base from which they can have some predictability as to how they will be marketing their aged animals in this province.

At the same time we have infrastructure issues in a number of communities across this province, including my own area in which we have a hog plant that has been established there for about 15 years, and I think we are going to see the local newspapers this week be very concerned about the fact that it still waits for some word upon whether or not it will, and the community will, receive any support to deal with their infrastructure demands in terms of disposal of effluent. That, combined with the fact that we would like to additionally expand the cattle killing capacity in this province, and there is an ability to expand that capacity at the same time as we solve the problem for the hog-slaughter capacity in the Neepawa community, and we are sitting here as legislators debating whether or not there should be liability for the board of directors. If I was a member of the board of directors, I would be happy to see that discussion, but in the overall picture of what needs to

be done on behalf of rural Manitoba, this government falls terribly short.

I just wish, and I want to put it on the record on behalf of my constituents, I sincerely wish that they would take their responsibility more seriously in terms of developing opportunity in rural Manitoba. At the very time when we are all celebrating the opportunity to expand hog slaughter in this province, and rightly so, this is a tremendous asset that is being brought to the province on behalf of agriculture, we have some long-standing and outstanding issues that have not been dealt with, and unless they are dealt with in an expeditious manner, I would suggest that the government of the day is being rather delinquent on how it views the big picture in moving the economy of rural Manitoba forward.

One of the things that I find very difficult, being both a farm operator in my past and, to some degree, currently, and being a representative of the area in this Chamber, I find it very disappointing that we are being cast in the position of constantly being required to sound like we are complaining about not having sufficient opportunity. That has to be put into the context that we know where we want to go, we know what needs to be done, and our frustration is driven by the fact that this government does not seem to be listening, nor does it accept our view of how we would like to move significant sections of the rural Manitoba economy forward.

That being the case, Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that my frustration and my concern with where this government is not moving is motivated by the fact that there are a lot of very good people out there, some of whom are approaching very difficult decisions in their future. This is not quite the same as whether or not a particular plant survives, whether or not particular salaried jobs stay in place. It is about the nature of our rural landscape, frankly, that is at question right now. We are seeing something that I would liken to an industrial revolution within agriculture, and I do not think that this government has adequately demonstrated that they know where they want to move on this issue and whether or not they can actually provide the leadership that is being so urgently required by people that I represent, other members on this side of the House represent, and at least two members on the government side represent.

So, with those comments on the record, Mr. Speaker, I will allow my comments to stand.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Similarly, do I want to put a few words on the record. In support of the protection of board members, boards of directors against lawsuit, I think that it is time that that was done. This province has numerous boards of directors that serve to benefit the people of this province, and certainly I believe that they should be afforded that protection. I know that some of the corporations, such as the public insurance corporations and others, do now protect their members from lawsuit up to a certain point, but I guess, also, when you look at the Crocus board and the Crocus Fund, it is questionable whether those board members at the Crocus Fund would have been protected to adequate levels. Yet, and again, when I look at this bill, there is nothing to give me comfort that those kinds of boards would have been protected from liability under the current situation as Crocus stands. I think it is time that this government admit that they made a very significant mistake with Crocus, that they did not do due diligence on the investments that were made by Crocus and therefore put in jeopardy the investments that thousands and thousands of individual Manitobans made into the Crocus Fund. They invested their pension funds. Many of the older shareholders of Crocus have their pension funds stuck in Crocus, and, again, this will be a severe blow to them.

I want to spend a bit of time, Mr. Speaker, if I would be allowed, to talk about some of the issues that are pertinent to the protection act, as this is called, the agricultural protection act. When you look at what some of these boards actually rule on and are going to be put in place to implement and be governed under the regulations of some of the new legislation that we have seen, one has to wonder what kinds of liabilities these boards might, in fact, incur and what sorts of hardships might be experienced by the farm operators in the province of Manitoba.

*Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

I think, maybe, at some point in time farmers will have to start demanding protection from government ministers such as we currently experience in this province. When I read the regulations of The Water Protection Act and when I see the huge areas in my constituency which will not be allowed to use any fertility products at all anymore, that leads me to believe that there will be no cattle allowed in that area. There will be no hogs allowed in that area, and one has to wonder at the huge number of deer and bear and all those kinds of

animals. Will we have to take some action to get rid of them as well? We do not know. Neither do the farmers know. Neither do the farmers who have farmed in those areas, family farms that have been in those areas for decades, indeed better than a century, some of them. These farms are today expressing amazement at the audacity of this government in the implementation of the regulations that are being proposed.

I would, indeed, suggest to the honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) that he of all people should be very concerned about how the new regulations are going to affect his area. Will those people that now have large livestock operations be able to keep on operating in the north Interlake? We know there are very high water levels there. We know there are many areas with permeable soils, rocky soils and those kinds of things, and when I look at the regulations, when I look at the maps, I sincerely wonder whether that member of the Legislature will be able to go back to his riding and say, "Oh, yes, you will be protected. You do not have to worry." Well, I ask the question: Will they be protected or will they be allowed to operate in those areas?

I find it very interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we now have a situation in place where we have drafted very, very stringent rules and regulations for the livestock operations in this province, including manure management regulations and including now the fertility regulations under The Water Protection Act and also these lagoons that are being built—and we call them earthen lagoons for the storage of animal waste—all the provisions that have to be abided by under the regulation, such as liners being put in the lagoons now to ensure that not a drop of waste will permeate into the soil and contaminate our water. We all agree with that. We do not disagree that is a bad thing.

However, what I find most astounding when I drive around my constituency and, indeed, the rest of the province, none of those provisions apply to our urban centres, the villages and towns and cities in many areas that have large lagoons. I believe the city of Winnipeg even has some of them, large lagoons where human waste is stored, then after some form of treatment, there are many of them, I understand, many different, and I understand there are no test wells under these lagoons to see whether there is any—and no liners required for any of these large lagoons, none at all.

Yet this government sees nothing wrong with that, nothing wrong with dumping human waste every fall when these lagoons are lowered to be able to accommodate the effluent in the winter months. Every fall they are allowed to dump their waste into the ditches that run down into the streams and into the rivers and into the lakes.

No law against that, no law against that whatsoever, no wells required, no testing required, no soil tests required, no fertility tests required on the effluent coming out of these lagoons. Why is that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Why is that? Why are we so enamoured with looking at the animal waste that is without question the best organic fertility products that you could buy anywhere on this globe, and yet we are condemning it and putting it to test and adding huge, additional costs to our agricultural producers?

Then I want to go one step further. Why is it that we as society allow the dumping of raw sewage into our floodway? Why is it that we allow that? Why is that we allow raw sewage to be dumped in the Red River? As long as it is human waste, it is not a problem. Why is it that we allow this in the Assiniboine River? As long as it is human waste, it is not a problem.

I tell you this government five years, six years ago would have gone up in arms if any farmer would have been ever caught dumping livestock waste into a river. They would have gone ballistic. The honourable Member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) says, "Do you mean people like Betty Green?" I do not know whom he is referring to when he says Betty Green, but, obviously, one of his constituents. I do not know. I am not sure.

**An Honourable Member:** I wonder if she votes for him.

**Mr. Penner:** I am not sure whether she votes for him or not or whether he has her on his executive. I do not know.

So I would suggest to you Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is of concern to many people that this government makes such a distinction, such a clear distinction between farmers and the rest of society. We are singling out the agricultural, the food producers of this province. We are singling them out and saying, "You are the bad guys. You are bad and we will do everything in our power to make sure that you will do as we direct and legislate."

Legislation we have seen. We have seen all kinds of legislation come out of this government, all directed at the agriculture community. It is an attack on agriculture, the likes of which I have never seen in my life by any government anywhere in this country. It is unprecedented, the attack of our agriculture community that we are seeing here.

\* (16:30)

I would imagine that when one takes a look at the 21 years' test results of the Red River, and all this, I guess, was perpetrated by a speech that the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) held about four or five years ago when this government came into power. He said that it was the Red River and its tributaries that were putting most of the fertility products, such as phosphorous and nitrates, into Lake Winnipeg, it was largely the Red River system that was responsible.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

Well, I went to the trouble of searching out whether there had been any testing done on the Red River and the rest of the rivers and streams in Manitoba on nitrates and phosphates. It was interesting when I found the results; 21 years of testing had been done. The previous government had spent virtually its whole entire mandate testing the waters of our rivers and streams in the province of Manitoba. That continued until a few years ago, until about two years or three years into the mandate of this government and then it was terminated. We wonder why they terminated that testing. I could not understand that; none of us could. They terminated the testing. But the 21 years of test results show, Mr. Speaker, that on the Red River, from Emerson to St. Norbert, phosphate levels have not increased in that river. They are dead flat. There is no increase over the last 21 years of phosphates on that river. There is no increase on nitrates from Emerson to St. Norbert.

Then I look south of the border, which the minister has constantly pointed at that those are the culprits, those Americans are the culprits, they are polluting our water. I looked at the results from Fargo to Emerson: dead flat, no increase in phosphate. Why? If that Red River is such a huge contributor, then why are there no increases? Or if the farm community that has made major changes and increased its livestock capacity in that Red River watershed, if they were to blame, then why would the phosphate levels not have increased?

**An Honourable Member:** Does not make sense.

**Mr. Penner:** Does not make sense at all.

Now I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what would the nitrate levels on some of the other streams and rivers have done? Well, some of them have gone up. But maybe we should ask the question: What happened between St. Norbert and just north of Winnipeg, at Selkirk? What happened there?

**An Honourable Member:** What?

**Mr. Penner:** A very substantive rise in the phosphates and nitrates in that part of the river running through the city of Winnipeg. Why is that? Twenty-one years of testing show those kind of results, and yet we are blaming the farmers for contaminating our waterway. We are blaming the farmers for contaminating our aquifers. Yet, three years of testing on a farm just south of Steinbach, about 10 miles south of Steinbach, proves the exact opposite, that the manure, or what we call natural fertility products, when applied in a pasture in an area that will now be deemed off limits for livestock production, under this new act, under the new regulations, exactly on that farm, the results were that the increased capacity for raising beef on that farm were very, very significant if you applied natural fertility products on those soils and on those grasslands.

Why is it then that this government would not look at those kinds of test results before they implemented these kinds of regulations that we are going to have to deal with? Why is that? Why would they not take the scientific evidence that is available to them that demonstrates that it is not the farm community that is, as they have presented, so polluting our waterways. Why is that? Is it simply that the minister wants to make a mark for himself before he leaves office? Is it because he wants to be known as the person who presumably was responsible for saving Lake Winnipeg?

Well, it is interesting to note also, when you look at the results of the fishery in Lake Winnipeg over the last 10 years, the fishery has never yielded as well in the history of the record-keeping of the fisheries in Manitoba as it has the last number of years. Fishing incomes and fishing results have gone up and up and up. Why is that, when the lake is dying, I ask you? You know, then I looked at some other results that were obtained by tests that were done in two and a half days on another body of water, and they talk about one of the few things that they found that might be different in that body of water compared to Lake Winnipeg might be the

plankton. Then I went and looked in the encyclopedia and I said, you know, what is plankton used for? What might it be good for? And do you know the biggest fish in the sea, the biggest fish in the ocean, what do they survive on? Plankton. It is a fish food, and this government is afraid of providing fish food to our lake system.

I think it is important to note that some of the things that we have seen and heard from this government lately in regulation and legislation are going to be detrimental from an economic standpoint to the agricultural community, the likes of which we have not seen before.

We had an environmental officer visit our farm last fall. We had two fuel tanks built on our farm, 2500 gallons each, and they are made of three-sixteenths inch steel. You cannot buy tanks like that from the market. We had them custom built, and we were told by the end of 2006 we would have to shred them because they were unsafe and I said, "So tell me what is wrong with them." "Well," he said, "You have not got a serial number on them." "No," I said, "It was a local custom welder that welded them for us, custom-built them." But, because it has not got a serial number we cannot register them, therefore they are not going to be allowed under the new environmental regulations. That is going to cost our farm between \$30,000 and \$60,000 to replace those. Can we afford it? Two years without crops. It is going to pretty hard. I am going to have to go ask the banker very nicely whether we can borrow that kind of money to replace those tanks. For what reason? For what reason? There is no reason. This government cannot explain it to us,

So we are doing some very questionable things by regulations without determining what the end results will be and what the end effects will be.

Will it, in fact, be beneficial to nature? Will it be beneficial to our waterways? Will it be beneficial to our soils in the long term by preventing natural, the most organic fertilizers to be used to raise crops and to raise hay and to raise cattle and hogs and whatever livestock we need to maintain our population? I question that, but this government has spent so much time advertising and publicizing that the general population, which knows nothing about farming anymore, believes them. I think it is sad. It is a sad day for society that we painted our farmers into a box as polluters and destroyers of the environment. I

think that is really sad, and I wonder if we would have done that to our fishermen and others in society that have made their living off the natural landscape around them as farmers must.

That leads me to another issue which is as important, because there are boards that have been struck here to also protect this part of the industry, and that is the free trade discussions that are going on in Geneva right now, and the week following or two will go on to Hong Kong, and I understand that it is our minister's intent to go to Hong Kong and be there when those discussions are taking place. If she takes the right message down there, if she takes the right message to the federal minister, then I commend her for going, taking the time to go. However, it is also important to note that, as of today in this House, she seemed to have no plan, or no clear direction that she could offer this House, or a clear view of what she was going to recommend to the federal government.

\* (16:40)

I think that is another clear indication that this government has spent a huge amount of time advertising and promoting itself as the saviour for the agriculture community. I look at the BSE situation and how much money they spent there. I look in advertising and promoting and promotion and all the other issues, the two years of huge amounts of rain that we have had that were destroying crops all over, and the CAIS program that they participated in. We warned them then that this CAIS program would not work and it is not, and yet this minister could not today identify for us clearly the message that she was going to take out of Manitoba when she was meeting with the federal minister to ensure that our industry would be protected.

I think it is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that there are countries in the world such as the United States and Europe and many other smaller countries that are today not looking at subsidizing agriculture or viewing their agriculture industry as a subsidized industry. They are looking at it from far more of a social direction, because they have told me personally when I was in Europe that it is much cheaper for them to keep their people living in those smaller communities than it would be to allow nine million people to move into a city like Berlin, for instance, and provide the infrastructure to house these people in these large cities.

They said just look at the city of Mexico, look at the city of Sao Paulo, and look at what is happening

over there. We do not want that kind of situation. The Americans have said exactly the same thing. We would like to keep our farmers and our people in smaller communities in rural America and let them flourish there. We will provide programs that are outside of the agricultural realm. We will provide programs, and they are calling them social programs to ensure that these smaller operations have a livelihood, an income that they can support and maintain their families on those smaller farms and smaller communities.

They are promoting smaller industries in these smaller communities, and it is somewhat similar to what the previous Filmon administration was doing in Manitoba. Yet the first thing that this government did, Mr. Speaker, was eliminate the Department of Rural Development. Just get rid of it, and that is the difference between the NDP and the Progressive Conservative Party in this province. We believe in rural people; we believe in urban people. We believe there must be a proper balance of both in order for it to create a society that can be integrated and interdependent. One provides for the other. In it you develop a sound economic base. I give you, for instance, Switzerland. Switzerland last year paid a dairy farmer with 13 cows \$30,000 to stay where he is. You know where this dairy farmer was? On the slopes of a mountain. There was a quaint little village there, and why are the Swiss so intent on keeping him? You know what the Swiss told us? They said that if we lose those villages and if we lose those small little pathways and little roads to those small villages and to the individual farmers, we will lose everything that is on those mountains and the trees will grow back and all we will end up with is bush and rocks.

They said now we cater to the tourist industry and that small little farm becomes part of our tourist promotion package. That is Switzerland, the mountainous little farm operations, the hills and the valleys and the ski slopes, and it creates a huge economy for them. Are the farmers an integral part of that? Are they allowing their farmers to maintain their livelihood on those small little farms? Yes, they are. Does that support the big cities in Switzerland that depend on tourism for their livelihood? Yes, they do. But do they make such a huge distinction, a huge distinction such as the NDP government is making in Manitoba today? No, they do not. They recognize that you need an integrated society supportive of each other, and you do not win and you do not build a province or a society by causing the

kind of differentiation that we have seen in this province. We have really seen this NDP government paint our farm communities as dirty operators, and the regulation that we are going to put in place is going to fix that. We are going to fine them until they learn better.

Well, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the farmers that I know have spent so much money maintaining their soils, making such huge changes in their operation over the last decade, two decades, it is shocking. The changes that you have seen when you drive out to Emerson, Manitoba, today down the Red River Valley, everything used to be black. Well, this year people were commenting on how black the Red River Valley was. Do you know why it was so black? Because it was all drowned out. Nothing grew. Yet, that had stopped. There was no black soil. There was stubble and straw protecting the erosion and the run-off and the degradation.

I want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that it is time that this NDP government should realize that you need your agriculture producers, you need your farmers. You need them to be able to produce food for society. Oh yes, we can go to Safeway; we do not need the farmers to produce food, but if Safeway quit buying from those very farmers, the store shelves will be empty.

It is time that this government recognized the value of your rural-urban communities. Do not abandon them. Do not legislate them out of business. Support them. Support them, and you will have a vibrant economy for many years to come.

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding The Farm Practices Protection Amendment Act, Bill 9, before us. There is very little of substance in this particular act.

We would hope that the government would focus more of its energies on dealing with the real issues out in rural Manitoba. This particular government is going to leave a legacy in rural Manitoba. They are leaving a legacy of debt for the entire province, but the other legacy they are going to leave us with in rural Manitoba is the end of farming as we know it. Mr. Speaker, when we really get out and talk to the grass-roots people, which I did this weekend, I really get a feel for just how tight of a bind we are in, in rural Manitoba. I attended a Ducks Unlimited function on Friday night where one of the local auctioneers was there. He indicated to me that within three miles of his

particular residence there were going to be five farmers having auction sales within the next year.

Mr. Speaker, I think this really speaks to the very tight crunch they were in, in the farm community. These are all individual farmers that are probably between the ages of 45 and 55 who should be in the prime farming years of their careers who are being forced out of business because this government did not recognize the acute problems we have in rural Manitoba. Then, on Sunday afternoon, I had the opportunity to visit another community and in visiting in the hockey rink there, I had, with one of the local fellows, a good discussion with him. He expressed the same concern, he as a number of individuals, again young farmers, who are being forced off the land, who will be selling their farms coming up this year.

\*(16:50)

Now, these young people will be probably travelling to Alberta to seek employment. They will not be coming back to the family farms that we know of. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to just urge the importance of this issue to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and to this government, that we are in a very significant crisis here in Manitoba. These issues will really come to the forefront over the next winter as farmers go to talk to their banks about extending some more credit for the next season's growing conditions. I just do not think it is going to be there for those farmers and the crunch is really on.

My honourable colleague from Emerson talked a little bit about some of the regulations that are coming forward, and he is correct. Those particular regulations will be greatly impacting Manitoba farmers, and they are going to be significantly impacting them in a way that is going to make their production much more difficult. Their cost of production is going to be increased, and in reality we are not sure if these particular regulations will actually come forward and protect the environment.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, the government keeps falling back on the programs in place, and I speak about crop insurance and the CAIS program. The government feels that these programs are protecting our farmers in Manitoba. In fact, we find the crop insurance program will probably pay out a record amount this year, but when we look at what the individual farmers are going to receive, the actual value is going to go down. The prices are just terrible. The commodity prices are just terrible and,

of course, the farmers are faced with increasing input prices, so in reality the revenue is just not there anymore.

Speaking of revenue, when we look at the CAIS program that the Province and the feds keep falling back on, I think they are starting to recognize that it is an issue. I read almost on a daily basis where the Keystone Agricultural Producers say that this particular program is not working for Manitoba farmers, and they are seeking ways to put improvements forward. The government I think recognizes that, but over the last year, year and a half, they have not been able to put forward any workable solutions to the CAIS program.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, the CAIS program, it is a two-year backlog in generating any income for farmers. It is nothing that those particular producers can bank on, so that is what makes it a really tight cash flow crunch for them when they go to face their bankers this season.

Mr. Speaker, that is all I really wanted to say on this particular bill. It is a very insignificant bill. It does speak to just one element in The Farm Practices Protection Act. Obviously, it is something that has to be addressed, but really we would hope that the government would deal with the specific issues of the day that Manitoba farmers are being faced with.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to turn it over to our Agriculture critic, the honourable member from Lakeside.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, I do want to put a few words on the record regarding this particular bill that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has brought forward.

As some of my colleagues have pointed out and put on the record, we are very disappointed that this government has not worked harder in trying to bring some resolve to the issue regarding agriculture within this province.

We went through three years of desperation for the farming community. We have had the drought in 2003, BSE in 2003. We had frost and flooding in the fall of 2004, and in 2005 we had nothing but more and more rain. We have never seen agriculture in the desperation that it is in now.

We would like to put on the record, as well, the member from Emerson talked about the regulations with respect to The Water Protection Act and there are lots of problems there. When we dealt with this

bill in the last session, we said that the problem would be within the regulations, and this government has held true to their form. We are very disappointed with what this government has brought forward, and we know that there are a number of recommendations that we will certainly be bringing forward, also the fact that I know the hog producers, the cattle producers and the KAP organizations have a lot of concerns with this particular regulation that has been brought forward, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the minister is meeting today with some of the farm groups with respect to the World Trade Organization. Hopefully, the minister will move forward on some of those recommendations. At the 11th hour of the day, this minister is starting to bring forward some concerns in regard to the World Trade. For the first time in many years, this government has the opportunity to make a significant difference. They need to show leadership. They need to show that they have something on the plate for our farmers.

I know from talking to my colleague from Pembina, he has several people down in his area who are trying to decide their future. The member from Turtle Mountain talked about the hardship within his area in respect to farmers just trying to decide what they are going to be doing with respect to finances for the next year.

He talked about the CAIS program—

**An Honourable Member:** If you do not have a grow op, you cannot make any money.

**Mr. Eichler:** Exactly. The type of farming that is making money is being shut down on a daily basis with this concept of more officers that are out there, and that is the grow op business. We certainly do not want to use that as our foothold for the agricultural sector. But, Mr. Speaker, all joking aside, we have to be sure that farmers have a sustainable, meaningful plan that is going to work for all producers.

With this bill that has been brought forward, Mr. Speaker, we would like to see it being moved on to committee. We would like the House to deal with this in an efficient manner and move it forward. So, having said that, we will look forward to this moving forward to committee.

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

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 9, The Farm Practices Protection Amendment Act.

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

\* \* \*

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

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Monday, November 21, 2005**

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