

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 23, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 18—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Countermeasures Against Impaired Drivers and Other Offenders)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 18, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Countermeasures Against Impaired Drivers and Others Offenders; Loi modifiant le Code de la route, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill makes our provincial administrative sanctions apply to residents of Manitoba who have been convicted of an impaired driving offence in the United States. It extends administrative sanctions to offenders who are found guilty but receive a discharge and puts into statute our post-suspension ignition interlock policy for offenders guilty of repeat drunk driving offences, offences where there is a passenger under age 16, impaired driving causing injury or death offences and equivalent offences committed in the United States.

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

PETITIONS

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 Orest Kosowan, Kelly Bazinet, Denise Remillard 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.

* (13:35)

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: Victoria Shaw, Raymond Le Neal, Esther Le Neal and many, many more.

Provincial Road 340

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The hard surfacing of the unpaved portion of PR 340, south of Canadian Forces Base Shilo towards Wawanesa, would address the last few neglected kilometres of this road and increase the safety of motorists who travel on it.

Heavy traffic has increased on PR 340 due to many large farms involved in hog and potato production, agriculture-related businesses, Hutterite colonies and the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon. A fully paved road would support local business and lessen the damages to vehicles.

Annual average traffic volumes on PR 340 are increasing with commuter traffic from Wawanesa, Stockton, Nesbitt and surrounding farms of Shilo and Brandon.

The arrival of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in 2004 and increased employment at the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon means there has been an influx of new families in the area. Improving the rural highway infrastructure in this location will be an additional reason for these families and others to settle and stay in the area.

Access to the Criddle-Vane Homestead Provincial Park would be greatly enhanced.

PR 340 is an alternate route for many motorists travelling to Brandon coming off of PTH 2 east and to Winnipeg via the Trans-Canada Highway No. 1.

This upgrade would also ease the traffic congestion on PTH 10.

All Manitobans deserve a safe and well-maintained rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) to consider hard surfacing of the unpaved portion of PR 340, south of Canadian Forces Base Shilo, towards Wawanesa.

This petition is signed by Jim Cullen, Gaye Innes, Dave Wiebe and many, many others.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Justice

First Report

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Justice.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Justice presents the following as its First Report.

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Justice presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings:

Your committee met on Tuesday, November 22, 2005, at 6 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters Under Consideration:

Bill 2 – The Private Investigators and Security Guards Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les détectives privés et les gardiens de sécurité

Bill 3 – The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Act/Loi sur l'exécution des jugements canadiens

Bill 8 – The Official Time Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur le temps réglementaire

Bill 10 – The Convention Centre Corporation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Corporation du Centre des congrès

Committee Membership:

Committee Membership for the November 22, 2005, meeting:

*Mr. Dewar
Mrs. Driedger
Mr. Hawranik
Mr. Jha
Ms. Korzeniowski
Hon. Mr. Mackintosh
Mr. Maloway
Mr. Penner
Mr. Reimer
Hon. Mr. Smith
Mr. Swan*

Your committee elected Ms. Korzeniowski as Chairperson.

Your committee elected Mr. Jha as Vice-Chairperson.

Public Presentations:

Your committee heard 1 presentation on Bill 10 – The Convention Centre Corporation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Corporation du Centre des congrès, from the following organization:

Mr. Klaus Lahr, The Convention Centre Corporation

Bills Considered and Reported:

Bill 2 – The Private Investigators and Security Guards Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les détectives privés et les gardiens de sécurité

Your committee agreed to report this bill without amendment.

Bill 3 – The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Act/Loi sur l'exécution des jugements canadiens

Your committee agreed to report this bill without amendment.

Bill 8 – The Official Time Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur le temps réglementaire

Your committee agreed to report this bill without amendment.

Bill 10 – The Convention Centre Corporation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Corporation du Centre des congrès

Your committee agreed to report this bill without amendment.

Ms. Korzeniowski: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Healthy Child Manitoba Annual Report for the year 2004-2005.

* (13:40)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Victor Mager School 38 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mrs. Carol Hill, Mr. Brad Fallis and Ms. Jodi Samms. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan).

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 all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS**Anti-Bullying Advertising Campaign Cancellation**

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the issue of bullying in our schools and our playgrounds is a very serious one. Research shows that one in five children are bullied regularly at school. Public awareness is critical if we are to put an end to this and to ensure that both our schools and our communities are safe for our children.

Knowing that it is such an important issue, an issue that requires increased public awareness, why has the Premier (Mr. Doer) pulled the plug on his government's anti-bullying ad campaign?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): The anti-bullying ad campaign was an extremely successful campaign, Mr. Speaker. First of all, there were over 5000 brochures that were sent out to Manitobans as a result of that campaign. Also, as a result of the campaign, there were over 3000 hits on the Web site.

Research tells us also that the most effective stage of a campaign of that nature in the very early stages of the bullying campaign, and awareness is, of course, the very key to addressing any issue here in Manitoba. Awareness of an issue of the nature of bullying is something that we are very committed to, and that is why we have been undertaking a variety of initiatives that we have undertaken.

Working to address this issue of bullying. Members opposite had the opportunity in 11 years in government. They chose to do nothing.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, obviously this government is so used to failure that they get overwhelmed when they experience some level of success.

Mr. Speaker, bullying is a very—[interjection] I do not know what part of this they find humorous. Bullying is a very serious issue. We know, and this minister said, that there were some 3000 hits to the Web site, some 5000 brochures that were requested. The public, because of the seriousness of this issue, is requesting information on bullying. So what does this government do? They pull the ad campaign. They stop it.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask this government today will they reverse this absurd illogical decision and reinstate the anti-bullying awareness campaign today because it is such a serious issue.

*(13:45)

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, yes, the advertising campaign is a success. Roots of Empathy is a success. The Triple P Positive Parenting Program will be a success. The anti-gang initiatives will be a success. We have a number of successes that we are very proud about on this side of the House because we took the issue very seriously. As a teacher, in 1993, we began the lobby for government—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bjornson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We began the lobby in 1993 as teachers and it fell on deaf ears. This is a government that is committed to school safety, and we have been committed throughout our terms in office and will continue to be committed and continue to improve on the programs—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Anti-Bullying Advertising Campaign Cancellation

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, on October 31, the Minister of Education handed Manitobans a trick-or-treat package. The treat was he launched a five-week, much-needed advertising campaign about how to stop bullying. The trick was he cancelled it halfway through the campaign. I would like to ask the minister if he is as truly committed to dealing with this issue then why did he stop this very important campaign.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Well, Mr. Speaker, the campaign continues. The brochure is still available. We have all the information on our Web sites. We have been communicating with schools, with parents, with community groups, with parent advisory groups, all the stakeholders who have been involved in this process to address the very serious issue of bullying.

We have been doing this through the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet with several different departments. It is intersectoral, interdepartmental, a very unique, made-in-Manitoba approach, that is a product of this government and our work and our commitment. As I said, they had the opportunity to do it. They chose to put their head in the sand. They did nothing over 11 years when teachers such as myself and my colleagues at the time, of course we were lobbying government for change. They did nothing. This is a government that has done a lot of things, a lot of action plans, and we will continue to support our stakeholders in this. We look forward to more initiatives coming forward.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, it is the ads on TV and in the media that are directing people to the Web site. It is the ads that are creating the awareness to make people aware of where to call for help. During the short time it ran, as the minister has indicated, there were over 3000 Web site hits and there were 5000 requests for brochures.

Maybe they have only published 5000 brochures and run out of brochures, but obviously people are desperately in need of help on how to stop bullying. Here was a resource for them, and I would ask the minister why did he pull back on this campaign. That just seems like such a dimwitted move.

Mr. Bjornson: Again, Mr. Speaker, this is just part of a number of different initiatives that we have undertaken as government. The member opposite

had no interest in the Working Together: Safe, Caring Schools, Families and Communities resource which we launched. The member opposite has not asked questions about that, which went to all schools and all parents. The member did not ask about the resources we provided to teachers which talked about how to deal with positive behaviour in the school, working towards an anti-bullying pledge that students can take and create on their own with the guidance of the teacher, teacher-facilitated direction in addressing this issue. They were not interested in any of those things. They were interested in a commercial which has been very successful, which has reached a very high audience in the very initial stages: 5000 brochures, 3000 Web site hits. We have raised awareness to bullying. They ignored bullying.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this is the minister that did not know his own bullying legislation. He stumbled then and he is continuing to stumble now. This Doer government not only rations health care, they are now rationing information and guides that help parents, that help children and that help teachers deal with the issue of stopping bullying. This government's bizarre move for doing this; the ads were too successful. Of course they are successful. People are crying out for help. They want to know how to stop bullying. I would like to ask this minister today if he will reinstate that public awareness campaign and help these families and help these children.

* (13:50)

Mr. Bjornson: Well, once again members opposite, when they were in government, invested—*[interjection]* Now, they are resorting to name calling, Mr. Speaker.

It speaks to the understanding of bullying in this House. Indeed, members opposite, when they were in office, had an opportunity to invest in the education system. Members opposite invested \$1.6 million net in five years in the education system. The programs that we have initiated to address bullying through the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, the Triple P program, itself, are going to cost more than \$1.6 million. It is not just about the programs; it is about the resources. We are committed to the resources. We are committed to the programs. We are committed to addressing the issue of bullying. Members opposite for 11 years did nothing.

Hog Processing Plant OlyWest Proposal

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier (Mr. Doer) said that members and their party who raised questions about the proposed hog processing plant in Winnipeg were opposed to farming. Those were the Premier's words. Now we learn that the Premier's legislative assistant, the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), is opposed to farming, and now we learn that the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) is opposed to farming, so according to the Premier that government is opposed to farming. Why, on the one hand, is the Premier saying bring our hogs home, and, on the other hand, his legislative assistant is saying leave your hogs at home. Which is it?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a lot of guests in the gallery, and they came all the way down to hear the questions and the answers, and I think they have the right to do that. We will have decorum, and I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly stand behind the record of this government when it comes to support of farmers. If you look at our record of support to the farmers during the BSE crisis it was greater than in other provinces.

Our government has worked with the pork producers who have indicated that they do not want to be at risk of a border closure or additional tariffs. They went out, sought a partner, and they are now in the process of bringing forward a proposal for a slaughter facility in this province. Our government has worked with them, and we are waiting for the City to make a decision on the siting of this facility and then we will do our part when they bring their application forward.

Mr. Goertzen: Certainly, some of the members of the New Democratic Party are not waiting for anybody else to make a decision. The Minister of Agriculture has wrongly stated that our motto is farm it in Manitoba; finish it in Manitoba. In fact, the motto is announce it in Manitoba and then we trounce it in Manitoba a week later. They are trying to have it on both sides.

Mr. Speaker, members on this side want that plant built in Manitoba. We support it in Manitoba, but how can the Premier tell us that he can get the

support of Manitobans when he cannot even get the support of his own caucus.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member to listen to the comments that individuals have made. Individuals have said that they have asked questions on behalf of their constituents, but the issue here is the siting of the facility. The company and the City of Winnipeg have made a decision on the siting of this facility. I remember the member across the way, in fact, herself, the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), asking questions about the siting of this facility. The members opposite have asked questions about the siting of this facility. I think people have the right to ask questions about siting.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the rogue NDP members in question wrote to the mayor and said that they wanted to have these public hearings, and the mayor properly indicated that if there were going to be public hearings they needed to write to the Premier (Mr. Doer), not to the mayor. The public hearings would be controlled by that side.

Why is it that the legislative assistant to the Premier does not even get the information? Are they being cut out of the loop, or is the Premier just using them as pawns in some kind of game because he wants to be on both sides? He wants to get the thumbs up from Manitobans, but he is getting the thumbs down from his own caucus. What is going on there on that side?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (13:55)

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I seem to hear the member opposite saying he is now opposed to public hearings on this facility. You know, we have said the City will make the decision on the siting. When the company makes their application, it will go to the Clean Environment Commission.

Mr. Speaker, there will be public hearings on this. I am not sure what the members opposite are trying to say. They are trying to say that they are the only ones that care for farmers. I can tell you that this government is committed to value-adding in this province, creating jobs in this province. If you look

at the importance of agriculture and the economic report that came out today, the agriculture economy—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hog Processing Plant OlyWest Proposal

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, first the NDP announced it was supporting Ranchers Choice, then they botched that. Nothing has happened to this project in a long, long time, and many question whether anything ever will. Now this NDP government is in the process of botching the hog processing plant for Manitoba. They trumpet it one day, trounce it the next.

Why can this government not get processing right? Is it a lack of communication, a lack of ability or lack of understanding, or is it all of the above, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, the pork industry recognized that there could be difficulties with exporting pork. They had been paying very high tariffs. They went out and sought a partner. Between the Manitoba and Saskatchewan producers, they went out and found a partner, and they decided after a lot of discussion to locate their facility here in Winnipeg. The City of Winnipeg has designated a site for them. In fact, they are voting this afternoon on that site. When that site is selected, the company will then make their application and then we will go through the licensing process.

If the member wants to talk about commitment, I will stand behind our commitment to the farmers in this province anytime.

Mr. Eichler: Hollow, hollow words, Mr. Speaker.

Ranchers Choice project was held up. The local MLA, who is the minister responsible for the environment, did not know if he could issue the necessary licences. The Manitoba hog plant is now being criticized by NDP MLAs who want to see this project delayed.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) may enjoy using his MLAs like pawns in a chess match, but Manitoba cattle and hog producers want results. Why does everything positive initially fall victim to this NDP government's inability to manage and communicate?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the member opposite understands the process. In order to

build a plant, in order for a facility to be licensed, the applicant has to apply for a licence, Mr. Speaker. In the case of Ranchers Choice, the committee has to make an application for a licence.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is being—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: The member opposite continues to be critical of the cattle producers in this country who are trying to get producers' support so that they can proceed with the plant. Mr. Speaker, our government stepped up to the plate. We put money into Ranchers Choice. We convinced the—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:00)

Mr. Eichler: Words, words, words, Mr. Speaker. The First Minister's legislative assistant and long-time member of his caucus wants to see the hog processing plant held up to delay. The First Minister says bring your hogs home, yet his MLAs are saying we have no home for the hogs.

Mr. Speaker, this facility is too important for Manitoba to lose due to poor communication and a divided House. Will the First Minister indicate his legislative assistant raised the issues with him prior to calling for a delay, or was he shut out of all discussions?

Ms. Wowchuk: That is a nice script, Mr. Speaker, but I think I have answered some of questions again but I will repeat my answer. I am quite surprised because I think the member opposite is suggesting that we should not go through an environmental process with this plant. Just go ahead and build the plant. That used to be the way the Tories used to do it. They did things like that where they did not allow for environmental hearings. This government is going to have an environmental hearing process.

Mr. Speaker, the people that are interested in building facilities will make their application for a licence and then it will be reviewed. I am not sure that the member is trying to convince people that he supports the industry or that he supports Manitoba, but when I hear his comments, he certainly does not. He wants to short circuit the process and put all of agriculture in danger. Shame on you.

Lake Winnipeg Restoration Plan

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Last January, the government of Manitoba was given a report by Lake Winnipeg Water Stewardship Board which contained 32 recommendations to government on how to restore Lake Winnipeg. Today, the government was handed another report on how to remediate Lake Winnipeg, which contains 22 recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, is this government going to implement any of the recommendations it has received over the last year?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I must say that it is quite something to see members of the opposition asking questions about Lake Winnipeg because it took this government to recognize early on in its mandate and announce the Lake Winnipeg Action Plan 2003, to see some action.

I also want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, indeed, the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board has been doing some excellent work. It has made numerous recommendations at public hearings throughout the province. There was indeed a report that was leaked to the *Free Press* and has been leaked today, Lake Winnipeg implementation process.

One of the questions I want to indicate very clearly the answer. Is there a provincial commitment? Yes. We are waiting for a federal commitment because it is going to take a national commitment to resolve the issues on Lake Winnipeg, and I would hope that the members opposite would support us on this, unlike on Devils Lake where they have been undercutting us all the way along.

Mr. Penner: Well, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House has always indicated that we needed scientific-based evidence, and we have continually called for proper scientific analysis to be conducted on our lakes, our rivers and our land to ensure decisions affecting Lake Winnipeg are made with science-based evidence in hand.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Water Stewardship prepared to commit today to science-based decision making for the benefit to protect our Lake Winnipeg?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where the member opposite has been the last number of years, but that is exactly what The Water Protection Act was about, and they continuously attack the

regulations we propose under The Water Protection Act.

Let us understand one thing. Yes, there are going to be some scientific issues that remain to be resolved, but when I look at the report that was released today it is heavy on science, but this government is most importantly committed to action. We have already started to act, and that is the key message on Lake Winnipeg. We need action and, with the provincial government, we have action. The question is will the federal government be part of the solution as well.

Mr. Penner: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has continually blamed the federal government for all the ills that they have not been able to deal with. The federal-provincial study that will be released today lists 22 recommendations to ensure Lake Winnipeg will be around for our future generations. The government has received in the last year 54 recommendations.

Will this government implement any of those recommendations, or is this government going to commission another study to study the results of the studies that have already been done?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, if the member would get off his script he would have heard me say that one of the key things that is needed is action. We are acting. We are acting through the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board. We are acting, by the way, by licensing city of Winnipeg waste water facilities. It was supposed to happen in 1992. It happened in 2004 for the first time thanks to an NDP government.

We need no lectures from members opposite in terms of Lake Winnipeg. What we need, and I want to make it very clear in responding to the report that is out, most definitely we do not need any more studies. We need a federal commitment to go with a provincial commitment already there. Our funds are in place, Mr. Speaker. Our action plan is in place. We need the federal government to partner with us, and I hope the members opposite will support that.

Economic Growth Tax Competitiveness

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Yesterday, the Minister of Finance said that I put misinformation on the record. I quoted directly from a study conducted by the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce indicated that some taxes need to be lowered, some eliminated,

and Manitoba has a long way to go in this area. Personally, I would trust the chamber, Mr. Speaker, rather than I would trust the minister.

I ask the Minister of Finance is he following the lead of the Premier (Mr. Doer). Is he saying that the Chamber of Commerce is wrong?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, let me be absolutely clear. I am saying the member from Lac du Bonnet is wrong, as he so often is.

It was just two weeks ago that he claimed the debt of the province is \$20 billion. The net debt of this province is \$9.5 billion. The member was wrong by \$10.5 billion. That is not a little error. That is a big error, but the member is wrong. He continues to be wrong.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, let me make it perfectly clear. I believe the Minister of Finance is wrong. The Minister of Finance was quick. He was quick, yesterday, to report a projection for economic growth in Manitoba by the Conference Board of Canada.

Anyone can make a guess. Even the Minister of Finance can make a guess. The reality is that Stats Canada stated Manitoba is the only province in Canada that consistently had economic growth below the national average for the last five years. You ignored red flags at Crocus, Mr. Minister. Why is this minister now ignoring the red flags presented to you by both Stats Canada and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce?

Mr. Selinger: Not only is the member wrong when it comes to understanding the finances of the province by just a small ten and a half billion dollars, but I think he forgot to read the newspapers today where the Export Development Corporation, Canada's vice-president, said Manitoba will lead the country, lead the country in export growth next year. Lead the country in export growth. Completely contrary to the evidence he is putting on the record. He does not understand the economy. He does not understand public finances.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the only person not to understand the economy in Manitoba is the Finance Minister. This Finance Minister, he continues to bury his head in the sand. The only person who does not understand the finances of this province is the Finance Minister himself. The Finance Minister continues to bury his head in the sand.

Take a look around you, Mr. Minister. Take a look at what is happening in other provinces across this country. Your record is pathetic. The Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and others all believe that Manitoba is not competitive. I ask the Minister of Finance to apologize to all Manitobans for failing to make Manitoba more competitive.

Mr. Selinger: The member is remarkable. He does everything but actually quote a fact. If you look at the facts, since 1999, private investment in this province is up \$1.26 billion. That is a 31 percent increase. Now if the member was interested in facts he might note that Biovail is expanding in Steinbach, a \$30-million expansion with the support of this provincial government, something the member from Steinbach always seems to ignore when he still quotes anything. What about Hopewell Development's \$50-million investment in the city of Winnipeg? What about Blue Cross, a \$22-million investment around Polo Park? What about Gull Harbour, a money-losing proposition under these members? We have private investment of \$15 million going into Gull Harbour. What about the ethanol plant in Minnedosa, \$145 million? I have two pages of investments that are being made in this province while we are in government. The member opposite has no idea what he is talking about.

Natural Gas Rate-Shock Protection

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba there are 510 000 Manitoba Hydro customers who use electricity. Only half of these use natural gas. This morning at the AMM convention, I asked how many of them were there who are using electricity but not natural gas. Many, many hands went up. In the city of Winnipeg, some homeowners have converted to electric heat for environmental or other reasons.

I ask the Minister of Energy why is his government going to compel the half of Manitoba population, including poor northern residents who use only electricity, to subsidize homeowners with big mansions in Tuxedo who use natural gas.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, when we introduced the bill on Friday to even out rates of natural gas the members opposite said the market price, the world price for natural gas, should prevail. That is what they said on Friday.

On Monday they said, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) said we should use taxpayer dollars to subsidize the price. What the member does not realize is we have the lowest electricity rates in North America. The opposition parties in Ottawa have worked together to bring together energy efficiency programs which are precisely in this bill to help individuals deal with the spike of natural gas and the spike in prices over this winter season. All of those homeowners are on fixed income, all of those homeowners who have trouble meeting a 20 percent increase will have it smoothed out—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: The Minister of Energy is shafting half the population of Manitoba. Let us be clear—*interjection*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I just want to take this opportunity to caution all honourable members in their choice of words because when the questions are directed, they are directed through the Chair and not directly to any member in the House.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I will be a little more careful. What I would say to the Minister of Energy, when the Minister of Energy uses dollars coming from Manitoba Hydro's hydro-electric power operations to subsidize the price of natural gas, what he is doing is, in fact, putting his subsidies directly into the pockets of producers in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

I ask the Minister of Energy why is he going to such lengths to use dollars from Manitoba's hydro-electric power operations to subsidize rich natural gas producers in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Mr. Chomiak: Obviously, the member does not understand the bill or the mechanics. The PUB order and the PUB ruling said that Hydro has a hedging account, of which they bought natural gas cheaper and that they can hedge out the price so that there will be no increase or the increase will be smoothed out, firstly.

Secondly, Hydro has a balance account that is favourable that allows them to spread out the cost so that it will not be as dramatic an increase. It will smooth out over the summer. No dollars are going in, Mr. Speaker. No dollars are going in. What we are doing is smoothing out the rates and making sure that Manitobans are smoothed out. That is what the bill does. Plus, we are doing energy efficiency programs to help people do—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order

Mr. Chomiak: –energy efficiency programs for every Manitoban to conserve energy so that tax dollars and ratepayers' dollars stay here. People pay less, Mr. Speaker, and it does not go to producers. It stays here.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, many are worried that we are going to have a short-term smoothie over here with a long-term big bite coming out of those who are using natural gas, and the fact of the matter is that is what is happening. What this government is doing is proposing to do exactly what I am talking about, that is, to take money from hydro-electric operations to lower the cost of natural gas to those who use natural gas. That is what the minister and the government are proposing to do.

We are opposed to cross-subsidization. We are opposed to the approach that distorts market prices. I ask the minister when will he end this market-distorting practice of using cross-subsidization and come to his senses.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, you basically have three choices. You go with the world price which the member has said. Do not distort it. You help smooth out the rates, which we are doing, or somehow you pay the price and cross-subsidize it totally.

We are taking the second course of action, Mr. Speaker, to smooth out the rates, which is the right decision for Manitobans. People on fixed incomes, people who are getting hit this winter, cannot go out and do geothermal. They cannot do energy efficiency. What we can do is smooth out the rates, help over a period of time, over two years in transition, while natural gas prices are at an all-time high.

Heating is not an option in Manitoba. We have a chance to do something to help protect Manitobans. We will do it whether the Liberals want to do it, Mr. Speaker, or want to go to world price. We do not want Manitobans to pay world price. Help us smooth it out for them. That is the right thing to do for Manitobans.

Residential Schools Compensation of Survivors

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, in light of the recent announcement by the Assembly of First Nations and the federal government regarding compensation for survivors of residential schools,

would the Minister of Family Services and Housing please update the House on this government's position on how the compensation will affect the benefits of those who are in the employment and income assistance program?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Yes, Mr. Speaker, recognizing the terrible suffering to Aboriginal children, families and communities, this is the only government in Canada who has established in law that there will be no clawback under any circumstances for survivors of residential schools who are receiving compensation for what they endured and suffered and who are also receiving income assistance.

Public Trustee Act Review

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Earlier this year, the Minister of Justice announced that he would be holding a review of The Public Trustee Act. That decision followed several stories where the role of the Public Trustee was called into question and its ability to take over an aspect of a person's life with little notice and little recourse.

I want to ask the minister today if he can tell us what the status of that review is, it has been four months, and whether or not he is going to take the recommendations that come forward to the public so there can be public input on this very important issue, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think at the political level there is a recognition that we could make improvements in terms of the checks and balances when it comes to the appointment of committees and the Public Trustee, and so officials are working on that. There have been discussions with the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) and myself in terms of how that can be accommodated, and we hope to bring forward some options for change, and indeed some change, in the next short period of time.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it has been four months since the review was taken under course. There have been a lot of issues raised, and there needs to be public confidence in the Public Trustee. We know that the Public Trustee plays an important role, but if there is not confidence in the Public Trustee that role is eroded.

There have been a lot of issues that have been brought forward in terms of that confidence. We

want to ensure Manitobans feel confident in the role of the Trustee, and I want the minister to give me his assurance that, when the recommendations come forward, he is going to take them to the public. There will be a public review process so people can come and make comment on it and give good recommendations. He should not be closed to public input, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the public certainly has the right, and indeed we look forward to any views from the public or from stakeholder organizations in terms of the role of the Public Trustee and the appointment of committees. The working group is keen to hear from organizations and is doing some outreach in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we think we can make improvements and we will bring those forward. At the same time, it is important to recognize that we have to be careful that we not open the doors to any abuse of seniors in Manitoba. This is a balance, making sure that the rights of people are respected at the same time and make sure that we do not put in place a regime that will not put in place the checks and balances, as well, to protect our seniors.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Year of the Veteran

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has declared 2005 the Year of the Veteran. Throughout the year Canadians have celebrated, honoured, remembered and taught our youth about the contributions and sacrifices of our veterans. This special year has offered Canadians many wonderful opportunities to show our gratitude to Canada's veterans, retell our history, understand the contributions and courage of Canadians in times of conflict and peace, inspire our youth to take an active part in remembrance.

Three times a year I hold a community leaders' networking luncheon to provide community leaders with an opportunity to network and hear about activities going on in Charleswood. On October 25 the luncheon was a salute to veterans. We had 30 Charleswood veterans present, veterans who had all served our country on various fronts. Some served in France, Germany, Hong Kong, Gaza, Holland, Korea, Belgium, Egypt, Cyprus, U.S.A., Vietnam, Australia, Nicaragua and Honduras. Some had been prisoners of war in Japan and Germany.

In addition, we had Lieutenant General Ray Crabbe as our guest speaker. General Crabbe, a native Manitoban, joined the Canadian Army in 1963. After graduating from the University of Manitoba, he served in a variety of command and staff appointments, including a tour of duty with the United Nations in Cyprus and NATO forces in Germany. In 1997, General Crabbe was appointed Deputy Chief of Defence Staff at National Defence headquarters where he was responsible for Canadian Forces operations and intelligence worldwide. He retired from the Canadian Forces in October 1998. General Crabbe was awarded the Meritorious Service Cross in 1996 and the Defence Medal from the government of France for his work in the former Yugoslavia.

Students from three Charleswood schools also participated in this salute to veterans. Oak Park High School students presented a short drama production about remembering our veterans. Students from Beaumont and Westgrove elementary schools also did a short presentation. I was truly honoured to be able to facilitate this salute to our veterans. Our veterans are everyday Canadians who chose to stand up for what Canada believes in: freedom, truth, justice, knowledge and peace.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Winnipeg Airports Authority

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the collaborative and co-operative efforts of the Winnipeg Airports Authority with several institutions and schools in Winnipeg. Whether funding bursaries for youth or offering valuable and fun work experiences, Winnipeg Airports Authority is helping to provide opportunities for youth in our communities.

Just last month I had the pleasure of attending, along with my colleague the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), the 2005 awards dinner presented by the Royal Military Institute of Manitoba and the Hubbel Awards at the 17 Wing Officers Mess. This dinner honoured the Winnipeg Airports Authority and several distinguished members of the Canadian military.

The Winnipeg Airports Authority has recently been assisting the Royal Military Institute with funding for their Hubbel Awards which have been presented to military cadets since 1967. These awards are presented in the form of a bursary to cadets who are full-time students and demonstrate

academic excellence, good citizenship, leadership within the cadets and physical fitness, among other things.

Funding for the bursaries was limited to \$100 per cadet for many years. With support from the Winnipeg Airports Authority the bursary has been increased to \$500 per cadet. It is telling to note that of the 18 recipients over the past six years who come from all parts of Manitoba, 17 have applied these bursaries to advance their education in a university environment.

Mr. Speaker, the Winnipeg Airports Authority is also demonstrating its commitment to youth through its recently announced Silverwing Youth Volunteer Program at the Winnipeg International Airport, which I also had the honour of attending. Partnering with educators, 14 high school students aged 16 years and up will gain knowledge in aviation and earn a half credit towards their graduation requirements. The program is based on the successful Goldwing Ambassador Program which has existed at the airport for eight years and won numerous awards for excellence in tourism.

I am very proud of these partnerships that support youth in cultivating excellence and good citizenship. The strength of a community can be measured by the co-operation that its residents demonstrate towards each other.

Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged to see the Winnipeg Airports Authority working in collaboration with community groups and I hope to promote the spirit of teamwork in my constituency. Thank you.

Ted Poyser

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, on July 15, 2005, in Portage la Prairie, I had the pleasure of witnessing the induction of four very deserving individuals into the Agricultural Hall of Fame. They were the late Heinrich Holtman, nominated by Rosser Holsteins; Frances Gwendolyn Parker, nominated by the Domain Women's Institute; Edward A. Poyser, nominated by the Manitoba Institute of Agrologists; and the late Eric Thompson Trotter, nominated by Keith Fargey.

I am particularly proud and pleased to put a few words on the record about Ted Poyser. Ted, who is a cousin of my mother's, grew up on the family farm near Austin, Manitoba, my home town. My grandmother was born on that farm. Ted's nephew Curtis Sims still operates that farm which is now in

its 110th year of operation and the fifth generation on the farm. Ted graduated from the University of Manitoba with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in 1948 and a Master's of Science in Soil Science in 1950. It was here he met J.H. Ellis.

Ted's work began with the Manitoba Soil Survey, where he published some of the first soil survey reports. He then became the soils specialist with the Manitoba Department of Agriculture where he was instrumental in establishing the Whitemud Watershed Conservation District. He also helped develop productivity ratings for land that became the basis for the Manitoba Crop Insurance Program.

In the 1960s Ted was appointed the provincial co-ordinator for all agriculture and rural development programs which led to his involvement in comprehensive development programs for the Interlake region, the major drainage systems across southern Manitoba and the development of provincial parks and wildlife management areas. In 1967, when the Interlake Fund for Rural Economic Development was signed, Ted was responsible for shifting the perception of rural development to other initiatives than just agriculture.

Ted retired in 1981 but continued to promote a new soil conservation initiative called Prairie CARE. While the provincial government at the time did not buy into the concept, Ducks Unlimited did and launched Prairie CARE in four provinces, two states and Australia. Ted served as chairman of the Manitoba Heritage Corporation from 1989 to 2001, and under his guidance partnerships involving farms, farm groups, conservation districts, Ducks Unlimited, the Delta Waterfowl Foundation, the nature conservancy, and PFRA flourished.

Ted and I have another connection. He married Alice Shulman, the daughter of Harry Shulman who was the MLA for Morris before Warner Jorgenson. He also went to university with Frank Pitura, the former MLA for Morris, and now he is the cousin of the MLA for Morris, me.

On behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, I am pleased and proud to extend congratulations to Mr. Ted Poyser on being inducted into the Agricultural Hall of Fame. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Christine Penner

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an important member of the

North End community, Ms. Christine Penner, vice-principal of St. John's High School. It is with pleasure that I inform the House that this indefatigable woman took it upon herself to visit 459 homes this past August and September to help welcome incoming Grades 7 and 8 students to the school.

Part of St. John's High School's mission statement is to promote communication within the school and with the community at large, particularly with parents and guardians. Through the creation of links between parents, students, teachers and administrators, a truly inclusive and educational community can be created, but this type of educational community is only possible with the type of admirable effort displayed by Ms. Penner.

A physical education teacher at Sisler High School for 18 years before becoming a vice-principal at St. John's High School, Ms. Penner, sometimes joined by other teachers from the school, knocked on all 459 doors in order to introduce herself to both parents and incoming students. Her initiative to include students and parents embodies a commitment to an inclusive school community. It is through efforts like hers that schools are transformed from concrete structures to places of learning.

Mr. Speaker, I can happily inform the House that Ms. Penner's efforts have already borne fruit. Her display has galvanized some parents to become involved in school affairs and at the first parent council meeting there were eight times the number of parents as there were in years past.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing and commending Ms. Penner's important work.

* (14:30)

Manitoba Hydro

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro is without doubt one of the most important Crown corporations in our province. But today, thanks to the current NDP government, Hydro is continually being undermined in performing its mission. Again this winter the NDP government has decided to compromise the financial integrity of

Manitoba Hydro through blatant political interference and micromanagement.

This government's decision to cross-subsidize natural gas prices at Manitoba Hydro with profits from Hydro's electricity division for some temporary and, in the end, false relief from high gas prices is, in the words of former Premier Ed Schreyer, "so wrong, it is perverse." Now, when Ed Schreyer agrees with the Manitoba Liberals that an NDP government is perverse, you know something is wrong with the government.

Yesterday, Liberals took action. We released our party's rescue plan to help Manitoba Hydro, to protect the financial integrity and independence of Manitoba Hydro. Our plan calls for putting an end to NDP slush funds. Liberals will introduce a private member's bill to end the practice of using assets and/or profits from Manitoba Hydro to create politically driven slush funds or to fund political staff.

Our plan will also prohibit cross-subsidization between natural gas and electricity, two divisions of Manitoba Hydro, and reduce the NDP government's ability to manipulate Manitoba Hydro finances in ways that distort market signals.

Our plan will amend The Winter Heating Cost Control Act to formalize the dates on which the Public Utilities Board reviews natural gas prices to May 1, July 1, September 1 and October 15 to avoid price rises during winter on a permanent basis.

A Liberal government would also provide financial assistance from general revenue when needed to those in financial need from short-term gas spikes, rather than picking the pockets of Manitoba Hydro.

In short, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro needs to be protected from the ad hoc NDP political raiding and political clutch and grabbing. Manitoba Liberals stand ready to defend Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, we will now adjourn the House. The House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 23, 2005

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