

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.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 17, 2006

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Funding for New Cancer Drugs

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death of Manitobans.

Families are often forced to watch their loved ones suffer the devastating consequences of this disease for long periods of time.

New drugs such as Erbitux, Avastin, Zevalin, Rituxan, Herceptin and Eloxatin have been found to work well and offer new hope to those suffering from various forms of cancer.

Unfortunately, these innovative new treatments are often costly and remain unfunded under Manitoba's provincial health care system.

Consequently, patients and their families are often forced to make the difficult choice between paying for the treatment themselves or going without.

CancerCare Manitoba has asked for an additional \$12 million for its budget to help provide these leading-edge treatments and drugs for Manitobans.

Several other provinces have already approved these drugs and are providing them to their residents at present time.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba and the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) to consider providing CancerCare Manitoba with the appropriate funding necessary so they may provide leading-edge care for patients in the same manner as other provinces.

To request the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Health to consider accelerating the

process by which new cancer treatment drugs are approved so that more Manitobans are able to be treated in the most effective manner possible.

This petition is signed by James Frey, Sebastian Cichosz, Trevor Gascoyne 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)

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death of Manitobans.

Families are often forced to watch their loved ones suffer the devastating consequences of this disease for long periods of time.

New drugs such as Erbitux, Avastin, Zevalin, Rituxan, Herceptin and Eloxatin have been found to work well and offer new hope to those suffering from various forms of cancer.

Unfortunately, these innovative new treatments are often costly and remain unfunded under Manitoba's provincial health care system.

Consequently, patients and their families are often forced to make the difficult choice between paying for the treatment themselves or going without.

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Several other provinces have already approved these drugs and are providing them to their residents at present time.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba and the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) to consider providing CancerCare Manitoba with the appropriate funding necessary so they may provide leading-edge care for patients in the same manner as other provinces.

To request the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Health to consider accelerating the process by which new cancer treatment drugs are approved so that more Manitobans are able to be treated in the most effective manner possible.

This petition is signed by Katelyn Roehl, Thao Ha, Monica Wermann and many others.

Removal of Agriculture Positions from Minnedosa

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Nine positions with the Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Crown Lands Branch are being moved out of Minnedosa.

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy.

Removal of these positions will be detrimental to revitalizing this rural agriculture community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government of Manitoba to consider stopping the removal of these positions from our community, and to consider utilizing current technology in order to maintain these positions in their existing location.

This petition signed by Ron Andrew, Thomas Rule, Cory Stevenson and many, many, many others.

Grandparents' Access to Grandchildren

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

It is important to recognize and respect the special relationship that exists between grandparents and grandchildren.

Maintaining an existing, healthy relationship between a grandparent and a grandchild is in the best interest of the child. Grandparents play a critical role in the social and emotional development of their grandchildren. This relationship is vital to promote the intergenerational exchange of culture and heritage, fostering a well-rounded self-identity for the child.

In the event of divorce, death of a parent or other life-changing incident, a relationship can be severed

without consent of the grandparent or the grandchild. It should be a priority of the provincial government to provide grandparents with the means to obtain reasonable access to their grandchildren.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider amending legislation to improve the process by which grandparents can obtain reasonable access to their grandchildren.

This petition is signed by Candace Love, Alice Boychuk, Chris Dyer and many, many more.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Our rules stipulate that when a member is reading names they should be the first three. Could you just read the first three names on the petition.

Mr. Reimer: Oh, I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. Candace Love, Faye Dubatz, Alice Boychuk.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member for that.

OlyWest Hog Processing Plant

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba government, along with the OlyWest consortium, promoted the development of a mega hog factory within the city of Winnipeg without proper consideration of rural alternatives for the site.

Concerns arising from the hog factory include noxious odours, traffic and road impact, water supply, waste water treatment, decline in property values, cost to taxpayers and proximity to the city's clean drinking water aqueduct.

Many Manitobans believe this decision represents poor judgment on behalf of the provincial government.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to immediately cancel its plans to support the construction of the OlyWest hog plant and rendering factory near any urban residential area.

Signed by Sheri Waugh, Becky Waugh, Tyler Currell and many others.

* (13:40)

Crocus Investment Fund

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, a 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.

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

As a direct result of the government not acting on what it knew, over 33,000 Crocus investors have lost tens of millions of dollars.

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.

To urge the Premier and his government to cooperate in making public what really happened and call for a public inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by Balbir Singh, Hakam Warha, Harpreet K. Warha and many, many other Manitobans.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister responsible for French Language Services): Monsieur le Président, le Manitoba et plus particulièrement—

Translation

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba and more particularly—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is that a ministerial statement?

Mr. Selinger: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: You must hand copies to the page and then we will wait.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the House would be prepared to give leave to revert to introduction of bills. The form was not quite available at the time that it came up, and it is now available.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement of the House to revert to first reading of bills? *[Agreed]*

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 40—The Medical Amendment Act

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the House.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 40, The Medical Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi médicale, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, this bill makes available improvements to accountability in terms of the physicians and surgeons of Manitoba. It makes some changes to the processes by which we approve various procedures in the act. It is largely a technical bill.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Conférence ministérielle de la Francophonie

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister responsible for French Language Services): Monsieur le Président—

Some Honourable Members: You have to wait.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you for your guidance. Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Monsieur le Président, le Manitoba et plus particulièrement Saint-Boniface ont eu le grand honneur d'accueillir la Conférence ministérielle de la Francophonie sur la prévention des conflits et la sécurité humaine les 13 et 14 mai derniers. La conférence réunissait le Secrétaire général de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, OIF, M. Abdou Diouf, et plusieurs délégations dirigées par les ministres des affaires étrangères des pays de la Francophonie.

La conférence de Saint-Boniface résulte d'une initiative du Canada et cherchait à valoriser les actions de la Francophonie en matière de prévention des conflits et à renforcer la contribution de la Francophonie au débat sur la sécurité humaine. La conférence visait à faire le point sur la mise en oeuvre des engagements pris par les membres de l'OIF dans le domaine de la prévention des conflits. Ce travail avait pour but de préparer le Sommet international de la Francophonie de Bucarest qui aura lieu à la fin septembre.

Les délégués se sont entre autres penchés sur la lutte contre le commerce illicite des armes légères, l'élimination des mines antipersonnel et le respect du droit international humanitaire dans les conflits armés. En plus, ils ont examiné la protection des personnes déplacées et des réfugiés et la question des enfants soldats.

Je tiens à souligner que la tenue de la conférence à Saint-Boniface a permis de mettre en valeur la vitalité et le dynamisme de la communauté francophone du Manitoba et ce, auprès de l'ensemble de la Francophonie mondiale. À cet égard, j'aimerais saluer les efforts importants que les groupes communautaires francophones ont déployés pour accueillir dignement et chaleureusement les délégués à la conférence et pour bien faire valoir la Francophonie d'ici.

Je félicite plus particulièrement la Société franco-manitobaine et le Conseil de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba qui ont joué un rôle de chef de file pour assurer le succès de cet événement important.

Merci, Monsieur le Président.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, the province of Manitoba and St. Boniface in particular were honoured to host the Ministerial Conference of la Francophonie on conflict prevention and human security held last May 13 and 14. The conference brought together the

Secretary General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, the IOF, Mr. Abdou Diouf, and several delegations led by foreign affairs ministers from the countries of la Francophonie.

The St. Boniface conference was the result of a Canadian initiative. Its objectives included promoting la Francophonie's activities in the area of conflict prevention and enhancing its contribution to the debate on human security. The conference sought to take stock of the implementation of the commitments made by the members of the IOF in the area of conflict prevention. This work was in preparation for the International Summit of la Francophonie to be held in Bucharest in late September.

Among the issues addressed by the delegates were the illegal trade in small arms, the elimination of anti-personnel mines and respect for international humanitarian law during armed conflicts. The delegates also examined protection for displaced persons and refugees and the question of child soldiers.

I wish to emphasize that the St. Boniface conference provided an opportunity to highlight the vitality and dynamic character of Manitoba's Francophone community to all of international Francophonie. In that regard, I wish to acknowledge the great effort made by Francophone community groups to extend a warm and dignified welcome to the conference delegates and to promote the local Francophone community.

I particularly wish to congratulate the Société franco-manitobaine and the Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities, which played a key role in ensuring the success of this important event.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:45)

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Monsieur le Président, ça me fait grand plaisir cet après-midi de répondre à la déclaration ministérielle du ministre responsable des services en langue française (M. Selinger). Hier ou avant-hier, quand j'ai fait mon petit discours ici dans la Chambre, j'ai parlé de la Francophonie et de ceux et celles parmi nous qui ont l'occasion de parler le français. Je me rappelle qu'en 1997 j'ai eu l'occasion d'aller avec le premier ministre du Canada, M. Jean Chrétien, à Hanoï, au Vietnam. C'était à cette réunion-là qu'on a eu l'occasion de voir tous ces gens qui ont la chance de parler le français. La

Francophonie a une Charte en vertu de laquelle nous avons convenu de parler le français.

Je suis très fier d'avoir été le président de la section manitobaine de l'Assemblée des Parlementaires de langue française. Le premier ministre du Manitoba à l'époque m'a accordé ce rôle il y a plusieurs années. Je suis très heureux aussi quand je participe à des réunions au Canada au nom des Manitobains.

Monsieur le Président, il y a plusieurs semaines déjà, le député de Kirkfield Park (M. Murray) a fait un discours en français. Il y a plusieurs députés ici qui commencent à parler la langue française, non seulement le député de Kirkfield Park et le premier ministre, mais aussi le député de Saint-Boniface (M. Selinger) et d'autres. Des députés qui sont venus de Congo et de plusieurs autres pays en Afrique ont eu l'occasion la fin de semaine dernière de participer à leurs travaux avec nous autres ici au Manitoba. J'étais fier d'y participer, et fier de la manière dont les invités ont été chaleureusement reçus par les gens qui parlent la langue française ici au Manitoba. Le CDEM a beaucoup contribué, mais particulièrement Mariette Mulaire qui a travaillé vraiment fort avec le Canada et tous ceux et celles qui ont eu l'occasion de venir au Manitoba à cette réunion. Je suis content d'avoir eu cette occasion et j'aimerais en remercier le ministre responsable des services en langue française.

Merci, Monsieur le Président.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased this afternoon to respond to the statement by the Minister responsible for French Language Services (Mr. Selinger). Yesterday or the day before, when I made my brief speech here in the Chamber, I spoke of la Francophonie and of those among us who have the opportunity to speak French. I recall that in 1997 I had the opportunity to accompany the prime minister of Canada, Mr. Jean Chrétien, to Hanoi, Vietnam. It was at that meeting that we had the opportunity to see all those people who had the good fortune to speak French. La Francophonie has a Charter in which it is provided that we agree to speak French.

I am very proud to have chaired the Manitoba section of the assembly of Francophone parliamentarians. The premier of Manitoba at the time gave me that role several years ago. I am also very

happy when I represent Manitoba in meetings within Canada.

Mr. Speaker, some weeks ago now the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) made a speech in French. There are a number of members here who are beginning to speak French, not only the Member for Kirkfield Park and the first minister, but also the Member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) and others. Representatives from Congo and several other African countries had the opportunity last weekend to participate in their work with us Manitobans. I was proud to participate, and proud of the warm way that guests were received by people who speak French here in Manitoba. The CDEM contributed greatly, particularly Mariette Mulaire who worked very hard with Canada and all those who had the opportunity to come to Manitoba for this meeting. I am glad to have had this opportunity and would like to thank the Minister responsible for French Language Services for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Yes? Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Merci, Monsieur le Président. Je voudrais parler à ce moment-ci de la Conférence de la Francophonie qui a eu lieu ici à Winnipeg la fin de semaine passée. C'était un évènement très important pour notre province et pour notre ville. Il y avait des gens venus ici de presque 60 différents pays. Ils voulaient agir pour la prévention des conflits et pour améliorer la sécurité humaine dans le monde de la Francophonie, non seulement dans le monde de la Francophonie mais dans le monde entier.

Le travail important de cette conférence tenue ici au Manitoba incluait des gens qui viennent de notre communauté francophone au Manitoba et qui ont participé et ont contribué. Cette conférence de la Francophonie a fourni l'occasion de partager nos technologies et notre expertise et de participer avec les autres pays de la Francophonie dans des efforts pour aider tous à améliorer la situation partout en Afrique, mais non seulement en Afrique.

Mes félicitations à tous ceux qui ont contribué au succès de cet évènement, et je voudrais dire merci

aux bénévoles et à tous les autres qui ont fait des efforts pour qu'il soit un tel succès.

Translation

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak at this time about the Conference of la Francophonie that took place last weekend here in Winnipeg. This was a very important event for our province and our city. There were people who came here from nearly 60 different countries. They sought to act for the prevention of conflicts and to improve human security throughout the Francophone world, not only in the Francophone world but throughout the entire world.

The important work of this conference held here in Manitoba involved people from Manitoba's Francophone community who participated and contributed. This Conference of la Francophonie provided an opportunity to share our technologies and our expertise, and to participate with other Francophone countries in efforts to assist all to improve the situation throughout Africa, but not only in Africa.

My congratulations to all who contributed to the success of this event, and I would like to thank the volunteers and all others who contributed their efforts to making this conference such a success.

* (13:50)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Wally Chudo and Gail Roesler who are with IBEW Local 2034.

I would like to also draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today the Step Student Tour Guides. We have Janelle Delaquais, Chantal Dupas, Vanessa Gregg, Abby Spencer, Lisa-Marie Tessier.

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

I would also like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today visitors from Kenya. We have Reverend George Okoth Otura, his wife Deborah and Reverend David Reimer of Steinbach. These visitors are the guests of the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

I also want to welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

**Inco Mine (Thompson)
Future Status**

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, as the Premier is no doubt aware, Inco is now in the process of attempting to acquire Falconbridge mining. The Premier would also be aware that, some nine days ago, Inco became the target of a takeover bid by the B.C.-based company, Teck Cominco, which was followed some days ago by a renewed bid by Inco for Falconbridge.

While we have no reason at this stage to be concerned about these developments, given the importance of Inco to the community of Thompson where it employs some 1,550 people, I wonder if the Premier could advise the House what inquiries he has made with respect to these developments and whether he can provide any information to the House that may be relevant to Inco's future.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I met with Mr. Scott Hand when I was speaking at the Policy Forum in Toronto. I made a point of meeting with him on the proposed takeover, the counterbids that are taking place. We have met in the past. We are going to meet again in August at the 50th anniversary, I believe, of the mine and the operation. They were very positive about some of the exploration results. At one point we had a finite period of time for the mine to operate in 2005, 2008. I believe now it is into the next decade.

I know representatives from other companies now are looking at takeover bids and have met with our minister responsible for mines, but obviously we are dealing with the chief executive officer of Inco. We do so on a regular basis.

* (13:55)

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the Premier for that detailed and forthcoming response.

I wonder if the Premier could just commit to the House that as there are further developments on this matter, as there is sure to be over the next number of weeks and months, whether he would commit to returning to the House for the time that we are in session to keep us apprised of this very important initiative for the takeover of Inco.

Mr. Doer: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that there are different bids going on, some of which have

been supported by the workers. We are in contact not only with the executives but also with the workers at the mine who have dealt with different companies on an international basis. We have also written to Industry Canada on what we think to be the most appropriate position for the people of Thompson, the workers in Thompson and the economy of Manitoba.

We cannot control the destiny of the company when it is in the marketplace. There are other companies we are concerned about as well that are now just traded on the market, but we certainly will keep the member apprised. Any views that we express to Industry Canada on any merger proposal would include both the advice we receive from Inco and its investments in Manitoba, its impact on the investments in Manitoba and its advice from the Steelworkers union primarily that represent the workers at the mine site.

Mr. McFadyen: Again, I thank the Premier for his answer today. He is obviously well briefed and very intimately familiar with the details of this important file. We share his concern about the prospects of Inco and obviously the many jobs associated with that.

On a related matter concerning the economy of Manitoba and our capital markets, I wonder if the Premier who is intimately involved in every economic development file in his government, given that his officials knew about problems at Crocus in 2002, how does he expect anybody to believe that he did not know anything—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind honourable members that a supplementary question is to seek further information on the main question when hearing the answer from the minister. I will give the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition a chance to rephrase his question.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, my initial questions were related to important matters concerning the economy of Manitoba and related to the Premier's intimate involvement with all matters concerning economic development policy in his government. We are satisfied on this side of the House that he is on top of matters concerning Inco.

My question is: How can anybody be expected to believe that he did not know what was going on at Crocus in 2002 when his officials were aware of what was going on there?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I thank the honourable member for tying the two together.

Mr. Doer: You know, the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), who has already been condemned by the mayor of the City of Winnipeg, says that we are "going for the cheese." We do not believe the workers at Inco and the community of Thompson are cheese. We believe it is very important to the future of Manitoba.

Members opposite do not give a darn about northern Manitoba. In fact, they do not give a darn about working people. I think the comments from the House Leader again demonstrates that the party opposite only cares about the privileged few instead of all Manitobans. We do, Mr. Speaker.

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

Livestock Industry Beef Levy

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about jobs in Manitoba wherever they exist. Unfortunately, we do not see as many of them as we used to, but we have had and I have been in contact with the people at Teck Cominco to seek the same sort of assurances because of our concern about jobs in Thompson and I will continue to ask questions related to that. We will continue to ask questions that are relevant to the 33,000 Manitobans who lost their savings as a result of his government's mismanagement of that critical file.

Mr. Speaker, on another matter impacting on the economy of Manitoba and the well-being of Manitobans, we know that upward of 1,500 cattle producers in Manitoba have gathered to oppose the Province's mandatory cattle tax. It is an even larger group than what gathered at the height of the BSE crisis. This is a new tax on producers being levied at a time when producers are suffering the effects of protracted border closures, low prices and high costs. These challenges have been largely overlooked by the current government which has responded to this crisis in this industry with a sluggish and ill-considered plan.

Yesterday, the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association called on the Province to ensure accountability by making the planned new tax refundable. Will the Premier heed the call of the producers, provide accountability and empowerment to those producers and reverse his government's policy of taxation without accountability to producers?

* (14:00)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member opposite is like a little water bug skirting across the surface of the water today. He has gone from Inco to Crocus, and let me deal with some of his false statements, again about Crocus.

He has made the statement in the hallway last week that legislation had nothing to do with the lawsuit and had nothing to do with the former government. I would point out, both in the lawsuit and in the Auditor General's report that the member opposite is purported to have read, it states clearly that the legislation in 1992—the last time I looked, he was in the Premier's Office in '92. We were not, in 1992, created conflicting roles for the government.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General commented on that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite put false statements in their premise and then ask a different question. We still have a responsibility to correct the false statements made by members opposite. We do not apologize at all.

If they want to be little water bugs going across the surface and if agriculture is the third priority for the member opposite, let it be treated as the third priority for the member opposite. The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) has already had to ask questions on agriculture before the Leader of the Opposition.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the Premier that the Member for Interlake is the legislative assistant to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk).

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like 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 departure of Manitoba practices. It is not to be used for a means of debate.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader does not have a point of order.

Mr. McFadyen: I see even when I do not ask a question about Crocus the Premier gets up and gives evasions on Crocus. It is remarkable. I think, Mr. Speaker—[*interjection*] I know he is touchy right now and he is getting personal and snippy. I guess if I were approaching an election and had his record, I would be the same way.

Elected seven years to fix health care, and now we have the worst health care system in Canada. We have crumbling roads across the province. We are the crime capital of Canada, highest income taxes west of Québec. We are the last have-not province in western Canada, and he has a Cabinet right out of central casting.

So let us come right back to the point about agriculture and see if the Premier—[*interjection*]

If the Premier wants to give an evasive answer about Crocus this time, he is welcome to, but I wonder if he could dwell on the issue of agriculture. There is an important question and some new information coming forward from the cattle producers which I think deserves a response.

Given that the cattle producers yesterday indicated that some 92 percent of their members opposed this new tax and given that his government has imposed new rules, regulations and new taxes on producers without consultation, without incentives and without regard for the consequences of those policies, will the Premier commit today to reversing this ill-considered policy which penalizes producers when they can least afford it?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that: a) the Province of Manitoba has pledged comparable investments in slaughter capacity, b) the investments to be made by producers is comparable to the investments made by the cattle producers in Saskatchewan and Alberta. I would refer the member opposite to an article, an excellent column written by Laura Rance on the weekend, that takes a broader view than the narrow view proposed by the member in his question.

The member opposite is a bit arrogant about the next election campaign. The last leader of this House that was as arrogant as the member opposite was a person named Paul Edwards. We always believe the

people should speak in election campaigns. The member opposite may want to size up the drapes in an office he does not have, but let me assure him the people of Manitoba are always a lot brighter than even all members, including the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I am going to resist the temptation to respond to these petty personal comments coming from the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association have indicated that they are developing proposals to bring forward to the government to deal with this crisis in their sector. Will the Premier today agree to meet with the MCPA and the representatives to discuss the forthcoming proposals?

Mr. Doer: I have met with the cattle producers in the past. I was actually—*[interjection]* and I will meet with them in the future. Many of the ideas that they proposed to us we have implemented over the last number of years. I would say, Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that we are committed to increasing slaughter capacity in Manitoba. We are committed to having a joint investment from producers that will benefit and the taxpayers. We have already put significant money on the table. Some of his members opposite have even said run a deficit to build slaughter capacity.

We have actually rejected the idea from the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) to nationalize a new slaughter plant for cattle, but we feel that the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

An Honourable Member: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Well, thank you very much—

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order?

Mr. Penner: On a point of order. The Premier knows full well, Mr. Speaker, that it is not proper to lie in this House, and when he puts—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The words "lie," "liar" have never been accepted by any Chamber that I am aware of. Even raising it through a point of order directly at an individual has never been accepted by a Speaker. When drawing attention to the Speaker of a person using unparliamentary language is one thing, but directly calling someone a liar or lied, I think that is going a little bit far. I would caution the honourable Member for Emerson. Continue with your point of order.

Mr. Penner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is important to note that I have never once mentioned in any speech or anything the nationalization of an agricultural industry such as the beef or the pork industry in this province. What I have suggested is that the Premier should—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Once again I would like to remind members that points of orders raise to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure of our practices, not to be used for debate or for rebuttal. It is not the uses of points of orders.

So the honourable Member for Emerson does not have a point of order.

* * *

*(14:10)

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister, to continue.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to the bottom line, I think all of us in this Chamber recognize that when Burns Meats left Brandon in the mid-nineties, it represented over two different governments' successive failures, including the lack of investments compared to Alberta. The public sector in Alberta put a considerable amount of money into the industry. The industry itself put money into processing in Alberta. The industry itself, producers, put money into investing in processing in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past. We do not know whether there will be another political closure of the border, and we know how difficult it is to recapture processing in Manitoba. That is why I thought the article from Laura Rance was quite balanced in talking about the challenges for the government, the challenges for producers and the challenges for processing.

In the long run, Mr. Speaker, we are willing to take some flak and some criticism to have co-investment between the Province and the producers to build processing in Manitoba. We know we will get criticized. We accept that. At the end of the day, if we are able to build a lot more slaughter capacity, we think Manitoba producers will be better off and we will be better prepared for the next crisis that might come with the border closure.

Livestock Industry Beef Levy

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): We need to teach the First Minister the difference between the Brandon inspection fee and the \$2 backdoor tax. That is what he does not understand.

Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's edition of the *Brandon Sun*, the Minister of Agriculture reiterates her support for expanded slaughter capacity. Yet, nothing has been done.

What guarantee can the minister give us today that the money she is forcing from producers' hands will not disappear and nothing to show for it, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): As a government since the BSE crisis, we have said that we want to work with the industry to increase slaughter capacity in this province, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, members opposite have not been in the same vein.

The Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) has said that investing in processing was not a good idea, and I am quoting from an article of November 18, 2004. I remember the member from the Interlake saying that people should pull their money that they had invested into slaughter capacity. They have not made up their mind what it is that they want to do. But we have come forward with a plan where producers will put their money into a fund that is not a tax because it goes into a special levy. The Province will match them and producers will get equity positions in facilities.

Mr. Eichler: As of May 20, it will be three years of this dithering government doing nothing. Financing under the Cattle Enhancement Council is too little, too late.

What guarantee can this minister provide that the money will be used effectively and not wasted, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Wowchuk: You know, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe it is too late. I believe that producers have told us they do not want to be caught in the same situation again that should borders close we will be caught like we were when the BSE hit us. I want to give credit to the people in the slaughter industry who have been coming forward with different ideas. The slaughter industry has increased their numbers and are coming forward with proposals. The member opposite may think it is too late, but I believe in this industry. I also believe that we need slaughter capacity in this province. We are going to continue to work with producers so that slaughter capacity increases and that we have federally inspected plants in this province.

Mr. Eichler: Three long years, Mr. Speaker, that is all we have had, nothing but hollow promises from this government. The Cattle Enhancement Council will have total control over how this money will be distributed.

What is the minister's plan for putting this money to use and does she even actually have a plan?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the member opposite for finally endorsing the fund and saying he wants to know where the money is going to go. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, there is a council in place. Additional members will be added to the council. Applications will be made to the council by various facilities in this province. Those applications will be reviewed and, based on a sound business plan, the council will decide whether or not to take an equity position in the facility on behalf of the producers so that we have increased slaughter capacity.

I know the member opposite does not like the idea. He would much rather support economic development in Alberta, in the United States and in Ontario. Well, I would rather work with the producers and have investment in economic development in this province.

Manitoba Hydro Debt Level

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): We have seen this NDP government raid Manitoba Hydro in 2002 for over \$200 million. We saw them double the water rental rates and increase the debt guarantee fee.

Bill 11 is just one more way for this government to get its hands in the pockets of Manitoba Hydro ratepayers. Mr. Speaker, we are seeing the debt level in Manitoba Hydro climb.

Will this minister—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, the debt level at Manitoba Hydro has climbed by \$2 billion since this government came into power.

Will this minister now keep his hands out of Manitoba Hydro ratepayers' pockets and let Manitoba Hydro spend their money on new expansion or on paying down the debt of Manitoba Hydro?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I note the member has changed her position when she actually stood up in this House and asked us to subsidize commercial places. Now she has changed her position.

I want the member to know that we can invest in the future of Manitoba by building more dams. We can pay down the debt, Mr. Speaker. We can do something which is the single best thing you can do for energy in this country and that is preserve energy and put money in people's pockets so that they spend less money on energy that is exported out of province, \$3 billion worth to Alberta and United States. Keep money in Manitoba, build Manitoba industry.

We can do all the same at the same time, Mr. Speaker, and still build Hydro, something members opposite never did in office and have been against ever since they have been government and continue to be against.

Bill 11 Withdrawal

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Well, it is pretty hard to do that kind of thing when this government sees a penny in Manitoba Hydro and wants to take it for their own personal purposes, Mr. Speaker.

Manitobans are saying that the NDP plan to raid Hydro revenues to subsidize natural gas rates is unjust. Former Premier Ed Schreyer called it the most retrograde step the government could possibly take.

Mr. Speaker, would the Minister responsible for Hydro withdraw Bill 11 and end the government's plans to subsidize non-renewable natural gas with clean renewable hydro energy?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I barely heard it, but I hope members opposite are supportive of our attempts to build new dams. I have never heard that, but that is where we are going, and I hope members opposite are supportive of it.

Secondly, conservation has been named as the No. 1 issue in terms of energy efficiency. Manitoba Hydro has won the award as the best in the country for energy efficiency and we want them to do that. It puts hundreds of millions of dollars in the pockets of Manitobans. Not a penny has been cross-subsidized through Bill 11. That is not the intention.

I said it in the House. The member continues to distort the facts. If she is so against conservation, if she is so against energy efficiency, I do not think Manitobans—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:20)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, what I am against is having a government that raids Manitoba Hydro coffers every time they can for their own purposes so that ratepayers and expansion can occur.

We have received hundreds of requests from Manitobans asking this NDP government to withdraw Bill 11. Many Manitobans have told us that this bill is dead wrong. When legislation is so wrong it is perverse, it should be withdrawn.

I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Hydro: Will he listen to the requests of Manitobans, including former Premier Ed Schreyer, and withdraw Bill 11 which is just another raid on Manitoba Hydro revenues?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I want the member to know that I think I talk to the former Premier Ed Schreyer much more frequently than the member opposite and I follow his advice.

Also, Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thing I do note was the single largest debt incurred by

Manitoba Hydro was the purchase of Centra Gas of \$400 million. When I last looked that member was sitting around the Cabinet table when they purchased Centra Gas.

With the new federal government, with energy efficiency being very crucial, we need to ensure that Manitobans have access to energy efficiency programs. People in the inner city, people in rural Manitoba, people in the North need to have the opportunity to upgrade particularly if you look at the ongoing increase in price of natural gas.

Wuskwatim Dam Project Costs

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, in 2004 when Clean Environment Commission hearings were held regarding the Wuskwatim hydro generating station, the cost of construction was pegged at \$900 million. Less than two years later, it is reported that the cost of the project has now escalated to be 33 percent higher, \$1.2 billion.

So I ask the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: When he gets around to building Wuskwatim, what will it really cost?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I will note that on most of the questions that I have had on Wuskwatim from members opposite, they have been opposed to Wuskwatim. They have been against Wuskwatim.

Wuskwatim has been a process that started in the late nineties and, indeed, the capital costs from the original project in the late nineties has gone up, so have the revenues. The costs have gone up, revenues have gone up. Cost of capital, cost of steel is all on the rise. Does that mean we stop building everything as happened during the Conservative government? Do we go into a hole and not build anything like members opposite want us to do? They are the mothball party. We are the building party for the future of Manitoba.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the minister has not answered my question, either because he will not answer or he does not know. So, in the event of an unexpected or unforeseen cost in this project, significant cash calls might be required. Construction costs have increased by \$300 million in less than two years and potentially hundreds of million dollars more because of this government's incompetence.

So I ask the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: Has he advised NCN First Nation about the requirement to pay its share of the cost overruns in this project? Has he advised them?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, here we go, Mr. Speaker. Here we go again. NCN and the First Nations are not capable of making these decisions. Here we go, the same mantra that we have heard from members opposite from day one.

NCN has had 27 hearings. NCN has had a long series of processes. NCN has put out notification as having a whole series of hearings. I can show you a copy of the number of hearings held by members opposite when they were government; nothing. They did not build anything. They did not consult with anybody. NCN is going ahead with the referendum. They are consulting with their population. We will abide by the results of the people in that community with respect to their interest in that particular generation.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, again, unforeseen circumstances could result in no profits or even losses from unanticipated project costs. This NDP government cannot anticipate and did not anticipate a \$300-million increase in project costs over the last two years. Hundreds of millions of dollars could be added to the project's costs before it is even built.

So I ask the Minister responsible for Hydro: Has he advised NCN First Nation that it has to pay its share of the losses? Has he advised them that?

Mr. Chomiak: First of all, Mr. Speaker, the members mentioned Ed Schreyer. I worked for Ed Schreyer when they said we should not be building any hydro dams. I worked with a government that said Limestone is a disaster. They voted against it. They were against it, and it came under budget and on time.

Mr. Speaker, the corporation, Hydro, has negotiated with NCN. NCN is capable of negotiating on their own. They are a community we are treating with respect. Members opposite, if they had their way, not only would they not consult, but we know they would not build anything. If we had taken that attitude in the 1970s, we would not have benefited from all the export revenues that we have now and the opportunity to fuel the rest of Canada with some of those exports.

**Wuskwatim Dam
Project Development Agreement Review**

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin). NCN members have been given until June 14 to review the 1,300-page project development agreement, a document that one NCN member aptly pointed out to us is the size of two Winnipeg phone books.

Mr. Speaker, does he believe that band members have been given an adequate amount of time to review and analyze the document before the vote?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Members opposite, when it comes to matters that concern anything to deal with First Nations, Mr. Speaker, simply are negative and do not accept.

NCN has conducted 27 separate meetings with their communities. They have negotiated over seven years. Over seven years of negotiating and there have been open forums, there have been letters. There is notice in advance to all members. I want to point out, I think it is something like 19 public meetings, including a CD, including a DVD, and negotiations have happened.

I want to contrast that with the meetings that happened when member opposite were 11 lean years of government. Zero. None.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, I am advocating on behalf of the Aboriginal women who have approached us with this issue. We have spoken to a number of NCN members who have shared their concerns about the ratification vote process.

Is the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs satisfied that a fair and independent process has been established for the vote? A simple question.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as acting minister, on behalf of the minister, I think it is really important to note that again we are seeing the attitudes of members opposite towards northern Manitoba.

They used Thompson as a prop in their first question. Now, Mr. Speaker, instead of respecting the fact that Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation is holding a referendum, a First Nation that is making the decision based on extensive consultations, I would suggest to members opposite that they should listen

to people in northern Manitoba, including the Thompson citizens recently who put in their editorial, they are pleading with Conservatives actually to come up North. They have not been up for years. If they had, they would understand that NCN and other First Nations do not need the paternalistic attitude of members opposite towards Aboriginal people.

* (14:30)

Mrs. Rowat: I appreciate his comments, but Aboriginal women have a say in this as well, Mr. Speaker. The consultation process has included meet-and-greet dinners. During the upcoming Nelson House Wuskwatim Awareness Week, activities include a trivia contest and talent showcase.

Is the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs satisfied that the NCN members have been provided with adequate information to make an informed decision on the Wuskwatim project?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I think it is really important that we respect the First Nations of this province. In this particular case, NCN has a vote. I think it is very important, as I do as an MLA representing NCN, to respect the people of Nelson House, respect NCN, and not take the kind of cheap political approach we see from members opposite. They do not ask questions about anything to do with improving the lives of First Nations in northern Manitoba. All they can do is sit and carp on issues such as this.

Respect NCN. Stop the paternalistic attitudes from members opposite because the people of Nelson House can make their own decisions.

**Transportation and Government Services
Racism Allegations—Public Inquiry**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, as all members know, both the Premier and I have stood in this House on many occasions to speak out against racism. The Premier also knows that there are serious concerns about racism within his own government, especially within the Department of Transportation and Government Services. Today, on a day we seem to be talking about northern Manitoba, leaders within MKO continue to call for a full public inquiry into blatant racism within the Department of Transportation and Government Services.

Will the Premier respect the call from the First Nations of northern Manitoba and announce today that he will call a public inquiry?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe the matter and allegations and the tape have been presented to the Civil Service Commission pursuant to The Civil Service Act. The issues have been raised dealing with employees in the department. Certainly, statements made are not condoned or supported by the government. We also respect due process with the Civil Service Commission. That is what is happening under the law today.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, day after day there has been scandal after scandal in this government that needs a public inquiry. Today, the MKO has passed unanimously a resolution demanding a formal independent inquiry into racism within this government. I table that resolution which was passed 22 to 0.

MKO represents tens of thousands of northern Manitobans. Will the Premier listen to the calls coming from MKO for a full public inquiry into allegations of racism within his government? Will the Premier call that inquiry? Yes or no?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly the statements made by the departmental employees have been commented on by the minister and by the government. I think we have discussions taking place right now. I think the ministers are there.

Having said that, the affairs, the careers of people that make, obviously, statements that do not reflect the views of the government are also balanced against the building of northern roads and other investments. *[interjection]* That is why we have legislation called The Civil Service Act. That is why we have the Civil Service Commission so that the obvious mistakes made and comments made that do not reflect the government, statements made by individuals are dealt with by a body that has put in legislation so that they have both accountability for their statements and balance in terms of their careers.

In terms of the MKO organization, there are lots of resolutions that are passed, many of which we support, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite should be very careful about throwing the word "scandal" around because today the Auditor General commented about the government that he was in, and, you know, he represented Peguis for years. For years we have raised the issue of all the mould in the community of Peguis, the First Nation of Peguis. So I would be very careful, for the member opposite, not

to be again holier than thou when it comes to dealing with First Nations people.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we are dealing today with a call from an organization representing tens of thousands of Manitobans in northern Manitoba, MKO, and they are calling for a public inquiry not only into racism but into the practices employed by this government into tendering for northern roads and winter road contracts.

The Premier has been aware of concerns in this area for some time. I ask the Premier why he seems so terrified about opening up this area to a public inquiry, to allowing people to have an open discussion and to present their concerns? Why is the Premier so concerned about allowing people to come forth to a public inquiry to present their concerns so they can be listened to?

The people of northern Manitoba demand to be heard. Will the Premier call a public inquiry?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think there have been 12 requests for public inquiries in this House in the last 12 months.

Secondly, we have already stated as a government that any comments that are sexist and racist are unacceptable for any civil servant in government. We have already stated that, the minister has stated that and we have stated that.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, we would point out to the member opposite that we have built four new winter roads this winter. We also had to punch in a winter road from Norway House to Island Lake to deal with materials that were at risk with the horrible winter situation with it being too warm in the North. We put that in to make sure that supplies could get to the communities.

But, I would point out, Mr. Speaker, there are responsibilities government has for ensuring that the standards of sexism and racism do not exist in the direct public service, but also public employees who work for the government are also dealt with under The Civil Service Act. They are not dealt with in the Legislative Chamber. I would think that over time that has been valuable.

We have always stated that the public service of Manitoba, I think since the early twenties when there were massive abuses actually with the building of this Legislative Building, when there were huge abuses of the tendering process and huge abuses with public employees, ever since that, no matter who has

sat in this chair has wanted a separation from politics and the civil service. I really respect that even if I do not agree with some of the actions taken by civil servants.

I do not agree with sexist comments and I do not agree with racist comments, but I do respect the fact that the Civil Service Commission should keep politics out of the civil service.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bill 11—Withdrawal

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I am surprised today because my caucus has received over 600 requests from the public calling for the immediate withdrawal of Bill 11. The public has seen that Bill 11 is not only bad energy policy, but they also know that it is just another attempt by this NDP government to reach into Manitoba Hydro's ratepayers' pockets for their own personal slush fund.

This NDP government has a long history of raiding Crown corporations, including Manitoba Hydro. Bill 11 is only their latest attempt. We all remember how they raided over \$200 million from Manitoba Hydro in 2002. They have also doubled the water rental rates and increased the debt-guarantee fees. Bill 11 makes no sense whatsoever from an energy standpoint subsidizing non-renewable fossil fuels through clean renewable hydro energy. It is counterproductive and unfair to Manitobans who do not have access to natural gas.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are saying that this bill is deplorable, unjust and totally wrong. Even former Premier Ed Schreyer called it perverse and the most retrograde step the government could possibly take. This NDP government should listen to him and to the hundreds of other Manitobans who have spoken out and withdraw Bill 11 today. Thank you.

* (14:40)

Sandy Bell

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an exceptional health care professional, Ms. Sandy Bell. Recently awarded the Fred Douglas Society Humanitarian Art of Caring Professional Award, Ms. Bell's professionalism, compassion and commitment to working with the elderly have marked both her long career as well as the lives of her many patients.

A nurse at the Misericordia Hospital for the past 24 years, Ms. Bell has had experience in a variety of different roles from student, director of education services at Misericordia to a resident care manager in a long-term care unit. Yet, throughout this time, Ms. Bell's interest in the health of the elderly and her desire to improve the quality of life of seniors has remained constant.

This passion led Ms. Bell to engage in groundbreaking research in the field of gerontological nursing. Her master's thesis identified a previously overlooked gap in services provided to the elderly. In her time as resident manager of the long-term care unit, Ms. Bell noted that undiagnosed visual problems contributed greatly to the deterioration of the health of the elderly. On her own initiative, Ms. Bell successfully lobbied the provincial government, established partnerships with companies and professional associations and started a new vision screening program on May 1 this year, all with the goal of identifying vision problems so as to improve the quality of life of the elderly.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Bell's passion and commitment to improving the lives of Manitoba's seniors is clear. Her innovative research and her dogged efforts have led to an important health need being met. It is a testament to her work that the Fred Douglas Society has recognized her accomplishments.

I would also like to congratulate Ms. Bell on her achievements and thank her on behalf of this Assembly for her dedication to Manitoba's elderly.

Treaty Relations Commission

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): This morning the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) and myself were privileged to attend the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba's grand opening held at the beautiful and historic Lower Fort Garry. It was wonderful to witness, and I was honoured to be there to witness the continued success of an important partnership between the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Canada.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I would like to congratulate and thank the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, Commissioner Dennis White Bird, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Manitoba's First Nations.

There were many moving remarks made by dignitaries at the ceremony, and of special note was a tribute by Elder Fred Kelly to Commissioner White

Bird. This tribute ceremony also recognizes the significance of Aboriginal women who play an integral part in the decision making of the past and present discussions that take place.

The commission was created to strengthen understanding and respect in regard to the treaties in Manitoba. I would like to acknowledge their strong commitment to public education and know that they will continue to play a significant role in our province for years to come. The commission provides a forum for vital discussions and unites past commitments with contemporary issues.

The opening of this space will assist in the commission's exceptional initiatives and give all parties involved the opportunity to work together. Once again, we extend our sincere congratulations and gratitude to the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Day

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, last week, I joined 80 Grades 4 and 5 students at Radisson School to celebrate the 136th anniversary of Manitoba's entrance into Confederation.

We were treated to an exceptional presentation by Cheryl Kolt, curator of Transcona Historical Museum. Her presentation informed students about the history of Manitoba, the significance of Manitoba Day and the historic role that seminal figures, such as Pierre Radisson, have played in the development of our province.

As the MLA for Radisson, I felt honoured to speak to the students of Radisson School on why Manitoba Day is of significance to all Manitobans and, in particular, the young people of our great province. The students listened respectfully and learned about interesting historical facts regarding Manitoba's birthday, May 12, 1870. On that day, the Manitoba Act was passed by the Government of Canada. They learned about Pierre Radisson, the French explorer after whom their school is named. Radisson lived between 1636 and 1710. He was very knowledgeable of First Nations people and North American geography.

He and another explorer, Des Groseilliers, sailed for Hudson Bay in 1668. Radisson's ship, the *Eaglet*, was damaged and he was forced to turn back, but Des Groseillier's ship, the *Nonsuch*, successfully completed the voyage. A replica of this ship is now featured at the museum of man and nature. The voyage of Radisson and Des Groseilliers helped to

open the northwest for early settlement. I am proud to represent this great constituency of Radisson where Miss Margaret Underhill was appointed the first female principal in Manitoba history when Pierre Radisson school opened in 1957.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Legislature, I would like to commend Cheryl Kolt and the Transcona Historical Museum for the excellent work they do preserving and promoting our heritage, and thank the students and teachers of Pierre Radisson school for allowing me to participate in—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Manitoba Housing Authority Properties

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we all know about the negative effect buildings run by slum landlords have on crime and poverty. If we are going to make real progress on crime and poverty, we are going to have to crack down on slum landlords, but to have any credibility in doing that this provincial government itself is going to have to start practising what it preaches and become a model landlord itself.

It is in that vein that I rise today to speak about issues affecting a Manitoba Housing Authority property in Charleswood at 170 Hendon Avenue. Contacted by a resident of the building, I had an opportunity to meet with about 20 concerned residents last week. The discussion involved major safety concerns that plagued the residents of 170 Hendon Avenue. During my visit I was very troubled by the safety concerns I heard: gunfire in the parking lot; crack cocaine available 24/7; prostitution; theft; physical assaults; verbal assaults; even suite doors lit on fire. Incidents have even been highlighted in the media, including machine gun fire in the parking lot and a man who was viciously attacked by a machete.

Of further concern, drug dealers and trouble-makers are easily accessing the building because doors are constantly propped open for anyone to come into the building as they please. Tenants in 170 Hendon live in fear. They fear the drug dealers and others involved in criminal activity. Some residents shared concerns that during evenings and weekends they were fearful to even leave the confines of their apartments.

Every tenant, every tenant voiced the essential need for on-site security. On-site security would be a huge step to address the safety of residents. Yes, there is a cost to supplying on-site security, but I suggest that the danger and social costs that residents

suffer right now is far greater. There is a large cost to society when people live in fear, fearful of the possibility that they could be at the wrong end of a stray bullet from the parking lot or perhaps the wrong end of a machete attack.

A majority of these tenants are good people. They are trying to lead good, productive, healthy lives and it is our responsibility to give them every possibility to do so. Manitoba Housing Authority employees work hard, but the government needs to shape up.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call the following bills: debate on second readings, No. 23; then, moving to second readings, would you please call 37, 31, 35, 30, and the rest in order as they appear under second readings?

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 23—The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on second reading, Bill 23, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Steinbach, who has 29 minutes remaining.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It is a pleasure to resume debate on this legislation. I believe that, when I was last speaking in this Chamber regarding the legislation, I was mentioning the good work that the former Minister of Justice, Vic Toews, did on this legislation in making sure this innovative legislation was brought forward. Many of the members opposite, the New Democrats at the time, thought it might not be constitutional; it might not be legislation that would stand the test of time. But, indeed, we see it is legislation that has stood the true test of time, Mr. Speaker.

So I commend the now current federal Minister of Justice on this innovative approach that he brought forward in 1998. I think it is good also that the government has recognized that now. They have kind of come around and recognized that it is legislation that will continue to be useful and to have supported it and extended it.

* (14:50)

I have been disappointed over the last few days to hear the derogatory comments, both by the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) regarding police officers in this province, the 1,554 officers.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I appreciated the Winnipeg Police Association coming forward with some concerns. I am actually keeping score. I think it is three to one right now. The Premier has bashed the police association three times and the Minister of Justice one. It is probably not a game that I would want to be leading at this time, but they can play between the two of them and see who can insult those 1,500 police officers more, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. Point of order being raised. What is the point of order, please?

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): The point of order is a point of clarification with the score that my friend is suggesting in this Chamber. Indeed, the score should be tied because my friend, the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), has refused to include the mayor of the city of Winnipeg and the chief of police of the city of Winnipeg for—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. A point of order relates to a departure from the rules or proceedings of this Assembly. A point of clarification is not a point of order.

Mr. Goertzen: To that point of order, I will table for my friend or provide for my friend a copy of a news story, a CBC news story which indicates the president of the Winnipeg Police Association raising concerns regarding a lack of police officers.

I know that the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) does not appreciate those 1,500 police officers, and I think that is unfortunate. There will be a change, though, in government soon, and, instead of putting down the police officers as this government does on a repeated basis, we will lift them up and support those police officers. That is what it is all about.

I know, maybe the Member for Minto can table any letters that he has from police officers commending them on issues. I can certainly provide him with one or a few. I can certainly provide him, I will have a page bring over to the Member for Minto

another commendation that we have had from the Winnipeg Police Association on behalf of 1,554 police officers.

So the members opposite can continue their game of bashing police officers and trying to hold them down and not believing that they are an important part of crime-fighting. We, in fact, think that they are an integral part of crime-fighting, that they are, in fact, what makes fighting crime happen or not happen in the province of Manitoba.

Instead of continually trying to make their work harder and trying to question everything that these good police officers say, I would encourage the members opposite to perhaps meet and discuss some of these issues with them, because legislation like we are debating here today, Bill 23, certainly has an important part of law enforcement, but, indeed, it is not everything. You really do need those boots on the street as sometimes is referred to, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You need those individuals who are on the ground doing the good work of law enforcement.

As law enforcement here in the municipalities, the city of Winnipeg and across Manitoba continues to struggle with a lack of resources, I think more than probably at any other time in the history of Manitoba, they need a government that supports them. They need a government that says we know that policing is difficult and hard work. But, instead of working with that difficult job that they deal with, the members opposite make their job even harder, even more difficult by the kinds of questioning that these police officers bring forward. I think that is very disappointing.

I think it is destructive in the long run. We all know, we recognize that there are recruitment issues, both here in the city of Winnipeg with police officers and with the RCMP, but those recruitment issues are made worse, are made more difficult when those who might be considering a career in law enforcement do not see that they have a supportive government, and do not see that they have real difficulties with police. They need a government that is going to support their work, that is going to support the things that they do. Instead, what they see here in Manitoba is the opposite, a harder perspective.

I would say to my friend, the Member for Minto, that we should perhaps—and I extend an offer actually to the Member for Minto here today, that we could join together and have a meeting with representatives of the police association. If the

Member for Minto can spare time in his busy schedule, we could jointly meet. I know the office is not far from here. We could jointly meet with the Winnipeg Police Association. I think if I heard him right, he said we could walk there together. We would go, then, and have this meeting together to hear about the concerns, because I know that the Member for Minto does not want to hear from these front-line officers, that he discredits what they say and that he is trying to get into the race. I should have a new scorecard now. Now, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has insulted police three times this week, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) once, and now the Member for Minto is in on the game. He is on the board. He has also insulted them once. It is certainly not a game, I think, that he should be playing.

But, on this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that the extension of the civil remedies that we are dealing with here in the province are, in fact, important, I think. They will extend and give those who are dealing with the legislation an added ability to go after those who are creating or manufacturing drugs in one particular environment or another, those who might be using prostitution in a particular home or within the area. It is an extension. It allows for that extension to ensure those other areas.

Protection of children, I know, is another area that this bill brings forward and allows to come forward. I think that that is very important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we support that. I do not think that we will be holding up this particular piece of legislation because of that. We do think that there is credibility and value in the legislation that has been brought forward in that way, and we appreciate that the government has worked on it to that extent.

We know that there are other things that could be done that are not always being done. Yesterday, we saw an announcement regarding drinking and driving and the extension of the zero tolerance policy on new drivers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We certainly think that that is a good approach to take and a good way to go. We were concerned, of course, because there are always two prongs when you are dealing with these sorts of issues. It is not just tougher penalties. You also need the certainty or an increased chance of somebody being caught for a criminal offence.

We know that one of the strongest deterrents for criminal activity is the prospect of somebody getting caught. The more a person thinks that they are going to get caught for a criminal activity, the less likely

they are going to do that criminal activity because the deterrent is more immediate. Larger penalties, while they have their place, certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the overall scheme of crime deterrents, are not the sole picture because, if an individual does not believe that they are going to get caught doing the crime that they commit, then, simply, it is not going to be a deterrent to them, whatever that penalty might be because they never believe that they are going to have to face the forbearance or they are never going to have to face the actual institution of that particular penalty.

So I think that is a key component that members opposite have missed, that they have misplaced, that they have not, in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, allowed for the reality that the more resources that we have on the street, the more likely that individuals will believe that they will get caught doing a particular crime, and that would drive crime down. So I think that I would ask the members opposite to consider that type of an approach as well.

We know that this particular piece of legislation that is before us today has acted upon a civil nature. There are some, when the legislation was originally proposed, I believe in 1998, by the former Conservative government, wondered if it encroached upon areas that are traditionally used by the federal government, the Criminal Code, for example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether or not there was an encroachment there, whether or not this government could do it or the previous government could use the legislation to crack down on those who are dealing drugs, areas that more traditionally have been in the federal purview of jurisdiction through the Criminal Code and the penalties running through the Criminal Code.

But, acting upon a civil nature, acting upon the property itself, which clearly, constitutionally, the Province has a jurisdiction to work upon is how it was able to be done. I think, in fact, that that is a creative approach, and it is one of the things that we are lacking here in the province today, a creative approach to how to combat some of these issues that continue to plague areas within the city of Winnipeg and other areas outside in Manitoba.

* (15:00)

I recognize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that just yesterday we saw more violence and acts of criminal behaviour that impacted on innocent Manitobans and innocent Winnipeggers here in the province of Manitoba. The government seems to turn a blind eye

to these sorts of repeated and ramping up in increased acts of violence in the province of Manitoba, whether it is in Winnipeg or in other areas. I know it is not just isolated to Winnipeg. If you look at the statistics, Canada crime statistics for Manitoba in general, you will see that, on a per capita basis, on a per 100,000 basis, Manitoba continues to have one of the highest crime rates for robbery, for assault and for a number of other violent instances, and that is something after seven years.

It is difficult for the government now to deflect that. It is difficult for the government to say, well, we have not had an opportunity to address that issue. There are members like the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan), for example, who is newer to this Legislature and newer to the government benches, who might say, well, I am not responsible for that because I have only been here for a year or two, but, unfortunately for him really, his entire government has to take responsibility for the inability to reduce those violent crime rates, whether it is in the city of Winnipeg or whether it is in other municipalities surrounding the city of Winnipeg. *[interjection]*

Well, I welcome a response from the Member for Minto, and there are a few things I would like him to address. Quite apart from the fact that he does not seem to stand by police officers, which we have dealt with, I know I would like him—*[interjection]* That is right. It is a riding issue, too. Well, we will ensure that, when the election comes, those police officers know that they did not get support here in the Legislature, either from their Member for Minto or from other members of the government, in particular, the Premier (Mr. Doer).

I know the Member for Minto feels he has to follow the Premier's lead, and since the Premier likes to poke fun at police officers, then he feels he has to poke fun at police officers. I suspect there is that sort of pressure, that institutional pressure, and I do not want to be too critical of the member. I know he probably feels that in order to advance his political career he must also follow that line of insulting those front-line officers.

But, beyond that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the Member for Minto will want to address a number of different issues as well. He will want to, I think, address the fact that the government has not developed an overall strategy for dealing with the shortage of police officers that we have on the street.

I believe it was last week that the president of the Winnipeg Police Association, sometimes the

target of barbs from members opposite, raised issues regarding the lack of police, up to 10 percent short of a complement in every division in the city of Winnipeg. Those were comments from the now president of the Winnipeg Police Association who raised those concerns on behalf of the 1,554 officers in the city of Winnipeg.

I think that there is a role to play for the provincial government to say, well, how do we meet those needs and how do we deal with issues and what are the problems? Why are we, as opposed to other jurisdictions, having more problems recruiting officers into the city of Winnipeg than perhaps other areas? We recognize that there are challenges across Canada with this sort of recruitment, but we know also that, systematically, we have a harder time getting those officers in place to police our streets. We do not think that residents of Winnipeg or other municipalities around the province should live in fear because this government does not have a plan either in the short term or in the long term to address this particular issue. *[interjection]* The Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) I think rightly points out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the government lacks a plan on a number of different areas. So perhaps it is not an isolated case. Perhaps what we see is a pattern, a repeated pattern, of a government that does not have plans on a number of different issues.

I have seen the now current Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) take a number of shots at RCMP officers in the past and dispute some of their actions. I remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, quite well, actually, back in 1997 where the now Minister of Justice was questioning the actions of RCMP officers here in the province of Manitoba. He was questioning whether or not their actions were appropriate. I do not think that that is becoming of—and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) shakes his head. I do not think he believes it to be true. He does not remember the Minister of—well, he is looking for evidence, so I will quote from a *Winnipeg Sun* article, Saturday, March 29, 1997.

In fact, I will provide it to the member and, perhaps, the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan). The headline of this article of the *Winnipeg Sun* is: Big act from NDP windbag, a farce. That is actually a headline in the *Winnipeg Sun*. Again, I will read it: Big act from NDP windbag, a farce. I would never write a headline like that. I think it perhaps is a little over the top in terms of headlines, but I will read from the article itself from the editorialist from the *Winnipeg Sun*. It says: But, with its penchant for

overkill, Mackintosh stupidly holds his young and inexperienced officer as representative of the entire justice system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When referring to a member of this Assembly, please refer to the portfolio or the constituency represented, not the name.

Mr. Goertzen: I will withdraw that on behalf of the person who wrote the article, but I will table it for my friend from Minto because I know he will want to see and to ensure that it is correct. In fact, there are more articles like that of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) attacking police, and I will bring them out over time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Oh, I see maybe the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wants to see the article. I will provide him with a copy. It is good fodder.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there are other articles that have a history of a pattern of the Minister of Justice questioning police officers, so, when he questions police officers' comments this week, I guess it is not really a surprise; it is more of a pattern. It is just his way. I am not sure if he does not believe in the work that they do, if he does not believe that they are credible. Even as a few years ago as that to say that an RCMP officer is inexperienced in their job and to question what these good officers do on the front lines, you know, is just absolutely, I think, wrong, and as the Minister of Justice, to continue that pattern by taking cheap shots at the Winnipeg Police Association now as they go along, is just simply wrong.

We will make sure that, when a new government comes in at some point in the future, we will take a different approach, that we are going to uplift these officers and not question the work that they do. We will work with the police association to try to ensure that the best of policing practices can be applied rather than criticize them here in the House when they raise concerns, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I just simply think that that is the wrong approach. That is the wrong approach when you are dealing with men and women who every day go on to the streets and put their safety on the line for our own safety.

I know that this House debated a resolution not long ago, brought forward by the Manitoba Progressive Conservatives, that praised police for the work that they do. It was passed unanimously in this House, but I suppose it might have been sort of a nominal passing, sort of something that the Minister of Justice felt that he had to do and did not want to

perhaps support it as strongly as others in this House did because his current actions regarding the police association and his past actions in questioning the RCMP in this article that I provided for my friend, the Member for Minto, which is entitled, Big act from NDP windbag, a farce. I do not want to repeat the headline too often. I do think it was too far. I do think it went too far.

But it does call, I think, some very important questions. It does call some very important questions about how much this particular government does support police officers, how much they really care about police officers on the street and safety. I know the Minister of Justice was at a dinner for Rudy Giuliani not long ago. I was there as well. I am not sure if the Member for Minto was there or not. But, certainly, that dinner demonstrated clearly the value of officers on the street and what they can do in trying to reduce crime.

* (15:10)

We heard it from a man who took the crime rate in New York from one of the highest it had ever been in that city, in any American city, down to a rate that is, I would suggest, if we looked at statistics on a per capita basis, lower than the city of Winnipeg's. It was interesting because Mr. Giuliani, in his speech when he began, said that, when he started as the mayor for New York City, he did a survey of the residents of New York City and more than 60 percent of residents in New York City said if they could, if they had either the economic ability or other ability to move outside of New York City, they would.

Can you imagine starting off as a mayor in a community and you do a survey, one of the first surveys you do, and you find out that 60 percent of your residents, that 60 percent of your residents want to leave your municipality and go somewhere else? What a difficult way to start and it is not surprising that Mr. Giuliani overcame that. We have seen, history has shown, that he has had the ability to overcome a number of different challenges, and I applaud him for that effort. He recognized that, if he did not do something radical or he did not do something that others would find to be significant to ensure that they did not get control of what was happening in New York City, that city would begin to lose individuals or continue to become more and more violent.

So he took what was considered to be a radical step at the time to have more police officers on the street dealing with not just large crimes but small

crimes. They recognized that, if you would go after some of these small crimes, it not only sent a message, but it also allowed officers then to do investigative work and to learn things from individuals who were involved in the smaller, some might consider, petty crimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So it was a good and a valuable lesson for those who would say that we should not have these officers on the street, that we should not have more officers on the street. I, in fact, tend towards the opposite. I side with Mr. Giuliani and say his approach was a good approach, and now it has been a proven approach. But it takes commitment and it does take resources. I recognize that, and, certainly, the mayor at that time in New York recognized that it would take resources as well if they were going to bring forward that particular plan, that it was not going to be something they could do easily, that it was not going to be something they could do and there was not going to be opposition.

In fact, I believe, if I remember from Mr. Giuliani's speech and from reading his book, that they faced significant opposition, significant opposition from taxpayers, significant opposition from others, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who said that that was not the way to go and that more policing and more significant policing would not, in fact, make a difference over time. The experience has been quite different. The experience has been that more policing can make that real difference on the street, that it can make a difference for those who are dealing with crime in their communities. Now, New York City not only has had a reduced crime rate, but Mr. Giuliani expresses that it is one of the safer cities in the United States. So it has lost its reputation as one of the more violent communities in the United States and has gained a reputation as one of the safest communities in the United States.

So we can learn lessons. Not every lesson will be applicable and not every lesson will be transferable; not everything that can be done in one jurisdiction can be done in another. I understand that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I do think that we should be looking at lessons and how we can do things better to improve safety in a community and around an area.

So I would encourage this government, who, I know, likes to put out a number of different news releases and try to leave the impression with Manitobans that things are happening in terms of community safety, really to look at the hard work. In fact, I think one of the lessons that Mr. Giuliani left

with us in his speech and that is left with us in his book is that it is not enough, when a leadership is not bringing forward things at a very superficial level, to try to make it appear that things are changing. If you do not really do the hard work and really make the difficult decisions that will make that difference in communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not leadership.

I think that those words probably struck the members opposite who were there at that dinner and probably got them to thinking whether or not they truly were doing something that was just politically expedient, that might get a headline today and go away tomorrow, or whether or not they were doing something more than that, that would be more long-term and more long lasting.

I think that we took away from that experience that you do have to be bold and creative and innovative in the things that you do. We saw that creativity, then, back in 1998, when the former Conservative government brought forward this legislation that had some people questioning it and had some people wondering whether or not it would stand the test of time. But, in fact, we have seen that it has stood the test of time.

I am glad—and I certainly do not mind saying when I think something is done well—that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and the officials in his department have seen fit to expand this particular piece of legislation to try to find ways to broaden it and to have more inclusiveness in terms of what the Director of Public Safety can act upon. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that is a good sign, and I think that it is a good step. It is one of the reasons that we are in favour of this legislation.

I know my time is drawing short, and there are others who will want to speak to this legislation. I certainly would encourage them to do so. But, as they are speaking, I would also ask that they themselves consider other innovative ways to deal with problems of crime, the continuing, escalating problems of crime that we have here in the province of Manitoba and to use the example of that former Progressive Conservative government who said, there must be a better way, there could be a better way, there is a better way. Then they went and they found that better way. That is what this government needs to do. Not just simply to say we are going to do something that is going to make a difference, but actually to find innovative and creative ways that are

being used in other jurisdictions and then to apply them.

So, with those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to hearing other presenters. *[interjection]* I see the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) wants me to say more. If he wants to give me leave, I would be happy to speak. I would be happy for him to speak. *[interjection]* He has lost those 1,500 votes from the police officers, but I know that he could probably try to mull some other votes through his speech, and I want to give him the opportunity to do that

So thank you again for the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I look forward to hearing other presenters.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to say a few words about The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act, Bill 23, which we are discussing at the moment.

As members know, this bill will make amendments to The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act and allow for provisions which essentially call for the ability for orders to be made to vacate and shut down buildings where there are illegal drugs grown or produced, where children are sexually abused or exploited, where there are prohibited or restricted firearms like sawed-off shotguns, machine guns and hand guns illegally stored, where there are stolen or illegally imported firearms stored, where there are prohibited or restricted weapons like switchblade knives or brass knuckles illegally stored, or where there are explosives illegally stored.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, I think, came into effect in early 2003, so it has been here for about three years. Certainly, from the comments that I have heard and the people in the community, there is some anecdotal evidence that this act has been effective, certainly in certain circumstances. Even, for instance, in discussions around the situation in Manitoba Housing at 170 Hendon Avenue, the provisions of this act appear to have been useful in shutting down or evicting people who are trouble-makers and causing problems, under the terms of this act, from suites, and therefore having a positive impact.

* (15:20)

That being said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that there is an important principle here, which the

Minister of Justice should listen to. That principle is this: When you have an initial bill, and it is there for three years, and you want to now amend it, you should bring to this Chamber a careful analysis of how the act has worked, what its positive and negative effects are, and not just rely on anecdotal evidence and hearsay. We clearly should have expected from this Minister of Justice a very careful analysis to be tabled in this House of how this legislation has worked, how many orders have been used under this act, what their effect has been, whether there is actually any decrease in crime in the neighbourhoods where this act has been used. I would suggest that that would be a fairly important measure in terms of whether there has been a decrease in crime.

One of the things, of course, we know is that certain crimes are still continuing to increase and others, in fact, are decreasing, but we should have that kind of analysis when we are amending a bill that the government has brought in several years ago. There should be careful analysis. There should be good background in terms of statistics, but there should also be a look at outcomes to see whether the legislation has had an impact on actual outcomes like the incidence of crime and whether you can show that areas where there have been these Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods orders put in place, where they have been impacted so that there, in fact, is a decrease in crime in those areas.

I think that there is all too often with this government measures put in place, press releases released, but there is not a follow-through in terms of an understanding and analysis of the impact that the legislation has actually had. Has it made a difference? That, clearly, is vital information that we should have here, and, if the Minister of Justice would table such analysis, it would be very welcome. Maybe the fact that he has not tabled it means that it was never done, and if that is the case, that is a real disappointment. But, certainly, it should be available to members in this Chamber, that the kind of look at this legislation which we need is a look at whether, in fact, it has made a difference and not just a single quoted anecdotal incident here and there, but, in fact, whether you can look at the communities and the areas where this act has been applied to shut down buildings, whether, in fact, it has had an effect, a decrease in crime.

Maybe the Clean Sweep had an impact and this had no effect. Maybe there were other things that had an impact and not this legislation at all. That is

important for us to know as legislators before we add on terms and provisions to this legislation. I am not necessarily opposed. In fact, we are supportive at this juncture of adding on terms and areas where this legislation could be applicable, but, having said that, then I would say that it is critical that we actually have some real analysis and not just talk from the government, so that we can show where there really is justification or where there is not justification for making further amendments. Give us more substance than we have had. That is what we should have in this Chamber.

Now, I would suggest that, in addition to looking at outcomes, it would be important to have and to present to this Chamber an analysis of the cost of these measures. What has been the cost over the last three years of implementing this act? What is the comparative cost of different measures in terms of decreasing crime? Has this been cost-effective? What is the cost? We know that under the NDP government the Justice budget has gone up a huge amount, and the suspicion is that the Justice budget has gone up because, under this government, what is happening is that there are more problems, so they are having to put more people in jail and they have more people before the courts. All these things add increased costs. So, when the government is not preventing crime, you get more crime. You get more need for policemen. You get more need for measures and more costs to the taxpayer. So we should have had, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a careful analysis of the actual cost impact of this legislation.

Too often this government is a free spender, going in and spending money. There is a principle here that, when you add new measures into legislation, we should know what they are actually costing taxpayers in Manitoba. Then we can make a better decision in deciding in terms of amendments to this act, in deciding in terms of whether there are things that can be done to look at implementation or actions under this act, which would render things more cost-effective or, in other ways, improve the act.

Certainly, from our perspective, therefore, that step No. 1 from this government should have been to present to the Legislature, to table in the Legislature, a very careful analysis of the impact of this legislation, both in terms of outcomes related to crime and in terms of costs to the taxpayer. The fact that this government has not presented us with that kind of analysis and wants to continue amending the legislation suggests to us that it is working without

doing the sort of analysis that really should have been done and needs to be done.

Now, my comments do not take away necessarily from our support for this legislation, but what we are emphasizing here is the need for better analysis of legislation that has been put in place, a better understanding of the costs as well as the impact, and the net result of that can be better legislation, better management of costs by government and within government and sometimes cost to people outside of government.

Clearly, it would be a big advantage if we could prevent crime so that we do not have to be closing down buildings at all. The objective clearly should be to improve the behaviour of people and prevent crime, and what is happening is that we have got more and more crime under this government that we have got to be concerned about, and so we have got more and more amendments to this bill that we should have at least had the analysis to be able to have a look at this carefully.

Now, having made these points, let me talk a little bit about some of the analysis that is available through Statistics Canada. Here I will go to the crime statistics and will look at the latest available from Statistics Canada. It happens to be 2002, but the crime statistics do not seem to have changed a whole lot under this government. The population in Winnipeg listed here, and these are crime statistics for Winnipeg, was 674,188. We compare that with the population for Québec City, because I am going to compare crime rates and crime in Winnipeg with that in Québec City. Here we are in Québec City, the population of 679,889, and that is about 5,000 more. They are very similar populations, Winnipeg and Québec City.

Now, let us look at the violent crime in the two. The number of violent crimes in Winnipeg for the year was 8,935; the number of violent crimes in Québec City with a very similar population was 3,489. In other words, Québec City had less than half the incidence of violent crime than Winnipeg, in spite of the fact that they have very similar populations. We have had consecutive Conservative and NDP governments, which have not done the job here in Winnipeg and in Manitoba. We clearly need a change. If members are concerned about the slight differences in population, then we will look at the actual incidence rates. The incidence rate for violent crime in Winnipeg was 1,325 per 100,000 residents; the incidence of violent crime, exactly the same time

period for Québec City was 503 per 100,000 population, so considerably less than half. They have things organized and going well in Québec City. They have done a good job of preventing crime. *[interjection]* Well, they have had a lot more Liberal governments in the last several decades than we have had in Manitoba. *[interjection]* That is right.

* (15:30)

Let us look at property crime. This is another area which is important. Property crime in Winnipeg, 38,247; property crime in Québec, 20,254. So it is about half the number of property crimes in Québec City compared to Winnipeg, in spite of the fact that they are very close in population. *[interjection]* Let me give the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) the incidence rates for property crime. In Winnipeg it was 5,673 per 100,000. In Québec City it was 2,979 per 100,000. Clearly, in property crime, like violent crime, successive Tory and NDP governments have not done the job here. We need a change.

Let us look at the total number of Criminal Code offences, total number of Criminal Code offences. We will look at Winnipeg. Here we are, 73,343; and in Québec City, 33,351, far less than half the number of Criminal Code offences in Québec City compared with Winnipeg. Here we are, we are comparing one provincial jurisdiction with another, one city jurisdiction with another. You know, in spite of the fact that it is the same federal government, federal governments may have been good or bad, but let us look at how provinces compare, right? Here we are.

You know, Québec City, for Criminal Code offences, let us look at the rate here. For Winnipeg the rate of Criminal Code offences is 10,879 per 100,000. For Québec City it is 4,905, less than half in terms of total Criminal Code offences in Québec City as compared to Winnipeg.

Clearly, we need to be doing a much better job in preventing crime here in Winnipeg and in Manitoba. Clearly, the NDP and Tory governments have not done the job. We need a change here. We need a Liberal government in this province to improve and to prevent crime, instead of what has been happening. *[interjection]*

In case the Member for Assiniboia is concerned that I am taking Québec City out of context, let us look at Toronto. We hear all about the crime in Toronto, right? Well, here we go. Total Criminal Code offences in Winnipeg, the rate is 10,879 per 100,000; total Criminal Code offences in Toronto,

5,281. Toronto has half, one half the incidents of Criminal Code offences compared—[*interjection*]

Well, here we go. Ottawa: the Member for Assiniboia is concerned that Ottawa might have a very high rate of crime. But the fact is, let me give you once again the number for Winnipeg. Total Criminal Code offences, 10,879 per 100,000; the number for Ottawa, 6,096 per 100,000.

So, you know, we do not do very well compared with Québec City and Toronto and Ottawa. We need to do better. Clearly, as I have said, we are supportive of measures, including these amendments, which may have some impact. But we sure would have liked to have better analysis by this government so that there is a clearer path in terms of moving forward. Surely, when you have got legislation that was brought forward only about three years ago, and implemented, we should have had an analysis of what was happening under that legislation.

Now, in case the Member for Assiniboia, you know, is concerned about the comparison of cities, right, Winnipeg to Québec City and Toronto and Ottawa, let us look at the whole province. Here are the figures I have for the whole province. Here we are, and I gave you the rate for Winnipeg, total number of Criminal Code offences, 10,879; the rate for Manitoba, 11,365. So the area of Manitoba outside of Winnipeg is actually worse than Winnipeg when you look at the rate of total number of Criminal Code offences.

We clearly need in Manitoba a Liberal government, because the Tories and the NDP have not done the job. [*interjection*] Well, it is quite clear when you look at these statistics. If you look at the whole province of Ontario, compare it to Manitoba. The whole province of Ontario, their rate is about half that of Manitoba; the whole province of Québec, rate about half that of Manitoba. Even if we took Newfoundland and Labrador, their rate is 5,635 per 100,000, compared with Manitoba's rate of 11,365 per 100,000. So we are twice as bad, you know. You do not like to admit that we have got these problems in Manitoba, but that is sometimes what happens when you have got successive Tory and NDP governments, they just do not prevent crime properly. They do not know how to look after things well, and we get the high rates of Criminal Code offences compared with other provinces.

Now, let me move on and talk, first of all, about one of the areas where I think the government and the Minister of Justice might listen and consider the

possibility of an improvement to this act. This act, as I see it, deals with residential properties, but the issue here is should there be an application of this act to a commercial property or certain commercial properties. One of my sources suggests that there may be at least as much illegal drug use, weapons use, prostitution associated with certain commercial properties as there is with residential properties. Yet The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, as I understand it, does not apply to such commercial situations. Maybe the minister should look at this. Maybe we will even have some presenters at committees who will present this point of view when this comes to committee stage. Maybe the minister can consider the possibility of an amendment that would look at including certain commercial properties so that this has application in commercial as well as residential.

* (15:40)

Clearly, there are some differences. But it is an area which the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) should look into if he is looking at amendments. Certainly, that was one of the reasons why I was suggesting to the Minister of Justice that he should have presented to this Legislature. He should have tabled in this Legislature a thorough analysis of the outcomes of the impact of this legislation. Clearly, from what we have seen, we have got a long way to go in terms of doing better at preventing crime, and, clearly, we could have done better if there had been a thorough analysis of the impact of this legislation, the outcomes and the cost presented and tabled in this Chamber.

Let me now talk about certain buildings, and I had a member's statement which talked a little bit about this. I have heard for some time from various people about concerns within the buildings operated by the government under their Manitoba Housing Authority. The fact that these are run by the government should mean that Manitoba Housing buildings are model examples, that the government should be a model landlord. The government should make sure that there is no crime occurring in the buildings which it operates and runs, and I would be interested to know how many of the orders under The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act had applied to government-owned and operated buildings under Manitoba Housing. Are these buildings problem buildings?

Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was out at one of the Manitoba Housing buildings recently at

170 Hendon. I met with about 20 residents of this building, and they expressed to me their very considerable concerns about the way that this building was being run and operated by this government.

Let me reflect, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our discussion involved the safety concerns of the residents of 170 Hendon Avenue, and I heard some major safety concerns. They raised instances of gunfire in the parking lot, crack cocaine available 24/7 within the building, prostitution, theft, physical assaults, verbal assaults. Several of the residents said that their decorations that they put at Christmas on their apartment doors had been set on fire. They did not feel very safe. Several years ago there was even an instance of a fellow who was virtually attacked by somebody else brandishing a machete. This in a Manitoba Housing building?

Government should be model landlords if they are going to be landlords at all. The fact of the matter is that this government has been running and operating a building where there has been drug dealing going on, where there has been prostitution and all sorts of problems. Clearly, this is a concern, and, clearly, there is a problem when the government is showing this kind of wrong-headed leadership in operating buildings where there is lots of criminal activity going on.

Every tenant, for example, voiced the essential need for on-site security, but this government was not going to provide on-site security. They do not seem as concerned for the security of citizens when it comes right down to it. They talk a lot about trying to do things to decrease crime, but I have shown you the statistics. We are much higher in terms of the amount of Criminal Code offences and crime here in Winnipeg and in Manitoba than they are in Québec City and Québec and other provinces.

Why is this? Well, one of the reasons why this appears to be happening is that the government itself is operating buildings where there is criminal activity going on. This is shocking to have this sort of thing. This is a problem with the way this government is going about, trying to provide governance and role models in this province, and, clearly, this is a big issue. The fact is that the majority of the tenants in 170 Hendon are good people. They are trying to lead good productive healthy lives, and it is our responsibility, legislators, to give them the opportunity, the possibility to do so.

Manitoba Housing Authority employees work very hard. I heard some positive things said by

residents about Manitoba Housing employees. So it is not the employees; it is not the civil servants; it is not the employees of Manitoba Housing. It is the government which is the problem. The government is the problem. The government is not setting the framework and the leadership and the modelling in the right kind of way. We end up with higher rates of crime than we should have. We end up with buildings operated by the government where there is criminal activity going on, and the result is that we have serious safety concerns for people in Winnipeg and Manitoba, and crime here in this province remains a major issue because this government has not done a good job at preventing it.

Let me repeat. The government of Manitoba, if it is going to be a landlord, should be a model landlord, should make sure that the properties that it owns and operates as at 170 Hendon are run in a model fashion, that there is not the kind of criminal activity that is going on there, that these are places where people want to be, places where people do not have to be fearful or scared, and clearly there are opportunities to do better, there are ways to do this much better than is happening at the moment.

Clearly, these residents did not bring a brown envelope. They met with me openly to discuss the issues and the problems, and they did not hesitate in raising lots and lots of issues with the way this government is running Manitoba Housing buildings, that there are issues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that those issues include far too many instances of drug dealing and prostitution and disruption and people not getting enough sleep.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Prior to the Leader of the Liberal Party's concluding remarks there I thought that it might be appropriate to give a considerable more amount of attention to that particular issue, but before I do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to put a little bit of emphasis of concern in terms of what the government is putting before us. One has to be concerned in terms of the time frame that is left. I am glad to see that Bill 23, which is an important bill, is finally being debated inside this Chamber, and I would like to hope that the government will ensure that there is, in fact, adequate debate on all the legislation that is there.

You know, it is interesting when you look across from where I stand, and you wonder whether or not the government really truly believes in its legislative

agenda, when you see, you know, a couple of rows in the front benches and you acknowledge what is a valuable number in terms of presence—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Directly or indirectly the member is not supposed to refer to the absence or presence of members.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: On a point of order then, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Point of order. Please state your point of order. What is the rule that is violated?

* (15:50)

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you had indicated that I cannot make reference to the number of people here or gone or absent, and I did not say whether or not members were here or absent. At least I do not believe I said that. I did make reference like the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) happens to be in the loge. I am just talking about a general observation as I look across. I do not think that I was in violation of any rules of the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Well, actually, it is the Opposition House Leader, but thank you for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to support the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). I did not hear him make specific reference to anybody. I certainly did not hear him, for example, say the Premier (Mr. Doer) is not here, and if he had I would cite that. But he did not say that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will review Hansard and then we will decide the ruling on that one.

Mr. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But it does beg the question, given that the issue has been raised, in terms of you can tell a lot by the commitment of the government to be able to do what it is that it really wants to do by where they are. I will suggest to you that Bill 23 is an important piece of legislation. If the government really believes that it is important, then it should have a strong presence, whether it is outside or inside this Chamber.

There are other pieces of legislation that we are going to be dealing with, and one has got to be concerned in terms of this government's commitment

to see legislation pass in this legislative session. There are some priority bills that need to be debated. What I ask of the government is to ensure that all this legislation, like Bill 23, is provided the appropriate time for debate.

Yesterday we talked about a bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which passed yesterday, and then the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) stood up and called the committee for tonight. Well, Bill 23 is a very important bill. I truly believe that the government would be better advised to allow the bill to be adequately debated inside the Chamber, then allow for public representation, if there are people that have an interest in issues like this, that they be afforded the opportunity to be able to come to committee and make a presentation.

So I would appeal to the Government House Leader, in regard to Bill 23, but also other bills, but specifically Bill 23, once this passes out of second reading, that we afford the opportunity of time to allow Manitobans the opportunity to be able to participate in our committee to provide input.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would give an example of an individual that I have a tremendous amount of respect for. There was actually an article in today's paper in regard to Reverend Harry Lehotsky. Just to pass on my best wishes and prayers for this individual who has been a very strong advocate for a community that has been hard hit by many of the problems that this bill actually is attempting to deal at. For years, this is an individual that has really fought the fight when it comes to dealing with issues like drug houses, gang activities, prostitution, and you name it. He has had individuals that have threatened his life in many different forms, on several occasions, in different ways. What we have seen is an individual that is committed to the community and trying to make the community that much better. I know that I share, no doubt with every member of this Chamber, in wishing him and his family the very best in terms of the short- and long-term future.

I did want to put that on the record because this is an individual that has done so much. I highlight that point because, if we had more Reverend Lehotskys throughout the city of Winnipeg and other areas of our province, we would have healthier communities. I really believe that, when we talk about neighbourhood revitalization, when we talk about fighting crime at that grass-roots level, this is the type of an individual that we are looking for. I

believe that they are out there, and we have an excellent role model. Maybe at some point this Chamber should give a special tribute to this fine individual.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that we need to get that sort of recognition for people who contribute to that sort of neighbourhood development in such a positive way, because if you look at it—and I do not mean to be ignorant of rural Manitoba because it is a wonderful place to live and to raise a family. I have many legislative colleagues who are very proud of the fact that rural Manitoba is their home, but having said that I want to focus some attention specifically on Winnipeg.

It is an area which, in particular the North End, the inner city, that I drive through every day. I see many of the different hardships. Over the last 18 years or so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since 1988 with the exception of a few years, I have had the privilege of representing a North End constituency, and over the years I have seen a lot of hardship. I have seen a lot of sad stories. I have seen the need for people to get involved in their communities in order to try to turn them around and make them a better place to live. To me, those are the things that need to be addressed in a more straightforward, tangible way.

So, when I am thinking about Bill 23, Mr. Deputy Speaker—Bill 23 deals with The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act—well, this is something that we can do from a legislative point of view, but, you know, you can legislate all you want but at the end of the day if you do not have the support of the community, the grass-roots community, the legislation is just not going to work.

I listened to the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) when he was talking about our police officers and the fine work that our police officers do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As legislators, what we are supposed to be doing is enabling and encouraging, enable the police officers to do what it is that they do best, and that is to be out on the streets supporting our communities, assisting—

An Honourable Member: Buying doughnuts.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, the New Democratic Party says, buying doughnuts. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not even go there. I think it is consistent with some of the attitudes that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has expressed towards our fine officers at times, but I

think a lot higher of our police officers than obviously members of the New Democratic Party.

I believe that we need to enable, bring in the tools that will allow for our police officers to do an even better job, and that is how I see Bill 23. Bill 23 is one of those bills that could really make a difference. It could make a very positive difference, and that is why we do not have a problem in terms of seeing this bill go to committee. But, at the same time, we need to recognize that it is more than just enabling police officers. We have to be able to look into our communities and say, well, what are we going to do at that grass-roots level?

What I would like to be able to do is just kind of relay a story that really got me somewhat involved in the community in which I used to live. It was the fine community of Weston. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the community that you currently represent. You know, back in '88, I had the short privilege of representing that area, but boundary redistribution took the community of Weston out.

* (16:00)

But I had a passion for that community because, as it has done for many Winnipeggers, it provided me the opportunity to be able to own a home. It was affordable housing. Back in 1985 or '86, I had left the military and went to Weston and was able to buy a house for \$23,000. Well, that was affordable living for someone that was just getting out of the military and starting up with some university courses, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But, like many citizens that live in Weston, as you know, you have individuals like the Ron Kellers, and so forth, and many others that take an interest in wanting to see the community grow and become a healthy community.

So one of the things that I did do is I joined the local residents' association. I remember at the time individuals like Maureen Hemphill, provincial MLA; Alan Wade, I believe, was the city councillor at the time, would show up at these residential meetings, and we would talk about what was important in the community. One of the things that we identified as really bad were slum landlords, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That seemed to be the topic of the day, slum landlords. We as a residents' group wanted to do what we can to evict, get rid of the slum landlords.

Well, I will tell you something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot has changed since then. There still are slum landlords, but I can tell you that more and more we are hearing about drugs, crystal meth,

prostitution, all of these crimes that are invading our communities. For me, when I had gotten involved at that point in time, we were not hearing those sorts of issues nowhere near as much. But we believed collectively as a group, and I think it was maybe anywhere from 10 to 30 of us that would get together virtually on a monthly basis or 10 times a year. Well, we would get together and we would talk about what do we need to do in order to turn our community around. There in it we had individuals that were prepared to volunteer and make a difference. We recognized what was happening in Blake Gardens, a non-profit housing complex, and, as I say, if I get time I want to pick up on that point a little bit later.

An Honourable Member: We will give you leave.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, maybe if I could have leave of the Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be able to—well, I will wait until the end of my speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what happened was is that at these meetings we came up with some sort of a strategic plan, time frame, some thoughts as to how we can make a difference. You might remember the Weston revitalization board, which I had the privilege to serve on. We wanted to beautify the kids' parks, you know, put in some slides, water fountains or ponds and so forth. What we started to see, I believe, is that there was a period of time in which the community started to really turn around and started to improve, because we would actually buy up derelict homes, tear them down, replace them through different types of programs, whether it is the infill housing program, whether it was through the Weston Housing Co-op program, and we would really be able to, at least I believe, and those of us that were around at the time believed that we were really making a difference in the community.

You know, at one point, it was scary to walk down certain parts of Alexander Avenue. I remember houses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one house in particular, that there was no roof; it was a tarp. Here you have this shell and then a tarp going over it. But the community, the residents decided to get involved and, by doing that, I believe it had a real impact on the amount of crime that is there today.

That is what it is that we are talking about here, legislation that, hopefully, will have a real impact. This is why I say that it is great to see the legislation, but we need to see more than just legislation. This is where I would like to pick up on the point that my leader talked about, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, the biggest landlord in the province of Manitoba is the Province of Manitoba. When I am expressing the—*[interjection]* Well, the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) is encouraging me to say positive things. I can assure the Member for Elmwood that, if you can manage to spend \$8-plus billion dollars, you are going to be able to spend it on some good things. So I suspect there are plenty of good things that the government has done, based on the fact that you have spent \$8 billion. But my concern as a member of the opposition is to point out where you have really messed up. At least that is a part of my responsibility, and I take it very seriously.

Having said that, and now I am being flashed a picture of Bob Rae from the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) *[interjection]* Oh, it is Sheila Fraser. From a far distance, I know the Member for Thompson is trying to get me to talk about Bob Rae. Anyway, I have got to learn to resist the heckles that come from the other side because this is a very important issue. I am going to try to get them to be focussed on the bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Join me, be focussed on Bill 23, I appeal to the members opposite.

The government of Manitoba is the biggest landlord in the province of Manitoba, residential landlord. We have thousands of units that we subsidize directly, indirectly. We have huge complexes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are responsible for.

One of the things that I give credit to this particular Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) on is that he knows the types of things to say that are really popular, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He has brought in so many press releases that it is totally amazing. You know, here is something that would be really popular: We will make it illegal to do this; we will make it illegal to do that, illegal to do this. I am waiting for the bill where it is going to be: I am going to make it illegal to commit a crime. This Minister of Justice sees the issue and, again, has some sort of a brainstorm and comes up with a bill. But Manitobans want more than legislation. What they want is action.

I want to take those two points, that largest landlord aspect, because I think this is a good example, and contrast that to something that my leader said about the crime rates. You know, Manitoba has got the highest crime rates in the province, I mean in the country. It is totally amazing.

One of the most amazing things I heard from the Minister of Justice is that he says, well, automobile

thefts are down in the province of Manitoba, and he wants to be applauded for his efforts. True to form, the government NDP MLAs are applauding that the numbers are down. What they do not realize is that, the year prior, we were record high. There was no province that even came close to the number of vehicles stolen. We had over 13,000 vehicles stolen in 2004. We were way above; no one was even close. So now we get a decrease, and the Minister of Justice takes the credit. Oh, yes, we were effective. We decreased it. Well, even with that decrease, we are still the highest in Canada. There still is no province that even comes close to us when there are vehicles being stolen.

*(16:10)

Just last Sunday, a very good friend of mine had her vehicle stolen from her back yard. We still get thousands of vehicles stolen in the province of Manitoba. In fact, we get different branches of the government providing different numbers to confuse people as to how many vehicles are being stolen, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They spread so much misinformation, it is totally amazing. They must think Manitobans are stupid. I think that that is the problem with this government, that they do not appreciate the intelligence of Manitobans. We are going to ensure that there is more accountability one way or another, whether it is between now and the next election or during the next election, because what I see is a 1988 coming again. The NDP are going to fall. There is one disaster after another disaster. All you need to do is go to the independent provincial auditor's office and you will see one incompetent action after another, one fiasco after another. They are on a downward spiral. They are going down.

So, if you take a look at it, you have the opportunity to do more than just bring in legislation. You know, as the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Gerrard) has pointed out, our crime rate is unbelievably high per capita based on any other province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, for the Member for Assiniboia, the comparison was with some liberal provinces too. You know, this is not a national problem as much as it is a province of Manitoba problem, because we are comparing province to province, based on a 100,000 per capita basis. We are way out. It is an issue of what is the Province doing, other than bringing in legislation, pretending that it is tough talk. What we want to see is, we want to see the walk. We have heard the talk; let us see the walk.

Let me give you an example now of the non-profit housing complexes. The Leader of the Liberal Party made reference to a non-profit housing complex that he was familiar with, that he went out and met with some local residents, that he had talked to some civil servants. As the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) represents the Gilbert Park area, an area which I am very, very familiar with, whether it is Blake Gardens, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which you represent, whether it is other large housing complexes in the downtown area or north of the tracks, these are all housing complexes that are, in essence, operated through and administered through, at the end of the day, by the Province of Manitoba.

What sorts of activities are actually taking place in these facilities? I can tell you that I have had opportunity to talk to numerous individuals that live in these complexes that I just finished referring to. I can tell you, what they are talking about is crystal meth. They are talking about all sorts of other drugs. They are talking about child prostitution. They are talking about boarded-up units. They are talking about vandalism. They are talking about things that are all to the detriment of those communities. I would ask this government, this Premier (Mr. Doer) in particular: What has this government done, in very real ways, that have made those communities healthier today than what they were back in 1999, when he was first elected, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

I do not believe this government has done anything that has made a positive difference overall, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yes, there might have been some programs that would have been brought in for a short-term basis, maybe even for a long-term basis. Overall, the lifestyle and the environment in which these many children, children living in poverty, are living in has gone down dramatically since 1999. I have had discussions from individuals that live in the Gilbert Park area, in particular, and they cannot believe the way in which things have gone in a downward spiral, how many more drugs are being sold through some of these homes in this complex. This complex is owned by the government of Manitoba.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you look at it, we now have a bill that talks about how we want to have more shutdowns, and we want to get tougher, and the media will give the minister attention because, you know what? The media are doing what they should be doing. They recognize an important issue and they see a flicker of hope. They see a flicker of hope here, so they are reporting on it.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) more often than not builds up false expectations. He builds up the expectations that the government is actually doing something in a very tangible way, and then what happens at the end of the day? Is life actually better in these complexes, thousands of them throughout the province? I do not believe that to be the case. I think that they have been getting worse.

If I look at the time at which I was first elected, I did not even know what a crystal meth lab was. If I take a look at grow ops—I see I have only two minutes left, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One of the fastest growing industries in the province of Manitoba is the grow-op industry. There have been numerous homes in the city and rural areas that have been—*[interjection]* Name one? There is not enough time. There is only two minutes. I have a list. I actually have a list of houses. If you really want a copy, I can arrange for you to get a copy of it. There is a list and that list is a growing list of grow ops.

Crystal meth is getting closer and closer to an epidemic type of situation that our young people are facing more and more. There are issues that are there that are very real where the government has the opportunity to do something. You know, their mandate has not quite expired. Technically, they can go till 2008. They still have a little bit more time to try to be New Democrats, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was talking to a New Democrat just the other day and he says, you know, the new NDP is not NDP. Today's NDP was not NDP. That is what a New Democrat was telling me. You know something? I think that there are a number of policy areas that I am amazed that this government has not moved forward on, but it is because they believe that they have the moral authority to deal with issues which they have really failed in, and it is going to take a change in government in order to deal with some of these issues that I am talking about.

So, with those few words, we are prepared to see the bill go to committee. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 23, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act, that was introduced by the Minister of Justice.

In theory, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a bill that we support. It is a bill that has brought forth the

concerns that the government is now recognizing, and I think a lot of it has to do with the efforts and the perseverance by our side of the House and our critic for Justice in trying to more or less embarrass the government to bring this type of legislation before the House, because it is sorely needed.

It goes on to indicate that it is the ability of the act to vacate and shut down a building in which illegal drugs are grown or produced or children are sexually abused or exploited, prohibited storage of restricted firearms, stolen or imported firearms, restricted weapons and explosives and things like that.

It reminds you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of a directive that went to Manitoba Housing quite a few years ago along the same lines. It was more or less like a zero tolerance for the residents of public housing that they had to comply with or they would be more or less kicked out of public housing. It was something that our government put into place, and we found that it was working very effectively.

* (16:20)

However, with the change of government, there seemed to be a new attitude towards the enforcement of the various rules in public housing, and, slowly, a lot of the things that are in this bill started to creep back into public housing. It is unfortunate that a lot of times we are reading right now in the papers about grow ops and drugs and prostitution and the unfortunate shootings that have happened in public housing.

It would interesting to see how this bill is interpreted in its presentation to its own government housing and public housing as to how much enforcement they will come forth in looking at within their own jurisdiction, if you want to call it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is the public housing.

I think, as the former speakers have mentioned, there is a growing awareness that in public housing there are some problems in the unfortunate incidents of crime and areas that are exploited with children and young people. These are the things that have to be addressed. Hopefully, this bill may even have the clout and the power to do that, even though I believe it is still mandatory for new tenants that are going into public housing, Manitoba public housing, to be aware of the rules of zero tolerance in regard to drugs and prostitution and restricted firearms and anything of that nature.

That is one thing I think that this government, I do not know how they are approaching that with this bill, but we would watch, and we would be cognizant of how this is going to affect their own public housing market, if you want to call it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is kind of ironic standing up and talking on this bill this afternoon because just last night, late in the afternoon, I was on my way home, and I got a phone call from a constituent of mine, a constituent of mine that lives in a complex of apartment buildings. He was complaining to me about the fact of the amount of break-ins and vandalism that is going on in the parking lots of this particular housing complex in my constituency. In fact, he has a car and a truck, I believe. He had his car and his truck in the last year broken into nine times; nine different times he has had his vehicle damaged or broken into and things stolen out of it. In fact, his truck was in the repair shop and the police were phoning him about the incident that he had reported, and the police, because of the backlog and all their cases and all their duties that are assigned to them, were getting to him, I believe he said, and this is not a criticism of the police, but he was saying that it was about four or five days after the incident that they would finally be able to catch up to him and talk to him about the incident of his truck break-in.

In the meantime, he had taken his truck, I guess, to Autopac to get repaired. It had been taken over to a local body shop and the body shop had given him a loaner car. The irony of the whole conversation that I am getting to is the fact that he says when he was on the phone talking to the police and he looked out his window, here were young people trying to break into the loaner car that he had in the parking lot. He said he could not believe it. So he told the police while on the phone, he said: There is something happening to the loaner car that I have in my parking lot right now. He said: I am witnessing it through the window, these young people. The policeman on the phone said, well, hold on a minute; we will see what we can do. He came back to him and he says, there is not a cruiser in the area, so we may not get to you for a little while.

It is just so evident and ironic that today I am standing and talking about this bill, whereas yesterday I had a phone call from this constituent of mine. He was very irate, and he wanted to do something, and he says, what can I do to try to help in my community? I referred him to Neighbourhood Watch. I think Neighbourhood Watch does have a

very valuable place in trying to keep our communities safe. The amount of effort that the individuals do come forth with in various areas, whether it is in streets or residential apartment blocks, or even businesses in trying to look out for each other. It is one tool, it is an extra tool in trying to make our communities safe.

This bill here is a step in the direction of being able to shut down crack houses and drug houses and crystal meth operations. As was mentioned previously by one of the speakers, crystal meth in relative terms is a new phraseology that is coming into more and more common usage throughout our society and young people and people that become aware that there is a problem out there. We have seen that in certain areas this is becoming a very epidemic problem for young people and for people that get exposed to this drug because it is highly addictive and it has highly different type of reactions to people. They have to be very, very cognizant of the fact that any type of drug that is being taken in a non-prescriptive manner can have damaging effects to not only their body, but their whole being, so it is something that has to be very, very carefully looked at, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One of the things that also we are becoming more and more aware of in the urban area is these grow ops, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is not uncommon to see grow ops and to hear of grow ops in very different neighbourhoods throughout the whole part of Winnipeg. In fact, in my particular area, the area that I represent, Southdale constituency, there have been a number of busts, if you want to call it, of grow-op operations in some of the very nice areas, very beautiful homes, brand-new homes, very quiet neighbourhoods. You drive by there and you would never know that there is something illegal going on in that residence. Then, all of a sudden, they become known and the police raid the place, and they find that they have been growing a grow op there for a number of months or even years because it goes unnoticed, but it is becoming more of a problem.

We see that it is not only grow ops in the rural area that we have heard about and that we have seen, and they become very public in the coverage through the press and that, but, even in the city, it is becoming quite predominant of the illegal drugs and that. It is unfortunate that a lot of times, because of the demands that are placed upon the police and the law enforcement officers throughout all of Manitoba, that a lot of times they are just manpower short to try to be every place where all these things happen.

Those are some of the things that we have to address. This bill gives you good ammunition to shut it down, but you do need the resources. You do have to have the resources of people and the police and the law enforcement agencies to carry this out. You have to have the judiciary aware that there has to be a punishment that fits the crime and that these are not just minor infractions of the law that the perpetrator is accused of or charged with, and there has to be some sort of recourse for dealing with drugs or for being involved with crime. These are a lot of the things, I think, that need to be looked at and addressed in a very substantial way because of the fact that it is becoming more and more of a problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In a lot of our constituencies, and I think I can speak for almost all MLAs, this becomes the topic of conversation when we are meeting with our constituents. They are very aware of the grow ops and the crime situations. They are very aware of the car thefts. They are very aware of the violence of gangs that are growing in Manitoba, in Winnipeg. We have seen the growth of two very, very significant gangs under the watch of the NDP. The Hells Angels came into Manitoba under the NDP. Now the Bandidos come into Manitoba under the NDP. Their attitude toward fighting this faction of crime does not seem to be effective, because of the fact that it is growing; it is becoming more prevalent, and we have got to hold this government accountable.

* (16:30)

So this is one of the reasons why we are concerned that we are giving them some of the ammunition for this bill in The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act, but we hope that there are other recourses and other avenues that they are also taking, because, if you have an act with no teeth or no enforcement or no support, unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is just an exercise in trying to showcase what they believe they should be doing but they cannot get to the solution of the problem.

So we look at it with the idea of moving it on, but at the same time we point out the reservations that we have in the history of what this government has done before in bringing forth resolutions and bills and public announcements and press releases. I think it is well known that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) kills more trees than any other minister on the side of government with all his press

releases, but we are still not seeing the decrease in crime.

We are well aware that car thefts here in Manitoba, and particularly in Winnipeg, are the highest in Canada. It is a problem that has been perpetuating itself with yearly growth numbers. Unfortunately, that is the wrong way we want to see the numbers go, but this government is well aware that they have a problem with car thefts, and that the amount of damage is tens-of-millions of dollars that is associated with car theft here in Winnipeg and Manitoba. It is something that the government has to take responsibility for. It has happened under their watch. It is growing under their watch. We do not know whether there is a solution for that as yet. As I mentioned previously, there is the growth of gangs and gang activity in Manitoba that is coming under their watch.

So, as I mentioned before, there is skepticism as to some of the legislation that is coming forth because of the fact that the record is not that clear. They are running on a record of non-action, if you want to call it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, well-intended, well-documented, well-presented, lots of good press release, but the end result is not coming about.

I guess what you use as a criterion of measurement is the fact, is crime going down? Is car theft going down? Are the incidents of violence going down? Are break-ins going down? You have to have some sort of measurement as to what the minister is working towards in trying to get some sort of a solution on this. We have not seen that dramatic movement yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We will give the government more ammunition with the movement of this bill on. As I mentioned, it does have the pretext of having a solution to some problems, because there is no doubt about it, illegal drugs and the manufacture of illegal drugs in Manitoba is increasing. Here in Winnipeg, we have heard of it. We have seen it. Some neighbourhoods have become very, very aware of what is happening with all the drugs, and you have communities rallying to try to bring some sort of semblance of order and decency back into the communities.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I would like to mention during this debate on safer communities, a very, very strong component and a tireless worker for safe communities whom we, unfortunately, just heard in the paper the other day of his battle with cancer, and that is Reverend Harry

Lehotsky. I think a lot of us have met him, talked to him personally. I had the opportunity to meet him on a fairly regular basis on various components when I was involved as the Minister of Housing. I have had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Lehotsky in his quest to make his community safer. He has been a very, very strong opponent of ridding communities and streets and neighbourhoods of illegal drug operations and prostitution. He has been a tireless worker in the community. It is very unfortunate that we heard that he has been diagnosed with a cancer that seems to be taking its toll on his life. It is unfortunate because the man is a wonderful individual and a person who is dedicated to his community.

Maybe, as a gesture, the bill could be even renamed in his name because of the fact that it is dealing with safer communities, it is dealing with neighbourhoods, and no other person, I believe, has brought this to a height more than what he has. As a gesture from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), maybe he would consider reconsidering the bill. It would be a great gesture for this Chamber to recognize the individual himself. I only put that on the record as a thought for the minister to look at. It would mean so much, I am sure, to him and to the communities that he has fought so hard to try to make safer.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those short words, I would like to say that the bill is something that we will support. It does have areas that I believe that we should be looking at further. But at the same time I leave with the last comment about maybe renaming the bill in honour of Mr. Lehotsky while he can still enjoy the name and the recognition as he is today. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): I am honoured to be able to put a few words on the record today in regard to Bill 23, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, anything we can do to enhance public safety here in Manitoba is a step in the right direction. I certainly thank the Member for Southdale for his very good words today that he has put on the record in regard to Bill 23 and some of the individuals that have helped out in terms of public service in Manitoba and indeed in Winnipeg. It was certainly sad to see in the paper today Reverend Lehotsky in the battle that he is facing right now. But it is certainly gratifying to know the good work that he has done for people throughout the city of

Winnipeg and, indeed, the province of Manitoba over the years in terms of helping people out in his facilities in Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly is important that this particular bill moves forward into committee so that we do hear what Manitobans have to say in regard to justice issues in Manitoba. We certainly recognize that drugs and illegal drugs are a growing issue in Manitoba, and I know the Member for Southdale did talk about grow ops. We see more and more grow ops throughout the province of Manitoba. You just never know when you open the paper where we are going to find grow ops. Look at marijuana, it is still being grown in Manitoba and, again, just throughout the province. You just never know in which community they might be found, anywhere. I know in southwestern Manitoba they have shown up, and certainly it has shown up in the Interlake as well.

I guess maybe, Mr. Speaker, that is a bit of a sign of the rural economy, how tough things are in the rural economy. We know the grain producers are in kind of tough going right now, and, obviously, the cattle producers are in tough shape, still suffering from the BSE issue. I guess what is happening is that people are looking for some cash flow to help themselves out and help their families out. So, unfortunately, they are turning to crime to support their livelihood, and it is very unfortunate to see.

* (16:40)

I guess back in my university days marijuana was the drug of choice, if you will. I was around to see that. I was not one to partake on a regular basis of that, but I was around to see some of my colleagues doing that.

But, as we know, times are changing and there are a lot of different drugs on the market, and a fear of mine is to have my own kids be involved in the drug crystal meth. We know it is a very dangerous drug because it can be addictive, apparently just on the first use.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we do whatever we can to try to get crystal meth off the streets. In fact, if this bill is implemented and goes forward, and we are able to shut down some of the facilities that might be producing crystal meth or growing marijuana, I think it is certainly a step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, just this morning I had a chance to go to the airport here in Winnipeg. My oldest son, as well as his classmates from the French class, is

embarking on a six-day trip to Québec. So, when the speaker from Southdale mentioned kids' safety, that immediately came to my attention and reminded me of the trip to the airport to drop these kids off on their venture to Québec where they are going to tour Montréal and Québec City. Obviously, we will think of their safety while they are away, hoping that their chaperones will keep an eye on them and hope that we as parents have provided them some positive guidance over the years so that they will endeavour to stay out of trouble when they are in another province.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to just mention briefly the tremendous job that our police services do here, not only in Winnipeg, but throughout Manitoba. When we opened up the paper today and saw the violence on the streets of Winnipeg today, it certainly shows that we do have a lot of work to do in terms of justice in Manitoba. We know this government is certainly good with the press releases when it comes to justice, but it appears that they are actually missing the mark when it comes to the real work and the real work of getting the criminals off the street. But I do want to commend the fine work that the officers throughout the province do; in particular in Turtle Mountain, we are serviced by a number of detachments, one in Carberry, who also do a lot of highway work on provincial Highway 1. The members also have an office in Crystal City, and there is also an office in Killarney that services a big portion of Turtle Mountain. As well, there is a fairly large detachment in the Portage la Prairie area which also services part of Turtle Mountain. So I do want to just commend the fine work that those officers do.

We do know they do provide a wide range of services. We are not just limited to the highway traffic acts; there are other items they become involved in. I think, Mr. Speaker, each community has different issues that they have to deal with when it comes to justice. Luckily, in rural Manitoba we are fairly well off in terms of the homicides. That seems to be more of an inner-city issue. We do have, from time to time, homicide issues that do show up in western Manitoba, but, luckily, rural Manitoba is fairly well off in that regard.

An Honourable Member: What about the lack of RCMP detachments?

Mr. Cullen: We do know that the RCMP do a tremendous job with the resources that are available to them, and we believe that the government, the provincial government certainly has a role to play in

providing resources, and I am talking about the number of officers that we need in Manitoba. We are clearly short of resources and officers in Manitoba, and not just rural Manitoba, but also in the city of Winnipeg. Clearly, with the serious issues that we have seen over the last few days in Winnipeg, resources are being used up. The Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) talked about a case just yesterday he had with a shortage of officers.

We see the same thing when I visit my detachments in rural Manitoba. A very important issue to them is the serious shortage of officers they have. So it is certainly, I think, important for the government of the day to look at their investment in the resources in terms of allocating officers to both the city of Winnipeg and rural Manitoba.

The Member for Southdale talked a little bit about auto theft, and I have had the same issue as well. I know it is a real issue in Winnipeg. I had a friend of mine in Winnipeg just, let us see, over the spring break session, in fact, and his vehicle was parked downtown and when we went out in the morning his vehicle was gone. Luckily, a concerned citizen in downtown Winnipeg had spotted his vehicle and was able to contact him and within a matter of half an hour we were able to locate the vehicle. The passenger window, of course, was broken out, but that was about the extent of the damage to the vehicle. So it was certainly operational. The drawback, too, was that the compartment in the back of the truck was broken into and—in fact, the kids were in Winnipeg curling during a bonspiel—the curling equipment was taken out of the vehicle. The kids had to curl within the next few hours, so what we had to do was make a rush trip to a sporting goods store and purchase some new curling equipment.

It is certainly something you have to be very cognizant of when you are in Winnipeg, the whole principle of auto theft and damage. You have to make sure that you do not leave anything inside your vehicle as it might serve as a bit of a bait to criminals.

I did have to get a window fixed the other day. I was at an auto glass store, repair shop just down on Pembina Highway and had a conversation with the owner there. He said to me when we got discussing auto theft in Winnipeg, and his statement to me was, you would not believe the amount of business we have with broken windows in automobiles in Winnipeg. He said it is just unbelievable. In fact, the

Autopac business alone, he said, keeps us in business.

So you know that the criminal justice issue is a very, very serious issue. We as taxpayers, we as insurance purchasers through Manitoba Public Insurance all face the consequences of the theft and the injustice that is out there in Manitoba. I think that really speaks to the direction or lack of direction this government has taken. They talk the talk, but, in reality, they are not walking the walk when it comes to justice because we see gangs and gang violence here in the city of Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba. Clearly, the government has a real lack of direction in dealing with the justice issue, Mr. Speaker.

It is interesting to read about the federal gun registry that has been under review here by the Auditor General, the federal Auditor. She has uncovered some interesting figures that, I guess, we probably had an idea were coming, but she certainly put the figures on the paper. Again, it really talks about serious mismanagement of the government, the federal government in this case, and how they dealt with the issue.

I hear that the federal Conservative Party is going to move to make some changes to that particular registry. I think it will probably enhance the system. I do not think it will be a major detriment to society in terms of justice. I think there are other ways that we can improve justice across Canada, and I think we should have a real serious look at how we are actually dealing with criminals out there.

That whole gun registry system, really, all it did was make criminals out of ordinary citizens by implementing archaic kinds of laws. Really, when you look at our hunters across Manitoba, again, they had to be forced to play a whole bunch of different rules. You are right, it was just a difficult situation to go through. I understand the federal Conservatives will bring some common sense back to the legislation, and we as ordinary Canadians and taxpayers will not be having to pay out of our pocket to try to fund some kind of an archaic legislation.

We certainly are in favour of a bill that will help get criminals off the streets and possibly shut down some of these vacant areas that may lead to crime in Manitoba. So we are looking forward to moving this particular bill to committee. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:50)

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I do appreciate having the opportunity to rise and participate in debate regarding Bill 23, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act. It is not that long ago that the original act was passed in this Legislative Assembly, and it was given Royal Assent on July 6, 2001. It was to address the issue of dwellings, residences that were actually being used for activities that neighbourhoods considered inappropriate and potentially causing concern for safety of not only themselves but other residents in the neighbourhood.

The legislation, Mr. Speaker, is comprehensive, allowing the safety orders to be issued to vacate properties that are disconcerting with their activities to persons in the neighbourhood. This act does give a fair amount of latitude to the director responsible for safer communities and neighbourhoods. It does also, though, allow for appeal and ability to have a stay of proceedings as far as vacating orders.

But, Mr. Speaker, as much as I can speak positively of the legislation we have before us today and to state that it recognizes a current situation that, unfortunately, is affecting all our communities right close to home in a lot of cases, as members of the Legislature have attested to, whether it is recognizing theft of automobiles or unruly neighbours or the situation where, in fact, illicit drugs are being sold or produced.

Mr. Speaker, it is an indication that the government of the day is not acting as it should insofar as applying the laws that are in place to prevent such activities already happening. The police refer to the current New Democratic Party government here in Manitoba as a government of catch and release. The police services of the province catch the criminals, and the government releases them to re-offend again.

It was kind of interesting to note that this is, in fact, the case, and I will cite an example of an individual caught for car theft in Portage la Prairie. We saw a marked increase in the number of thefts in Portage la Prairie. Actually, it was attributed to a very, very small number of individuals, of which one contributed at least, at least one car theft per day. He made it a mission in his own personal life to acquire an automobile before noon so that he had that automobile all day to move about the community, and then the following day he would acquire another vehicle through theft.

I will say that the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) mentioned about the inordinate amount of glass repair in automobiles here in the province of Manitoba. I had my own personal vehicle vandalized, broken into through the breaking of the driver's side glass, and, when I reported this to the Winnipeg Police Service, they made the statement that I was only one of more than a hundred individuals that had already made a reporting of this nature on that day. He said that that was not uncommon, to have more than a hundred glass breakages on automobiles in a 24-hour period.

Mr. Speaker, you just need to do the math on that. That is over 36,000 glass breakages in vehicles in a given year just in the city of Winnipeg. It is so hard even to get one's mind around that number of glass breakages and the amount of cost to those of us who own automobiles in the province of Manitoba. I paid my \$200 deductible, but it cost Autopac in excess of an additional \$170 to complete the repair, not only to state that I was inconvenienced by not having my vehicle for two days while the repair was done and which, again, if I was renting a vehicle, which I could very well have done and charged it to Autopac, which would have, in fact, added even further costs to the system. But I personally saw my way clear to not generating any further additional costs to those of us who are the motoring Manitobans.

I just want to say that it is a deplorable situation which we are facing at the present time, the amount of crime in our province, and this government seems less than interested in making certain that this is addressed, because I will say that their trials are being put off almost a year. If you look at the newspaper, the resolution of some of the more serious crimes here, you are seeing two and three years before these criminal acts are disposed of through our court system. Mr. Speaker, I think that

that is absolutely deplorable, that this government is shorting the necessary resources in order to deal with the criminal activity in this province of ours.

So, Mr. Speaker, having stated that, I do support Bill 23 and look forward to seeing public input at committee. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 23, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act.

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

Point of Order

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

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I guess there is some concern, given the time, that it might be more appropriate to continue—I believe it is Bill 37 that we were hoping to be able to speak to today, but, out of respect for the need to have a debate on the bill itself, it might be more appropriate that the government call that bill first thing on the agenda for tomorrow. This way, all members would be at least afforded the opportunity to debate it before the House would actually adjourn.

So I think that in order for due process and diligence—and I know the Opposition House Leader also wanted to add a comment to that, if need be, if you are looking for further advice.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member for that advice.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 17, 2006

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