

Second Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

Vol. LX No. 56 – 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 11, 2008

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	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.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, 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.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	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.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Power Line Development

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct a third high voltage transmission line down the west side of Lake Winnipegosis instead of the east side of Lake Winnipeg, as recommended by Manitoba Hydro.

The NDP detour is more than 400 kilometres longer than the eastern route recommended by Manitoba Hydro experts.

The line losses created by the NDP detour will result in a lost opportunity to displace dirty coal-generated electricity, which will create added and unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to an additional 57,000 vehicles on our roads annually.

The former chair of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee has stated that an east-side bipole and a UNESCO World Heritage Site can co-exist contrary to NDP claims.

The NDP detour will cut through more forest than the eastern route and will cut through threatened aspen parkland areas, unlike the eastern route.

Former member of the Legislative Assembly Elijah Harper has stated that the east-side communities are devastated by the government's decision to abandon the east-side route, stating that this decision will resign them to poverty in perpetuity.

MKO, an organization that represents northern Manitoba First Nations chiefs, has stated that the government has acted unilaterally to abandon the eastern route without consultation with northern First Nations despite repeated requests by MKO for consultations.

The NDP detour will lead to an additional debt of at least \$400 million related to the capital cost of line construction alone, to be left to future generations of Manitobans.

The NDP detour will result in increased line losses due to friction leading to lost energy sales of between \$250 million and \$1 billion over the life of the project.

The added debt and lost sales created by the NDP detour will make every Manitoba family at least \$4,000 poorer.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to abandon the NDP detour on the basis that it will result in massive environmental, social and economic damage to Manitoba.

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the route originally recommended by Manitoba Hydro, subject to the necessary regulatory approvals.

This petition is signed by Roland Grenier, Michael Everett, Darcy Dearsley and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by John Friesen, Lisa Zacharias, Heidi Tremblay and many, many others.

Pharmacare Deductibles

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The NDP government has increased Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent each year for the past seven years, with the curious exception of the 2007 election year.

As a result of the cumulative 34 percent hike in Pharmacare deductibles by the NDP government, some Manitobans are forced to choose between milk and medicine.

Seniors, fixed and low-income-earning Manitobans are the most negatively affected by these increases.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider reversing his decision to increase Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent in budget 2008.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider reducing health-care bureaucracy, as previously promised, and to consider directing those savings into sustaining Pharmacare and improving patient care.

This petition is signed by T. Richards, H. Khan, Margarete Loftus and many, many others.

Cancer Treatment Drugs

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of death.

Colon cancer affects both men and women almost equally.

Avastin and Erbitux are two drugs that have been shown to work and offer hope to patients who suffer from this disease.

CancerCare Manitoba is offering Avastin to patients on a case-by-case basis, claiming the cost to be too much to give all patients the prescribed treatment.

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

The CancerCare Manitoba Act stipulates, and I quote: "The objects of the corporation are the conduct of a program of diagnosis of, treatment of and research in"

The principles of the Canada Health Act under the criteria list, universality: One hundred percent of the insured residents of a province or territory must be entitled to the insured health services provided by the plans on uniform terms and conditions.

Several other provinces are providing access to these two drugs for colon cancer patients.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider providing CancerCare Manitoba with the appropriate funding necessary to provide the standard of care treatment, Avastin, to all colon cancer patients.

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

This is signed by Evelyn Wray, Lesley Iredale, Jim Coates and many, many others.

*(13:40)

Child-Care Centres

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly:

These are the reasons for this petition:

There is an ongoing critical shortage of child-care spaces throughout Manitoba, particularly in fast-growing regions such as south Winnipeg.

The provincial government has not adequately planned for the child-care needs of growing communities like Waverley West where the construction of thousands of homes will place immense pressure on the already overburdened child-care system.

The severe shortage of early childhood educators compounds the difficulty parents have finding licensed child care and has forced numerous centres to operate with licensing exemptions due to a lack of qualified staff.

Child-care centres are finding it increasingly difficult to operate within the funding constraints set by the provincial government to the point that they are unable to provide wages and benefits sufficient to retain child-care workers.

As a result of these deficiencies in Manitoba's child-care system, many families and parents are growing increasingly frustrated and desperate, fearing that they will be unable to find licensed child care and may be forced to stop working as a result. In an economy where labour shortages are common, the provision of sustainable and accessible child care is critical.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) to consider addressing the shortage of early childhood educators by enabling child-care centres to provide competitive wages and benefits.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider adequately planning for the future child-care needs of growing communities and to consider making the development of a sustainable and accessible child-care system a priority.

To urge the Minister of Family Services and Housing to consider the development of a governance body that would provide direction and support to the volunteer boards of child-care centres and to consider the development of regionalized central wait lists for child care.

To encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to consider becoming more closely involved with the operations of the licensed day-care facilities in their constituencies.

This petition is signed by Mark D'Almeida, Damian Surasry, Gustav Mazurow and many, many others.

Pharmacare Deductibles

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The New Democratic Party government has increased Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent each year, for the past seven years, with the curious exception of the 2007 election year.

As a result of the cumulative 34 percent hike in Pharmacare deductibles by the New Democratic government, some Manitobans are forced to choose between milk and medicine.

Seniors, fixed and low-income-earning Manitobans are the most negatively affected by these increases.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider reversing his decision to increase Pharmacare deductibles by 5 percent in budget 2008.

To request the Premier of Manitoba to consider reducing health-care bureaucracy, as previously promised, and to consider directing those savings into sustaining Pharmacare and improving patient care.

This petition is signed by Robert Pitt, Allan Porter, B. Scott and many, many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table the Twenty-first Annual Report for the Manitoba Law Foundation, 2006-2007.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also table the Annual Report 2006-2007 of the Provincial Court of Manitoba.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today 12 students from Heartland International English School under the direction of Carol Hutchinson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

Also in the public gallery we have from Steinbach Christian High School 25 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Curt Plett. This is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Inland Port Facility Premier's Support

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier knows, being a keen student of history, that cities rise and fall on whether or not they're located on major trade and transportation routes. He'll know that at the turn of the last century Winnipeg was poised to be Chicago of the north because it was viewed at that time that all roads would go through Winnipeg in terms of trade and transportation within North America.

The construction of the Panama Canal dealt a serious blow to our economy which has been felt for generations. Today we have an opportunity to re-establish our position as the centre of trade and transportation for western Canada.

An inland port will affirm and strengthen Winnipeg's position as the centre of western Canadian trade and transportation and logistics. If we fail to get this inland port, it will be a major blow to Manitoba and Winnipeg. It will be felt for generations to come. Cities that aren't on transportation routes wither away and die. Those that are on trade and transportation routes grow and prosper. So this is an issue that's bigger than CF-18. It's bigger than the disease control lab. It's perhaps bigger than any other major infrastructure issue that we've confronted for a very long time.

We are concerned with the glacial leisurely pace that the Premier seems to be taking on this important issue, and I just point to the headline in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Saturday, April 26, 2008, 46 days ago: Premier wants city promoted as inland port. I woke up this morning to read the paper thinking that it must be Groundhog Day because the headline today, all these days later, seven weeks later: Doer pushes city as inland—oh, Mr. Speaker, I'll retract that and say: Premier pushes city as inland port.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the lack of progress over that seven-week period is in stark contrast to what's happened in Alberta. Eighty-three days ago, port

Edmonton announced \$1.5 million in WD funding to complete their study on the costs and benefits. They have millions in private investments lined up. The lobbying is going on with the federal government as we speak. And today's *Free Press* says that the Premier wants to kick-start the process of how the city can tap into—he's kick-starting the process 83 days after Alberta announced \$1.5 million in funding.

I want to ask the Premier if the inland port is anywhere on the list of priorities that his government has submitted to Western Diversification as a first step toward getting the study done for an inland port. Can he answer the question: Is the inland port on that list of priorities that is now sitting with the federal Department of Western Diversification?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, there's the Gateway project. There's the border issue with the federal government. There's the Building Canada Fund with the federal government. There are a number of other initiatives we're dealing with. The one part of the decision yesterday with all the private sector representatives, including the transportation sector, following on the report for the mayor and the report prepared by Mr. Mauro for the Airports Authority and the report prepared by gateway Canada with Mr. DeFehr insisting that an inland port be part of the federal document, all of these reports have been done by the private sector. We were just trying to ensure that we had a unified approach to some of the variances that were in those reports.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have \$57 million announced for the Inkster-Route 90 corridor. You know, he's talking about 56, 60 days ago, whatever it is. This actually predated those discussions, so I don't know where the member opposite is. Maybe he is part of Groundhog Day. Get out of the hole, to see the light, see the light. Let's get united. Get out of that groundhog hole.

Mr. McFadyen: I wish he would take that crusading speaking style that he uses in the House to Ottawa and say, let's get an inland port for Manitoba. The great crusader here in the Legislature and he hasn't taken the show on the road to Ottawa, and Edmonton is eating our lunch. It's an urgent issue, Mr. Speaker.

The announcement made back in March in Edmonton about the WD funding to conduct the study, we're all this distance behind. We acknowledge that there've been some baby steps taken toward preparing some of the infrastructure, but this is a project that will take hundreds of

millions of dollars to complete, plus a free trade zone that the Premier isn't even prepared to take a clear position on. It says in the *Free Press* he was ambiguous about it in his response yesterday: We can't have an inland port without free trade. He can't even say whether he believes in free trade or not.

* (13:50)

So, Mr. Speaker, here we are, all these months behind Edmonton, not even sure, hasn't even made up his mind yet about whether we believe in free trade or not as a provincial government, which we need in order for this project to move ahead. We understand that the inland port is not even on the current list with Western Diversification. We hope that he'll put it on that list after question period today before it gets finalized next week.

I want to ask the Premier if he can confirm that the federal government is going to step up to the plate with between \$70 million and \$75 million as an offset to floodway expenses while he is not intending to put a nickel of new provincial money into it, thereby demonstrating a complete lack of commitment while the federal government's going to come through with between \$70 million and \$75 million as a floodway offset to be put toward this project.

Why isn't he prepared to put any new money toward this project when he's allocating new money to a range of other projects, Mr. Speaker, that are arguably not of the same stature or importance to Winnipeg and Manitoba's position for generations to come? Where is his commitment? The feds are there; why isn't he?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants us to go to Minister Ambrose who announced \$1.5 million in Edmonton—it might happen to be in a constituency which she represents—and asks us to run out of question period and immediately, immediately get into a situation on western diversification.

Now, we have had other announcements on western diversification. I don't know whether the member opposite is aware, but he perhaps should relook at some of the material he's looking at. Some of the Port of Churchill announcements did come from that same Minister of Western Diversification. In fact, she was going to make the announcement to the Port of Churchill, and we were pleased that the Prime Minister chose to do so. I actually believe part of that might even have been higher than the amount

of money he just asked me to ask for out of WD, Mr. Speaker.

Point No. 2, did we say no to signing the existing amount on the infrastructure? Did we say no to the member opposite? You know, on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays he tells us to sign the status quo document which is \$141 million for increment, and then on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays he says, get an offset. It's nice to have two different positions on the same issue. One day he's saying, oh, if you don't sign immediately it's all going to leave the harbour, so to speak, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have funded other infrastructure programs with money from Manitoba. Anytime we discuss infrastructure, like we did with the Port of Churchill, like we did with the floodway, like we're doing with recreation, like we're doing with sewage treatment, like we're doing with many other programs—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Doer: —as we have committed to sewage treatment, we have a provincial government that will pay and invest in projects that are important for our transportation.

Let me point out the model to the member opposite. We have an announcement now on Route 90. The member opposite says it's baby steps. He had an announcement in their previous government. They lost \$6 million in 50 days. Look at how far that set us back with Winnport, Mr. Speaker.

We have had \$57 million announced in the inland port and Airports Authority and, Mr. Speaker, I would point out, the member opposite should get some pride in Manitoba. Manitoba has the largest amount of air cargo of any province in western Canada, and the Winnipeg Airports Authority has been steadily building over the last number of years. It hasn't been standing still, as the member opposite has pointed out.

Again, get out of that groundhog hole. Pay attention. The largest amount of air cargo in western Canada takes place here in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: I was there when Mr. Rempel as the head of the Airports Authority was lobbying Minister Emerson about seven weeks ago, actually, Mr. Speaker. They're doing a terrific job. The

Winnipeg Airports Authority is doing a great job, and on that point I'll agree with the Premier.

Mr. Rempel was at the table. Mr. Lawrence was at the table. Everybody's at the table apparently except the Premier. They're looking for leadership on this issue. The great stuff that's happening today is going to be jeopardized if Edmonton and Saskatchewan leapfrog ahead of us on this issue. What we need from this Premier is leadership and not ranting in the House along the lines of what we've just heard.

I want to ask the Premier that it's not in the WD priority list. There's no new provincial money. He's going to take the new money from the federal government which is welcome and a positive step forward. When will the Premier make a clear and unambiguous statement on this issue on two points: No. 1, that this is his top infrastructure priority, and No. 2, that he believes in free trade? Will he make those two statements right now so that we can save this project and ensure our place as western Canada's centre for trade and transportation?

Mr. Doer: Well, yesterday, the member was asking about NAFTA. I'll send him the speech from last week with all the other transportation experts.

I would also point out, by the way, as we believe, that NAFTA is not free trade. In fact, NAFTA has way too many subsidies for the agricultural sector in the area of the U.S. farm bill. In fact, part of what we talked about last week, Mr. Speaker, was to remove some of the European subsidies, the American subsidies and the Canadian subsidies.

It has not, Mr. Speaker, been free trade for the cattle producers in Canada. It's not free trade for the hog producers and livestock producers in terms of hogs—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member asked a question. At least give him the courtesy to be able to hear the response, please.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out, the member opposite asked about would Manitoba invest? Yes, absolutely. We have already. We've invested in Churchill. Note to the Leader of the Opposition: press release, October, money from the federal government, money from the private sector, money from the Province of Manitoba.

Note to Leader of the Opposition: the Inkster-Route 90 route, \$27 million from the Province, \$30 million from the federal government, money from the private sector. That's how we negotiate, but you don't announce an agreement with another party, whether it's private or public, or whether it's federal or civic, unless there is an agreement.

Obviously, the inland port and infrastructure for transportation are a priority for Manitoba. It has on an ongoing basis. We've already made two announcements with money well over \$100 million for transportation. Now, I know you don't know necessarily—when we came into office we had to put Churchill back on the Manitoba provincial highway map, Mr. Speaker. Churchill is just north of us. Announcement: federal-provincial-private.

An announcement at the Airports Authority: provincial-federal. Work on the inland port: provincial-federal-civic-private. That's what we believe in. That's what we stand for, and that's what we're working on, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 17

Government Intent

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): We know that they're good at spending money. What the Premier doesn't seem to grasp is the fact that you cannot have an inland port without free trade. He can build all the infrastructure he likes. If people don't want to trade there, then he's going to do exactly what he does in health care and everywhere else and build big buildings, put in place infrastructure that nobody is using. You need free trade to make it work. Otherwise, they're going to go where it's easier to *[inaudible]* I don't understand why he doesn't understand this.

Mr. Speaker, he raised the point about the hog industry, and I can't believe—he's clearly off his game when he leads with his chin, talking about free trade and hogs.

But last night in committee at close to midnight, a presentation was made by Rika Koelstra. She's a recent immigrant to Canada from the Netherlands. She came to our country 14 years ago, left her family and her home country behind, boarded a plane and started from scratch in the agricultural industry in Canada. She came here because agriculture, she said, was in her blood and that it was nearly impossible to find a farm-related job in the Netherlands at the time.

* (14:00)

In her presentation last night, she asked the question—after moving to Manitoba four years ago full of hope and optimism about what kind of a future she was going to have, she asked the question last night: Why is it that hog farmers are being picked on by this government? She went on to say: As I became a proud Canadian in 2002, I dare to fight for the rights of my fellow farming Canadians and myself and regret very much to see such a shallow bill possibly being put in place.

The word "shallow" could perhaps not have been a better description of what we've got with Bill 17, a bill that is about politics, not about the environment, a bill that is about stamping out a way of life and an industry, not saving a lake. It is a bill about punishing those who haven't provided political support to the governing party.

I want to ask the Premier what he says to people like Rika Koelstra and other immigrants to our country who have come here looking for hope and opportunity in agriculture, who are instead finding themselves the subject of punishment by this NDP government.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, if one looks in southeast Manitoba and looks at the political representation, he would find, if he analyzed it, that there are two representatives, one from either party. If you look at the Interlake, we're certainly well represented.

To say that this is a political consideration is absolutely false. It's a Tory spin and look who's playing politics in the House of this Legislature, and look who's shallow with the question he just asked, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, maybe the Premier hasn't looked at a map of southeast Manitoba for a while. There are more than two members of our party from the southeastern part of the province.

What I'm relaying to the Premier are the words of immigrants to our country and our province. It's not spin. They've made reference to the recommendations in the Clean Environment report which was issued on the same day that they announced Bill 17, and that report said, go to regulations as a way of moving to best practices.

Many of the presenters from Europe have made a very important point. One of the presenters who had emigrated here from the United Kingdom

pointed out that there's more livestock in the United Kingdom than there is in all of Canada, and yet the United Kingdom occupies a land mass of less than the size of Lake Winnipeg. Yet, through sensible regulations and incentives, they're able to maintain the cleanliness of their waterways in the United Kingdom. They cannot believe that a province like Manitoba with our land mass, a country like Canada, would be punishing the foundation of our economy and the history and the backbone of our province's economy, Mr. Speaker.

Why will he not listen to the lessons coming from Europe, where they can have more livestock in a much smaller place and yet maintain the cleanliness of their waterway? Why, instead, are they bent on destroying an industry?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we certainly understand that in some areas of the province, it represents 28 percent of all the hog operations in all of Manitoba. So it does make sense not to shut people down but not to allow it to expand. There is another area of the province that has, I think, 80 percent of the nitrogen in terms of the designation. There's a third area called Interlake. It should be self-evident about those issues.

There are 178 municipalities in Manitoba. I believe 38 of them are limited on expansion and not all expansion. If they had anaerobic digesters, for example, that is allowed. There are clean abilities with anaerobic digesters and other measures. It's not that they can't expand, but we can't sustain this kind of growth and volume in certain areas.

This is why we have a democracy. In some provinces, they have had moratoriums.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has just asked a question and he needs to hear the response to form his supplementary question. I'm sure he has a supplementary question, but he can't form that unless he hears the response of his question. So let's have a little bit of order here, please.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the province of Québec, they had a moratorium for a number of years, and then I believe they have now protected the capital region of Québec City, if I recall correctly.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of people from Europe, Manitoba has not stopped expansion in a land mass that's above the size of the U.K.

Mr. McFadyen: I'm a little surprised the Premier would want to follow the Québec model when it comes to the pork industry, if anybody looks at what has happened in that province, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier has, in his spin, made comments about, well, if people don't want to farm in the 39 R.M.s impacted by the bill, why don't they just go to one of the other R.M.s. We've got 200 of them in the province of Manitoba. It's what he said yesterday. Mr. Speaker, 80 of those R.M.s are towns and villages. I don't think he's proposing that we set up hog barns in towns and villages. The rest are either forest or in northern Manitoba or in areas that are not intensive livestock areas of the province.

The absurdity of that comment has not been lost on the presenters who have come to committee. The members of his party who have been patiently sitting there—and I given them credit because I know a lot of them have spent hours listening to presentations and I think have been impacted by those presentations, and I wonder why the Premier isn't getting the message. Bill 17 will not save Lake Winnipeg. Bill 17 will damage the economy of Manitoba. It will cut hundreds of millions of dollars off land values in rural Manitoba, which he's not proposing to compensate, which he should be compensating, because it's akin to an expropriation. It's going to drive down assessments and revenue to rural municipalities.

The economic cost of this bill is astronomical. He hasn't built that into his calculations. Will he simply withdraw Bill 17 and go back to a common-sense partnership with agriculture to clean up Lake Winnipeg?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, every act one has to take dealing with water protection, whether it's the regulations that we put in place last year, The Water Protection Act that we debated for over a year in this House—I would point out that we wanted to extend the debate to make sure that people had an opportunity to comment on it which, of course, we're doing in this case, as well—the actions we're taking with the City of Winnipeg, with the water treatment plant, and removing nitrogen, which now Regina is doing, in spite of the criticism we received by some of the pundits and others.

We, Mr. Speaker, obviously know that there are three options dealing with this industry that expanded dramatically in Manitoba under the former government and under our government. We know there are three options on a go-forward basis. One is

a complete moratorium on the whole province which is an option. Another option is unfettered development as proposed by the Conservative Party and the Leader of the Opposition. There's a more appropriate balanced approach to deal, not with stopping farming—we're not stopping farming. In fact, expansions can still take place with anaerobic digesters. We're just not allowing the status quo to take place in areas where 28 percent of development is in one municipality.

The De Salaberry city council gets it. Why don't members opposite understand that, Mr. Speaker?

Bill 17

Economic Impact

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I invite the Premier to the committee to hear these heart-wrenching stories about every Manitoban that wants their voice heard. Where is he? Where's he been? Get to our committee.

Mr. Speaker, last night, Steve Penner from Pioneer Meat of Altona stood with his wife and three children and talked about the impact of Bill 17. Pioneer Meat is a family business that processes meat raised by Manitoba producers. Mr. Penner wants his children to have the opportunity to work in the family business when they're old enough, but he fears the future of the hog industry.

I ask the minister: Has he finally figured out the economic impact Bill 17 is going to have on businesses like the Penner family? Withdraw Bill 17, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to sit next to our Premier (Mr. Doer) in the committee yesterday and listen to many of these varied presentations that came forward.

Mr. Speaker, presenter after presenter has come to us and spoken about how we need to take care of our environment and how we need to protect Manitoba water. People, in their presentations to us, understand that there are some parts of this province that need some extra special attention and that's what we've been doing. They've been encouraging us to do that and we have done that.

Those folks get it. Manitobans get it. I don't know why the members across the way still don't get it.

* (14:10)

Mr. Eichler: Presenters have offered solution after solution. The minister knows it. The Premier, if he was to show up at a committee, he might get it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, two young Hutterite women spoke passionately about Bill 17 and their life on the colonies. Marie Hofer explained that colony life is the only life she knows and that she wants to keep it that way. She asked the committee members: If we can't raise pigs, what can we do? Ms. Hofer asked the question: Why do we want to import pork from other provinces when we can raise a quality product here?

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Can he explain to Hutterite producers and other Manitobans raising hogs, what are they to do?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Under our rules, it's out of order to mention the presence or absence of any members. A committee is an extension of this House, so I caution members.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, many presentations dealt with the ability of Manitoba to slaughter hogs in this province. If the member would just think a little bit to a few weeks ago when we made an announcement at Brandon, we made an announcement in Neepawa about expanding hog-slaughtering capacity in this province. That's what people in the Hutterite colonies, that's what people that have come to present to us have said is an important part, an integral part of how we move forward in this province. We're, again, just slightly ahead of our friends across the way.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this affects every single Manitoban in Manitoba. We have record-breaking numbers of presenters on Bill 17. These presenters have repeatedly pointed that the industry invests tens of millions of dollars annually into our economy and creates thousands of local jobs. It also generates tens of millions of dollars in annual export sales which are reinvested here in the province of Manitoba. These people fear for the very future of their industry, indeed the future of the farm sector.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister trying to put the boots to the industry? Why does he refuse to work with the industry? Why won't he withdraw Bill 17?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, presenter after presenter has said that we need some regulations to control the amount of manure that ends up into our systems. That's presenter after presenter. The only—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Struthers: Presenter after presenter understands that. The only people who don't understand that, led by the Official Leader of the Opposition—when we brought forward our water regulations that people in these presentations say were a good thing, he said no. Many of the farmers who have presented already have said that The Water Protection Act that we brought in is a good step forward. Again, the Leader of the Opposition says no.

Mr. Speaker, we're—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Workers Compensation Board Expansion of Coverage Report

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Workers Compensation Board extension of coverage report was released after the minister sat on it for a week and dragged it out to the end of session.

She then admitted to the media that she was not going to respect the input that came in during the consultative process. She said that if they listened to opponents of the extension, the government would be, and I quote, doing squat. She said we're at a place in this province that we just got to get on with it.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board explain why she's ignoring the input from the consultation process?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): Well, Mr. Speaker, I received the report Tuesday afternoon. I released the report Wednesday. So let's put the facts on the record. I'm very pleased—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Allan: Well, I find it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite think it's funny that we have the lowest coverage.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Allan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it very interesting that I'm being criticized for sitting on a report that I released within 24 hours. It was a report that I received from the WCB that is unanimous, and it is a report that I received that suggests that I

broaden coverage of Workers Comp here in Manitoba.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, the 2005 report recommended that low-risk workplaces be encouraged to voluntarily opt into coverage. This recommendation was ignored. The report also recommended that there should be a full and free opportunity for consultation and discussion before any expansion, and that was ignored. Virtually all of the respondents indicated that they were opposed to this extension of coverage. As well, a 2004 report from Deloitte found that there was no correlation between Workers Compensation and farm safety. The minister admitted that they only consulted because they had to. They were being good little trustees, was the quote she said, and they are still going to force coverage.

Mr. Speaker, why were 43,000 packages sent out when the minister isn't even going to listen to the report? It's a sham.

Ms. Allan: Okay. One moment I'm being accused, Mr. Speaker, of not consulting or following the recommendations in the report of the 2005 WCB review committee. I would suggest the MLA for Morris read the 2005 report, because what it said in the report is that the government should expand coverage in three to five years. It also said in the report that the WCB should consult, and the WCB did consult. They sent out 40,000 letters to stakeholders in regard to coverage.

I have now received that report from WCB. I released the report within 24 hours of receiving it, and I said very clearly, and I have said very clearly for months, we are going to expand coverage because we do not want to continue to be the lowest coverage of any jurisdiction in the country. It's shameful.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the minister reread the 2005 report and follow all of the recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, the minister planned to aggressively expand coverage well before they received input from stakeholders. In the consultation letter that went out it indicated: the Manitoba government now intends to significantly increase Workers Compensation coverage.

Consultation means hearing and respecting what people say. It's not something you do just to pat yourself on the back, just to say you've done it.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister respect all the recommendations from the 2005 report, respect what the Deloitte report said regarding agriculture and respect the vast majority of people who responded to the consultative process, or is she going to cherry-pick the recommendations that just respect her political agenda at the expense of Manitoba employers?

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, we plan to move forward very quickly in regard to expanding coverage now that we have received this report. We believe we should not have the lowest coverage of any jurisdiction in Canada. I said very clearly, yesterday in the hallway, when the MLA for Charleswood was listening, that what we will do is we will continue to dialogue with the stakeholders. We will have a balanced approach, because that's what's best for employers. Employers want a level playing field in this province, and there are employer reps on the board, the tripartite board, that provided me with these recommendations.

We're going to have a modern framework for Workers Comp that's going to meet the needs of employers and the needs of workers here in our province, and we're going to clean up the mess because they didn't do anything on the WCB ever. We're going to make it happen, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:20)

Pukatawagan Rail Bridge Fire Investigation Report Status

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): A state of emergency has been declared in Pukatawagan after a rail bridge burned making it difficult to move critical supplies into this community. It's critical that this rail bridge be repaired and full service restored as soon as possible.

It has been reported that the movement of the work train needed for the bridge repairs has been delayed while the cause of the fire is being investigated.

Can the Minister of Conservation provide an update as to when the fire investigation may be completed so the bridge repairs can be completed as soon as possible?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, decisions will be made based, first and foremost, on the safety of people that live in the area. The last thing we want to be doing is authorizing an action to take place that will cause more stress, more

fires. So when we make these decisions we do that very carefully.

Having said that, the weather, from the reports that I've been given, have indicated that very soon we can be moving forward to have those trains moving.

Rural Emergency Rooms Summer Closures

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, we just learned that the Carberry emergency room will be closed from June 30 to September 12. We've also had the resignation of two doctors in Killarney, so it's in all likelihood that those services will be suspended in that facility this summer as well. The *Brandon Sun* reports that unless replacement doctors are found, the Virden emergency room will be closed indefinitely.

The RHA also sent a document, and it stated that staffing this summer will be even more challenging than in the past, and we faced numerous closures in the past.

So can the minister explain why, after nine years in government, this problem is getting worse?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. The member and I have had a number of conversations about this issue. The member well knows that the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority has a unique situation of having the highest number of hospitals and personal care homes in the province of Manitoba per capita. We also know we have a declining population there. The challenges of maintaining health human resources have been increasing as of late compared to other regions.

We know that we have worked with the regional health authority, and the region has developed a plan toward the challenges that will exist this summer when these doctors and nurses take their well-earned vacations. We want to ensure the hospitals with the highest visits and highest acuity have—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hip and Knee Surgery Length of Hospital Stays

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, quick mobilization after knee and hip replacement surgery to reduce complications and improve recovery is one of the goals of today's medical care. One of the important performance measurements in

hip and knee surgery indeed is the time in hospital. I table a comparison between Alberta, where Alberta Bone and Joint Health uses best practices in all its efforts, and in Manitoba, where we don't even have a Manitoba bone and joint health.

The comparison is not pretty. As well as much, much longer wait times for Manitoba, the average stay in hospital in Alberta is 4.7 days, while that in Manitoba for primary knee and hip replacement surgery is between seven and nine days.

Can the Minister of Health please explain why Manitoba is so far behind Alberta?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. Of course, I know that he doesn't mean to pay any disrespect to the doctors and the nurses that are working so expertly in our orthopedic program. We know, of course, that with innovations, including our prehab program—which, incidentally, Mr. Speaker, has resulted in individuals who were destined for hip or for knee surgery to be able to be taken off that path and not have to have surgery at all, a very salient point in this.

We know that together with the two-operating-room model that exists at Concordia Hospital and our use of clinical assists to increase the number of operations from three to eight a day, we've been able to dramatically bring down our wait time by over 50 percent since 2005, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave to complete the two supplementaries.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to complete his two supplementary questions?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the wait times for knee and hip replacement surgery are not even as good as they were in 2001. There's been a status quo.

Mr. Speaker, bed-sitting is the hospital version of musical chairs. Surgeons use their patients as placeholders to ensure the availability of a hospital bed. One patient's hospital stay is prolonged until the next patient needs the bed, and then the first patient is shuffled out and the new patient moved into the empty bed. Bed-sitting happens because of poor political leadership and badly run health care which has perverse incentives for people.

Has the minister checked to see whether bed-sitting is occurring in Manitoba and is, in part, responsible for the far longer hospital stays than in Alberta?

Ms. Oswald: At least he got back, in this question, to blaming me and not the doctors and nurses in the system. That's progress for him anyway, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I will say to the member that while we have instituted prehab that has helped individuals to get off the track for surgery in the first place, we've instituted, with the doctors and the nurses, the two-operating-room model. We have, of course, the world-renowned Pan Am Centre, where incredible work is being done on diagnostics and orthopedics.

It's worthwhile to say, Mr. Speaker, that one of the single greatest innovations that has happened is the surgeons—most surgeons, perhaps excluding some of the member's best friends—got together to centralize their wait list, to share those lists and to put the patient first.

Mr. Gerrard: I'm glad the minister's recognizing she's responsible for the problems in the health-care system.

The difference between 4.7 hospital days per patient in Alberta and eight hospital days for patients in Manitoba means that Manitoba needs some 9,000 extra hospital bed days compared to Alberta. This is a lot of extra time that patients are staying in beds in Manitoba. Surely the minister needs to investigate and find out why Manitoba needs an extra 9,000 bed days costing millions of dollars a year for hip and knee replacement surgeries.

When will the minister act to bring in a Manitoba bone and joint health initiative, get things sorted out, improve the quality and cost-efficiency of care in Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, point of clarification. Just because the member opposite says one thing that doesn't mean he's anywhere near the truth. Let's always be clear on that. I'll say to the member opposite—

Mr. Speaker: Order. All members bring factual information to the House as far as the Speaker is concerned. I ask the member to withdraw that last comment.

Ms. Oswald: I withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Oswald: We'll certainly say that the member opposite and I disagree on the facts.

What I can say concerning the love affair the member opposite seems to have with the Alberta institute, we know that we have made progress with the excellent work of doctors and nurses that have brought down, since 2005, the wait time for orthopedic surgery by well over 50 percent.

We know that we began on our journey by focussing on lifesaving treatment moving to quality-of-life treatment. We know the member opposite could go a long way to convince some of his colleagues to get on board, centralize their wait list and let's work together to put the patient first in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, question period is over.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

The Forks 20th Anniversary

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, 2008 is a momentous year for Winnipeggers, who celebrate the 20th anniversary of The Forks, an important historical, cultural and economic landmark in Winnipeg. Its history is traced back over 6,000 years, as the junction of the Red and the Assiniboine rivers was used by indigenous peoples from across North America as a place to trade, hunt, fish and celebrate.

In the 19th century, the location became the home of the railways, bringing more people to the province, enhancing Manitoba's development. By the 1960s, railways departed and the abandoned location became what we all know today as The Forks.

Through the vision and support of all three levels of government, a unique partnership was created in 1981 to direct development of the location, and after years of public consultation and planning, The Forks was created. Now The Forks has become a shopping and recreation centre, including Manitoba's Children's Museum, Manitoba Theatre for Young People, Inn at The Forks hotel, world-class skateboard park, and in a few years it will also boast the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

* (14:30)

Throughout the evolution of the site, the defining purpose of this location has been to service

a place to gather, meet and socialize. Over 20 years, The Forks has championed this idea and there are many events attracting people locally, nationally and internationally. For this 20th anniversary year, additional events are being held.

I was pleased to attend the Founders Dine-Around yesterday evening where visitors had the opportunity to enjoy samples of the very delicious foods offered by the merchants in The Forks public market. As well, key figures responsible for the development of The Forks were honoured for their commitment and work that resulted in the creation of this fantastic feature for our city.

I would like to congratulate everyone past and present who have dedicated their time and resources to The Forks throughout these two decades. It is through these individuals that The Forks became a defining aspect of Winnipeg and has provided millions of people with a source of enjoyment and activity. Congratulations once again, and I hope to see The Forks continue to grow with success in the decades to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dennis Nord

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in the House today to mark the occasion of the retirement from the Louis Riel School Division of Mr. Dennis Nord.

Mr. Nord's career in the St. Vital and Louis Riel school divisions spanned 37 years, during which time he has provided excellent service to the students and families of our community. He began teaching physical education at Victor Mager School in 1971 and has served in a variety of leadership roles throughout his career, including that of guidance counsellor, designated teacher, co-ordinator of the Family Life Program, vice-principal and principal. He's touched the lives of so many in our community but, in particular, those who attended Dakota Collegiate, Darwin School and Hastings School. His most recent contribution as supervisor of human resources has made all the difference in the overwhelming success the division has achieved in recruiting and retaining the best professionals the province has to offer.

I remember what it was like to be in Mr. Nord's class. The lectures were fascinating and, as is his signature, hilarious. He cared deeply about his students being critical thinkers and compassionate human beings. His stellar career in the volleyball community made being a player on one of his teams

an honour and a privilege. He was assistant coach of Team Canada at the 1976 Olympics and head coach of the Canadian men's national team the year after.

The Dennis Nord Award, originally presented to Mr. Nord in 1985, is now presented annually by the MHSAA to a graduating volleyball player who demonstrates excellence in academics, athletics and leadership. With a resume like this, it isn't hard to imagine how professional his manner was as a coach of the Dakota Collegiate varsity girls' team. The drills were technical and occasionally excruciating, the tactics and strategy presented were of the highest level, and the results were consistently excellent, but, most of all, it was Mr. Nord's ability to instil a work ethic and a sense of pride in one's legitimate achievement that made those days so memorable for me and so many other athletes at Dakota.

When I reflect on the people who have had the greatest influence on me, Mr. Nord ranks high atop the list. While he is known for his intelligence, razor-sharp wit and charismatic personal style, it is his dedication and compassion that stand as his greatest gifts to Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, let the official written record of Manitoba history show that Mr. Dennis Nord made a significant contribution to many and made a profound difference to me. Thank you.

Dr. Emöke Szathmáry

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to express our sincerest congratulations to Dr. Emöke Szathmáry on an exceedingly successful term as president of the University of Manitoba. As the president of Manitoba's largest post-secondary institution since 1996, Dr. Szathmáry's leadership and advocacy have attracted world-class researchers, new funding opportunities and innovative programs. During her tenure, the university has seen massive infrastructure renewal projects, all of which has enhanced the university's capabilities and its international reputation.

Dr. Szathmáry, who was born in Hungary, along with her parents, was forced to endure life as a refugee in the years following World War II. Moving to Canada in 1951, she would pursue her lifelong interests in history and culture by earning a B.A. and Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Toronto. Dr. Szathmáry quickly established herself as a prominent academic within the anthropology

discipline. Her ascendance through departmental ranks would soon find her in line for executive administrative positions which she held at both the University of Western Ontario and McMaster University.

During her 12 years at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Szathmáry has continued to add to her legacy of successful university leadership. Important programs and projects such as the establishment of University 1, Engineering and Information Technology Complex, Helen Glass Centre of Nursing, Downtown Aboriginal Education Centre, University Smartpark and the Arthur Mauro Student Residence are but a few of the accomplishments that Dr. Szathmáry has overseen.

The extent of Dr. Szathmáry's contribution to the University of Manitoba cannot be overestimated. At the conclusion of her term as president, we can clearly see that determined and thoughtful approach that has brought her so much personal success has also been an enormous benefit to the University of Manitoba and, ultimately, to the province of Manitoba.

To Dr. Szathmáry, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I would like to thank you for all you have done and wish you all of the best in your future endeavours. Thank you.

International Trail Days

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Infrastructure means more than roads, sewers, and bridges. Having quality recreational spaces and thoroughfares is also part of a neighbourhood's infrastructure and contributes to the health and well-being of residents. I'm very pleased to report that International Trails Day was celebrated on June 7 on the Northeast Pioneers Greenway.

New signs that mark the kilometres that a person travels as they walk, bike, rollerblade or run down the path were unveiled. This trail runs from Herbert Avenue to Springfield Road. Mr. Speaker, the Northeast Pioneers Greenway will be the first trail in the city to have the signage installed. Often, trail enthusiasts remark that they are never sure how far they've travelled. These signs will be an excellent way to measure the distance a person has come and allows residents to keep track of their fitness progress.

I would like to encourage all my constituents to embrace the trail and increase their level of physical activity. With prices at the pumps climbing ever

higher, taking a bicycle to work or to the neighbours and friends is a triple saving for your health, for the environment, and for your bank account.

Mr. Speaker, this trail is only phase one. I'm looking forward to the slated fall completion of phase two of the trail which will extend to Knowles Avenue. Eventually, this beautiful trail will run from The Forks National Historic Site to Birds Hill Provincial Park. I'm very proud to be part of a government that has promised to invest a minimum of \$6 million into city trails. Creating a place to play and exercise is a great way to build community, help the environment and get healthy.

I would like to thank Sigrun Bailey and Louise Balaban, the co-chairs of the River East Neighbourhood Network's Trail Committee for being strong advocates for trails in our neighbourhood. I look forward to working with them to make additional trails and trail expansions a reality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 45

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I read a communication from Pat Bowslaugh and Anne Monk of the Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba, in which they talk about the lost years under the NDP.

Monday, June 9, 2008, marks the moral bankruptcy of the current government's dealings with the retired teachers in this province. Rather than find a solution to the long-term funding of the cost-of-living adjustment fund, the government has chosen to cut benefits and send all retired teachers away from the discussion table for 10 years. The first reading of Bill 45 unashamedly reduces retired teachers' entitlement from 100 percent COLA to 66 percent with no guarantees of any amount whatsoever.

The bill includes the escape clause of available funding in the pension adjustment account. Put simply, it means that the government is not going to increase the pension adjustment account so that adequate COLA could result. Instead, it's putting its trust in the stock market and hoping that enough interest can be earned to raise the COLAs from the 25 percent level to 50 percent.

A 100 percent COLA for which all teachers paid and are continuing to pay maintains the purchasing power of teachers in the year in which they retire. The government has read into the recent flawed plebiscite results some spurious justification for

acting on legislation it must have had written well in advance of the plebiscite itself. Disregarding the 48 percent of the voting teachers who didn't want the reductions of the Sale report, the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) has taken a backward step in relation with those who've served this province well for many decades.

The bill makes no mention of their organization, the Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba. It makes no provision for their involvement in the future. In plain words, the minister's abusing retired teachers and telling them to get used to a lower standard of living. He's added insult to injury and shows he has little respect for those teachers who've worked for the children of this province for many decades. He's chosen to do this on the very day that the government proclaims its opposition to verbal and financial abuse against seniors.

The minister has been heard to say that he doesn't like being described as a bully. Yet he's talked like one, blaming RTAM for not totally accepting all parts of the Sale report. Now he's acting like a bully by using the big government club to rush legislation through, putting retired teachers in their place with no prospects for improvements for the next 10 years.

With their proposed Bill 45, he's become the biggest bully on the playground. That said, the communication—and it's going to be one more thing that will have to be sorted out after the NDP leave.

* (14:40)

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Agriculture will meet on Friday, June 13, at 10 a.m., to continue to consider Bill 17, and I'd like to canvass the House to see if there's leave for the Clerk's office to not call presenters today about this meeting scheduled for Friday, but instead call them tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that the Standing Committee on Agriculture will meet on Friday, June 13, at 10 a.m., to continue to consider Bill 17.

Also, is there leave for the Clerk's office to not call presenters today about this meeting, but, instead, call them tomorrow? Is there agreement on that?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with the meeting on Friday, but, surely, they should be called today. I mean, one day's notice is not enough.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: I thank members of the House for that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call report stage on Bills 25, 27, 40 and 28, to be followed by motions with third readings on Bills 20, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 29 and 34.

Mr. Speaker: House business will be report stages Bills 25, 27, 40 and 28 and then, if we have time, we'll move to concurrence and third reading of Bills 20, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 29 and 34. If there is any time left, we will then proceed in order.

DEBATE ON REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Bill 25—The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: The amendment moved by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), amendment to Bill 25, The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Finance, who has eight minutes remaining.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I don't think I'll need the entire eight minutes for this amendment. *[interjection]* Okay, I'll consider it then.

The requirement for the ethics requirement, amendment 16.1(1), as I was saying yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the way it's drafted could prevent some helpful options being made available to a person who is located in a hospital, health-care centre or nursing home. They may wish to, for example, have a discussion with a funeral director about arrangements that they wish to enter into, along with members of their family.

So I think it would be best advised to not vote for this amendment, but for the Member for River Heights to understand that the underlying point that he was concerned about—unwanted solicitation of people in these facilities by telephone or otherwise—should be looked at by the board that will be drafting

the code of ethics to ensure that people are not experiencing pressures that they do not wish to have the experience of.

I think we can draft a code of ethics which will address the spirit of this amendment without some of the limitations that are inherent in the way it is currently drafted.

I will ask, of course, that the board of directors that administer The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act, which will be changed in name to The Funeral Directors and Embalmers Act, to take this into account when they're looking at their code of ethics to ensure that there are not wide-open opportunities to put people under undue pressure for the purchase of services.

So, therefore, I think we cannot vote for this amendment, but ensure that it's picked up under the code of ethics. The people doing the code of ethics, Mr. Speaker, will be members of the public in the majority, as well as a couple of funeral directors that are appointed so that the public interest will be served by the majority of members of the committee. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

THAT Bill 25 be amended in Clause 7 by adding the following after the proposed subsection 16.1(1):

Code of ethics requirement

16.1(1.1) *The code of ethics must include a provision prohibiting a funeral director from soliciting the sale of any supplies or services of the funeral director by telephone or in a hospital, health care centre or nursing home.*

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No?

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division? On division.

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Bill 25—The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll now move on to second amendment to Bill 25, The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou),

THAT Bill 25 be amended in Clause 7 by replacing the proposed section 16.2 with the following:

Requirement to disclose information

6.2(1) A funeral director, or a person acting for or on behalf of a funeral director, who sells, offers for sale, or negotiates the sale of any of the supplies or services provided by the funeral director must

- (a) provide an itemized list of the supplies or services to be provided to the purchaser; and
- (b) disclose other information to the purchaser about those supplies or services in accordance with this section in the regulations.

Time to disclose information

16.2(2) The funeral director, or a person acting for or on behalf of a funeral director, must provide the itemized list of supplies or services and disclose the information specified in the regulations before the earliest of the following occurs:

- (a) any supplies or services are provided by the funeral director;
- (b) the purchaser makes a payment in connection with the provision of the supply or service;
- (c) the purchaser enters into the sale.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights, seconded by the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou),

THAT Bill 25 be amended in Clause 7 by replacing the proposed section 16.2 with the following—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this amendment comes from discussions with a number of funeral directors who have specifically raised concerns about practices within the industry, the practice that people will say, well, we'll sell you a funeral for \$500 or \$600 or \$700 or \$400, or whatever the amount is, and then when the person who has purchased the funeral service goes to find out and to proceed with the funeral, all of a sudden, they end up being served with bills for all sorts of other additional items.

Clearly, this is a practice which is unconscionable and is causing a huge amount of problems within the industry as I think the Minister of Finance recognizes at the moment. So what is needed is to make sure that we have the itemized list in this fashion and that it's presented and that people know exactly what they are buying when they're putting forward money to purchase a funeral or funeral services or whatever services from a funeral director.

So I think this is an important amendment, and I would hope that the Minister of Finance, who seems to be nodding his head, will support this amendment.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Again, I would have to say the member's concern here is a very legitimate one. I'm not sure if he's aware that we already passed an amendment at committee stage which will require disclosure of information, not only to purchasers of funeral services but to prospective purchasers of funeral services, as well as members of the public that ask for this kind of itemized information.

* (14:50)

We have a broad regulation-making power in the bill that will bring forward requirements for itemization of services so that people can make a choice of which services they wish to purchase as, right now, the member well knows that often the price given to a person has a number of things included in that price, but those items are not clear to the member. They may think they're getting an entire package and then find out they have to pay additional costs and not be aware of that, or the reverse. They

may find that they actually wish to purchase less services than they actually have received within the price they got and they wish to purchase those services for a lesser price.

So the concept of itemization of the services offered and pricing those itemized services will certainly be addressed in the regulation. It will be addressed not only for purchases of services, but also prospective purchases of services, as well as members of the public who are, quite frankly, price shopping, looking around for where they can get the best package of services specifically tailored to their needs.

So this amendment, in that respect, then, is unnecessary, Mr. Speaker, because we will cover it in the regulations and through the amendment that has already been made at committee. I would recommend that we not support the amendment, but ensure that, in the way we do make regulations, this itemization requirement is covered before a person purchases anything, before a person even decides whether they want to purchase anything, as a member of the public. And, certainly, once they have decided to purchase something, they should be able to get an itemized list of what it is they have purchased and what the cost of those items are so they will have clarity about what they're paying for in their bill and not have any surprises after the fact.

I agree with the spirit of the amendment, but I think we've covered it, and our regulation power will be able to provide for that. Therefore, I'd recommend that we not support it at this stage, but go with the amendments already made at the standing committee level.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), to Bill 25.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Bill 27—The Shellmouth Dam and Other Water Control Works Management and Compensation Act (Water Resources Administration Act Amended)

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

THAT the Bill be amended in Clause 4 by adding the following after the proposed section 12.7:

Government may purchase land

12.8(1) The government may, upon the written request of a person otherwise entitled to claim compensation under section 12.2 for property damage or economic loss resulting from artificial flooding of the person's land, instead of paying compensation under this Act for that damage or economic loss, purchase that land from the person in accordance with *The Land Acquisition Act* and lease it back to the person for a nominal fee.

No compensation payable for purchased land

12.8(2) Despite sections 12.1 and 12.2, no compensation may be claimed by a person under this Act in respect of an economic loss resulting from artificial flooding if it relates to land that was previously sold by the person to the government under subsection (1) and leased back to the person.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Russell, (Mr. Derkach), seconded by the honourable Member for Tuxedo,

THAT the Bill be amended in Clause 4 by adding the following after the proposed section 12.7:

Government may—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, this amendment is one that was actually encouraged by the presenters who came to the committee.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Cliff Trinder, who came to the committee, actually asked that this be a part of the package because, over the course of time, producers who have been repeatedly flooded have, in essence, given

up in terms of wanting to hold on to the land because they recognize that perhaps it is better to have this land purchased by the government. Then the government would not have to pay flood compensation if it, in fact, happened.

All the producers would then do is lease the land back for a nominal fee, whether it's a dollar or whatever, and still be eligible for crop insurance for the crops they grow. In a time of flood, these producers would not be compensated under the flood compensation program, because they would not own the land.

Producers that I have talked to along the valley seem to be amenable to that kind of a clause being included in the bill, because it does give them the option. Mr. Acting Speaker, if you look at the land along that valley, there's a difficulty in producers selling that land to someone else, even at the present time, because there's the fear of that land being inundated by water when it's time to seed the crops.

So farmers are concerned that, in fact, the devaluation of their land has gone to such a level that, indeed, perhaps it's better if they can make some arrangement with government to purchase that land, lease it back to them. Then, if an event occurs, they understand that they will not be compensated under the flood compensation program.

I think this is a win-win, to be honest with you, because it does give the government the option of taking over that land and not having to incur that cost whenever water has to be let out of the dam for whatever reason, and artificial flooding occurs. It also gives the operator of the land the flexibility to continue operating the land but understanding fully from the beginning that, if that land is inundated by artificial flooding, they are not eligible for any compensation.

For the government, Mr. Acting Speaker, it's an ability for them to start the process of taking control of the land that is below the dam. I think that is something that's been talked about for 20 years, because there's always been a problem in times of artificial flooding.

What is artificial flooding? It's when the regime of the dam has to be managed in such a way that an excessive amount of water needs to be let out of the dam, either because of too much water coming in too quickly behind the dam, or when there is a call for water downstream to such an extent that the gates have to be opened up.

I have been there when those gates have been opened up to their maximum; it doesn't take long for that water to flood over the land. The problem in the valley is that we have levees along the river that have actually been built up over time. Once the water gets out of the channel and onto the land, it takes a long time for that water to find its way back into the river channel.

It's a different situation altogether than what we have in the Red River Valley because of the nature of the valley, the topography of the land and, of course, the vegetation in that area. A lot of the vegetation in the valley is not just crop land, but it's also a mix of natural and original—if you like—grasslands that are used for pasturing and are used for hay land and which can sustain flooding.

Perhaps, what we should be looking at down the road is to have that entire valley, as much of it as possible, into a stand of grassland and forages because those lands can then be flooded for a longer period of time and still yield some benefit to the producers in later summer, when the water goes down. If there are places that are too wet to harvest the forage of, it's not a total loss of crop because, next year, that forage will still grow up through the old forage and will still sustain a yield.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think there's some good thinking that has gone into this whole issue of having the government buy back the land from the producers, if, in fact, the government or the producer decides that that's the best way to go. There has to be a mutual agreement between the government and the producer. It can't be a forced sale, because I don't think that's at all the way to go but, if the government decides that it is the right way to go, to purchase all that land, then there's a process of starting to communicate with those landowners.

* (15:00)

Eventually, I think, most landowners will see the benefit of that. I'm not saying that every single one of them will, because some of them have been living in the valley for generations. So there is that whole issue of having that land transfer from owner to owner within a family.

But I think many of those producers have gotten to the point where they understand that a dam is an important structure for Manitoba. They understand that their lands below the dam may not be able to be saved every year. So what they're prepared to do I think is to work with the government towards a

resolution of that for the long term, not for the short term. Then, having that kind of a resolution arrived at, I think allows for both the landowner or the land operator and the government to work in harmony towards things like more sustainable forms of agriculture in the valley where you can grow more forages, harvest them later in the summer as the flooding occurs and still have some benefit to the producer and also to the government.

The other thing that it does is it allows that producer, then, to start looking at what kind of an operation he or she has, and some of the producers have said, if I could sell my land in the valley, then I'd be prepared to go to the other parts of the province or perhaps to the top of the valley, if you like, and purchase land that isn't subject to flooding, still carry on my operation and hand that down to my children down the road. I think that's a good thing as well.

So it does provide some options for landowners, and it does provide some options for the government. So I'm encouraging the minister to look at this amendment in a positive way. This is not, if you like, a quote, unquote, political amendment. It's more a practical way of approaching the solution.

Now, I'm going to say that the government has done a good thing in moving to a bill that is going to compensate people in the valley in a similar fashion that they are in the Red River Valley. I think that's a good bill. I think it's a positive step and in the right direction.

But all I think we need to do now is seal it with this kind of an amendment which the producers have been asking for. The minister was present when Mr. Cliff Trinder and Mr. Gene Nerbias, who are both farmers in the valley representing a lot of the producers along the valley, presented before the committee, and I think that she heard in their presentation that this is something that they would like to see within the bill. So I'm standing here trying to encourage the minister to look at this amendment now. This is enabling. I know that we had a little difficulty with the amendment because it may have called on government to spend money and that would be out of order. So what this amendment does, it's enabling legislation and enabling amendment to the bill which will allow the government then to take that option, if in fact that option is one that is seen practical for the producer and for the government, and to move forward in a very positive way.

This area has suffered for many years. There's no question about it. When I came into this Legislature, you would not even recognize the valley today as to what it was then. We had a difficult time in convincing even the government that I was part of that the reality of the flooding was such that it hampered families from being able to make a proper living on the land that they used to make a good living at for many, many years. So once that reality started to strike home on the government side, we did a lot of things. We didn't do them all. Indeed, I'm thankful that the minister saw the wisdom in moving in this direction, and I have to give her credit and the government credit for taking that step because it certainly has relieved a lot of the tension in the valley, especially immediately downstream from the dam.

As you move away from the dam and down the valley to St. Lazare, Miniota and beyond, I think the situation shifts because the water in those parts of the province will flood the land, but the water gets away much more quickly in that part of the province. So it makes sense to pay compensation but not necessarily to take over the land. The area I'm speaking about, Mr. Acting Speaker, is the area between the dam and Highway 16. But there are some lands beyond that. For example, if you go a mile or two beyond 16, that's where the Trinder farm is, and they would like to be included. So the bill gives some flexibility in which lands the government may select.—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reid): Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Yes, Mr. Acting Speaker, we have had a lot of discussion with the Agricultural Valley Producers, the AVP. Certainly, I've chatted with Mr. Trinder myself and he is very interested in the scenario that the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) has put forward. Other folks in the AVP are not interested in a scenario like this, so I think we have to leave it for producers or cattle ranchers such as Mr. Trinder to determine what's their best course of action.

The ability for the government to purchase land is already available through The Land Acquisition Act, section 4, clause 1. Also, the ability for government to lease land back to producers, or whoever it might be, is also available through The Crown Lands Act, section 7(1) and/or 7.3(2). So, recognizing that, and the Member for Russell is representing his folks and he really does want to see

some relief from the situation that they've had, which, of course, is the spirit of the Shellmouth act that we've brought in.

We feel it would be redundant to include these clauses in the Shellmouth act. We are already, in many different ways, working on the purchasing of land, as I mentioned, through The Land Acquisition Act and then the leasing back, where necessary or where appropriate, in The Crown Lands Act. So the member can feel comfortable knowing that any of the members around the Shellmouth Dam, whether they're members of the AVP or otherwise, can certainly come to our department. We can work out something that is going to be good for everyone in that area there, and we will have to reject, on that basis, the amendments brought forward by the Member for Russell, but I thank him for his concern for the folks in that area. I thank him for his very positive words about the Shellmouth act, Bill 27, which we are discussing today.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I'm pleased to stand today and put some words on the record with respect to Bill 27. Of course, we did sit through committee, and we heard some very compelling presentations in committee from Mr. Trinder and others who are very supportive of this amendment.

I think the minister has already stated, she has stated that this may be covered in other areas of legislation. In fact, the difference between other areas of legislation and the reason why this amendment was brought forward is because this gives the producer actually a decision as to whether or not they choose to accept compensation or sell the land to the government. It's a little bit different; it isn't already there. It is something that does give the producer a little bit more say in what's going on. I think that's a very important part to note here.

Certainly, I think the minister's right in the other areas that parts of it may be covered off, but I think that's another reason why she should probably support this. Certainly, we are supportive of this bill. I think, when it comes to this bill, we need to give credit where credit is due. I would say that—I know I've been a member of this Legislature for almost eight years now, seven and a half years, and I've heard time and time again, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) and often the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), as well as the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) even, stand up and ask questions about this but, in particular, the Member for Russell.

His constituents have been significantly impacted by flooding around the area and artificial flooding from the Shellmouth Dam area. I give him credit and I think members opposite should, rather than pat themselves on the back with respect to this bill, give credit where credit is due and that is for the Member for Russell, who time and time again, has stood in this Legislature during question period and has asked the minister for years now, where is the compensation package for people in my area, the flooding in the Assiniboine Valley region.

*(15:10)

We've had, for a number of years now, legislation there for people for flooding in the Red River Valley area. Of course, we're supportive of that, Mr. Acting Speaker, but for years, there has been artificial flooding in the Assiniboine Valley region and for years those producers and people have gone without compensation. So there's been a bit of a conflict happening there; it's pitting people off from different areas of the province. I'm glad we don't have to go through that anymore. I'm glad that people in the Assiniboine Valley region will be treated the same as those in the Red River Valley region and will be properly compensated.

Certainly, with respect to the bill, we're in favour of the bill, but I would also encourage the minister and members opposite to support this because I think—we go back to the committee meetings, the committee hearings where we heard from a number of people on this specific issue, the issue being that producers often have land in the area which they developed in the valley region and just outside the valley region. When they're going for compensation, there's an average that's done. Really, what it should do is just apply to the land that is within the flooding region and not take into consideration the other land.

While we're not allowed to bring forward bills or amendments, as opposition members, that would require additional funding or so on, that would be a money amendment in this Legislature in terms of compensation, I think the Member for Russell has crafted a very good amendment to this legislation which maybe doesn't go all the way in terms of where we would want to see this go and in terms of where Mr. Trinder and others who so eloquently put it at the committee, because we're restricted in terms of what we're able to do and what we're able to bring forward in this Legislature. Certainly, it is a step in that direction. I know that Mr. Trinder and others are very supportive of this.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The minister sat through those hearings. I think she saw the compelling reasons why she should support this and members opposite who were also around the table—it wasn't just the minister, but there were other members of her government around the table who listened to these very compelling, very articulate and very heartfelt speeches from those people who have been seriously affected for many, many years in the area. This isn't something that just came about yesterday and this is a quick solution.

As I mentioned earlier, the Member for Russell has been asking this for a number of years now in the Legislature and calling on this government to take action with respect to this. He has wanted to bring fairness to those people in his area and I think, certainly, this does provide a step towards bringing fairness to people in that area. This amendment, in and of itself, I think, strengthens the bill in such a way.

Often we sit in committee time after time and we listen to those people; hopefully, members opposite also listen. We certainly have been listening on Bill 17 and others but, certainly, on Bill 27 as well. We've been listening to people bring forward their heartfelt reasons why they are either opposed to, or in favour of, certain bills. Pretty much everyone who came out to speak on Bill 27 was in favour of the bill but just felt that it needed a little bit of tweaking in terms of strengthening it, making it even better for them and making it more effective.

I think that's what we're trying to do here, as legislators in the Manitoba Legislature, trying—we represent the people and the people came out and spoke. This is an amendment that they are very much in favour of.

I think that members opposite—it's incumbent upon them to listen to Manitobans. If they do, Mr. Speaker, they would see that this is an amendment that's very worthwhile supporting. If, indeed, they did listen to the presentations at committee, they would know how the flooding has affected the families. It's not only just about crops and land loss and these types of issues, it's about families as well. I think it's, you know, because this type of thing affects, it affects the families, the children, and, you know, when crops are lost as a result of artificial flooding et cetera, this is something that people within that area, it affects everybody. Not only does it affect the people whose land is flooded, but it affects the entire community as a whole.

As we know, there's a ripple effect within communities and, obviously, you know, it affects the towns, the R.M.s and everybody within that region. So I am pleased that the government has finally come forward and brought forward this bill. It is a very important one, so we would support it. But I think, because this amendment does strengthen the bill even more, it does bring forward some very thoughtful dialogue that took place at the committee hearings as a result of presentations that were made there. You know, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) and I were there and listened to all the presenters. Certainly, this was an issue that came out loud and clear and needs to be dealt with.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage members opposite to support this amendment and I think with that I will leave it there. Thank you.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It's my pleasure to help out the farmers of the Assiniboine Valley as well by supporting the resolution, the amendment that's come forward from the Member for Russell. I know how hard he's worked in regard to trying to provide compensation for the farmers that have been affected by artificial flooding in the Shellmouth and Assiniboine River area, and The Shellmouth Dam and Other Water Control Works Management and Compensation Act (Water Resources Administration Act Amended) that's been brought forward by the government to deal with compensation in this area.

I've had the opportunity of dealing directly with a lot of the farmers myself in this particular area. It does come down into my constituency in Arthur-Virden as it moves east towards the community of Oak Lake and Griswold, through that area toward Brandon, and these amendments allow the government to purchase some land, purchase property that may be overly impacted from artificial flooding due to economic loss and, you know, the amendment 12.8(1) is: The government may, upon a written request of a person otherwise entitled to claim compensation under section 12.2 for property damage or economic loss resulting from artificial flooding of a person's land. Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say that, instead of paying compensation under this act for the damage or economic loss, the purchase of that land from the person in accordance with The Land Acquisition Act and lease it back to the person for a nominal fee.

Mr. Speaker, there are farmers in the region feel that, if the situation became unduly in the future that

there was a regular artificial flooding, or regular flooding of their land caused by artificial flooding, which is described in the act, but I'll put it in the record that this is flooding that's caused by a situation after the normal runoff, spring runoff would normally go by, that the land would normally dry up during normal spring moisture levels, runoffs, the water does get out of the banks of the Assiniboine River periodically in quite a few of the flat areas along the banks of the river. It is a very deep river across the valley. The Assiniboine Valley is very beautiful, very scenic, but it also has some of the best agricultural land in Manitoba in the bottom of it, and the landowners who own that land have been very unduly affected by the fact that water has been let go at certain times for a number of reasons in the Shellmouth area that artificially floods their land. That is pertaining to land that would be not able to be cropped after the normal period of time that they would do that, and after the normal spring runoff would normally dry up.

So I'm sure, as the Speaker is very much versed in areas of conservation and, having dealt with water management all of his life in a lot of northern Manitoba, he knows how important it is to be able for these farmers to be able to put their crop in. I would certainly appreciate the support of the government on this amendment and the minister of water services.

* (15:20)

This is a situation where, due to no—I guess you could say that this is beyond their control. They have no control over the ability to manage this particular dam and this water flow that would come through. Sometimes it's let go because of artificial flooding or flooding along the banks of the Shellmouth behind the dam. I was there a few years ago myself and had the opportunity to fish with my cousin, David Maguire, along the banks, and other friends that we were with at that time, fishing in the Shellmouth reservoir and Lake of the Prairies, and the normal campground areas that we were dealing with were under water.

I think that sometimes the management, although it was put in place as a water reserve to be released in a slow manner to be utilized by the persons downstream for irrigation and to protect the city of Brandon and other communities from flooding, the dual purpose to protect from flooding and to use the water as a slow release for irrigation purposes on down as far east as Portage la Prairie,

then are times when some of that water will be, you know, back on their lands, particularly in the late spring. Any crop that isn't in that area by the 1st of June because of the lowness of it is very susceptible to frost in the valley come the end of August, as well, and shortens up the season and certainly the growing period and the quality of the crop that the farmers are impacted by.

I commend the government for coming forward with the package that they have, the compensation package that they have, for these individuals. They have indicated that perhaps there'd be an opportunity if they felt that they had been flooded artificially in successive years, that the government could purchase some of that land and pick it up. The second part of this would provide that they could lease it back to those farmers, but, of course, then the farmer wouldn't be eligible for the same kind of compensation as if he owned it himself because, of course, at that point, it wouldn't be the impact of the farmer from a capital perspective, but it certainly would be still from a loss of crop. That's a concern, Mr. Speaker; the loss of crop in these circumstances is what the whole bill was all about.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that, as we've seen a number of times in the last several years, there has been artificial flooding. I know members of the committee, the Assiniboine flooded farmers, the Assiniboine Valley Producers, have been in to see the minister and see the government on this, and I respect the government hearing their views and dealing with their views on this. I appreciate that very much. On their behalf, I'd like to let her know that, the minister, but I think that this would be a very good amendment to the bill to help deal with future situations, as well.

One of the circumstances that I was very familiar with had water released from the dam, whether it's for, as I said, for enhancement of the fishing opportunities or now that it's being used more for tourism as well, then I think we need to be able to provide another alternative, provide another option for the farmers in this particular case. Some that may be so frustrated with it they say, well, you know, we're basically going to move out of that area. You can purchase the land from me and you can lease it back to the person, to the same person. I'm assuming you might be able to lease it back to someone else as well, but then there would not be the same responsibility for compensation in the second part of this, no compensation payable for purchased lands, Mr. Speaker.

So, with that, with those words, Mr. Speaker, I would request the members of the government to consider this amendment, request the minister to look at it as well. I know they're having discussions as we speak, and so, if the government could see their way clear to support this amendment, we would certainly support the rest of the bill as well. So thank you very much for those comments.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity of putting a couple of words on the record. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation. It's something that has been necessary for a long time, and I do appreciate the fact that it came forward.

I've had the personal experience of dealing with the landowners below the Shellmouth Dam on a number of occasions in a different life. I should tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it's very important that compensation be paid to these individuals, because really, it's a societal cost to not only my community of Brandon, but, certainly, communities upstream and downstream from the Shellmouth Dam.

I would also like to thank the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) to bring forward the amendment because quite frankly, the amendment's a positive amendment to a positive bill. It gives the government the opportunity, rather than just simply pay compensation to the landowners below the Shellmouth Dam, it does give them now an open opportunity to purchase the property.

There are some frustrations associated with flooding, springtime flooding, and if those frustrations are exacerbated, then certainly the individuals may well want to sell the land and get out of that particular frustration on a regular basis. All it does is give the government another option that makes it available to them. I don't think that the government nor the minister should really take any offence to this amendment. Quite honestly, they should, in fact, embrace the amendment and suggest that this is a good amendment to, as I said, a good piece of legislation.

Just for a little history, as I said, I have a lot of experience with the Shellmouth, particularly in my community of Brandon. We depend on the Shellmouth for water management. As you're well aware, this was a big plan. I congratulate people like Duff Roblin and Harry Enns for putting the whole floodway, whether it be the Winnipeg floodway, or whether it be the Portage Diversion or whether it be

the Asessippi, they had some vision. Here were individuals and a premier, Mr. Speaker, who had vision and put in a water management system that was going to assist not only the city of Winnipeg, but a number of other communities, of which my community is one of them. The Shellmouth Dam, and if members opposite have never been there, I think they should take the trip up there and just see the development on Lake Asessippi as well as the Shellmouth Dam and they'll also have a better understanding, I think, of the flood plain below the dam.

There were three purposes. The main purpose was water management, of which this development has proven invaluable in the past. There was also the need for potable water in areas downstream, which my community depends on. We draw our water from the Assiniboine River. The water comes from Lake Asessippi and its Shellmouth watershed. What happens is, during the summer months when it gets a little dry, you open up the gates of the Shellmouth Dam and it obviously allows water to come down the Assiniboine, of which my community draws the water from.

As a matter of fact, we're having a serious problem right now in Brandon because our own dam system in Brandon on the 3rd Street dam is, unfortunately, broken and we can't repair it until we get an opportunity to see exactly what the damage is. So what's happened now is they're letting more water out of Asessippi so that we do have the opportunity of drawing water on a regular basis. We have a community of some 40,000 people that depend on that river and that water and the water coming from the Shellmouth watershed in order to provide us our potable water.

So it's a very, very important piece of infrastructure that we have here in the province. The reason I mention that is because the people downstream have suffered quite extensively because of that. In the springtime when you've got too much water in the Shellmouth, the gates are open and all of the water comes—not all of, but a manageable amount of water is let loose from the Shellmouth and from Asessippi. The people at the base of that dam are affected, have been affected in the past years quite dramatically.

This legislation is very positive. What it does is it allows those people now to get fair and honest compensation. As I said earlier in my speech, this is societal. This means that the Province should be, and

is required to make compensation to those people. It's not an R.M. issue. It's not a city of Brandon issue. It's about the whole province of Manitoba. So putting this legislation in place is a step in the right direction, but the amendment, equally, is as good a step in the right direction. What it does is now allows the government—just gives them the opportunity—allows the government to purchase the property from the affected individuals, Mr. Speaker, rather than just simply paying compensation on an annual basis, whether two years or three years or five years down the road. I think it's a good amendment to allow the government to go ahead and pay for those improvements, if they will, whether they are compensation or whether they are a purchase.

*(15:30)

The Shellmouth-Asessippi development, as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, is something to be marvelled at. It was something that was put into place by a previous Conservative government, the government that certainly had vision and long-range views as to where Manitoba should be going and where they have been going which, unfortunately, in some cases, I cannot say the same thing for this particular government.

I don't believe they have vision; I don't believe they have the view of the future. We can get into some other issues with respect to finances right now. I don't believe that they're doing what's necessary for the province of Manitoba to be competitive in the future, compared to our neighbours, particularly to the west, but I won't get into that.

What I will talk to, specifically, are the Shellmouth opportunities that we have right now to right a wrong. Most of these people below the Shellmouth Dam have been wronged in the past and, quite frankly, deserve this piece of legislation to be put into place, so that they can be compensated fairly by Manitoba, not just simply the R.M.s and, as I say, the communities downstream.

Winnipeg, in fact, also takes advantage of this particular flood protection. If it wasn't for Shellmouth, in those years when the Red River is flooding to the point where the Red River Floodway could not take it—if the Shellmouth was not there, the Assiniboine would flood.

My community has, in fact, been subjected to floods, even with Shellmouth and Asessippi. We remember the years of high water where—we do have a diking system and the water was about two and a

half inches below the top of that dike. If it had not been for the water management capabilities of this infrastructure, my community would have lost millions, probably tens of millions of dollars' worth of assets if it hadn't have been for this.

So it's imperative that the government recognize just how important this piece of infrastructure is to all of Manitoba and, certainly, pay the people who are being unfairly impacted by it. The amendment is good; it's solid. It should be accepted by the government.

I don't see why the minister would not allow this type of flexibility within the legislation, so that she then has one more tool in her arsenal—if you will—with being fair, honest and open and allow herself the ability to either just simply pay compensation or, for that matter, to purchase the affected property.

Mr. Speaker, in saying that, I do thank the House for the opportunity to thank people of Shellmouth and the area for allowing their lands to be flooded and other lands downstream not to be flooded. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) to Bill 27.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

* (15:40)

Formal Vote

Mr. Derkach: Recorded vote, Mr. Speaker, please.

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

Order. The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach)

THAT the Bill be amended in Clause 4 by adding the following after proposed section 12.7:— to Bill 27.

Division

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

Yeas

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurichou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Nays

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 20, Nays 33.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

Bill 40—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we will now deal—order, please—we will now deal with amendments to Bill 40, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I move, seconded by the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou),

THAT Bill 40 be amended in Clause 5 by adding "unless the application is for a class 5L licence, in which case the additional charge does not apply" at the end of the proposed clause 10(2)(a).

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), seconded by the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie,

THAT Bill 40 be amended in Clause 5 by adding—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the bill itself we're not really opposed to, but these amendments we think are necessary to make the bill a better bill through—and to put it into law, and because it is a major change in the act itself, we thought it was important that we address it today. This first amendment to Bill 40 provides that those that are applying for their first driver's licences—the first stage of a graduated driver's licence are a class 5L—can offer and enhance driver's licence without having to pay for the additional charge.

The reason for that is pretty obvious. We have the biggest percentage of the first-time driver's licences being applied for by the young people. It'll be their first licence, Mr. Speaker, and those applying are now required to submit several identification documents. It would make sense that if they were to apply for an enhanced driver's licence, they could do it at the same time at no additional cost because not much of that same information is required for the enhanced driver's licence.

MPI suggests that an additional charge for the enhanced driver's licence would be about \$30, Mr. Speaker. This is a significant amount for high school students, who make up the majority of the people applying for their graduated licence. Keep in mind that these high school students, many of them are trying to save some money to buy a car or at least put some money into their vehicle. They're working part-time at one or two jobs, and sometimes two or three jobs. They also like to have a little bit of freedom, the opportunity not to ride Transit Tom, but the opportunity to drive their car.

Sometimes they're working in fast-food outlets at minimum wage, Mr. Speaker, and it's not always just right by the bus stop. Quite often, they're working extended hours, hours after school and even before school in some cases, before they attend classes at the university—a number of different jobs that they would be working at. I might say that the bus service doesn't always accommodate them. It gives these young people an opportunity to achieve that licence because a lot of the cost that goes into it is the research for the basis of the licence, and that is being done anyway in the graduated licence program.

* (15:50)

We're suggesting that a small investment—and I'm going to say a small investment. Thirty dollars is a lot of money to a young individual who is working part-time at minimum wage. It is a lot of money. However, in the scheme of MPI, I would suggest that that amount of money is not even brunch. It doesn't amount to a whole lot of money for these young people. I think if we're going to invest in anything in this province, rather than some of the advertising that we do, we could be investing in our youth.

First-time driver's licence applicants are typically paying for driver's ed, they're paying for their written test, they're paying for the road tests and all within a short period of time. As we know as adults, it's difficult to save money to buy some expensive—or any of the things that we would like to have. It takes a certain amount of time to accumulate that money, but when you're only able to work part time as you're doing your studies, it takes much, much longer. In that short period of time that they have all these other expenses, it just makes sense to offer them some incentive to look ahead and say, boy, if I could do that enhanced driver's licence, that's going to save me some money, that if I'm going to cross the border, I'm not going to need to go and spend \$120 for a passport.

Mr. Speaker, they may not have that \$30 investment at the beginning of their careers to buy the enhanced driver's licence while they're going through this process, much less the passport, so we would be restricting them. If these young students—and I'm going to say that some of them may be 18, 19, I'm not sure, by the time they go through the graduated process, at what time they would have their full licence. Some of these students and young people may well be having bursaries and incentives to attend American colleges. Being as we're only 75 miles from the border, the opportunity for them in many of the colleges in the States has been presented quite often. This here would be an incentive or a benefit to them as well.

We on this side of the House think this amendment is just a simple good policy for young people. We think that investing in our young people is one of the best investments that we will make in any of our lives. However, we would also like to note that this cause should be borne by the government. We should be investing in our young people, but the cost should be borne by the government, not by MPI. MPI is not the NDP's personal piggy bank.

If I was sitting in the minister's position, I certainly would be wanting to invest in our young people, and the \$30 is not a big investment when we can give these young people an opportunity at very, very little cost.

When we say that the driver's licence, enhanced driver's licence costs \$30, that is just a figure that's been estimated. We really don't know exactly what the true cost is. I might say that that true cost could be \$20. If that's the situation, then we should be able to invest without any deterrent whatsoever and the government, I think, would want to step forward and do that.

Mr. Speaker, there are some other reasons for this basic identification card that Manitoba and residents—they won't need to have a passport. It also gives them an opportunity that a lot of their information—it's a privacy thing on this card, so I think that's better than carrying a bunch of other identification with them whenever they do travel around the province.

Manitoba should be considering limited trials for this enhanced driver's licence. However, this would be one of the places that that trial would work well with the young people in our society. It would, I think, give a good indication that, whenever we'll be bringing this technology forward, the technology that I was used to when I got my driver's licence has changed considerably. I believe that the young people today are more in touch with technology than I was.

As I recall, my driver's licence cost \$2, and I had to drive to the hotel to pick up a box of beer for the elevator agent, deliver it back, and, if I could do that without breaking any of them bottles, I got my licence, and that's the way I drive today, actually. We didn't have to use the crank, though. I can honestly say that we did have a starter, and it was a six-volt battery that we used, not twelve-volt, in them days. But we still had a battery and a generator and a starter.

But, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the cost of the drivers will remain an option—or the enhanced driver's licence is an option to all of the drivers in the province; however, I think we need to encourage the uptake in this enhanced driver's licence, to give it an honest trial in the province, so to speak. I would suggest that the investment in our young people is the way to do that and to achieve what the goals of this enhanced driver's licence really is.

The eligibility requirements for the EDL, as I have said before, contained in the regulations. However, because it is considered a document that proves Canadian citizenship, it'll only be available to Canadian citizens. The driver's licence, the graduated driver's licence, you need to have all of that information presented at the time that you file.

So I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that that's the way that we should go with this. That's the reason we brought the amendment forward, and I would really appreciate the support of this House, from members opposite. I would appreciate the support from members opposite on this particular amendment, and I believe that the members opposite really do want to invest in our youth in this province, and so it gives me great pleasure to bring this amendment forward and put these—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for his amendment and for taking the time to provide me with this information ahead of time, as well as his interest in this act, his participation in this act and his knowledge of this act. I'm very pleased. It's very commendable when we, in this Legislature, work collaboratively on issues, and I do appreciate the fact that he's taken the time to do so.

With respect to the specific amendment that I know other members want to speak to, I also think it's an excellent suggestion. I'm suggesting that we won't support this amendment, not because we, in principle, are opposed to the initiative that the member is suggesting, as demonstrated, for example, by our attitude toward student fees, et cetera. It's very commendable that we encourage and we assist those that are going to—those that are coming forward in Manitoba.

At this point in time, I think that it would be most appropriate to not categorize one or another individuals as having a different fee arrangement on this bill for a couple of policy reasons. Firstly, that since this is a first-time initiative, and we may, in fact, be one of the leaders in North America on doing this, we want to be careful not to carve out too many exceptions at this point. Secondly, we want to be able to see what the—the fact that this is a voluntary licence on the enhanced side then, would present a choice to individuals that, as the member said, may as well get the more enhanced licence right off the bat, et cetera. But it may affect the pattern of

application and the pattern of usage, as well as the effect, the impact on cost, et cetera.

* (16:00)

So, having said that, Mr. Speaker, certainly, in principle, I have advised the corporation and they will look at—and I think it's a useful suggestion, of a benefit for young people. Of course, the member does appreciate and understand the fact that MPI itself, in the very nature of its establishment, is one of fairness to all Manitobans. I do not go as far back as the member when I first applied for a licence, but I did follow the legislation in the Legislature when the act first came into being.

I can tell the member that, as a teenager, it was costing me \$600 to just have personal liability insurance and no collision insurance prior to MPI; post-MPI, I got complete coverage for \$80 to \$120 as a youth. That was significant; in fact, it allowed me to drive. It allowed me to have the opportunity to drive. That was one of the benefits and remains one of the benefits of MPI in its fairness and its application to all Manitobans.

While the suggestion is valid and has been passed on to the corporation, at this time, as we are developing this particular proposal, it's not an ideal opportunity to amend the legislation to categorize a particular group of individuals. As commendable as the member's suggestion is at this time, it certainly will be considered in the future by the corporation.

With those few comments, I thank the member for his amendment and reluctantly indicate that we can't support this amendment at this time for the reasons stated.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity to speak in report stage on the proposed amendment to Bill 40, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

I am disappointed that the minister has decided not to support this amendment, because I believe that this government needs to have an opportunity to show the general public that they're offering service at cost. Instead, once again, this government is true to its tax-and-spend operation and is pegging \$30 over and above—now this is over and above your normal drivers' licencing renewal fee. We all are left wondering as to whether or not we are getting a service at cost, or is this just another under-the-table

tax grab by this government because our drivers' licencing fees have been going up?

Whether or not the \$30 is going to be charged or not charged, it has been suggested by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), who brought forward this amendment, that it should be what it really truly costs, and not to be using this as another opportunity for this government to extract more dollars from the motoring public of Manitoba.

I will say that I'm very much in support of Bill 40. As the original proponent in this Legislative Assembly for the graduated drivers' licencing system, this legislation does, indeed, enhance and bring some needed changes to that system which does seem to be working very, very well at this point in time.

The minister has stated that they are looking forward to changing the merit and demerit system and switching to a driver-safety-rating system. I know that the government wants to put their stamp on everything that is currently in legislation but, when things are working properly and well, I wonder whether the government needs to, in fact, tinker with the system.

If you want to—there will be another amendment coming forward from the honourable Member for Emerson. The public really does have a lot of good ideas. Once the opportunity has been given to the public to share those ideas, I think legislators and regulators will have that benefit.

I might just leave with the minister—the point, in fact, is that one needs to look at new arrivals to Manitoba, persons coming from other provinces and out of country, and be able to evaluate the individual's driving record from the other territories and be able to effectively provide to that new driver here in Manitoba a merit or demerit assessment.

Right now, persons arriving to Manitoba really do have to start earning their merits, even though in other jurisdictions they may have demonstrated, over years of trouble-free driving, significant merits in other jurisdictions.

Currently, we have a two-part driver's licence which is, indeed, cumbersome. When displayed in other jurisdictions, a grin or a chuckle is exhibited from those individuals who are asking for us to display our driver's licence from Manitoba; they're curious as to why we have yet to adopt the technology in a one-part driver's licence.

Speaking of the one-part, driver's licence system and enhanced driver's licence, it is, indeed, an excellent idea, one which we on this side of the House support, to be in compliance with the necessary information for cross-border travel into the United States.

I will say, also, the adoption of technology in allowing for the electronic monitoring of what personal information is on that enhanced driver's licence—but I want to ask government—even though the legislation is being passed, and we will expect it to be passed in the next few days, it was response of government that these enhanced driver's licences won't be available for more than a year. Yet the government of the United States is going to be requiring that this enhanced documentation be available for border crossing next summer.

So we won't even have this technology and available to motoring Manitobans until after the deadline of the United States federal government.

I may be mistaken. The minister is shaking his head—that's not true. However, by committee and by briefing, that was my understanding, that we will be effectively months behind the deadline of the United States unless that, perhaps, has been renegotiated or the time line for availability of the enhanced driver's licences has been changed.

Also, I do want to say that the younger driving population of Manitoba is, perhaps, less able to afford paying tax to the government. I would encourage the government to make this enhanced driver's licence available at cost. This is an opportunity for the government to see whether or not the charges already made for renewal of one's driver's licence have surplus funds. They could, perhaps, find that they could make available the enhanced driver's licence for no additional cost, other than what the cost of renewing one's driver's licence is at the present time.

*(16:10)

I also want to say that I do support the legislation for its multiple-year eligibility and not requiring everyone to drop by the MPI offices to renew our driver's licences each and every year. Outside the province, once again, you have that multiple-year driver's licence, and you are able to purchase it without having to return each and every year. I wondered why this government continued to do an annual renewal, other than, once again, as I stated at the outset of my address here this afternoon.

Potentially, this is an under-the-table tax grab and, perhaps, at this juncture in time, the government can evaluate and, indeed, provide to motoring Manitobans a service at cost and not raise additional dollars for revenues.

If the minister would at some time perhaps on the next amendment, clarify the implementation dates as perhaps they have changed from when I received the briefing on this. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a privilege to talk today about Bill 40. I do want to support the Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) in terms of his amendment to this legislation. It certainly looks like it would be a novel amendment and I think it's something the government should consider more seriously. It certainly doesn't appear the minister's too interested in this particular amendment, but I think they should have a sober second look at this particular amendment.

I guess, first of all, I should premise some of my comments to the fact that I have spent some time in the insurance business and, as a broker, we certainly dealt with the driver licencing system and we deal with the whole concept of vehicle registrations and, of course, vehicle insurance. I think most people in the insurance industry, the people that deal with the driver licences and probably most Manitobans too would say it is time for some changes in terms of the structure of the driver licencing program here in Manitoba.

We still have in Manitoba the two-piece driver licence system which really is quite archaic when you look around other provinces and other jurisdictions in terms of what they have for driver licences. I think I would certainly agree with most Manitobans that it's time for change in that regard. Also we know the personal information and privacy aspect is certainly an important issue to this particular process going forward. We recognize that we have to be very important and very vigilant in terms of how we look after the private information that we do have. Obviously, the drivers' licencing is an important component to that.

We would certainly encourage the government to move forward on the revamping of the driver licences themselves, getting into the one-piece system and having the ability now we have to go through it every year to renew our driver's licences, certainly something that I think can be changed and

is time for change. In viewing that, I think there's one issue that's probably holding the government back from going into the multi-year renewal process and that's probably the cost that Manitobans have to bear in terms of the actual licence fee it selves.

I think now, if you have all your merits in Manitoba, the basic fee, the lowest fee that you can be assessed for your driver's licence is \$35 annually. So, if the government looks to bring in a system where we renew every three years, well then, now, Mr. Speaker, you are looking at \$105 licence fee just for your licence. We know that's a very substantial cost to most Manitobans. If you look around at various jurisdictions across Canada, you will find that we are probably paying one of the highest rates for driver licence fees across the country.

If you have the opportunity to look at the vehicle registration fees in Manitoba, which were just hiked up by this government in this past budget, I think it was another \$10 tax grab there. We are probably assessed one of the highest vehicle registration fees in Manitoba. I think it's important to point out that this government collects over \$100 million each and every year in driver licence fees and vehicle registration fees. The cost to administer those particular programs is way, way below the \$100 million that they're collecting from Manitobans. Quite frankly, this is just another tax grab, as the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou) rightly pointed out. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't think Manitobans would be too upset about paying those kinds of fees in these registration fees if they knew that that \$100 million was actually going back into improving the road infrastructure here in Manitoba.

Quite frankly, we know the government has talked about putting more money into infrastructure in Manitoba, but really they haven't increased that to an extent where we're actually seeing significant improvement in our roads in Manitoba. I just had a call—in fact, I had one phone call, I received two letters, just within the last 12 hours on one particular piece of road in my constituency. I have brought it to the minister's attention for, well, three or four years now. There's a 13-kilometre stretch of road there that hasn't been paved. There's been a bridge built there back in the 1980s, but 13 kilometres of provincial road that hasn't been paved that people can barely get down the road to get from one place to the other.

The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) has a provincial park, a brand-new provincial park right

along and adjacent to that particular stretch of road. The minister refuses to put up a decent sign along that stretch of road to acknowledge he's got a brand new provincial park there. I'm not sure if the Minister of Conservation is embarrassed about his park or if the Minister of Conservation is so embarrassed with the minister of highways in that particular stretch of road, that's why he refuses to put up a decent sign to acknowledge that park. I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker.

But Manitobans are being taxed again here. We think that particular amount of money at over \$100 million a year annually should go directly into the infrastructure program and the roads in Manitoba.

We're also kind of curious to see what Bill 40 will do here in terms of the merit and demerit system here in Manitoba. Clearly, we've had the same program in place for some time. We look forward to having some kind of an improved or enhanced system brought forward. I guess the devil's in the detail here in terms of the regulations that the government may bring forward.

But, you know, in terms of being a broker and handling driver licences when they come in from other jurisdictions, sometimes motorists feel that they're being chastised almost for coming into Manitoba because we in Manitoba are not giving them full credit for their very good driver licence record that they may have had in other jurisdictions. So it's unfortunate we in Manitoba, at least up till this point in time, haven't recognized that from other jurisdictions. Hopefully, Bill 40 will move to remedy that.

Mr. Speaker, certainly, in terms of the driver's licence and the enhanced driver's licence that have been proposed for Manitoba, we look forward to that. Obviously, it's going to come at a cost to Manitobans, but, hopefully, it's something that will be available to Manitobans and actually the product, whatever it looks like in the end, is going to be acceptable for other jurisdictions so that we can actually travel from border to border.

I think the other thing that's important in this legislation is that we have some form of ID, identification, available to Manitobans that may not have driver's licences already. I'm looking at some of the seniors who may not want to drive but should have some other form of identification, or some of the younger people that maybe aren't eligible to drive due to time age, they probably should have some form of identification. I hope that this particular

legislation will address some of those aspects as well, Mr. Speaker.

So those are certainly the items that I wanted to discuss today, and, hopefully, the government will certainly reflect positively on the amendment put forth by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable Member for Emerson to Bill 40.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move on to the second amendment.

Mr. Graydon: I move the amendment

THAT Bill 40 be amended in Clause 50 by adding the following after Clause 50(1):

50(1.1) The following is added after subsection 33(1):

Regulation development

33(1.0.1) In developing regulations under clause (1)(h), the minister must provide opportunity for public consultation and must hold public hearings.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable—

Mr. Graydon: —seconded by—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Does the honourable member have a seconder?

Mr. Graydon: It's seconded by the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), seconded by the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck),

THAT Bill 40 be amended in Clause 50 by adding the following after Clause 50(1):

50(1.1) The following is added after subsection 33(1)—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Graydon: This amendment makes changes to that part of the bill that deals with a new driver rating system. With Bill 40, the NDP are taking the current merit and demerit system out of the legislation and putting it into regulation. This will create a new system called the driver's safety rating system. They're proposing to establish a new system of merits and demerits and financial penalties, but they provide no details of this new system in this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a system of merits and demerits and associated penalties and rewards. There is some truth to the fact that I can speak from experience as well on this system. I think it has worked fairly well in the past. There were short times in my life that I have had five merits and I really appreciated those times. However, they weren't there all of the time. But the system, I think, worked very well for everyone.

Mr Daryl Reid, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

However, now we have another dramatic change in the system, and for that reason, I thought it was important, as the critic, to bring forward an amendment. This amendment would require the minister to hold public consultations before developing a new driver safety rating system. I think that's important because the general public believes that it was working fine. They understood that system very well. They knew what the costs were associated with it and because it's been in place for so terribly long, it was well accepted. Perhaps if you had demerits, maybe the acceptance rate was a little bit less than it was if you had merits. However, people understood that.

Manitobans have been operating under that existing merit and demerit system, and a surcharge system, for a long time. Proper consultation is

something that is too often lacking from this government, and we've seen that in the past. Bill 40 is a big piece of legislation, and there are fundamental changes that are hidden by the creation of the enhanced driver's licences, merits and demerits that have nothing to do with the enhanced driver's licences, but they are part of this legislation. So, in order to deal with that, that was one of the main reasons for the amendment.

We believe that this amendment enhances the transparency and the accountability and only strengthens the legislation. I know that the members opposite are terribly concerned—concerned about the transparency, concerned about accountability. We hear that every day in this Legislature, and we, on this side, we agree with them. We really want to see transparency; we want to see accountability; and that's the purpose of bringing this amendment forward.

I know that I have a number of colleagues that would like to speak to this, so, just by putting those few words on the record, I would encourage the members opposite to support this wholeheartedly even though there might be something in it that they disagree with. I think overall this is something that they will agree with in the end. Thank you very much.

Mr. Faurshou: I was looking to the honourable minister, as I was hoping he'd rise and say the timetable as to which the minister is looking at implementation of this bill.

Now this particular amendment, I do believe, will be supported by government because it is in keeping with what has been reiterated, time and time again, that this government is at least saying that they are accountable and looked for public input and respect the general public's opinion. But I will say that it has been stated on numerous occasions and then we all have been disappointed.

I know, earlier, I put forward an amendment based upon the exact words that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) stated in regard to public consultation. The Minister of Finance stated unequivocally that he could not support the amendment. It was really baffling to me that the minister could not support his exact words that he put on the official record of this Legislative Assembly. I wondered why he would not want to have, written in law, exactly what he had stated were his intentions regarding the legislation. It makes one wonder as to whether or not the government has full

intention of saying one thing and doing something totally contrary to that. Because when you will not support an amendment that states exactly what you have stated, it leaves you definitely believing that the government will not be true to its word and is only saying it for the element of popularity and for political gain and, ultimately, they are not worthy of their own word.

The amendment that is proposed today is one that is, indeed, in keeping with what the government states it is, and that looking for public consultation and will make use of public hearings in which to gather further information and allow Manitobans a chance to put forward their good ideas and a chance for the government to effectively hear those good ideas and incorporate them into the proposed legislation. Because on the explanatory note that the government has stated that there will be a change to the system in which drivers are rated, banning the current merit and demerit system, and replacing it with a new driver's safety rating system, government has stated that they will be looking for public input. Hence, this amendment is very much in keeping with what the government has stated, and so I do believe the amendment will pass this afternoon if the government is truly honourable to their word.

Further to the changes that are going to be made with the existing legislation is going to be incorporated for the benefit of everyone, and I look to the government to make sure that this legislation is not only provided with royal assent, as we will be supporting it, but, also, too, to make short order in regard to the implementation and to minimize the time period till proclamation of the changes that the legislation proposes, because I believe that the time has come where Manitoba can finally catch up with the rest of the motoring world. No longer will we have to display a two-part driver's licence system to the brunt of a chuckle, a grin or a curious look as to why we in Manitoba are so far behind with technology. Thank you ever so much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (16:30)

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I'm pleased to make some comments in regard to the amendment proposed by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), the amendment that makes changes to the part of the bill that deals with the new drivers' safety rating system. What this bill is doing, is it's taking the current merit and demerit system out of the legislation and putting it in regulation.

When you do establish a new system of merits and demerits and financial penalties but provide no detail, I think that's a little bit problematic. I think that we always want to be up front, accountable and open about what is being in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Bill 40 is a big, big piece of legislation. Even the minister's own comments on this bill, it's very, very complicated and it's one of a new kind of legislation in the country. In this legislation, it appears that the creation of the enhanced driver's licence—the changes to that within the bill—the merits and demerits have nothing to do with the enhanced driver's licence. They're part of this whole, big, big bill, Mr. Speaker, so it's a little bit not as transparent as we would like to see.

I do want to also say that, when the enhanced driver's licence was first suggested in Manitoba, I had some concerns just in regard to privacy and protection of personal information issues which have been raised by other people in other provinces as well, primarily privacy commissioners in Ontario and B.C.

I did raise the question to the minister's department as to whether radio-frequency identification chips would be the enhanced technology used in the driver's licence. The answer was very—it came back in a way that wanted to mask that and didn't want to use the terminology. It was not very forthcoming.

I find that, when you hide something from the very beginning, you set yourself up for concerns for the public later. If you're up front with the public, educate the public as to what is in the enhanced driver's licence, then you'll get more acceptance in the long run.

I don't find in this legislation there's any mention of the technology. They do mention privacy issues but they don't mention—they don't really go into the technology and how it can be used.

When you're talking extensive changes to legislation and the way we do things, you would definitely want to have proper consultations. I think that the amendment requiring the minister to hold public consultations is a very good idea. I think that, in the public consultations, you would have opportunity to educate the public on issues around the enhanced driver's licence.

I think that that would be a fair way to go. It's accountable; it's open; it's transparent. I think that you get better buy-in from the public when you do that, rather than have the public find out about issues later that they weren't aware of. That creates some unease.

I know that these kinds of issues have been raised in other jurisdictions and, as I said, primarily by privacy commissioners that we do not have in this province, with the amendments to The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Bill 31.

I think what the member has proposed here is a legitimate amendment. Listening to the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou), it sounded to me as if this had been discussed and even previously brought forward by the government themselves—and the wording and such, they could support.

The minister said he would wrap up on this, so I'm thinking that, perhaps, there will be some support for this amendment. With those few words, I think I will allow my colleagues to also have a chance to speak.

Mr. Cullen: I just want to briefly talk about this particular amendment and in support of this particular amendment.

I think it's very important because we should be hearing what Manitobans have to say on this very important issue. You know, we had the opportunity—we've got 400-and-some people coming to talk to Bill 17. Hopefully, the government is listening to what those people have to say, and they will have the common sense to agree with what Manitobans are telling them. Hopefully, through this particular process, too, we can develop a better system of vehicle licencing and a better rating system than we currently have.

I hope, as we develop the driver licencing and the enhanced driver licencing system, that the government will actually have a made-in-Manitoba solution, because what we're dealing with now with the existing driver licencing, those existing driver licences are actually manufactured in Saskatchewan. I would think it's high time that we have—the Manitoba people will have the opportunity to bid on that process. I would assume we've got the technology to do that somewhere here in Manitoba, and I would hope that the government give some serious consideration to looking after Manitobans and Manitobans' best interests and have a look at that whole process when they do review the new

structure for driver licences. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity, and the members recognize I'm sort of wrapping up because we have other amendments we want to get to before the end of day, so I appreciate that.

First off, one of the real advantages of having MPI is not only do we have a head office here, but we have hundreds of millions of dollars in investments staying in Manitoba as a result of keeping and having MPI as a Crown corporation, so that in itself is significant.

With respect to the Member for Portage's comments about the time line, the time line that we're looking on is to have enhanced identification, hopefully, this year. Although the enhanced driver's licence per se will not be till next year, but enhanced identification for this year as an alternative to passport because of the fact and the complexity of this process. I do appreciate members supporting the passage of this bill and the expeditious movement of it.

With respect to the amendment per se, I have talked—and, again, want to thank the member for letting me know about the amendments in advance—I've had a discussion of opportunity to discuss it. The good news is that there's been public consultation. The PUB has actually almost essentially ordered MPI to do this, to review the merit/demerit system after a number of years. The PUB is an essential public process where individuals get a chance to appear and be represented, et cetera. Anyone can and has appeared, and they will be able to appear with regard to the merit/demerit system. There's no question that every time you change something, there's a possibility of difficulty, but insofar as the corporation is changing significantly regarding technology and it's moving forward with technology, this seems like an appropriate time under the direction, ultimately, of the PUB, who are the public body that make determinations with respect to rates, to look at the merit/demerit system under that auspices. It makes eminent sense. PUB's already asked for it, MPI and the public, so I can assure members opposite that there has and there will be public consultations in this regard.

With regard to the member's comment about the radio frequency chip, it is in the legislation. There will be a radio frequency chip with respect to the notification at the border station that's in line with

Homeland Security as mandated in the United States. But there is very limited information that will be accessed on the radio frequency chip related to a small strata of information data, relating to specific information only confined to that information on the radio data chip.

Finally, Mr. Speaker—actually I'd like to speak more at length, but I can advise that we're quite prepared to provide additional briefings and information to members on the evolution and development of this legislation. Ontario's now introduced legislation to do likewise on EDL.

With respect to the privacy issue, it has become a bit of an issue with respect to information held by the Government of Canada, information held by the various provinces, and I'm hoping that through this process—and we are working collaboratively with the federal government, border security, U.S., et cetera, to try to make this a process that, in fact, may be trend-setting. So, while there might be concerns that have been raised vis-à-vis the exchange of information, I'm hopeful that at the end of the day we can resolve that issue.

* (16:40)

Unfortunately, putting the specific amendments into the legislation, the merits and the intentions are positive. We support those. Putting it into the legislation does cause difficulties, Mr. Speaker, with respect to myriads of other legislation. From my legal standpoint, I indicate to the member that then becomes a legal issue in terms of what kind of consultations, how are the consultations conducted, et cetera. I've gone through enough difficulties and been through section 35 consultation processes and, whether they're adequate or not, to know that putting this into specific legislation can cause difficulty, although I have conversed with the corporation and there's no doubt that it's appropriate to the corporation, and it should be the customers and the corporation who make the decision vis-à-vis how the system should work. They will have that opportunity not only through the PUB process, but from other actions that the corporation will take. It is better that these actions or these determinations be made by corporation and the public rather than by us sitting in the Legislature and making that specific decision.

Having said that, I appreciate the amendment. The intention we agree with, and the intention will be undertaken. The specific wording we can't agree with, so, unfortunately, we will be forced to vote against the legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) to Bill 40.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

Bill 28—The Strengthening Local Schools Act (Public Schools Act Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Amendment. We will now deal with amendments to Bill 28.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson),

THAT Bill 28 be amended in Clause 2 by adding the following after the proposed subsection 41(1.5):

Low enrolment schools to receive additional funding

41(1.6) In determining the amount of operational support to be paid to a school division under subsection 173(1.1), the minister must take into account the additional funding requirements of schools in the division that have low enrolment, including funding to ensure

(a) student safety through—but not limited to—the providing of adequate adult supervision at all times that students are present, including over the lunch period;

(b) the maintenance of quality programming in classes where there are low student numbers,

including through the increased use of technology and additional professional development; and

(c) the recruitment and retention of sufficient numbers of qualified staff to ensure the maintenance of quality programming, including extra-curricular activities.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Springfield, seconded by the honourable Member for River East,

THAT Bill 28 be amended in Clause 2 by adding the following after proposed subsection 41(1.5)—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Schuler: I wish to speak to this motion.

We've heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) say at numerous times, whether it was in this House, whether it's been at committee, whether it's been out in the hallway or in the media, I've heard him say it all over the place that his government is prepared to listen to the public and to support amendments that would make legislation better and stronger.

At committee we've had the opportunity for a lot of individuals to come forward, and I'd like to thank all of those that did come forward. I'd like to say that we had great cross-representation from parents, economic development officers, school boards, representation from various councils and towns. The representation of those speaking, it was really fantastic the kinds of presenters we had.

What was interesting is it didn't take long for a pattern to start to develop that, although they were using different words and they might have been saying it differently, they were all basically saying the same thing, and that is that small schools, in themselves, are not the problem. It's the funding, or the lack of funding, that seems to be the problem when it comes to low-enrolment schools. Therefore, we had parents coming forward and saying they wanted to see proper funding so that their local community school could stay open. We heard some very compelling arguments why a school should stay open. That is, often the school and the local post office basically are the last bastions that keep a town a town. Once you lose those two, you lose your post office, you lose your school, that basically seems to signal the end of the town.

The fact that parents are coming forward and saying, listen, we would like to see our children walk to school, we'd like to see our children go to school in our local town, was a given. They made very good arguments, very compelling arguments and really appreciated the fact that some of them came out with their children. It was sort of like proof in the pudding. They're talking about real children and it was very nice to see. Again, I've sat on a lot of committees where opposing groups can get up and get fairly nasty and go at each other, and that was not the case at this committee. I thought it was very respectful and we certainly appreciated it.

What was interesting, we also had economic development officers come forward. The economic development officers were putting forward a case that for their town to keep the town viable it would be important to have this school open. Again, they all indicated that they understand that it costs money to keep these facilities open and there has to be appropriate funding.

It was actually one of the groups that came forward and said they just didn't feel that 10 to 20 students in a school with only one teacher was appropriate enough for safety issues. Until this point in time, we hadn't actually heard that issue being raised, and I thought that that was very appropriate, to start raising safety issues. We know that there are a lot of children who have different allergies, probably one of the worst of which is the peanut allergy. If there's a child that goes into distress and there's only one adult, that puts an awful lot of strain on that particular teacher.

So they were starting to talk about appropriate staffing levels. One of the parents brought up and it was actually one of the economic officers also brought up the point that there has to be appropriate program funding because you can't just have a small school be open and not provide any of the kind of programs that are available in other schools, that there shouldn't be a disadvantage. Again, these were comments that I know the minister took note of and certainly we took note of.

It was interesting to hear from the school boards. You have the parents and you have the community development officers and then you have, sort of, the management side of it. On the management side of it, they raised the issue of being able to recruit and retain professionals in a school where it might end up being a one-room school or two-room school. There too, they talked about the kind of support. One of the

economic development officers actually raised a point at committee and said, what if the community would do fundraising? They didn't specify what kind of fundraising. But what if they would do fundraising and try to pay for one of the teachers? Now, I don't know if the minister is comfortable with that, if that's quite where we want to see education going, but it was certainly an interesting idea. We also asked all of them, what would be appropriate uses of school, and those answers, of course, are all in *Hansard*.

Through it all, it was consistent that student safety, quality programming, and retention and recruitment of sufficient staff was very important. So we put those three in as amendments, would love to hear from the government and would appreciate support on making this amendment to Bill 28.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this amendment proposed by the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler). Quite frankly, this amendment is redundant as funding of schools program currently provides funding to school divisions to support small schools. Our government has invested an additional \$238 million into the K-to-12 public school system since we've been elected to office. It's a 31 percent increase in nine years, exceeding our promise to fund at the rate of economic growth, which is 23 percent in that same nine-year period. But we've funded 31 percent increase in that time.

* (16:50)

The support that we provide for small schools is quite significant in that, since 1999, the combination of the number of grants that are available to fund small schools, including declining enrolment grants, small schools grants and sparsity grants, has increased from \$3.2 million in 1999 to \$19 million as an allocated fund today.

Now that's a pretty significant increase, almost \$16 million, which I might point out, coincidentally, the \$16-million increase that we've invested in small schools since we've come into office is roughly the same amount that the opposition invested in the entire school system in the same time frame, and that was over 700 schools, let alone the small schools and the challenges that small schools face today. These grants ensure that school divisions facing declining enrolments can support small schools and schools with smaller than average enrolments, and that's why I would suggest that the motion is redundant.

I would also point out that the subsections that the member identified, the maintenance and quality programming—we've held a rural education forum to address the profound challenges that some communities have in rural areas as far as delivery of programs are concerned. Subsection (c), talking about recruitment and retention of staff—well, we've been increasing professional development funds for teachers and also we've been working with school divisions in support of human resource development plans for them to address issues of recruitment and support for teachers in small and rural areas. We've also supported multi-age, multi-grade learning environments and are recognized nationally as being leaders in this area.

So, Mr. Speaker, this particular amendment as proposed is redundant and we will not support this amendment.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I find it rather strange that the minister talks about it being redundant not to have enough money to make sure that schools have the services they need, whether small schools—well, this is quite important. We heard this at the committee stage and it should be a fundamental component of this bill. You know, the minister in bringing this forward should be accountable and make sure that the funding is there. What's been there in the past is not necessarily what's needed in the future given the changes in this bill, and I think that's very apparent from the presentations that we heard. I'm just disappointed that the minister doesn't think that ensuring the funding to make sure the schools work well is adequate. The minister, I think, is off-base. It's too bad and too sad.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) to Bill 28.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We'll now call the second amendment to Bill 28.

Mr. Schuler: I move, seconded by the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu),

THAT Bill 28 be amended by replacing Clause 6 with the following:

C.C.S.M. c. P260 amended

6 Subsection 8(2) of The Public Schools Finance Board Act is amended

(a) in clause (a), by adding, "particularly as they pertain to students in kindergarten to Grade 8" at the end; and

(b) by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) the additional funding requirements of schools with low enrolment, including funding to ensure the proper maintenance of school buildings;

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), seconded by the honourable Member for Morris,

THAT Bill 28 be amended by replacing Clause 6 with the following—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed in the minister. Clearly, he doesn't speak to his Premier (Mr. Doer). The Premier said that amendments would be entertained and anything that could be done to better legislation. We heard various groups come forward and I listed to them. I listened whether it was parent and parent committees, whether it was economic development officers, reeves, counsellors. We had school boards coming forward and, basically, they were proposing the previous amendment.

This second amendment also comes from the discussion that we heard. What was particularly interesting is one presenter came forward and said there seems to be a real dichotomy in the government's approach. They approached the government. They had a school with low enrolment,

thought that if they would renovate it a little bit, get it up to a certain standard, they could perhaps do other things with it. They went to the Public Schools Finance Board, and the Public Schools Finance Board said, nyet, no. They weren't going to fund this particular school. It was too old and did not fit their criteria.

So what we have is that, on the one arm of the minister, he is saying no to low-enrolment schools. Then we have the minister, the other arm coming out and saying, but it must stay open. What this amendment does is it makes it very clear. Because there is basically a ban on closing schools in Manitoba, what we need is to make sure that those schools are up to a standard, that they have the ability to ensure that there's proper maintenance on these buildings. They tend to be slightly older in age.

The minister also talks about that he wanted to bring day cares and maybe nurseries and law offices and accounting offices, seniors, community groups, and so on and so forth. The minister had rattled off all kinds of different—initially, the kinds of different programs he wanted to see in the schools. Well, the schools would still need some renovations, and the minister is on the one hand saying, absolutely, we want to see new and creative ideas in our schools. Let me see, he used that nouveau term, thinking outside of the box. I think that's what he stated. On the other hand, he is saying, however, we don't have any faith in these buildings. We will put no money into them. We will not even allow standard upgrades to take place.

We've had presenters come forward, and they talk about that some of these schools are getting on in years, are going to need a retrofit of some kind, and here we have the two sides of the minister. On the one side, we have the minister who plays politics and says yes to everybody, and then we have the other minister who has his department run around saying no to everybody. It really does leave confusion, because what is the plan of this government? Is it to keep low-enrolment schools open that might be moving on in years, and are they prepared to put up the money to keep them up to a certain standard, or are they going to cut back on that funding and basically condemn these schools to become even more of a burden on the local taxpayer, on the local ratepayer?

The minister really does owe the public some kind of an explanation. I've raised this at committee and he took the opportunity not to respond at that

time. In fact, I suspect what he will do on this one is make sure that the 35-member tyranny of the majority in this House will come down and reject this one.

What it does is it leaves a real unease. It leaves a real unease. *[interjection]* The Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) wants to put comments on the record and we encourage that. We think that would be a great thing. In fact, I remember when he was Minister of Education and he talked about amalgamation. He talked about the savings of amalgamation and how we all have to have amalgamation. He talked about we have to close school divisions. He talked about you save money by closing school divisions, and all of sudden we have the next minister coming up and saying, no, no, no, we're opposed to amalgamations, and, no, it's not just about money, contrary completely to what the Member for Brandon East went out and used to purport.

Again, it's this entire talking out of both sides of their mouth. I think Manitobans and communities that have low-enrolment schools would really like to see the government put their money where their mouth is. If they want these small schools to stay open, they need to be funded properly, because a lot of these schools need the upgrades, whether it's going to be with their HVAC system, whether it's going to be with plumbing. Is there proper air exchange in these schools? Do these schools have asbestos? Do they need asbestos removal, all those kinds of things.

He has to send a directive to the Public Schools Finance Board indicating to them that the government is now prepared to fund that, and that is going to be a—

* (17:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. According to the sessional order adopted by the House last Thursday, report stage on the following bill must be completed by 5 p.m.: Bill 28, The Strengthening Local Schools Act (Public Schools Act Amended).

The sessional order indicates that, at 5 p.m., the Speaker must interrupt the proceedings and, without seeing the clock, take all steps necessary to conclude report stage. If a motion for report stage was previously moved, the Speaker must put the question necessary to dispose of the motion without further debate or amendment. The Speaker must allow each motion for a report stage amendment that was

distributed before 5 p.m. to be moved and spoken to by the mover of the motion immediately after the motion has been moved and spoken to by the mover. The Speaker must put the question necessary to dispose of the motion without further debate or amendment.

Therefore, we will now deal with the report stage amendment to clause 6 of Bill 28 proposed by the honourable Member for Springfield. The honourable member will finish his comments and then we shall proceed to the vote.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recommend to this House that we pass this most timely motion.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable Member for Springfield to Bill 28.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division? On division.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, might I have leave of the House not to see the clock for a few moments?

Mr. Speaker: Is there will of the House for the Speaker to not see the clock? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm canvassing the House to see if we have leave for the Clerk's office to phone all of the remaining individuals on the list for the Agriculture Committee to phone them to advise them about the committee hearings for tomorrow. Do we have leave?

Mr. Speaker: Okay, for the information of the House, what the honourable House leader is asking, by leave, is the agreement before was the first 200. Now he's asking for the Clerk's office to phone all remaining members that are on the list. Okay, that's what he's asking. Is that agreed to? *[interjection]*

Order. For the information of the House, what the honourable Government House Leader is asking, by leave, is if there is agreement for the Clerk's office to phone all remaining names that are on the list to deal with Bill 17 in Ag Committee, because the agreement before was only 100 to 200, but now it's to phone all the names that are on the list.

Is there an agreement to that?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, there is agreement? So all over 200. So there is agreement? Okay, that's been agreed to.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the House. I want to thank all the Clerks and all of the staff who have done exemplary work. It's very much appreciated to make all of this work. It's very much appreciated.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if you, having said that, could call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Members' Statements	
Petitions		The Forks 20th Anniversary Mitchelson	2868
Power Line Development Cullen	2857	Dennis Nord Oswald	2869
Long-Term Care Facility—Morden Dyck	2857	Dr. Emöke Szathmáry Driedger	2869
Pharmacare Deductibles Mitchelson	2858	International Trail Days Braun	2870
Maguire	2859		
Cancer Treatment Drugs Driedger	2858	Bill 45 Gerrard	2870
Child-Care Centres Briese	2858		
Tabling of Reports		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Annual Report of the Manitoba Law Foundation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 Chomiak	2859	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Annual Report of the Provincial Court of Manitoba for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 Chomiak	2859	Debate on Report Stage Amendments	
		Bill 25—The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act Selinger	2871
Oral Questions		Report Stage Amendments	
Inland Port Facility McFadyen; Doer	2860	Bill 25—The Embalmers and Funeral Directors Amendment Act Gerrard	2872
Bill 17 McFadyen; Doer	2862	Selinger	2873
Eichler; Struthers	2864	Bill 27—The Shellmouth Dam and Other Water Control Works Management and Compensation Act (Water Resources Administration Act Amended) Derkach	2874
Workers Compensation Board Taillieu; Allan	2865	Melnick	2876
Pukatawagan Rail Bridge Rowat; Struthers	2866	Stefanson	2876
Rural Emergency Rooms Cullen; Oswald	2867	Maguire	2878
Hip and Knee Surgery Gerrard; Oswald	2867	Borotsik	2879
		Bill 40—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment, Highway Traffic Amendment and Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act Graydon	2881

Chomiak	2883	Bill 28–The Strengthening Local Schools Act	
Faurschou	2884	(Public Schools Act Amended)	
Cullen	2885	Schuler	2891
Taillieu	2888	Bjornson	2892
		Gerrard	2893

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>