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Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 12, 2008

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): First of all, Mr. Speaker, is there leave to allow for the private members' resolution for September 11, 2008, to be submitted intersessionally to the Clerks and to have it appear in the Notice Paper for Monday, September 8, 2008, notwithstanding rule 31(8)?

I'm sorry. I said rule 31(8); I meant 31(9).

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for the submission intersessionally to appear on the Notice Paper on September 8 despite sub-rule 31(9). Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Hawranik: With respect to private members' bills this morning, is there leave to proceed, first of all, to Bill 300 for second reading, then to Bill 232 for second reading and then, if there's time, to go to Bill 235 for second reading?

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for the House to deal with bills in order: 300 first, 232 second, and 235 if there's time. Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PRIVATE BILLSBill 300—The Royal Lake of the Woods Yacht
Club Incorporation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: I'm going to call Bill 300, The Royal Lake of the Woods Yacht Club Incorporation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

What is the will of the House? Is the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Selkirk?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? It's been denied. Any other speakers?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to express my support for this legislation brought forward by the MLA for Tuxedo.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 300.

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLSBill 232—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Anaphylaxis Policies)

Mr. Speaker: I'm going to call second reading on Bill 232, The Public Schools Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Inkster?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. It's been denied. Any speakers?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I would rise to support this bill which provides for improved approaches to address concerns related to anaphylaxis in schools. Clearly, there have been a number of issues in the past, as I think that we are all familiar with, particularly with peanut allergies. There have been, over the last probably 10 years in particular, some significant efforts to try to—*[interjection]*—232.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative I am quite familiar with because my wife worked in many schools, trying to improve the understanding and prepare people to be ready when there were emergencies, like anaphylaxis. Certainly, this is a good initiative. It builds upon work that has been done already by nurses and many others in the schools. They are to be congratulated for the work that they've done.

I look forward to this going to committee, so people will have a chance to present and we can hear

more in support or I suppose with the issues around this bill.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 232.

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

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 235—The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise this morning and move, seconded by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that Public Interest Disclosure Amendment Act, Bill 235, move to second reading.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie, seconded by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, that Bill 235, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Faurichou: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the House support for bringing forward private member's Bill 235, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act for debate this morning.

This act was introduced by me for first reading back on May 21. I believe it incorporates two very important items that were originally an oversight in the passage of the act back in 2006. The particular changes that the private member's bill brings forward are to amend the act to protect whistle-blowers from having civil proceedings brought against them. It also makes it an offence to threaten to bring civil proceedings against any whistle-blower.

* (10:10)

Also, the bill extends the act's protection to persons who provide information to a public service wrongdoing to a member of the Legislative Assembly, and, looking across the way, I believe that all members of this House are honourable individuals and have taken their oath of office very seriously. I believe that any and all legislation that we pass in the House is one that we, as members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, support, whether we do

initially, but once passed by the House it is incumbent upon us to support legislation that is the law of the Province of Manitoba.

This particular bill provides that if, in fact, there is known wrongdoing taking place within the civil service, and that civil servants feel it important to bring notice, then I believe that members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly should be one of those individuals that are able to receive the information and to carry it forward for the perpetrator of the wrongdoing, and the actions of the individual are dealt with.

Also, too, it has been found in other jurisdictions across Canada where, in fact, similar legislation is in place that, although individuals may in fact bring forward information, it is sometimes very, very difficult for the individuals to bring forward the information because even though their job may be protected and their position within the civil service guaranteed, that does not hold outside of their position with the civil service. There has been occasion where, in fact, threats of civil suit, as well as the proceedings, have been brought against the individual by persons that were engaged in the wrongdoing, even though court, to this point in time or to my knowledge, has never, in fact, supported civil action on those affectionately termed whistle-blowers.

It is important that all persons that see wrongdoing feel free without concern for not holding their position of employees, but also their individual well-being that civil lawsuit could, in fact, have significant implications on. So I brought forward this legislation for the House consideration, and I believe that all members of the Legislative Assembly can make a considered support of this legislation to see that it is passed in second reading and moves into committee. It is legislation, I will say, that is in place now in at least one other province and with the two notations that are contained within this bill, and it is also under consideration in all other jurisdictions that have whistle-blower legislation, including that of the federal government.

So if the House is supportive this morning and passes this bill on to committee, which I sincerely hope that there is that support, Mr. Speaker, then we will once again be a province in the forefront of this type of legislation. I do know that the government was very, very supportive, as was the opposition in the original passage of The Public Interest Disclosure

Act back in December 7 of 2006. In fact, I believe it had unanimous support of the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those short, few words in regard to Bill 235, I look to the government side of the House for support for this bill, which I believe is one that will regard all members of the Legislative Assembly with the position that the public has bestowed upon us that we can fulfil our duties and obligations as elected members of the Legislative Assembly in our effort to support not only the laws of Manitoba but also to the best interests of all Manitobans through the services provided by the civil service. Thank you.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I wish to respond to the member's speech on Bill 235, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act.

This bill protects whistle-blowers from having civil proceedings brought against them and makes it an offence to threaten to bring civil proceedings against a whistle-blower. The bill also extends the act's protection to persons who provide information relating to a public service wrongdoing to a member of the Legislative Assembly. I think, when I conclude my comments, I'll comment a bit about bringing these two amendments at the same time and what the potential risk is to doing that.

First of all, protecting whistle-blowers has been something that we have acted on since 2006 when we passed the comprehensive whistle-blower protection legislation in Manitoba, the first time in the history of this province that we brought this type of legislation into the Legislature and had it passed. It came into effect in '07.

Our act is about reprisal protection. Its purpose is to ensure that where an employee reasonably believes that a serious wrongdoing is taking place, or is about to take place, the employee can raise the concern, have the matter looked into and not fear for his or her job, or fear any other form of reprisal. Reprisal is broadly defined to include discipline, demotion, dismissal or any other measure that adversely affects the person's employment. Should a reprisal be taken against the employee, the employee is able to go to the Manitoba Labour Board, which is a quasi-judicial body to make a complaint and seek a remedy.

Our existing whistle-blower protection is one of the most comprehensive of its kind in the provincial sphere across the country. The legislation covers

public sector employees, including those in departments, Crown corporations, regional health authorities, statutory Child and Family Service agencies and authorities, and independent offices of the Legislative Assembly. Other public sector bodies have been brought under the legislation by regulation in October 2007, including public sector bodies or bodies that receive a substantial amount, which is at least 50 percent of their operating funding from the government of Manitoba. This includes universities, child-care centres, residential care facilities and family violence crisis shelters.

Some of the features of our whistle-blower act are that the act was designed to protect individuals who report wrongdoing in the public sector by giving them the opportunity to go to the Labour Board in the event the reprisal is taken against them for reporting the wrongdoing. I think this is a very important feature because you don't have to go to your immediate superior to seek redress, you can go to an independent body which will show no fear or favour for either employers or employees, but will rule on the merits of your complaint.

It builds on other statutes that require disclosures and protect those who disclose, such as The Child and Family Services Act, The Workplace Safety and Health Act, The Drinking Water Safety Act and The Protection for Persons in Care Act, and it does not replace or affect those obligations who report under those acts.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation provides protections for employees from reprisal. This means that the Labour Board can determine whether there has been a reprisal against an employee for making a disclosure under the act and grant remedies, including reinstatement. Anyone found to have taken a reprisal against an employer or found to have contravened other sections of the act, could face a fine of not more than \$10,000. It also protects whistle-blowers from making a disclosure about perceived wrongdoings.

* (10:20)

Wrongdoings include contraventions of federal or provincial legislation; acts or omissions that endanger public safety, public health or the environment; gross mismanagement, including gross mismanagement of public funds or assets; and knowingly directing or counselling a person to commit a wrongdoing. That's a very comprehensive set of coverages there.

It specifies the process a whistle-blower should follow to disclose wrongdoings. First, an employee would be able to make a disclosure to their immediate supervisor if they wished, to the designated officer, which there have been the designations occurred already, in the employee's public-sector organization, or to the Ombudsman, and this is another important feature of the legislation. By being able to go directly to the Ombudsman, again, there is access to an officer of the Legislature, a third-party organization that is completely impartial, and there's no risk of having anybody who employs you doing anything to cover anything up if you can go to the Ombudsman. So that is very strong protection.

The act also allows employees to get advice about the act from the designated officer or the Ombudsman, and it allows the designated officer and the Ombudsman to arrange for legal advice if that is necessary at any step along the way. It also requires the heads of bodies covered by the act to develop policy procedures for receiving and investigating disclosures and make the procedures widely available to staff.

A public disclosure could also be made if the matter is of an urgent nature and constitutes an imminent risk of substantial and specific danger to life, health, or safety if the employee has first made a disclosure to the appropriate law enforcement agency or, in the case of a health-related matter, to the Chief Medical Officer. So the individual who has a disclosure to make, if there's an imminent risk of substantial and specific danger to life, health, or safety, can immediately make a public disclosure after informing or disclosing to a law enforcement agency or the Chief Medical Officer.

It ensures employees have access to the Ombudsman who would have responsibilities to investigate complaints. The Ombudsman would be able to refer a matter to the Auditor General if the Ombudsman believes that a disclosure received would be more appropriately dealt with by that office. The Ombudsman would make an annual report to the Legislature on the operations of the office of the Ombudsman under the act.

Some of the strengths of this legislation that we've passed are: It builds on the natural jurisdiction of bodies that already exist with expertise in Manitoba, the Ombudsman, the Labour Board, and the Auditor General. It does not create new bodies at additional expense to the public to support the

implementation of the legislation. The process for the whistle-blower under the proposed Manitoba act is as simple and straightforward as possible, and information about it will be readily available to everyone.

The bill does not communicate a message that wrongdoing is rampant in the public service or that our regular checks and balances and activities are inadequate or nonexistent. As all honourable members know, we have an excellent public service across the public sector in Manitoba whose work is often, and in many cases, regularly exemplary, every single day.

We have our Financial Administration Act, Mr. Speaker, including our comptrollership framework, our General Manual of Administration requirements, our human resources policies, and many statutory requirements addressing particular program requirements as checks and balances in our activities, as well as the existing statutory mandates of officers of this Assembly. The act addresses those very rare and extremely serious wrongdoings that occur despite the checks and balances we already have in place.

Now, the Tories, how did they react to this legislation when they first said it? The Leader of the Opposition, or the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), dismissed the legislation by saying, you can't legislate good judgment in a government. However, by the time the session ended, the opposition changed their tune. They called the whistle-blower law useful and essential in their end-of-the-session press release, of which I have a copy for the Assembly if necessary, criticizing the Liberals for blocking its passage.

Mr. Speaker, these two amendments, I want to be specific about the concerns about them. First of all, we did not allow whistle-blowing to occur directly to an MLA. That would politicize it to the point that any impartial judgment on it would be very difficult to make. That's why we've allowed the person who has a concern to go to the Ombudsman—*[interjection]* Two minutes, thank you. By going to the Ombudsman, it ensures an impartial review without any partisan considerations factoring in to the kinds of statements that would be made about it.

By going to the MLAs, we would perhaps irreparably harm our civil servants by politicizing what's going on within the public service and have a number of allegations made that could damage the reputation of the public service, damage the

reputation of members of the public service, including the person doing the whistle-blowing, in such a way that the recovery from that could be extremely difficult even if that person or that organization was exonerated later on.

Now, you combine that with immunity from civil proceedings and what you're doing is you're giving a free cheque for destroying the public service in Manitoba, and members opposite, if that is their objective, to destroy the public service by giving a free pass to anybody to say anything they want with complete immunity to an MLA, this amendment will do that. If you want to destroy the public sector in Manitoba, pass these amendments. If you want a public service that operates impartially in the public interest, vote against these amendments because that will protect the integrity of the public service and the integrity of this Legislature.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Certainly interesting to hear the minister's passionate speech about protecting the civil service. The bottom line is, Mr. Speaker, the issues that the public service see on a daily basis and see what the government's doing on a daily basis, those sorts of issues should be brought forward so the public has a chance to see what the government is doing.

I think this particular amendment, this bill here, is very timely. Obviously, this government must have things to hide if they don't want the public service to come forward and speak with MLAs. Whether they're government MLAs or opposition MLAs, it doesn't matter, Mr. Speaker, but, quite frankly, this is all about being accountable to Manitobans. If this government really, really wants to be open and accountable, they will let people in the public service, or any other Manitobans, come to their MLAs and talk about issues that are relevant to them.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Actually, Madam Deputy Speaker, this particular bill could be renamed. This bill could be the Pat Jacobsen bill, if you like. The whole idea of the whistle-blower legislation was brought forward a couple of years ago because of damage control. We know this government reacts to times of crisis, and we know there's a lot of crisis management going on in government these days because there are so many fires going on. This government's busy, busy doing things to try to put those fires out—*[interjection]*—exactly what they're doing, as the Member for Ste.

Rose (Mr. Briese) points out. The government is trying to muzzle their own employees. If this government was true and honest with Manitobans, they would allow the public sector to come forward and discuss issues with MLAs.

That should be the role as opposition to work with the public sector to uncover unscrupulous activities that are going on within government. We have a huge, huge public sector under this particular government. Madam Deputy Speaker, these people are afraid to come forward and bring their issues forward to government. They're afraid to bring issues forward to the opposition MLAs.

We, as opposition MLAs, we get feedback from our communities. We get feedback from people in health care. We get feedback from people in education. They're willing to come forward one on one to talk about issues that are relevant to them, but these people are afraid for their jobs. They're afraid to speak out and tell people what is wrong within their jurisdictions.

All we're saying with this bill, let's amend the legislation so that there is protection for those people to come forward and speak out with their concerns. We have thousands and thousands of people that are working in public sector jobs in Manitoba, all over Manitoba. They have issues that they want to bring forward, but they are afraid for their jobs. They are afraid for their jobs. That's not right in our society.

We know what this government's doing in terms of wanting to be in full control of things. We've got the hog industry—hundreds of people coming forward to talk about the hog industry here in Manitoba. It's taken a crisis in the hog industry for these people to stand up and come to the table and talk about what's going on in their industry.

* (10:30)

We know when the industry, the representatives from the industry, the people that are elected to represent that industry come to the various ministers in this government, they want to come and talk about their industry in the past. This government wants to have control of exactly what they say and what they do. This government has muzzled those industries in the past. That's just one example of how this government controls what industries say and what they do.

If this government really wants to be open and honest, they would have a serious look at this bill, allow the people that are employed by this

government to come forward and talk about the things that are wrong here. Do the honourable thing; have a look at this legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Pat Jacobsen—if the minister remembers the story from two or three years ago, a very honourable person, employed by this government in a Crown corporation, who had issues with this government and the way things were being managed, brought forward issues, very specific issues on how management was done within her corporation—brought it forward to the government. What happened to Pat Jacobsen? She was fired. That is not open and accountable government.

If you want to talk about conspiracy, that should be brought forward. Pat Jacobsen was a very reputable manager; Pat Jacobsen landed on her feet in Vancouver. She is the chief executive officer for the Greater Vancouver Transit Authority, 5,000 people under her department, but this government here kicked her out of the province of Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's unconscionable that this government would not allow public service people, employed under their watch, to come forward to MLAs with their issues; that's all we're asking.

We've got a history here of this government bringing forward legislation that looks good, looks good to Manitobans. This bill, the whistle-blower bill that was brought forward a couple of years ago, was strictly damage control. Whistle-blower legislation—we're going to protect anybody that comes forward with whistle-blower issues. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If you really read their legislation, there's nothing in there to protect whistle-blowers, Madam Deputy Speaker. What the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) is trying to point out, this should be strengthened, especially within the civil service.

If this government wants to continue to carry on and cover up issues that they're dealing with, issues that should be brought forward to Manitobans, they can go ahead, but what is the secret? Why not bring forward ideas and issues? Let's have an open dialogue with it. It's a very noble idea.

So I certainly support the bill that's been brought forward by the Member for Portage la Prairie. I hope the government would have a sober second thought in this and really stand up and speak for all Manitobans and be accountable to Manitobans and

allow people in the public service to come forward with issues that are relevant to Manitobans. Thank you.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Madam Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to get up and put a few comments on the record. I don't think I'll be quite as passionate as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) who, I think, gave a particularly good summary and a passionate summary, defending our civil service here in Manitoba.

On this which we hope is going to be the last day of the Legislature sitting, at least for a few months, I think it's kind of interesting to note that, although the opposition has never had consistency as one of the hallmarks of their work, every day that goes by, they seem to be taking inconsistency to new heights.

Just to put everything in perspective, I think it's helpful to consider the history of the Progressive Conservative opposition as it relates to whistle-blower legislation. Of course, we heard from the Tories that they would be announcing whistle-blower legislation in the spring 2004 session, and, of course, they waved that around high and low saying, we're going to bring in legislation, we're going to introduce legislation, and, of course, that never happened. That promised bill never, never showed up.

When the government introduced the whistle-blower last spring, the Leader of the Opposition was quick to open his mouth and put some comments on the record. Indeed, he was quoted in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on May 9, 2006, saying, you can't legislate good judgment in a government. But as often happens—and I know there seem to be some divisions within the Conservative caucus which we see every day in this Legislature and at committee and other places—by the time the session ended, the Conservatives, if not their Leader, had changed their tune.

Indeed, it's quite interesting to note that the Conservatives issued a press release on June 14, 2006, titled "Liberals Carelessly Prevent Useful Legislation," and the press release was under the name of the former MLA for Ste. Rose, Glen Cummings, who expressed concern the Liberals had taken some steps which were going to result in Bill 34, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, not being passed at the end of the session in June. And, indeed, Mr. Cummings described the whistle-blower legislation as, quote, important legislation, end quote, and was very upset

that the Liberals had prevented this very useful piece of legislation from coming into force.

So, again, we have the sceptre of the Opposition Leader getting up one day and saying, well, this isn't a useful bill. Then we have Mr. Cummings issuing a press release saying, actually, this is a very useful bill and we should pass it, and now, a scant two years later, we have another bill suggesting that perhaps the Conservatives don't believe this legislation is useful. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it's just helpful to try and put on the record some of the difficulties I think the Conservatives are having at singing from the same song book.

Now, of course, in 2007, we brought forward whistle-blower protection legislation which came into effect in 2007, and really, as the Minister of Finance has mentioned, the act is really about protecting employees from reprisals. Its purpose, of course, is to ensure that when an employee reasonably believes that a serious wrongdoing is taking place, or is about to take place, that employee can come forward and can raise the concern to have the matter looked into and not fear for his or her job, or fear any other form of reprisal.

Now reprisal in the act is broadly defined to include discipline, demotion, dismissal or any other measure that affects the person's employment, and should any reprisal be taken against the employee, the employee then can go to the Manitoba Labour Board to make a complaint and seek a remedy.

As the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has pointed out, the Manitoba Labour Board is a quasi-judicial board and, actually, the Labour Board does very good work. There is an impartial chair; there is also one representative who would be inclined to understand the needs of employers; there'd be another member of that panel who'd be inclined to understand the purposes of employees. Indeed, I know many people that sit on the Manitoba Labour Board, including the chair, Bill Hamilton, who actually is a lawyer I had the pleasure to practise with at the law firm where I used to work. Bill is, frankly, a top-notch lawyer, respected by both employers and by labour as being a very fair and excellent person to conduct inquiries of this kind. So, indeed, any employee who is wronged or believes they've been wronged can go before the Manitoba Labour Board and bring their problem before the board and obtain a remedy.

Now, of course, what we didn't hear from the Member for Portage la Prairie is that our whistle-blower protection act is indeed one of the most comprehensive of its entire kind at the provincial level. It covers public-sector employees, including those in government departments, including those in Crown corporations, including those at regional health authorities, within statutory Child and Family Services agencies and authorities, and, also, independent officers of the Legislative Assembly. Of course, the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurchou) didn't point out that other public-sector bodies have been brought under the legislation by way of regulation in October 2007, and these additions included public-sector bodies or bodies that receive a substantial amount, at least half, of their operating funding from the Government of Manitoba, including universities, child-care centres, residential care facilities, and family-violence crisis shelters.

* (10:40)

Now this act was designed to protect individuals who report wrongdoing in the public sector. As I've said, it gives them the opportunity to go to the Labour Board in the event that reprisal is taken against them for reporting a wrongdoing.

Instead of simply standing on its own, Madam Deputy Speaker, this law really builds on other statutes that require disclosures, other acts which protect those who disclose sometimes confidential information, such as The Child and Family Services Act, The Workplace Safety and Health Act, The Drinking Water Safety Act and, indeed, The Protection for Persons in Care Act. It doesn't replace or affect, it really builds on those obligations to report under other acts.

Certainly it protects whistle-blowers from making any disclosure about perceived wrongdoings, which could include a whole number of different things an employee could be concerned about. That could include contraventions of federal or provincial legislation. It could be an act or an omission that endangers public safety, public health or the environment. It could be an allegation of gross mismanagement of public funds or assets. It also could include knowingly directing or counselling a person to commit a wrongdoing. So, indeed, the scope of the act, which I believe is why the Conservatives called it useful legislation, is quite broad.

It also, quite helpfully, specifies the process that a whistle-blower should follow in order to disclose those wrongdoings. It gives the employee some choices, which we think makes sense with a bill of this type. First of all, an employee is able to make a disclosure to their immediate supervisor or to the designated officer in an employee's public sector organization, but it gives a further choice. If an employee has a concern that doing that could result in a problem within their department for them, they have the ability to make their complaint to the Ombudsman. Indeed, the Ombudsman, of course, is an independent officer of the Legislature who can certainly step in and investigate any complaint that's brought forward by an employee.

It also allows employees to get advice about the act from the designated officer within the department or the Ombudsman and also allows the designated officer or the Ombudsman to arrange for legal advice for the employee at any point should that be necessary. It also requires the heads of bodies covered by the act to develop procedures to receive and investigate those disclosures and to make those procedures widely available to staff. And, as I believe members opposite know, which is why they called it important legislation, a public disclosure can be made in certain circumstances if the matter is of an urgent nature, if it constitutes an imminent risk of substantial and specific danger to life, health or safety as long as the employee has first made a disclosure to the appropriate law enforcement agency or, in the case of a health-related matter, to the Chief Medical Officer.

As we've indicated, of course employees have access to the Ombudsman, an independent office that certainly we respect and, I believe, my colleagues on the Conservative side would also respect that office. The Ombudsman has the right to refer a matter to the Auditor General if the Ombudsman believes the disclosure received would be more appropriately dealt by that office. The Ombudsman, of course, will make an annual report to the Legislature on the operation to the office of the Ombudsman under the act.

As I wrap up, Madam Deputy Speaker, certainly there are considerable strengths to the whistle-blower legislation, which was understood by the opposition no more than two years ago. It builds on the natural jurisdiction and expertise of bodies that already exist in Manitoba: the Labour Board, the Ombudsman and the Auditor General. It doesn't create new bodies or

create any additional expense to the public in order to support the legislation, and, most importantly, the process for the whistle-blower legislation is simple and straightforward as possible, and information about it is readily available to every Manitoban and certainly every Manitoban in the civil service.

So, with those comments, Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope I've been able to put on the record some reasons why this is good legislation, to highlight the fact that the Conservatives, as short as two years ago, believed it is good legislation, even if their leader didn't see that. This may be a continuing theme for the Conservative Party, but certainly we do have good legislation in Manitoba. I thank the Legislature for the time to comment on it. Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I'm pleased to speak on Bill 235, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act.

Now I'm on a very interesting internal committee in our caucus, called the Legislative Review Committee. A number of years ago one of our legislative interns did some research and found out that we're the only province in Canada where proposed bills and bills in clause-by-clause form come to a committee of caucus before they go to Cabinet and the full caucus.

It's very interesting as a legislative assistant to be part of this process. Some bills that we discussed in this session came to the committee months and months and months ago, and I actually remember the government's legislation on this from a previous session, 2006, because it seemed to me that the concept of whistle-blower can be summed up fairly succinctly by pointing out that civil servants must go through an internal process first if they feel that something is urgent and needs to be public.

They must talk to their supervisor or supervisors up the chain of command in the department first, and then, if they feel that their concerns are not being taken seriously or that there's some urgent or emergency reason why they need to go public, then they can do so after they've followed the existing protocols. If they do go public then there is protection because they can go to the Ombudsman. In fact, anyone can go to the Ombudsman, and they are protected by the Manitoba Labour Board. As the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) pointed out, we're the only province in Canada where civil servants are protected under whistle-blower legislation with the opportunity to go to the labour board so that their job

and career is not threatened. They have protection, just as any employee would.

You know, the member opposite in his bill, he wants to include members of the Legislative Assembly. Well, we already have freedom to say anything we want in this Chamber and we cannot be sued for anything that we say inside the Chamber. So if any individual wants to come to an MLA, and from time to time people do. Sometimes people get brown envelopes, usually in opposition but not in government, but one would, of course, keep their sources confidential because you wouldn't want somebody who was blowing the whistle through an MLA to lose their job, would you? So, of course, you would keep your source confidential. But we don't encourage civil servants to do this. We encourage civil servants to act professionally and to follow the protocols in terms of notifying a supervisor, and if they feel that they must go public, well, there's a process in place.

Bill 235 would protect whistle-blowers from having civil proceedings brought against them and make it an offence to threaten to bring civil proceedings against a whistle-blower, and it would also extend the act's protection to persons who provide information relating to a public service wrongdoing to a member of the Legislative Assembly. Well, in 2006, we passed comprehensive whistle-blower protection legislation and it came into effect in 2007. Our act is about reprisal protection. Its purpose is to ensure that where an employee reasonably believes that a serious wrongdoing is taking place, or is about to take place, the employee can raise the concern, have the matter looked into and not fear for his or her job, or fear any other form of reprisal. Reprisal is broadly defined to include discipline, demotion, dismissal or any other measure that adversely affects the person's employment. Should a reprisal be taken against the employee, the employee is able to go to the Manitoba Labour Board, as I mentioned, to make a complaint and seek a remedy.

Our existing whistle-blower protection act is one of the most comprehensive of its kind at the provincial level. This legislation covers public sector employees, including those in departments, Crown corporations, regional health authorities, statutory child and family service agencies and authorities and independent offices of the Legislative Assembly. Other public sector bodies have been brought under the legislation by regulation in October 2007, including public sector bodies or bodies that receive

a substantial amount, at least 50 percent of their operating funding from the government of Manitoba such as universities, child-care centres, residential care facilities and family violence crisis shelters.

Now, here are some of the features of our whistle-blower protection act. This act was designed to protect individuals who report wrongdoing in the public sector by giving them the opportunity to go to the Manitoba Labour Board in the event that reprisal is taken against them for reporting the wrongdoing. It builds on other statutes that require disclosure and protect those who disclose, such as The Child and Family Services Act, The Workplace Safety and Health Act, The Drinking Water Safety Act, and the Protection for Persons in Care Act. It does not replace or affect those obligations to report under other acts.

* (10:50)

This legislation provides protection to employees from reprisal. The legislation empowers the Manitoba Labour Board to determine whether there has been a reprisal against an employee for making a disclosure under the act and grant remedies, including reinstatement.

If the Labour Board feels that they were wrongly dismissed or fired, they can be reinstated in their job under an order by the Labour Board. Anyone found to have taken a reprisal against an employee or found to have contravened other sections of the act could also face a fine of not more than \$10,000.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, this act protects whistle-blowers for making a disclosure about perceived wrongdoings. Wrongdoing includes contraventions of federal or provincial legislation; acts or omissions that endanger public safety, public health or the environment; gross mismanagement, including gross mismanagement of public funds or assets; and knowingly directing or counselling a person to commit a wrongdoing.

It specifies the process that whistle-blowers should follow to disclose wrongdoings. An employee would be able to make a disclosure to their immediate supervisor, to the designated officer in the employee's public-sector organization or to the Ombudsman.

This was what I was referring to before—the process that needs to be followed. The act allows

employees to get advice about the act from a designated officer or the Ombudsman, and it allows the designated officer and the Ombudsman to arrange for legal advice at any point that is necessary.

It also requires the heads of bodies covered by the act to develop procedures for receiving and investigating disclosure and makes the procedures widely available to staff. I had called this a protocol.

A public disclosure could also be made if the matter is of an urgent nature and constitutes imminent risk of substantial and specific danger to life, health and safety if the employee has first made a disclosure to the appropriate law enforcement agency or, in the case of a health-related matter, to the Chief Medical Officer.

Once again, there are processes to follow, but someone could blow the whistle if they have first informed a law enforcement agency or the Chief Medical Officer.

Our legislation ensures employees have access to the Ombudsman who would have responsibilities to investigate complaints. The Ombudsman would be able to refer a matter to the Auditor General if the Ombudsman believes that a disclosure received would be more appropriately dealt with by that office. The Ombudsman would make an annual report to the Legislature on the operations of the office of the Ombudsman under the act.

Now, our act has many strengths. For example, it builds on the natural jurisdiction of bodies that already exist with expertise in Manitoba, namely the Ombudsman, the Labour Board and the Auditor General. It does not create new bodies at additional expense to the public to support the implementation of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the process of the whistle-blower under the proposed Manitoba act is as simple and straightforward as possible, and information about it will be readily available to everyone.

The bill does not communicate a message that wrongdoing is rampant in the public service, or that our regular checks and balances on activities are inadequate or non-existent. As all honourable members know, we have an excellent public service across the public sector in Manitoba, whose work is exemplary every day.

Now, the opposition implies that this is urgent and that it's needed and yet they put out a news release on April 8, 2004, saying that they were going to introduce legislation, which they never did. Instead, they have come with a resolution.

With those few remarks, I'll turn it over to one of my colleagues to continue the debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm actually surprised there isn't more contribution coming from members opposite, given the supposed urgency of this matter.

I think anyone looking at what's happened in terms of whistle-blower protection will realize why. That's because, quite frankly, we already have some of the most comprehensive whistle-blower protection in the country. It came into place in 2008.

We clearly understood the key elements of whistle-blower protection. We put in place, in fact, what we believe is one of the most comprehensive provincial acts of its kind. The key element here, Mr. Speaker, is to protect whistle-blowers from fear or any other form of reprisal. We recognize that.

I've had the opportunity, obviously, to be in government, to be in opposition. I remember when members opposite were in government. There were times in which people felt it was important, because they were being ignored by the government, to raise issues publicly, and we followed up in terms of that. But the act that we have in place lives up to something that was not available in the way of protection to members of the public when the members opposite were in government.

I know there's nothing like a convert, but, you know, their conversion here to the cause, whistle-blower protection, rings pretty hollow to me having spent 11 years, Mr. Speaker, in opposition, seeing the way they functioned as a government. You know, here we have a government that has moved in terms of protecting whistle-blowers in public-sector bodies generally, not just government; in fact, anywhere that there's a substantial amount of funding from the government of Manitoba. That includes universities, child-care centres, residential care facilities and family violence crisis shelters. So we've taken a broad view of the public sector.

What strikes me about it, though, is if you really want to look at what this debate is all about, it's our broad view, our broad protection, whereas, in this

particular case, the members opposite have really, I think, missed the point, you know, in terms of looking at protecting whistle-blowers from having civil proceedings brought against them. I mean we have to recognize here that there is importance of protecting whistle-blowers, but there is also importance in terms of civil law of ensuring that people aren't slandered, libelled, that there are other aspects in terms of people's actions as supposed whistle-blowers that aren't exempt from the normal protections that occur in terms of civil law.

I would point out, for example, that members of the Legislature outside of this Chamber can be sued, and have been sued, for slander or for libel. Yes, there's a broad protection of the right of members of the Legislature to speak on matters of public interest, but there's not immunity, there's not a protection. Members opposite or any member of this House steps outside of this Chamber and says something maybe intended as whistle-blowing—but you know, Mr. Speaker, if they step outside and they slander someone, if this is printed there's some form of libel. Would they expect that there should be a blanket protection, whether it be a government member or an opposition member? Well, of course not.

To my mind that's not the intent of protecting interests in terms of whistle-blowing. It is not the intent to protect people from potential lawsuits that can come from comments that are slanderous, libellous or any other matter that would put them at risk of a civil lawsuit. So why put that in? Why put that in? Do members opposite think it should be legitimate in this case to have a blanket protection? I mean that's what the bill does. Do they see that as putting forward something that protects the public interest by giving a blank cheque to somebody, anyone, to say anything that in this particular case, if it was considered as coming out of this act, would give them a blank exemption?

That turns whistle-blowing, Mr. Speaker, on its head. It misses the point. Whistle-blowing is not about the ability of anyone to say something that is libellous or slanders anyone, or in any other way would set up a situation where they could be liable for civil proceedings. It's there to make sure—and I stress again what the current legislation does to show that there's no fear of repercussions; that they not be subject to demotion if they're employees, firing if they're employees, any other kind of repercussion. It's not there. It is not there—and I want to stress this—to protect the rights of anyone to slander, to libel, to anything.

That's why we have civil proceedings. It's an important balance. Members of the Legislature, as I said, have to be very careful what they say. Are we—members opposite often see themselves as whistle-blowers. Do they think they should have a blanket ability to say something outside of this Chamber that's not true, that's slanderous, that's libellous? Of course not.

* (11:00)

Is there one member across the way that would suggest that? That's what civil proceedings are. Proceedings in regards to slander and libel are civil proceedings, the tort system in terms of protecting against liability. What we protect here is the right not be subject to repercussions. We have that.

But you know what? I think what they do and they've tied in with extending to *[inaudible]* information to members of the Legislative Assembly. We've established that this is not about politics; it's about the ability of individuals to serve the greater public good. That is why this, again, is very self-serving by members opposite, perhaps very narrowly focussed. But we have a system whereby people can be whistle-blowers and can be protected. This act, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, is—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have three minutes remaining.

The time being 11 a.m., we will now move on to resolutions and we will deal with Resolution 17, Rail Line Abandonment.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 17—Rail Line Abandonment

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I ask leave of the House to make a change to the resolution and it's in the WHEREAS, No. 8 WHEREAS—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The intent here is to change the word "retroactive" to "regressive". I ask leave of the House for the change in the wording.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for the eighth WHEREAS to change the word "retroactive" to "regressive"? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Cullen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the members of the House for that. I move, seconded by the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen),

WHEREAS railways have been a part of Manitoba's heritage and history since before the founding of our province; and

WHEREAS if not for the development of the inter-continental railway system, Manitoba would not exist as it does today; and

WHEREAS active railways also present a form of transportation that engenders less impact on the environment than other forms of land transportation; and

WHEREAS rail line abandonment removes vital transportation links and access important to rural Manitobans; and

WHEREAS if rail lines are abandoned there will be further increases in traffic on Manitoba's highways system; and

WHEREAS there is a need to support mass public transportation and efficient cargo shipment in our desire to become a more environmentally friendly province; and

WHEREAS the provincial government must lead by example in supporting this objective; and

WHEREAS rail line abandonment flies in the face of this objective and is a regressive step in the quest to increase rural access, to protect Manitoba's heritage, and to pursue environmentally friendly transportation policies.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider an end to the practice of rail line abandonment in the province of Manitoba, ensuring the continued viability of a mode of transportation that has been a part of our provincial heritage, enables access to rural Manitobans, and is more environmentally friendly than traditional highway transportation.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, seconded by the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen),

WHEREAS rail lines have been—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Cullen: I think this is a very important resolution that we're bringing forward. I certainly hope that the government will have a serious look at this resolution that we're bringing forward because it really is very important to all Manitobans. It has an impact on not just Manitobans but, in fact, all Canadians.

We're in a time here, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about greenhouse gas emissions. It's a very important piece of that entire puzzle that we're dealing with greenhouse gas emissions. Obviously, we know that transporting goods by rail line is very efficient. We recognize we're coming to a point in time where we're transporting a lot of our goods now on the highways. We recognize that, with the increased fuel prices and the whole idea of greenhouse gases, there's a lot of pollution going into the air. We think that certainly the rail lines can play a very important role in terms of reducing our greenhouse gases.

I think it's important to reflect a little bit on our heritage here in Manitoba. Clearly, the development of Manitoba and the rail lines and how we worked together in terms of rail lines and the development of the rail lines played a really integral role in how Manitoba was developed.

If you take the opportunity to look at a map, a provincial map, you will recognize that Manitoba towns develop along the rail lines that were originally established. In every community, they're situated 10 to 14 miles apart along those rail lines because the original rail lines were steam-powered. The locomotives were steam-powered. As a result of that, we had to situate these communities every so often so that the water was available to provide the energy for these locomotives to carry the goods.

If you look back in history, it was very important to these communities because it was their link to the rest of the world. The goods were all transported by rail line. People were transported by rail line. That commitment is still there. Manitobans recognize the important role that the railways play, and they still have that emotional tie to the rail lines because they are very significant in the development of these communities and very significant in the development of Manitoba. That's why people in the communities, especially I'll say the older generation, are very emotional when it comes to the point when the rail lines are actually being torn up.

If you take a look at the provincial map, we have a very significant rail line that ran from the

Saskatchewan border right over to Morris. The entire line was torn up in the last few years. So that particular line is missing. Also, we have two more lines that run east and west across our province, south of the main line, south of the CPR and CN main lines, that are in danger of being torn up.

I think it's important to recognize it's a three-year process that these rail lines go through to apply to abandon or discontinue the use of those rail lines. That's where the federal government comes into play. These companies, CN and CP, will apply to the government to discontinue the use of those particular lines. We have, as I said, the two lines in southern Manitoba which, in this case, now it's CPR, want to take sections out of the middle of those two lines. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is, once those sections of the line are removed, it's going to be virtually impossible to replace that. Once those sections are removed, those communities along that line become very remote and they've lost their ties.

That's the emotional debate that we're into when it comes to rail line abandonment. These people and these communities view this as another link or as another nail in the coffin—if you would—to their particular communities. So that's why it becomes a very emotional debate.

* (11:10)

It's maybe time for this government—they're certainly intent on moratoriums these days. We have a moratorium on school closures; we have a moratorium on hog development in certain regions of province, at least that's the proposal. Maybe the government and the minister responsible for transportation in our province should have a serious look at a moratorium on rail line abandonment because it's something that, once it's done, it's almost impossible to replace.

We recognize that, in Europe, some of the rail lines were discontinued. Some of them were torn up, but we're seeing a movement back to rail lines, because they recognize the importance that railway plays in their economy.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to recognize that we have tremendous potential in Manitoba, and part of that potential, I believe, relies on our transportation network. I believe rail lines can play a very important factor in that development of our economy.

We're talking about Winnipeg as an inland port; we're hoping that we're successful in establishing

Winnipeg as an inland port. We're certainly hoping that the Premier (Mr. Doer) will come to the table, get in the game, deal with our federal government and, hopefully, be successful in developing the inland port in Winnipeg.

As part of that inland port, obviously, the railways can play a very important role in that. If you talk to people in communities in rural Manitoba, they look at the railways as being part of their economic development strategy.

We look at ethanol, for instance; I'll just pick ethanol as one example. We know there's going to be a tremendous need for more ethanol or more fuels. Ethanol is derived, at this point in time at least, from the grain industry; it requires huge amounts of grain to make ethanol. It would just be more efficient to be able to transport those raw commodities into a site, process that grain into energy, and then you also have a component left over, the distillers' grain. Obviously, that feed can be used for cattle or for livestock or for the hog industry, and very efficient to move that material out on rail, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, once you develop the ethanol itself, it would be easy to put it on rail and then ship that ethanol into the areas that it's needed, so it could be blended with other gasoline.

Mr. Speaker, all we're asking here is to have the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) of Manitoba recognize that we have an issue here. We have the potential here for two more lines to be closed in southern Manitoba. If those lines are closed, we will have no rail lines south of the Trans-Canada Highway in southwestern Manitoba. It's very important to recognize that.

Mr. Speaker, we know we have some labour laws here that make it very difficult for short-line railways to do business in Manitoba. I just refer you to the Saskatchewan situation. There are eight short-line railways currently in business in Saskatchewan, which are very actively involved in moving commodities around the province.

There's no reason we can't be doing the same thing here in Manitoba, but there has to be a will from this government to get things done.

The government of Saskatchewan, within the last two weeks, just made an announcement. They've committed half a million dollars to enhance short-line rail lines in Saskatchewan. It's a matching grant, one to one, where they're going to offer dollars to maintain and enhance the rail lines in Saskatchewan.

We don't see that kind of initiative coming from this government here in Manitoba. There's talk—we've got correspondence from the minister where he talks about trying to enhance the situation in Manitoba, but it's talk, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased to hear for the first time that the opposition wants us to own railway lines. I'm really pleased to hear that because this government is not going—we're not in the business of owning railway lines. We believe that the private sector has an important role to play with regard to the railway lines and running railways is their business. But we have, on many occasions, worked with the railway companies and we've also, I can assure the member opposite, that we've also worked with his cousins in Ottawa to try to get them to address this situation because it's not just a province, or even two provinces. There are many provinces that are being hit with the fact that the two major railways have essentially abandoned their shorter lines, passed it on to other companies, and some of those companies have found out at a later date that those lines are not viable.

So, the process to be followed, which, indeed, may not be perfect and we're certainly willing to look at that—we held a—I don't want to call it a conference, but a summit with regard to trying to address what the ills are with regard to short-line railways. It was AMM, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Keystone Agricultural Producers came together with some federal officials, provincial officials, and tried to take a look at best practices and what can be accomplished, quite frankly, in a short period of time.

Now, granted, no community wants to see a mode of transportation lost from their communities, but since the Crow rate was abandoned—now, it's not the federal Conservatives that did that, obviously, it was a different government—but that particular move was very, very detrimental because you start to have grain elevators being shifted and moved. At one time, people could travel 30 miles to a grain elevator or less; now they're travelling hundreds of miles. When they see their rail lines abandoned, quite frankly, going to their communities, it's very disturbing for them.

Also, I have to agree with the members opposite where they point out that it puts additional stress on

our highway system because if the railways are not there, grain and other products still have to move and they have to move somehow to market and so people are using our roads to do that.

Now, the member opposite said all we're doing is talk. Well, maybe he's heard of the Hudson Bay rail line company. It's in northern Manitoba; it's north of No. 1 highway and I just want to make sure that the members opposite are aware. Also, I have to congratulate the Minister of Transportation, also the Prime Minister for investing in the rail line going to Hudson's Bay or to Churchill and that is considered a short-line railway.

So, we've put millions and millions and millions of dollars, approximately a \$60-million investment is going into that line from the federal government, the provincial government, and also OmniTRAX, the private corporation that runs the Hudson Bay rail line.

So, we are putting money into short-line railways, Mr. Speaker. We understand that it doesn't address all the lines in the province. We want to make sure that—but we're working with the industry. I've spoken and had the opportunity to speak to many, many people with regard to a serious—it's a serious problem, quite frankly, on what do you do when the rail lines in the private sector say, you know, we can't make any money as a result of our lines? You know, are you going to force us, Minister, to run these lines at a deficit where we're losing money and we can't make any money on these lines or do you just want to keep the line there and maybe someday someone will take it over?

And, of course, the other side of the coin is that if you grant abandonment and those processes take place, then the rail line, not only can they just abandon it, in most cases, they don't leave the line. They lift the line up. They sell the railway ties for landscaping and they also sell the steel, which is at such a high price right now in return for them, that the steel, quite frankly, being recycled or put into the market is more value to them than what they can make on the line.

* (11:20)

So, here you have both sides of this that—I understand and I know, being in government now for almost nine years—the challenges aren't always easy and some decisions aren't always easy, for example, dealing with Bill 17 where a government has to stand up to protect the water of our province. It's not an

easy decision, but it's a decision we've made as a government. Those kinds of tough decisions have to be made sometimes, and this is one as well.

We're trying to find a solution that's a win-win, where the communities still have access to good transportation modes that allow them to move their products and allow those communities to be serviced, but there is no silver bullet and magic solution to address this challenge of short-line railways.

I know there are other members here that want to speak, but I just want to essentially conclude by saying that, when we heard the members opposite—and that's why I hear their indignation with regard to, you've got to do everything possible, Minister, to help these communities and shortline railways.

What about Churchill? When the Canadian Wheat Board is at risk and all that wheat and the product that's going to Churchill to make that community viable, where are they? They want to sink the Canadian Wheat Board. The Wheat Board is responsible for providing product going to Churchill that will keep that short-line railway open. Where are they? They want to shut it off and they want to cut that produce from going through Churchill, Mr. Speaker, which is really regrettable because they are connected.

Not only that, they talk about Saskatchewan. Well, the majority of the wheat, whether it's durum or other product, going into Churchill comes from the Carrot River Valley in Saskatchewan. So here you've got the double whammo effect is that, if you hammer the Wheat Board and get rid of the Wheat Board, what do we have in place to ensure that that product will continue to go to Churchill instead of to the St. Lawrence Seaway, Mr. Speaker?

So it's nice to see members opposite supporting Thunder Bay and eastern Canada, but we're here to support Manitoba, northern Manitoba and Churchill as a viable community into the future. So there are a lot of issues. The reason I raise this—*[interjection]* Mr. Speaker, I hear members opposite saying we pay too much attention to northern Manitoba. Well, maybe they should have paid just a little bit of attention to northern Manitoba when they were the government of the day.

I will conclude, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of people that wish to make comments on this particular issue. I raise the issue that it's not an easy one and I regret if I'm repeating myself, but it's not an easy

challenge for government. We do not want to own the railway line or any railway line, for that matter, Mr. Speaker.

We feel the private sector has a role to play, but you have viable short-line railways, like the Hudson Bay rail line and also Keewatin rail line, which are working; we're there to help them. We have been there to help them with our partners in Ottawa, quite frankly. I raised this most recently with Minister Cannon and my colleagues across Canada and the challenges they have with regard to short-line railways.

I just want to wrap up, Mr. Speaker, by saying this government has shown leadership with regard to transportation, not only looking at the infrastructure side with regard to the unprecedented \$4-billion investment we have in transportation, but I can tell you this government has been open with regard to consultation.

We had the 2020 Vision consultation committee talking to communities, talking to other elected bodies, talking to the farming community, trying to come together with a united approach on what to do with this very, very difficult issue.

So, yes, we're there not only in talk but also with money. We have provided plenty of it, and yet, that's not the total answer. We look forward to working with our federal colleagues and other provincial governments to make short-line railways work where they're viable. Thank you.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to stand up and support this resolution brought forward.

It's interesting to listen to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux). We're not asking for them to own the railways; all we're asking this government is to do something. They've done absolutely nothing. They've watched the railways disappear across this province.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about Winnipeg being the transportation hub; I look at it like a wheel. They want Winnipeg to be the wheel. The centre of the wheel is called the hub but, in any wheel to have any strength at all, it needs to have spokes. If the spokes are missing, the wheel collapses.

OmniTRAX is a spoke in the wheel. CN, CP mainlines are another spoke. What we're doing here is we're losing our spokes in southwestern Manitoba.

It's just amazing how this government absolutely turns a blind eye to this. They bring in bills like Bill 17, which will decimate the hog industry, in turn force farmers to ship more grain, whether it's through the Canadian Wheat Board, or that one percent of barley that's marketed through the Wheat Board. But they're going to force them into shipping more grain, which will put more emphasis on truck transportation because the railways will be gone.

If this government had any foresight, any vision at all, they would look to other jurisdictions. Go down into Illinois and Iowa, where the ethanol business is flourishing, and what's happened with them, if you talk to the people that are down there, they have lost their railways and now they're having difficulty shipping both the ethanol and the distillers' dried grain, the by-products out of this, because they don't have the rail infrastructure to ship it. They've put a huge strain on the trucking industry. By the way, Mr. Speaker, ethanol has to be shipped in airtight containers and trucking is a very inefficient way to do that, as compared to tanker cars for shipping of the ethanol. Just look at Minnedosa. They're lucky they still have a rail line there, it makes the plant that much more viable.

What we're asking this government is not to own the railways, but to at least put pressure on the federal government to stop abandonment. My constituency of Carman has been very hard-hit by abandonments. We've lost our line between Morris and Mariapolis which used to go to Elgin, which was lifted even before. As of this spring, they've lifted the last of the rails just west of Morris, from Morris to Jordan. We have businesses along there who have invested a great deal of money in elevators. They moved an elevator out of the valley at La Rivière and up to Somerset, invested a great deal of money in, only to have that rail line pulled out and now truck-dependent. That rail line used to parallel Highway 23. Mr. Speaker, Highway 23 is continuously faced with restrictions on trucking. They have bridges on that highway that cannot take the truck traffic. Now you have a situation where they can't even ship grain out of there for a great deal of the year.

The other concern that we really have is the CP line from Rathwell to Nesbitt in my constituency. This line is a CP line. This used to be a secondary main line. A number of years ago they had a railcar accident on the main line and they used this particular line. It goes from Winnipeg right through to Souris and then connects back up to the main line. They used this line as an alternate route. If they take

out this middle section of this line, they're going to lose the entire capability of using it as an alternative route. Never mind the fact that we have communities all along there who will not have a rail line.

If we're going to have economic development within the province, we need to have that rail line access in order to encourage manufacturing and further processing in our prairie towns. When you lose your rail line, you're losing a tremendous asset that could be used for economic development. We've seen it. We see it down south happening. We've heard about it in Europe. I've even heard of them rebuilding lines now in Europe because they abandoned them, took them out years ago, and now they're replacing them.

Why not look forward to what we could potentially do in the future? We're not asking the Province to own the rail lines. What we're asking them is to work with the federal government so that these lines do not be abandoned. We could let them sit for five years, the lines. The Morris to Mariapolis line could have sat very well, and it doesn't deteriorate. If it was sitting until we have the ability for private investment to come in and buy it and to run it.

We have other issues on these rail lines in terms of car access, getting cars onto the secondary lines from CN and CP. We see it happening in other provinces. As the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) described, in Saskatchewan, they are taking a progressive step towards this. They are actually helping companies set up their lines and get working on there. The province of Saskatchewan is not running these lines.

* (11:30)

We certainly don't want the Province of Manitoba to run these lines. We know how badly they run Crown corporations now. It's the last thing we would ever want them is to run another Crown corporation. Well, they check their shares and see how they do when they're sold, but interesting that they would mention that because the other night in committee one of the NDP backbenchers spoke of his support for Bill 17 because he says this is a vendetta against the PCs for selling MTS. Try and explain that to the hog farmers across Manitoba that you're supporting Bill 17 as a vendetta against the Conservatives.

There is so much potential that we could be doing in rural Manitoba, and yet this government is

not interested. We know that this is a difficult portfolio. You're dealing with federal government, you're dealing with CN, CP, but to turn your back on it and not at least try to get something going is shameful on the part of this government. We have so much potential in southern Manitoba, and we know that, as we face along No. 2 highway where I was talking about the CP has now applied to abandon a section of that railway, we have severe restrictions on trucks. The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) is well aware of that because we have a meeting set up there. What we're looking for is for access to No. 1 highway for truck traffic, and right now, in the spring season in particular, when restrictions are on, we're facing trucks hauling potatoes out of Treherne and Notre Dame, particularly out of the Treherne-Holland area, having to go around via Brandon or around No. 1 highway just to haul potatoes to Portage to the two potato plants. We have a lot of potential there to increase potato acreage, and yet we're forcing trucks to go hundreds of kilometres out of the way in order to get their product to market.

They say they have a commitment to the highways and yet, by letting these rail lines be abandoned, the infrastructure is not in place there to allow communities to have economic development. It's very easy. What we're suggesting is get on board with the federal government and work to keeping these rail lines from being abandoned even if CN, CP want to give them up. Let the municipalities run them, let that private enterprise in. The labour laws are very restrictive for the private companies to run. Try and work with communities.

Just to sum up, it's time the NDP clearly laid out its position, whether they do have a position. That would be interesting to hear what their position is in terms of preservation of rail lines, and we know that the rail lines are a key component of our transportation network, so let's see what they actually put out in terms of plans for that. I would strongly urge the provincial government to consider an end to the practice of rail line abandonment in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Very pleased to put a few words on record regarding this issue, Mr. Speaker.

I happen to be a proud member of the Hudson Bay Route Association. I have been for many, many

years. My wife is a member as well, and I know the sterling work that people like Arnold Grambo are doing. Arnold is from Brandon, I believe, and I know Sue Lambert quite well, who is a great supporter of the northern railway, and Eddie Johanson, both of them are from The Pas. Eddie Johanson always ends his meeting with the battle cry, Viva el Norte, which, I guess, is Spanish and my Spanish is very poor, Mr. Speaker. I presume it means long live the north, which is also, of course, our cry. It's also the direction in terms of north where the Golden Boy points.

July 1, 1996, was indeed not a good day for the vision that was first, I believe, elaborated by Sir John A. Macdonald, trying to connect various portions of this very diverse country together with a rail line. It was a bad day because the transportation bill that was passed July 1, 1996, basically meant that the federal government walked away from transportation in many, many ways, and it affected not only rail lines but also airports and ports and other aspects of transportation.

Of course, it led the way for closing down railways. Certainly, the one that's important to most of us here and certainly to people in northern Manitoba is Hudson Bay Railway, because after that it was possible to privatize a line, to sell a line, or to sell it for scrap. Now there were some mechanisms in place, that's true, some transfer mechanisms which allowed for the province to buy the railway line or, failing that, after a certain waiting period, perhaps a municipality or a band or a consortium or an individual or company could buy the line. But, you know, how do you buy a multimillion-dollar railway line unless you have big bucks?

Well, some people did try, and I remember we tried very hard in 1996. I remember that summer because I was Transportation critic and I tried very hard to get a sense of the future of the Hudson Bay Railway, and together with the-then Transportation Minister, Darren Praznik, I attended a meeting with Paul Tellier, who was, of course, one of Brian Mulroney's protégés. I tried to impress Mr. Tellier with the point that we were throwing northwestern Manitoba and even central Manitoba in the north into turmoil, at risk, because if we closed the Hudson Bay route and the Sherridon route, we really had closed down a major developmental tool for northern Manitoba.

I thought I made a very good argument and then he basically got back to me with a one-sentence line,

or something to the effect and I'm paraphrasing here: Mr. Jennissen, I sympathize with you but I'm not in the business of worrying about your voters. I am responsible for the shareholders, most of who are in New York. And I suddenly realized how far we have come from the days of Sir John A. Macdonald, so instead of caring about certain isolated parts of the country, we had basically thrown those portions of the country at the mercy of the marketplace and said, well, they've got to swim or float, because at that point we were spending, I think, it was a million dollars a year subsidizing the Hudson Bay Railway and the other spur, which is the Sherridon Line, which I personally am more involved with because it's in my constituency.

Now, we did try very hard to keep the line in Canadian hands and in Manitoba hands. There was a group and, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Speaker, I believe was called Gateway North led by people like Doug Webber, the former mayor of Churchill. I remember being part of a delegation along with the honourable Member for Rupertsland. We went to Regina and we tried to broker a deal to see if we could get both governments, the Saskatchewan government and the Manitoba government, involved with this group so that we could salvage the lines and make sure that farmers could get their grain to market and, perhaps, with the total support of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, hoping we would get either some money from them or some subsidies or else failing that, that they would buy the line outright. We thought that two provinces involved in supporting their farmers, supporting northern development would be a wonderful idea.

Well, I hate to say it, Mr. Speaker, but it fell through. Manitoba Tories, under Mr. Filmon, were definitely not interested, and the Saskatchewan NDP were not as—I would say were lukewarm and they wouldn't do it alone. So that was unfortunate and that fell through.

Now I could talk about the whole railway line, Mr. Speaker. I'd rather talk about a little portion of it which is called the Sherridon Line which runs from The Pas, Wanless, Cranberry Portage, Sherridon, Cole Lake, Pukatawagan and then Lynn Lake, and you have to ask yourselves a question: Why was this line built? We know why the larger line was built, the Bay line to Churchill, but this line was built basically to service the mines at Lynn Lake; to bring the ore out of Lynn Lake to the smelter at Flin Flon. It was not built for the benefit of Aboriginal people. Although some people may think that, it was not, and

that's unfortunate. It was built to service Lynn Lake and later on Leaf Rapids, the Rattan Mine, where low-grade copper ore concentrate was first driven from the Rattan Mine in Leaf Rapids some distance to the main road and then another 101 kilometres to Lynn Lake, put on the railhead there, and it would end up in Flin Flon.

It was purely incidental that the Aboriginal people in Pukatawagan, Mathias Colomb people, could use that rail line, and that's part of the colonial mentality that I think yesterday we tried to put to rest with the apology from the Prime Minister. It was part of that same legacy, because in the early 1950s, and I could be wrong but I believe it was 1953, the people of Mathias Colomb, Pukatawagan, were promised jobs, connectivity to the rest of the world, development, a lot of things were going to come because of this rail line. They didn't materialize, didn't work out at all that way. In fact, that line had to be the most anachronistic, backward-looking, ill-serviced line I think probably in the entire world.

I remember talking to Joan Edwards from Flin Flon, who told me when she came north on that line, in the late '40s, I believe it was, and there was no road from Cranberry Portage to Flin Flon then, she was travelling that same rail line to Flin Flon, the Sherridon Line, and there were signs in the railway coaches that said, No Shooting At Buffalo While Train Is In Motion. That's what it said, so those same railway coaches actually came from the western United States, so I presume their vintage must have been the 1860s, 1870s.

* (11:40)

Now, that improved a little bit on. We actually got 1913 cars. The passenger cars used for Pukatawagan were 1913 cars: poor service, couldn't handle the overflow at Christmas. People were stuck in The Pas. They tried to get back to Pukatawagan, couldn't because there were too many of them. Sometimes they were put in baggage cars. Elders felt that they were treated with irreverence and no respect very often. Although individual people working on the line were good people, the whole system wasn't a very functional system. There were endless delays and slow orders. I think at one time they told me how many dozens or hundreds of slow orders there were on that line, and it's not a long line. It was often the case that you would go 15 miles an hour or 10 miles an hour for a long time. So, what would have taken a European train less than an hour to get from The Pas to Pukatawagan would take 12

hours, 15 hours, 20 hours. There were breakdowns, all kinds of problems on the line, would be shut down—as it is today, by the way. A bridge had burned because of the Sherridon fire and the people of Pukatawagan are stranded once again. Which, and I'll make the plea again, I've made it for years: we need an all-weather road to Pukatawagan. At any rate, it's interesting to see that this state of affairs prevailed.

Also, the maintenance on those cars to Pukatawagan was just unbelievable. I've seen orders from CN—CN owned the railway at that time—where basically they were saying in those orders—that shouldn't have leaked out, but I got a hold of them—run those cars till they basically fall apart. Well, that's not a safe way to run a railway. The caboose was unsafe. In order to get something to eat, you had to walk to the back of the train; you had to hop over sort of an opening which was about a yard long. It was very dangerous. In fact, somebody got killed there once. You hopped over that opening, you got in and the guy might fry you a hamburger on an ancient stove. That was the service we got to Pukatawagan. That service, in fact, later on, was terminated after that death.

I tried to catch the train—I've been on the train several times, but I tried to catch it once in Cranberry Portage to go to The Pas to join some of my friends from Pukatawagan. I had to phone New Brunswick to find out where the train was, and they didn't know where the train was. They couldn't give me an estimation. Would it be one hour or two hours? They said it's somewhere between Lynn Lake and Cranberry. I said, well, is it between Lynn Lake and Sherridon? Well, they didn't know. Must be the only train in the world where you wouldn't know it would arrive within the next hour or the next 12 hours, but that's the way it was. I can't help but think, because it was servicing a remote reserve, it was servicing Aboriginal people, I can't help but think it was a colonial attitude or the penny-pinching attitude in Ottawa—whatever—that allowed for this incredibly bad service that would not be tolerated in any other part of the world.

Now, talking about that attitude, I was very happy that yesterday I joined some of my colleagues and friends at one of the hotels downtown, and, at a huge screen we were watching—actually, it was the Radisson. We were watching the Prime Minister offer his apology to the survivors of the residential schools. I thought it was very tastefully done. I was very impressed not only by what the Prime Minister said, but with what other leaders of political parties

said, and with what the Aboriginal leaders said. I think a lot of people were in tears. It was a memorable day because we recognized some of the evils of the past, and, that dark page of history, we're not only turning it over, we now have to, now that we've admitted it and accepted it and apologized, we have to work toward healing. But part of that legacy, I think, is that same legacy which allows for substandard service to my people; the people that I represent and I'm proud to represent, in Pukatawagan and Flin Flon and elsewhere.

I think I could talk endlessly about the Sherridon spur of the rail line, but it's the Churchill line—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I'm really appreciative of the opportunity to rise this morning in regards to the resolution before us pertaining to rail line abandonment. I thank my honourable colleague from Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) for bringing forward a vitally important resolution from my perspective.

If members opposite recall, I have, on numerous occasions, spoken on the benefit of rail transportation of goods and services, and the cost-effective and efficient mode of transporting those goods and services. I can't quite recall the number of rail cars, but there was a formula: the amount of friction of a tractor-trailer unit versus the number of rail cars. Although I think it high, the number that comes to mind is that the amount of contact with the roadway that a truck, Super B configuration, has, is equivalent to about 200 rail cars.

We know that the point of contact of a steel wheel with a steel rail is very, very small. That is why there is a significant cost-effective mode of transportation that is provided via rail lines. Now, we have had a lot of discussion regarding rail lines here in the province of Manitoba, and in fact, the discussions pertaining to rail lines here in the province of Manitoba are extremely significant. So much so that the deliberations involving the rail line development in the province of Manitoba back in the early days of provincehood here in Manitoba, the Prime Minister saw it important enough to come west and let his name stand for election in the 1878 general election for the federal government.

Sir John A. Macdonald represented the constituency of Marquette-Portage. I'm very proud to

say that the area which I represent was also an area represented by the Father of Confederation, Sir John A. Macdonald, the first Prime Minister of Canada, because he regarded the development of railways here in Canada as paramount to nationhood and vitally important to the furthering of expansion not only of goods and services but political stability right across Canada.

He came and represented Portage la Prairie and obviously negotiated very substantive running rights to the Canadian Pacific Railway and allowed for the crossing of the Grand Trunk Railroad and the now-known as the Canadian National Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway. Those two main lines crossed in Portage la Prairie, the only place in Canada where the two major railroads' main lines cross.

Now, I would like to hopefully garner the Minister of Transportation's (Mr. Lemieux) and the former Minister of Transportation, the honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) currently, the Member for Thompson, who brought in The Provincial Railways Amendment Act that I'm looking at early in his tenure on the government side of the House. At that time, as Transportation minister, he definitely recognized the importance of railroads and brought forward amendments to The Provincial Railways Act.

However, those amendments were not really ones that would be conducive to maintaining the existing rail lines here in the province of Manitoba, and I must say that it was very perceptive of the former member for Minnedosa, Mr. Gilleshammer, who said, in fact, this act would be an impediment to continuing in the railroad business. He has been borne out to be right because what has transpired here in the province of Manitoba is we've seen a continued abandonment of lines to the detriment of service and cost-effective shipment of goods and not only on a fuel and greenhouse gas argument but also as it pertains to the wear and tear on the public roads that we as Manitoba taxpayers are responsible for maintaining.

* (11:50)

Also, I want to state that the honourable Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) introduced legislation that made it so that any rail lines that were covered by union contract, if they were to be sold to any other entity, the union contracts would be transferable to the purchaser of any rail lines in the province of Manitoba. The discussion at that time was that it

might indeed be an impediment, and I spoke to the act when it was before the House and said, indeed, it would be an impediment to any transferral of rail lines here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this government goes ahead and passes legislation and says it's for the good of all Manitobans. What happens? Year after year after year after year it's borne out that this government hasn't a clue as to how their legislation actually impacts on business. So the transferral of the union contracts to short-line railroads is indeed an impediment for purchase. As we all know, a short-line railroad has to work on a very minor margin, and persons employed by that railroad must be flexible. Now, I'm not saying that they should not be paid a decent wage, but persons have to be flexible that sometimes union contracts do not allow for.

I know the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) is shaking his head because he is one that could very well be impacted with the rail line heading up through Gimli that now transports from the distillery and is indeed a rail line that the major railways are looking to dispense with because it is of limited profit. I have looked to the government side of the House to give your head a shake and look at what has happened since you passed the legislation. Since you passed the legislation there has not been one railroad line transferred to private ownership in the province of Manitoba. What we have though seen is line after line after line picked up and salvaged and shipped either to the United States or to South America for use as railroad line. Why is it the government has to look at themselves in the mirror and ask why?

I believe if you go back to the legislation that's on the books, passed by this NDP government, that's the date that the last railroad was transferred to private ownership in the province of Manitoba. The minister of transportation does indeed recognize that the heavy weight—

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

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise to add my comments to this private member's resolution dealing with rail line abandonment. Of course, I'm sure all members of the House know of my history and involvement with railways. It's no secret that I have had some employment in the rail industry for the early years of my life. Of course, I've had great interest in wanting

to make sure that we have the appropriate rail service servicing our communities throughout the province.

But I have to start off. I know I have a limited amount of time here this morning. I have to ask the question when I'm looking at this resolution that's brought forward by the honourable member.

In the fourth WHEREAS of his resolution, here in particular, it says,

WHEREAS rail line abandonment removes vital transportation links and access important to rural Manitobans.

I have to ask the members opposite: Why is it you're totally forgetting about northern Manitoba? Is it northern Manitoba is not important to members of the Conservative Party and that they totally eliminated discussion of the importance of short-line and regional railroad lines in northern Manitoba? Is it not important to you that you would not have included it in the resolution—[interjection] The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) says it's important. Then why didn't you include it in the resolution? I have to ask, Mr. Speaker. It's very clear, if you don't include it in the resolution, then it's not important to you.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that all of the rail lines in Manitoba are important to the economy and to the people living in the communities of our province.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on government House business.

Mr. Speaker: Oh, on government House business? Does the honourable member have leave to deal with government House business? [Agreed]

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I want to announce that the Standing Committee on Agriculture that has been announced in the House as sitting Friday, at 10 a.m., I slightly want to amend that, with the leave of the House, to say: if necessary.

Mr. Speaker: If necessary. Okay.

The honourable Government House Leader has indicated that the Standing Committee on Agriculture for Friday a.m., which is scheduled, he's proposing the change to: if necessary.

Is the House agreeable to that? [Agreed]

* * *

Mr. Reid: To continue with my comments in the short time I have remaining here, I'll leave my comments regarding the lack of Conservative interest in northern Manitoba for others to ponder and contemplate, Mr. Speaker, and go on with my comments.

I know our Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux) has had meetings many times with the federal Minister of Transport regarding transportation in general but, in particular, for railway and trucking industries as they might affect the economy and the people of the province of Manitoba.

Just recently, I believe, Transport Canada is close to initiating a rail service review, Mr. Speaker, and I know our minister of MIT also asked that there would be broader rail policy and service items included to include measures to increase the genuine competitive behaviour of the national railways; the enhancement of car supply to small shippers, in particular, who may lack the financial and other resources to access the agency; shipper service on short lines and result in short-line viability; and also ensuring the equitable rail service treatment of Churchill corridor—all important items, Mr. Speaker, for the economy and the people of the province of Manitoba. I thank our Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux) for making sure that these interests remain on the national agenda, Mr. Speaker, for further consideration by the federal government.

But I have to think back, Mr. Speaker, to the time when the Conservative Party, those dark days in the 1990s when the Conservative Party was in government in the province of Manitoba. I remember during those times seeing the significant decline in the employment in the rail sector in the province of Manitoba, having seen in my own community of Transcona where we had over 3,000 employees, and since that time during the 1990s up until 1999, we moved from around 3,000 employees down to around 600 now. I have to say that where was the government of the day to protect the jobs of the people of Manitoba and those working and living in my community in Transcona?

I remember, Mr. Speaker, very clearly—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on a point of order.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, on a point of order. The hour being near 12 o'clock, I would ask for leave to have a vote on this resolution.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It's not customary to interrupt members that have the floor. It's starting to become out of hand in this House because the practice is to allow members that wish to speak, to speak. Then, if there is time, we put the vote. But now I see the practice is now where almost daily we're getting members that—*[interjection]* Order, please. We're getting members being interrupted in their speech to ask for votes. That is not really the practice of the House.

But the honourable member has put it, so I will put the question.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. So there is no leave for that.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Transcona still has the floor.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity—

* (12:00)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, and the hour being—when this matter's again before the House, the honourable member will have 5 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, we will recess and reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 12, 2008

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