

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, September 15, 2009**

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PETITIONS**

**Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler**

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Many seniors from the Morden and Winkler area are currently patients in Boundary Trails Health Centre while they wait for placement in local personal care homes.

There are presently no beds available for these patients in Salem Home and Tabor Home. To make more beds in the hospital available, the regional health authority is planning to move these patients to personal care homes in outlying regions.

These patients have lived, worked and raised their families in this area for most of their lives. They receive care and support from their family and friends who live in the community, and they will lose this support if they are forced to move to distant communities.

These seniors and their families should not have to bear the consequences of the provincial government's failure to ensure there are adequate personal care home beds in the region.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

And to urge the Minister of Health to consider working with the RHA and the community to speed up construction and expansion of long-term care facilities in the region.

And this is signed by Irvin Enns, Isaac Derksen, Bill Braun, and many, many others.

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

**Seven Oaks Hospital—Emergency Services**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The current Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP government are reducing emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital.

On October 6, 1995, the NDP introduced a matter of urgent public importance that stated that "the ordinary business of the House to be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the threat to health-care system posed by this government's plans to limit emergency services in the city of Winnipeg community hospitals." End of quote.

On December the 6th, 1995, when the then-PC government suggested it was going to reduce emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital, the NDP leader then asked Premier Gary Filmon to "reverse the horrible decisions of his government and his Minister of Health and reopen our community-based emergency wards." End of quote.

The NDP gave Manitobans the impression that they supported Seven Oaks Hospital having full emergency services seven days a week, 24 hours a day

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Premier and the Manitoba—Premier of Manitoba consider how important it is to have the Seven Oaks Hospital provide full emergency services seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by J. Olid, M. Olid, and G. Olid and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

**Parkland Regional Health Authority—  
Ambulance Station**

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The communities of Eddystone, Bacon Ridge and Ebb and Flow First Nation rely on emergency medical service personnel based in Ste. Rose, which is about 45 minutes away.

These communities represent about 2,500 people. Other communities of similar size within the region are equipped with at least one ambulance, but this area is not. As a result, residents must be transported in private vehicles to the nearest hospital if they cannot wait for emergency personnel to arrive.

There are qualified first responders living in these communities who want to serve the region but need an ambulance to do so.

A centrally located ambulance and ambulance station in this area would be able to provide better and more responsive emergency services to these communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider working with the Parkland Regional Health Authority to provide a centrally located ambulance and station in the area of Eddystone, Bacon Ridge and Ebb and Flow First Nation.

This petition is signed by Lori Malcolm, Brian Courchene, Evie Bear and many, many other fine Manitobans.

**Ophthalmology Services—Swan River**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has told the town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program; however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

This is signed by Phyllis Hunt, Joe Cober, Debra Anderson and many, many others.

**PTH 15**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition.

In 2004, the Province of Manitoba made a public commitment to the people of Springfield to twin PTH 15 and the floodway bridge on PTH 15, but then in 2006, the twinning was cancelled.

Injuries resulting from collisions on PTH 15 continue to rise and have doubled from 2007 to 2008.

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) stated that preliminary analysis of current and future traffic demands indicate that local twinning will be required.

The current plan to replace the floodway bridge on PTH 15 does not include twinning and, therefore, does not fulfil the current nor future traffic demands cited by the Minister of Transportation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate twinning of the PTH 15 floodway bridge for the safety of the citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by Ann Michaels, Dave Ratnor, P. Hrychuk and many, many other Manitobans.

#### **Long-Term Care Facilities—Lac du Bonnet**

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

Many seniors from the Lac du Bonnet area are currently patients in the Pinawa Hospital while they wait for placement in the Lac du Bonnet personal care home.

There are presently few or no beds available for these seniors in the Lac du Bonnet personal care home.

These seniors have lived, worked and raised their families in the Lac du Bonnet area for most of their lives. They receive care and support from their family and friends who live in the community, and they will lose this support if they are forced to move to distant communities to access personal care home beds.

These seniors and their families should not be required to bear the consequences of the provincial government's failure to ensure that there are adequate personal care home beds in the region.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in a personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider working with the RHA and the community to speed up the construction and expansion of long-term care facilities in Lac du Bonnet.

Presented on behalf of Elsie Chapman, Debbie Kettles, Clara Hiebert and many other Manitobans.

**Mr. Speaker:** Committee reports. Tabling of reports. Ministerial statements.

Order, please.

#### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with—where we have with us six individuals who are serving on the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program for the year 2009 and 2010.

In accordance with established practice, three interns were assigned to the government caucus and three to the official opposition caucus. Their term of employment is 10 months. They will be performing a variety of research and other tasks for private members.

These interns are—these interns commenced their assignment earlier this month and will complete them in June. They are working with the government caucus: Ms. Ksenia Prints of the University of Winnipeg, Ms. Natasha Jean Szach of the University of Winnipeg and Mr. Jamie Thomas of the University of Toronto.

\* (13:40)

And working with the caucus of the official opposition: Mr. Patrick Boily of McGill University, Ms. Emily Loewen of the Canadian Mennonite University, Mr. Robert Patchell of the University of Manitoba and Professor Jean Friesen looks after the academic portion of the internship.

The administration of the program is carried out by our Clerk, Patricia Chaychuk.

The caucus representatives on the Internship Administration Committee are the member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) and the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members to congratulate the interns on their appointment to the program and to hope that they will have a very interesting and successful year with the Assembly.

On behalf of all the members, welcome.

Oral questions.

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Influenza A (H1N1) School Closure Plans**

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, while all Manitobans are hopeful that the worst-case scenario in an H1N1 outbreak will not materialize in Manitoba, we know

that it's crucially important that the government be prepared in the event that it does.

Mr. Speaker, we have been concerned about the vagueness of the responses that we've had to date in terms of the government's plans to minimize the impact of H1N1 on Manitobans.

Yesterday there was reference to future meetings to discuss what would happen in the event of a serious outbreak. We've seen in other governments, Mr. Speaker, very specific plans from other provinces. The City of Winnipeg, on Monday, very concretely laying out who will do what in the event of a serious outbreak that could impact 20 percent to 30 percent of civic employees.

Mr. Speaker, parents in Manitoba will be on the front line of fighting H1N1. I want the Premier to be specific about what triggers will be used in the event that the government is considering school closures.

What level of warning will be provided to parents in Manitoba, and how can we be sure that the actions taken are taken aggressively and proactively to prevent a serious outbreak, which could swell demand on health care by up to 40 percent to 50 percent if the government fails to act soon enough, according to the World Health Organization?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the World Health Organization that the member just referenced stated, in their guidance in terms of closing schools, that—which has been accepted by the Public Health Agency of Canada—our advice regarding school closures remains the same and will not change unless there's a significant change in the way the virus is behaving in Canada. The benefits of keeping schools open in Canada currently outweigh the risk of transmission in these settings.

There's a further set of guidelines that the public health agencies are operating under in Canada and, in terms of specific direction, we have had protocols in the schools for all the students that have returned to class. Many children—many of us know our own children have been briefed on procedures to prevent the illness. They have been briefed on protocols that will be in place and, Mr. Speaker, we believe that, obviously, that we should continue to work under the guidelines of the World Health Organization and the public health experts.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, the concern is that there's some conflicting messages coming from his government versus what the World Health Organization is saying. There was a very vague

directive issued in August with respect to the issue of school closures. We certainly acknowledge some of the steps that have been taken on the preventative side, but the school closure issue is one that the WHO has identified as the critical decision that will have to be made in the early stages of the outbreak. It'll be a decision the government will confront even before we get to the issue of the distribution of antivirals through the province of Manitoba. In fact, it's a decision that may have—may have to be made in a worst-case scenario within the next two weeks, with projections of a peak being the middle of August.

WHO is saying, ideally, schools are looked at for closure when less than 1 percent of the population falls ill. That is at odds with what the Premier said on the record yesterday.

Can he be clear about what the approach of his government is? Are they following the WHO advice or is it some other standard that's being applied, and, if so, what is that standard?

**Mr. Doer:** Well, they're not a variations—there were not a variations with the September 11th directive by the World Health Organization adopted by the public health agencies of Canada. So the September 11th information is consistent with what we've said and what we will continue to say.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, it is very important to take the advice of health professionals in this forum and in every other forum. There is a difference between an antiviral, which you take after the disease, and vaccines, and the vaccine is meant to—we purchase vaccines through the federal government. It's meant to prevent the disease, and the member opposite referred to antivirals as the vaccine in essence of where it was placed in the health-care continuum. Antivirals take—are administered after a person is diagnosed with H1N1. The vaccine is distributed when we receive it from Ottawa, hopefully in a targeted way with agreement with all the public health officials in Canada to prevent the disease.

**Mr. McFadyen:** The issue of the effectiveness of the vaccine is a serious one. We understand that the science is going to have to work overtime in order to deal with a vaccine. The antivirals, we understand, is a separate issue which comes down the road, but, Mr. Speaker, the first question they will confront is the issue of dealing with the gathering of people in public places, which is the issue that is relevant to both schools and child-care centres. That's where

we're getting conflicting messages from the government.

Yesterday the Premier made a comment that they would wait until there were diagnosed cases in the classroom. That is not what is being said by the World Health Organization. Can he be clear about whether they're following the WHO directive on this or whether there's a different standard in play in Manitoba, and if so, what is that standard so that parents can begin to prepare if necessary and Manitobans can be comforted that everything possible is being done to prevent the spread of the vaccine in a scenario where it could begin to spread very rapidly if things are not managed very aggressively up front.

**Mr. Doer:** I know my—I know children, and including my own children, were told that if they have the flu stay home. I think parents have been instructed the same way. We in terms of dealing with the public setting.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that the issue of antivirals and vaccines, it's very important for people in this Chamber to know the difference and not have it interchangeable in terms of the questions being posed here and potentially the information going out of this Chamber. So I'll alert that to the Leader of the Opposition.

The September 11th World Health Organization note says, in terms of schools, that we should—decisions about if and when schools should be closed during the pandemic are complex and highly context-specific. World Health Organization cannot provide specific recommendations for or against school closure that are applicable to all settings.

So, you know, this is not a legal document where it's black and white. It is an issue where public health experts—public health experts—will give us advice about how—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

### **Influenza A (H1N1) School Closure Plans**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, many teachers and parents are concerned about the potential impact of the H1N1 influenza and how it may affect the current school year. To date there is very little concrete information about the government's plan to ensure that children and staff are protected and the Premier has just further muddied the issue.

We previously heard from the government that the decision to close schools will be made on a case-by-case basis. The question is: If the case-by-case strategy in Manitoba is different than what the World Health Organization recommends, can the Minister of Education tell us what the plan is and what would constitute a trigger to close schools in Manitoba and who makes that decision?

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** I thank the member for the question and, as the First Minister has said, the World Health Organization has stated that decisions about if and when the schools should be closed during a pandemic are complex and highly specific, and the Health Organization cannot provide specific recommendations.

Now, what we've been doing with respect to this particular issue, Mr. Speaker, is we have met with all of the stakeholders. We've met with the stakeholders over the course of the summer. All school divisions have to have a pandemic plan in place, and they do have a pandemic plan in place, and on the advice of regional health authorities it will be my decision to close the schools on the advice of regional health authorities.

But the key is this is a health issue and the decisions will be made by the regional health authorities and recommendations made to me for that purpose, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, it's clear from the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Education they haven't figured it out yet. As this government knows, Manitoba graduation rates are the worst in the country. Helping our children to succeed is a priority, and a break in the school year could result in an even bigger lag for some students.

\* (13:50)

Can the Minister of Education tell us if, in the event of a school closure, is there a plan in place to continue teaching using some form of a distance education model?

**Mr. Bjornson:** There are plans in place in the event of a disaster such as floods. There are plans in place for teachers to address the needs of students on an ongoing basis, whether we have a pandemic, whether we have a flood. The plan's in place. All school divisions are required to have a pandemic plan, and they have pandemic plans, Mr. Speaker.

We've been communicating with the parents through letters and we've been communicating to superintendents, to the staff. There's been a lot of media coverage on this. We do have a Web site. I would invite the member opposite to visit the Web site and follow the links to see what information is available for the public, for the schools, for the school divisions, for the parents, for the teachers, for the superintendents on this very important issue.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, parents are very concerned about the impact of the H1N1 influenza in schools and are looking to government for guidance.

Would the same plans and triggers that are used to close schools also apply to the suspension of all school sports and community sports programs?

And will the minister consider recommending that the customary handshakes before and after all games be suspended until further notice?

**Mr. Bjornson:** As I said, we take the advice, the advice of medical professionals. We have to find a balance between society and the general operation and function of society. And hysteria, which the member opposite is apparently trying to turn up here, Mr. Speaker—we have—[interjection]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Bjornson:** We have been in close contact with the school divisions. The Health Department is working with the Education Department. We have plans in place.

When I sent my daughter upstairs to wash her hands before dinner last night, I heard her singing "Happy Birthday" to herself three times while she washed her hands, which is part of the lesson that they teach a grade 1 student about how you should wash your hands thoroughly, and that's part of, part of what's happening. It's being taught in the schools. It's being addressed through communications through our, through our department.

#### **Influenza A (H1N1) Child Care Centre Plans**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Child-care workers and parents have a lot of questions about the impact of H1N1 and what this government's plan is to ensure that children and staff are protected. The directions provided to child care have not been clear. The department has on its Web site a pandemic planning document for child-care centres dated September 2009. That leaves staff very little time to adequately prepare for H1N1.

Can the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) tell this House today whether every child-care centre has been asked to prepare a pandemic plan and submit them to his department?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** Mr. Speaker, I think the line of questions and answers are certainly very important to ensure both information and accountability.

And I know during the 9/11 matter, there was a very strong cross-political party process that was put in place, and I would urge all of us to reinforce that. I understand it met as late as last week, and I think that has been very useful. And we do have the experience of 9/11 to build on.

And with that note, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to advise members of this House that correspondence, letters and bulletins have been sent to licensed child-care centres. And as well, of course, that is in line with the professional advice that we have received from health officials in Manitoba. The most recent letter from public health was sent via child-care facilities to parents, advising parents, of course, to keep ill children at home and, of course, to provide information how best to prevent the spread of the disease within child-care centres.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** But I heard the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) indicate that all schools were required to have a pandemic plan in the case of H1N1, and I didn't hear the Minister of Family Services answer that question.

My very simple direct question to him is: Has he asked for a plan from every child-care centre, and will his department be reviewing those plans?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, the department has, not only for child-care centres but for other vulnerable Manitobans, served by the department for other congregate facilities and including external facilities, put in place a team with a lead and emergency teams in all of the branches and we're continuing to ensure that we are well positioned in light of the professional advice that we receive to deal with any pandemic.

In terms of pandemic preparedness, Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question is that child-care facilities have been provided with what is required for pandemic planning.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, but I spoke to a child-care director this morning that indicated they hadn't even been asked

for a plan from this government. So maybe the minister should stand up and apologize for trying to mislead this House with his answers.

Mr. Speaker—

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

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, someone on government side says take the high road when there isn't even a request. There hasn't even been a request from this government to ask child-care centres to provide a pandemic plan. Are the children that are in child-care centres in Manitoba not as important as the children in our education system? Where is this government's plan for child care?

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, it's very important that in this House we not engage in some line of questioning that's not based on information. It's important that we as legislators have a surefooted—surefooted responses—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** —to the concerns of Manitoba parents—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** —and our interests are for the best interests of children.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Family Services and Housing has overseen the distribution of information to child-care centres. There's been letters and bulletins from Family Services regarding H1N1. A letter with a pandemic preparedness checklist from Public Health has gone to the child-care centres, and if the member wants to provide the name of the child-care centre in question, we'll be certainly pleased to do a follow up with that centre.

### **Influenza A (H1N1)**

#### **Government Communication to Public**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** We have huge concerns about information coming from this Minister of Health because of her handling of Brian Sinclair's death. She misled the public with false information and she covered up the truth.

So, Mr. Speaker, we would like to ask the Minister of Health to explain why should we believe anything she would say about H1N1 and pandemic planning.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I can inform all the, all of the House based on the questions here today that the single most important principle that we need to keep in mind is that we must all, that is all parties in the House, take our advice from the medical professionals.

We should not substitute the judgment with, you know, politicians' advice. We need to listen to our Chief Provincial Health Officer on matters like whether or not we should be advising our children to shake hands at their games, on whether or not schools should be closed, on whether or not antiviral should be administered and when. These are very serious issues that, I believe, Mr. Speaker, every party in this House, every individual in this House wants to see us all come together to work for the health of Manitobans. This isn't about a political war. It's about health.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

#### **Availability of Antiviral Medications**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, it's very hard to trust a minister who has put false information on the record. In mid-June the government said that they had 195,000 treatment courses of antivirals. Last week we were told that Manitoba's stockpile was only 176,000 treatment courses.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us why she cut back on Manitoba's antiviral stockpile?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Because we used some.

Also, I can say to the member opposite that when the federal government with the fiduciary responsibility for First Nations communities needed extra antivirals we, without hesitation, sent the provincial stockpile directly to those nursing stations.

That stockpile is recommended by national guidelines to be maintained at a certain level, and I have assurances from our health professionals that that stockpile is exactly back to where it needs to be. Indeed, there is more on order. The vaccine is coming.

\* (14:00)

This is not a partisan issue, Mr. Speaker; it's an issue about health.

I say to the member opposite, again, I invite her to ask any questions of Dr. Kettner anytime she wishes. She has in the past refused those

opportunities, but I welcome you to have them anytime.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, the difference between the two numbers is 19,000. In the government's briefing last week, they only indicated they've used 500 courses. What happened to the other 18,500 courses?

So, Mr. Speaker, 176,000 treatment courses are only going to treat 15 percent of Manitobans. That's all. It means that antivirals in Manitoba are going to be seriously rationed and used very, very sparingly. So I would like to ask the minister if she would put forward today her criteria for who is going to be able to access this small number of antivirals in this province.

**Ms. Oswald:** You know, Mr. Speaker, when the member gets up daily and takes personal shots at me, this is not a big deal. I signed up for that. But I can tell you, when she puts dangerous and irresponsible information on the record, like the fact that antivirals will not be available to those that are ill, that's another matter entirely.

I want to make very clear, Mr. Speaker, that the recommended levels for every jurisdiction in the nation, regardless of political stripe, those recommendations come from the Public Health Agency of Canada and national guidelines. The administration of antivirals, for those for whom it is appropriate, is done by doctors. It isn't done by politicians. It isn't done by people trying to score political points. It's done by people that are taking care of people's health on recommended guidelines. Manitoba is ready to treat people with antivirals and will be with a vaccine as well as any jurisdiction in the land.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

### **Gang Violence Government Strategy**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** With that sort of support, you should've run for leadership, but the time's not over yet, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) told the media that the NDP's seventh gang strategy in 10 years, the one that he announced on the fly in the summer, that the timing of it had changed.

Can the Minister of Justice tell Manitobans, while he's put his gang strategy on hold, are the gangs who are selling drugs to our kids, who are

carrying illegal weapons on the streets, who are putting the lives of innocent people at risk, are they putting their gang activities on hold while this minister tries to get his act together?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Well, Mr. Speaker, if—what I wanted to explain to the media was that the member opposite has a chance. If he wants to change the police act, he can do it right now and make the police report directly to the ministry. He can do that in the act, which is what he implies on a daily basis, as if somehow I'm supposed to direct the City of Winnipeg police.

Mr. Speaker, I know the member drove in from Steinbach in the summertime to have a press conference, and then he drove in again to have another press conference on gangs. He didn't drive in when we had our—he didn't drive in when we talked about our murdered and missing task force that we set up on August 26th. He didn't drive in to do a press conference on that. He didn't drive in when the member of Aboriginal Affairs set up a round table for missing women and children, which are the product of gang activity. He didn't drive in when we did our—when the member did his \$2.1-million strategy to have—to deal with sexually abused children. Yes, the gang plan is coming and will be—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Actually, I drove in several days before the task force announcement to demand they set it up, and I'm glad they listened to our suggestions, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, in trying to explain to the media why the gang strategy that he announced on the fly in the summer would be delayed, he said it was because of the police act and because of the legislative session. Mr. Speaker, the police act was drafted months ago. He knew that the Legislature was coming back into session. There are announcements all the time when the Legislature is sitting.

Is the real reason for the delay the fact that they had six failed strategies before? Is the real reason for the delay because the minister is too worried about who is going to run his party and not worried about who's running the gangs?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, it's interesting the member for Steinbach talks about leadership a lot. He's moved over and he drives in quite a bit. He drives quite a—I don't wanna have, you know, he was out campaigning for the federal nomination—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Chomiak:** All I know is, Mr. Speaker, when I was in Ottawa talking to the federal minister, he commended Manitoba on our gang initiatives. I know that we have a letter in to the federal minister today to appear before the Senate committee to express our support in the two-for-one remands. What have you done except come in and do a press conference, come in and do press conference, come in and do a press conference? And—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I want the member to know that we worked very closely with the police department—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Chomiak:** —under the direction of the City of Winnipeg and the RCMP, and I'm very pleased on—the police department was able to put in place a task force on missing and murdered women to provide for all of our protection.

**Mr. Goertzen:** If we're honoured with the opportunity after the next election, we'll surely show what we're going to do as a government, Mr. Speaker. But until that day, you are still responsible as the Minister of Justice.

And while this Minister of Justice was putting his gang strategy on hold, the Saskatchewan Party in the province next to us was announcing a gang strategy for part of their province. Apparently, that minister responsible was able to talk to the police and talk to the city and didn't make an announcement on the fly, which he then had to backtrack on and say that it would be coming at a later time.

Manitobans, at best, are losing confidence in this Minister of Justice. He needs to tell them—not us—he needs to tell Manitobans when the announcement will come and why we should believe it's going to be any better than the six failed strategies announced by that government before.

**Mr. Chomiak:** As of March 1st, 2009, the gang prosecutions unit that was set up has achieved 973 convictions or guilty pleas with 577 gang people serving jail time. We've increased the commitment to the gang prosecution unit by this government by seven.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Members opposite made one promise last election to—

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Chomiak:** —build a jail. That was all they said, Mr. Speaker. They voted against the additional 200 police officers that we've put in place. They voted against the additional 60 prosecutors that we've put in place. That has all been part of the gang strategy, part of the gang strategy that's been our federal strategy that's in place and been put in place in Ottawa, and we've indicated there'll be additions to that gang strategy, which we will announce shortly, not when the minister—when the member decides to drive it and make another press conference. In fact, he had one today.

#### **Melita Hospital Emergency Room Closure**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** The town of Melita, the surrounding southwest region of Manitoba, the parts of southeast Saskatchewan rely on Melita's hospital for emergency services. Emergency services in Melita have only been available sporadically since the spring of '08, and as of yesterday, the emergency services there are still not being offered.

Can the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald)—well, actually, Mr. Speaker, people in southwest tell me that wouldn't be too bad an idea. Can the—why can the minister not tell southwest Manitoba citizens when they can expect full emergency services to return to the Melita hospital?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, and we know that the regional health authority in partnership with Manitoba Health and Healthy Living and the Physician Recruitment Coordination Office are working very hard to augment health human resources, doctors and nurses to the Assiniboine region. We know that that particular region has some unique qualities to it in comparison to other regions. On average, most regions have four or five facilities that they're required to staff. The Assiniboine Regional Health Authority has 20. We know that having those facilities in communities are very important to the people there. We're going to continue to work with

them. We saw this year a net increase in the number of doctors to Manitoba of 57.

We know we have more work to do, and we're working with the region to do that.

**Mr. Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, Melita deserves more than patchwork emergency services, here one day and gone the next. The minister procrastinates on how many doctors are available in Manitoba.

So, why can the NDP Minister of Health still not supply enough personnel after being aware of years of shortages to keep 24/7 emergency services at Melita's hospital?

\*(14:10)

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Speaker, we know full well that the single most important thing that we can do to build our complement of doctors is to grow them here at home. That's why we made a commitment to reverse the horrendous decisions made by the Conservatives to cut the spaces in medical school that they did during the last recession. Indeed, we went from 85 spaces down to 70 under their watch. We're still feeling the effects of that today, Mr. Speaker.

We restored those seats back up to 85, went up to 100 and a couple of years ago went to 110. I'm also very pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that of this year's class of 110 first year students, 49 of them are of rural origins, which is a step in the right directions to bring doctors back to rural Manitoba. We've also added additional incentive programs as recently as August. We're going to continue to work—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Maguire:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister can baffle all she wants about increased numbers of doctors in Manitoba. Where is she hiding them? Why are they leaving? Why are 18 emergency rooms closed in rural Manitoba? Manitobans know there is a shortage of doctors.

When will the minister assure Melita and area that what she is proposing is not a short-term fix but a permanent solution to emergency medical services at Melita hospital? Will she support Melita's efforts to attract more permanent medical staffing?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I know a lot of words that I might use for the Tory decision to cut medical school spaces. "Baffle" is not among them, but I have a few other clever ones. I can tell you that in addition to increasing the number of

medical school spaces, we recently announced \$2.1 million for a doctor relief fund to ensure that doctors that are recruited to rural Manitoba are retained in rural Manitoba. We've invested half a million dollars to assist with settlement to rural Manitoba. We've invested \$90,000 to repatriate our Canadian students that are studying abroad, and we've invested money to ensure that we can work with regional health authorities to recruit. This is a national and international phenomenon, shortages of doctors. Manitoba is holding its own, is indeed ahead, and we will continue to work—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

### **Greyhound Canada Passenger Service Cuts**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, when Greyhound Canada announced September 2nd their plans to abandon passenger service in Manitoba, it was noticeable that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) wasn't available to answer questions on this massive issue. You know, 250 Manitoba Greyhound workers are preparing to see their layoff notices this coming Friday. Northern communities are urgently working on contingency plans for their citizens.

And I ask the minister, who's known about the problems of Greyhound for months, why he was caught so unprepared, and why he was so incompetent to let this crisis develop in this way.

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Just to correct the record, as usual any time we're dealing with the member from River Heights, Mr. Speaker, we've been meeting with Greyhound over the last number of weeks, and we've been talking to them about the fact that what they've done is that they came to our office and they notified us that as of October 2nd, they're going to be removing all bus travel from Manitoba.

Indeed, that was certainly surprising, Mr. Speaker, but you know we've been working with them to try to bring them to the table to see if there can be some alternatives with regard to bus travel in the province of Manitoba. We know how important it is not only to rural but to northern Manitoba, to the farm implement dealerships, to the hospitals, to the regional health authorities, and bus travel for them is a real necessity, and we're working with Greyhound as we speak to find a solution.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, at the hearings in Snow Lake, it was obvious that Greyhound was having

major difficulties and this government wasn't listening, haven't even got a report from anything. Now the majority of northern Manitobans travelling to and from medical appointments rely on Greyhound bus transportation.

Manitoba Health, of course, has huge contracts with Greyhound to provide affordable transportation to its clients and I would like to know whether the Minister of Transportation has actually discussed with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) an alternative method of transportation for Manitobans who are sick and who need care and what the additional costs of this new transportation would be because taxi or plane is, from Thompson to Winnipeg, is like \$500 a person extra than it would be by Greyhound.

Are Manitobans gonna have to put up with these extra costs? What is the minister doing? Why's he being so slow on this issue?

**Mr. Lemieux:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are aware and we have discussed this.

#### **Greyhound Canada Job Losses**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** What a response, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we're talking about 250 Manitobans this Friday are gonna receive layoff notices. The Minister of Labour has known about this for months and she has said nothing. The government's been absolutely quiet as hundreds of jobs are put into jeopardy in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, that is not acceptable behaviour from any minister of this government. There's a responsibility to stand up and protect those jobs.

My question to the Minister of Labour is: What has she done to protect the jobs, those 250 jobs? What is she doing, Mr. Speaker, to protect the interests of Manitobans? She's known about it for three months now. Tell us what you've done, Madam Minister.

**Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** This is a very serious issue. We have, we—I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) who has been in dialogue with the company in regards to the reduction of service here in Manitoba.

I'd also like to thank him, Mr. Speaker, for getting in touch with the federal minister to talk about this very, very important issue. The minister has also requested an FPT meeting—*[interjection]* Excuse me, this is a very important issue. I thought you would like to know the answer to it.

The Minister responsible for Transportation has also requested a federal-provincial-territorial meeting with ministers because this is a very important issue not just for Manitoba but for other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to continue to meet with the company to see what the solutions are very, very quickly.

#### **Churchill Northern Studies Centre Funding**

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's an international leader in the battle against climate change. The Arctic is key to the survival of the earth and, as such, Arctic research and education is an important piece of the puzzle in creating a healthy and sustainable environment.

Can the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines update the House on the work our government has done and is doing to support Arctic research at the Churchill northern studies centre?

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines):** I'm pleased to let all members of the House know that we made a commitment of \$6 million that will be spent over the next four years for this important centre.

And the centre is important. It does a lot on polar bear research. It does a lot on climate change, water research, biodiversity. And actually when I was there this summer I saw all the people who go there. Basically, it's hosted a hundred scientists from 22 universities, 10 government departments, and they're talking about climate change or doing world-class research.

And I'm pleased that we're supporting this type of research, and I'm pleased to let all members of the House know we have unprecedented amount of research that's been invested in this government, and what we're doing is we're spending \$32.2 million this year, which is unprecedented money in research and in our knowledge economy.

#### **Neepawa Supportive Housing Project Status**

**Mr. Stuart Briese (St. Rose):** Almost four years ago the Minister of Health promised to enhance

supported or assisted living in Neepawa. Four years later very little has been accomplished.

I ask the minister: When can the people in the Neepawa area expect the minister to fulfil her promise? Will it be another four years?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** I thank the member for the question. It, of course, provides an opportunity to discuss the really important investment we made in Neepawa with the personal care home that was opened within the last year, arguably, you know, the jewel of Manitoba in terms of its state-of-the-art care and state-of-the-art construction. That, of course, is a critical piece in long-term care for our seniors.

I'm also very pleased to announce to the member that last week, of course, there was an announcement of over \$800,000 for emergency medical services and construction that is going to go on there. Talks are continuing with the regional health authority and with the community in building on that continuum of care, of supportive housing, building home care, building personal care home beds, the full package, Mr. Speaker.

\* (14:20)

**Mr. Briese:** This minister cut the capacity of the PCH in Neepawa from 125 beds to 100 beds to save costs. She stated that enhanced supported living would address the shortfalls in beds. The PCH is now open; there's no sign of the supported living development. Four years has gone by.

Will the minister share today what the timelines are on supported living in the Neepawa area?

**Ms. Oswald:** Again, building the kinds of beds and the kinds of rooms that existed—that exist in the personal care home now was certainly in accordance with the wishes of the community to go from multibedded rooms to single rooms, to go to rooms where couples may dwell, which was not the case in the past. By every account in the community this was a significant improvement, and we're continuing to work with the regional health authority to build supportive housing options and, of course, the element that the member did not mention, what is, of course, a real pride in Manitoba, the building and augmenting of home care, which is one of the single greatest things that we can do for our seniors who want to remain in their homes and live in their communities.

All of those investments are being made across the board, and we're going to continue to work with the region and to work with partners to bring more of those supportive housing options on board.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired. Members' statements.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Avastin Medication Availability

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in Canada. This year, over 20,000 Canadians will be diagnosed with the disease and nearly 9,000 will die of it.

Unfortunately, some of these patients are ill enough that they are eligible for Avastin, a life-extending cancer drug that's widely available in most other Canadian provinces. In Manitoba, Avastin is only available on a very limited basis. Very few patients receive it even if their oncologist prescribes it because of this NDP government's failure to make it a priority.

Avastin was one of the issues raised by many cancer patients and their families last Saturday at the second annual Kick Butt for Colorectal Cancer run at Kildonan Park. It was a privilege to participate in this fundraising event which was dedicated to the memory of Kai Arnot, someone many people in this Legislature will remember well. Kai was a retired teacher, a colorectal cancer patient and a great and vocal advocate for better colorectal cancer screening and for access to Avastin. Kai lost her battle with cancer last November. The colorectal cancer community is grieving this great loss, but they know that Kai would've wanted them to pick up the fight where she left off. With Saturday's fundraising run and their continued efforts to fight for better screening and drug access, that's exactly what they're going to do.

Over the last three years my colleagues and I have presented petitions to the Legislature calling on this government to provide Manitoba colorectal cancer patients with equal access to Avastin. Thousands of Manitobans have signed these petitions and we're honoured to have presented them on their behalf. We're disappointed, though, that this government continues to turn a blind eye to these patients.

If an oncologist prescribes it, a cancer patient should not have to plead for access to it. This

government should provide the same kind of access to Avastin that other Canadians have. I'd like to take this opportunity to once again call on the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to take note of the exceptionally strong support that exists for this important cause.

Finally, I'd like to take a moment to thank the organizers and volunteers of the Kick Butt for Colorectal Cancer run for the opportunity to share in this important event and wish them all the best in their advocacy efforts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Manitoba Ranger Program**

**Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and share with this House a great opportunity for young people that took place at OCN over the summer. For five weeks 14 First Nations youth from all over northern Manitoba took part in the first annual Manitoba Ranger Program at Egg Lake Camp in The Pas.

Based on Outland Reforestation Incorporated's successful camps in Ontario, the Rangers' camp is about giving young people from the north first-hand experience in three industries that drive this province. The Rangers spent five weeks engaged in classroom learning and hands-on training in geosciences, mineral exploration, forestry, hydro-electric generation and environmental management. Campers go on field trips and training sessions that include visiting Wuskwatim, Jenpeg hydro projects, planting trees, studying aspects of the logging industry with Tolko Manitoba, among other activities.

Throughout the program, participants gain working experience and earn a student wage. The camp hopes to encourage these young people to one day consider careers in these fields. What's more important, also, is that this program gives young people a chance to develop their skills and confidence. A personal life skills component is also part of the program, with a focus on the importance of education and building a career path. I was fortunate to attend their graduation ceremony. Also present at the graduation was the member from Flin Flon.

Mr. Speaker, in a region where stories of our youth are often tempered by tragedy, the success of the first annual Manitoba Ranger Program is encouraging. This initiative shows what can be accomplished when people and industries work together. I would like to thank HudBay Minerals,

Tolko Industries, the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, Manitoba Conservation, University College of the North and Manitoba Hydro for their partnership in running this program, as well as the government of Manitoba, the First Nations Forestry Program, MKO, OCN and the Northern Manitoba Sector Council and the home communities of the participants for funding this program. Thank you.

### **Peter Brandt**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, this summer Team Canada won the gold medal at the National Geographic World Championship Geography Bee in New Mexico. Fifteen-year-old Peter Brandt of Steinbach was chosen to be the captain of the three-person student team. The Canadian team has not won gold at the championship since 1997. However, this year's team held a commanding lead throughout the competition, beating out teams from 14 other countries.

Through school and regional playdowns, Peter Brandt has become a three-time provincial geography champion which has secured his position at the national championships three years in a row. However, Peter has not finished in the top three positions in Canada up until this year when he was crowned the national champion. He was able to beat out 35 other students from across Canada to be recognized as a Canadian champion. As winner of the National Geographic Challenge, Peter was selected to be the team captain for the Canadians at the World Championships, and he was also awarded a \$3,000 scholarship.

Peter was homeschooled as a child until grade 6 and is currently a student at Steinbach Christian High School. He is an exceptional student with a 99 percent average in his grade 9 year over five subject areas. However, geography remains his favourite subject area. Peter hopes that someday he will be able to use his knowledge in geography in his future career, possibly in the travel industry.

I would like to congratulate Peter Brandt of Steinbach along with his teammates for winning the National Geographic World Championships. Their hard work has paid off, as they have done well to represent Canadians on the world stage. We as Manitobans were particularly proud and honoured to have Peter Brandt representing this province at the World Geography Champions. Thank you very much.

### Garry Gurke

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise and share with this House today the great work being done by Garry Gurke of Lynn Lake. Garry is the owner of Nueltin Fly-In Lodges on Nueltin Lake.

Garry is working with Fish Futures Inc., a non-profit corporation dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of freshwater fisheries, to promote fishing and conservation among youth in northern Manitoba. Together, Garry and Fish Futures are working to sustain a new youth fishing initiative by encouraging young people to keep the fishing culture alive in northern Manitoba.

They do this in a number of ways, including speaking at schools and communities across the north where they have given away over 6,000 fishing rods and other gear. They've also donated a brand new boat and motor to the Town of Lynn Lake to be used by groups such as the Lynn Lake Friendship Centre and West Lynn Heights School to promote boat safety and responsible sport-fishing practices.

Garry has also auctioned a trip to Nueltin Lodge, with proceeds going towards educational seminars, free fishing equipment for Lynn Lake and Lac Brochet and sponsored 600 youth into the Fish Winnipeg program. The program also brings RCMP and Conservation officers to communities to build relationships with young people. Garry's work is particularly important in the community of Lynn Lake, where tourism and sport fishing are diversifying the local economy.

Garry has a long history with fishing and conservation in the north. He started Nueltin Fly-In Lodges in 1989, where it was the first catch-and-release lodge in the world, and has since been a leader in conservation methods, like barbless hooks, that the Province now implements.

For Garry, his work is about keeping the culture of fishing alive among Manitoba's youth and the rewarding experience of seeing a young person learn how to fish. His dedication to the traditions and the young people of this province is to be commended. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

\* (14:30)

### Pembina Valley Honey, Garlic and Maple Syrup Festival

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, residents of Manitou and visitors to the

community were offered some tasty treats at the annual Pembina Valley Honey, Garlic and Maple Syrup Festival. The festival usually draws about 3,000 people to the area for two days of food and festivities, and Irene and I had the privilege of attending this event.

Some of the main attractions to the festival include a craft show and sale, farmers' market, display booths, free stage entertainment, historic town tours and soap box derby. There were also many opportunities to sample some of the many dishes featured at the festival including a pancake breakfast, honey, garlic and maple syrup vendors, cooking demos, gourmet alley and, of course, a delicious buffet supper.

The festival of course featured Manitoba products and menus which contain honey, such as raspberry honey, cherry, peach, garlic and maple syrup, along with many other made-in-Manitoba products such as beers and fine wines.

Festivals such as the Honey, Garlic and Maple Syrup Festival are extremely important for local producers as they act as a catalyst for a change to inspire alternatives and economic diversification to rural areas.

The weekend was filled with great entertainment and the honouring of a great entertainer. This year's entertainment was provided by Chuck Suchy for—on Friday night along with Manitou's own On the Edge, Take Four and Wing and a Prayer. Those were held at the Opera House.

The next day Stew Clayton was honoured for his volunteer work and his dedication to music during his 60-year career. Clayton has won 11 international yodelling championships and has received numerous awards for traditional country-and-western singing and song composition.

Mr. Speaker, I would congratulate Manitou for hosting another successful Honey, Garlic and Maple Syrup Festival. I would also like to thank all the volunteers for making the event possible, as their hard work and commitment is the reason why this event continues year after year. Thank you.

### MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member from River Heights, that under rule 36(1), the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of

urgent public importance, namely the recent announcement that Greyhound Canada is cancelling all passenger services in Manitoba and causing undue hardship to many residents who rely on bus service for medical appointments and to move about the province in a safe and affordable fashion.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable member for Inkster, I believe I should remind all members that under rule 36(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance, and one member from the other parties in the House, is allowed not more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in *Beauchesne's* citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, let me first address the issue of timing.

It's only this morning that we actually found out that, in fact, there is going to be a significant layoff of somewhere in the neighbourhood of 250 people that's going to be announced, coming this Friday.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, to acknowledge just how much of a vital role bus services, such as Greyhound, have to play in the very fabric of our economics here in the province of Manitoba, not to mention the social component to it.

In terms of dealing with the no-other-opportunity-to-debate-the-issue, I myself have already used grievance. We've passed budget and Throne Speech debates. We've already gone through the Estimates process. The only real issue that we have to deal with this is the government agenda of bills and private members' bills. In a very limited way, we, I would ultimately argue, do not have the opportunity to be able to have the type of dialogue and debate necessary on something that is so vitally important to, I would argue, all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. So that's the reason why it is that I believe that we should be debating this.

Now, further to that, I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is value to having that emergency debate. You'll recall that it wasn't that long ago where I had brought in an emergency

debate suggestion in regards to something of a similar nature and that was with the flight attendants for Air Canada. And again, when I brought it forward to the Legislature, members of the Legislature saw the importance of that debate. And it was in that debate where I articulated as to, and others I would suggest, that the government had a responsibility to play and they needed to take some action in order to protect those jobs and to ensure that the government was taking some action. And, in fact, it was months later that one of the ideas that I talked about, the government acted upon, where in fact, they launched a legal lawsuit against Air Canada or brought Air Canada to court. And I believe it's still in the court process.

Well, what I would like to do is suggest to members that if you take a look at the importance—and really, there's two issues here. There's the 250 jobs and the impact that this decision to issue these layoffs is going to have on those 250 people that are getting paid by Greyhound Canada to work. Well, it quickly spreads to include their families and, ultimately, that is how—I would say is one of the major issues that we should be addressing.

The other one is in regards to the impact that it has on our province. These are vital important positions. You know, I don't know how many speeches I've heard in the last year about the inland port, for example, and how Greyhound and Canada Post and others are saying how wonderful it is that we have this relocation that's taking place over at the Winnipeg international airport. The Premier (Mr. Doer) himself has talked about how important it is that inland port is going to be. Well, busing is a critical component of that, Mr. Speaker. And I would welcome, from the government's side, in terms of their participation, in telling us what it is that's actually taking place. What has the government been doing?

Both the Leader of the Liberal Party and myself asked questions earlier today on this issue. My leader made reference to the additional burden that it's going to create, potentially create, for individuals that require health-care services. The potential additional costs that could be generated because of transportation of northern patients, as an example. The minister, in one of the responses, made reference in terms of the other advantages of rural communities and importance of bus services to those rural communities. Mr. Speaker, I've read many articles, a few in the last couple of days, at the Legislative Library where, again, it emphasizes just

how important these bus services are to our rural communities.

And I ultimately would argue that if you saw the merit and the benefits of allowing for a debate in regards to the flight attendants with Air Canada, then you should allow for the debate with regards to the plight of these 250 jobs with Greyhound Canada. At least allow the debate to occur so that when Manitobans, and I'm sure there will be many Manitobans that will be looking at today's *Hansard* and wanting to see exactly where people and what people had to say about this very important issue. Mr. Speaker, we want to make it very clear that we are concerned about those individuals that are going to be both directly and indirectly affected by Greyhound's apparent decision.

\* (14:40)

And there is an onus of responsibility on the government to be able to clearly demonstrate that it's working to address the many concerns that Manitobans have with regards to what's happening with Greyhound. And, you know, I would like to see the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) actually answer and tell this House what specifically it is that she has done to protect those jobs, to protect the busing industry in the province of Manitoba, along with the Minister of Infrastructure and highways, or even others, Mr. Speaker, that have talked about the importance of that inland port.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, I believe, is that having a debate today is indeed appropriate. We have seen in the past where we have allowed debates of this nature to occur. And I cite the example of the flight attendants with Air Canada where there was value by having that debate and, I've heard that firsthand, and we have seen proof of that.

While here, what I'm suggesting is let's treat the employees of Greyhound and that particular sector of the industry here in Manitoba in the same fashion and, at the very least, allow the debate to occur. And I realize, Mr. Speaker, that the only way that that debate in all likelihood will occur, is if the government, in its wisdom, is prepared to allow it to occur.

So I look to the government. I look to the leadership candidates and their supporters to get on the record and get behind the employees and get behind the need to ensure that the busing industry in the province of Manitoba is not only being protected today, but also going into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader.

Okay, the honourable member for Arthur-Virden.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to also concur with the member from Inkster that the—upon the urgency of this particular point of discussion with the Greyhound services in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and that this is a first opportunity that we have had to speak to this issue, particularly because of—I have been notified as well, in regards to the particular pink slips that have been offered to a number of the employees of Greyhound. These are unionized personnel across the province of Manitoba that deserve a better fate than what is before them, and it would be a different story if we have had some forthcoming information from the government. We've been waiting very patiently to find out what that information would be.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that's why I rise to support the member from Inkster's matter of urgent public importance, and that's to deal with the information around the whole issue of Greyhound having notified the provincial government here in Manitoba that they will close services—and, I believe, it's October the 2nd—that they gave a 30-day notice on September the 3rd that they will disband all service in the province of Manitoba.

This isn't about a few routes. It's not just about a couple of routes that they have wanted to cut services on. This is about leaving Manitoba completely, Mr. Speaker, and so that's why I feel that it's very urgent that we discuss this issue in the House today.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the government says that they only knew for a few days apart—you know, when they got the letter and they got the announcement. I think it was the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) that indicated on behalf of the transport minister, that while we've only been notified for a few days—well, that's not true. There was a very urgent circumstance around this. They had—that's misleading the House and Manitobans. They knew about it 'cause the letter was of August the 14th, I believe, that they—has been reported that they received this letter, and that's a very urgent matter. We've been waiting to hear from the government, but they haven't been able to put that forward.

So I think that that's—certainly the fact that there will be layoffs coming, the fact that we will lose the service, the fact that seniors, students, people in remote areas of the province will not only lose passenger service, but along with that, some particular form of freight service in some of those areas as well, Mr. Speaker, is very, very detrimental and very urgent to be discussed, given the fact that we have been patient in waiting for the government to try and provide information on this particular devastating action across the province of Manitoba.

I think that, Mr. Speaker, it's very easy to make the case that the public interest would be harmed if this isn't discussed because, of course, many, many, many services will be shut down; many citizens, seniors, students, as I've said, will be extremely inconvenienced by the lack of bus service in not only rural and northern Manitoba, but in persons from the city of Winnipeg trying to get out to those rural areas. And I don't believe that the minister has taken into consideration the economic impact that that's going to have, the devastating economic impact that that's going to have on other regions besides Winnipeg and in all of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and what it does to our whole economy.

Mr. Speaker, this service is—or a service like this is certainly required to make sure that people are able to get to their medical appointments, that students get to school in the province of Manitoba, whether it's university students that use the bus to go back and forth from their rural homes during the weekend periods or even close enough that some of them may commute on a daily basis to universities in the city—in the cities, I guess I should say as well, because of course we have universities in many of our cities in Manitoba.

I want to say that the minister tried to make out that he knew about this for only two days. I've pointed out that the minister's known this for about weeks, but I think the key here, Mr. Speaker, is that as long as I've been transportation critic, there has been concerns voiced by Greyhound Canada about the regulations and detrimental circumstances that have been placed by this government, who is responsible for this service in Manitoba, for administering it. They have been warned many times by Greyhound Canada about the detrimental circumstances and regulations that this government has placed upon them, so in an effort to allow them to provide that service in this province.

And that's a concern, Mr. Speaker, and one that I think we need to debate in the House today and that we need to have voiced as well as we can in this—given the information that is available. And hopefully that the minister could provide us with a greater amount of information instead of continuing with the secrecy that we have—that surrounds this in Manitobans' minds. At least let Manitobans know what is proceeding in regards to where the government would like to go with providing a—this service or a continuing service in the province.

But I think as long as the government—you know, and I'm sure that they were all aware—aware that Greyhound Canada is a private firm that—but this is an essential service, Mr. Speaker. It's a movement of people throughout our provinces as a very essential service for the citizens of this province.

And we, as the PC caucus in this House, are very disappointed to learn that Greyhound signals intention to end that passenger service within 30 days, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before. But what we're most disappointed about is the fact that the NDP hasn't taken steps to work with Greyhound to find both short- and long-term solutions that will allow them to continue to operate in the province. And if they have, why is it taking so long or why are we pushing it so close to the end of the period of time when Greyhound has indicated that they'll pull out? These discussions should have been going on for some time.

I'm sensitive to the fact that Greyhound is sensitive to the regulations that have been placed upon them to operate in this province, Mr. Speaker. Maybe we need to know more about what those are. The government has been very secretive. I know we have asked for Freedom of Information on some of these particular points at times and we've been denied that access as well.

So, while I understand contractual arrangements in the province and throughout Canada to operate, this is a circumstance that is pointing to Manitoba being the first place that they'll pull out of, Mr. Speaker. Greyhound has indicated that they may move out of other areas as well. To me, I think Manitobans need to know that why was Manitoba picked as the first place that Greyhound would leave. I don't think it shines a light very well on the economic viability of our province and certainly, certainly doesn't speak well for the—for what our side of the House has been speaking about for some time and that is the economic climate that this government

has left in the province of Manitoba. If we had a better economic climate, we would have more industries, more support in our rural communities, to have a greater population in those areas—and some of our areas are growing. I know that, in my own southwest corner of the province, we are seeing growth there—but I'm very, very concerned about why this government has done nothing to reduce the red tape and the regulations and the tax burden upon these kinds of industries in the province of Manitoba when it's been brought to their attention many, many times.

\* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, there are many quotes in rural newspapers and across the province in regards to the need for this service. I know in our—my own community, the town that I live in, in Virden, Mr. Brethor, the economic development officer, is quoted as saying: Any time a community loses the service you have to be concerned about it, end quote. And that's true right across the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, while Greyhound has sent the letter to the minister, we just want to reiterate in closing that we are seeking changes, that Greyhound has been seeking changes to the legislative and regulatory regimes governing their operation in Manitoba. We've just been forthcoming with the government or we've been seeking information from the government as to why they've been so secretive and why they haven't changed these legislative and regulatory regimes earlier.

It should be no surprise to this minister because, of course, he's been warned, as I've said, for years that this has been a concern for Greyhound, and we understand that in the past Greyhound has gone before the Manitoba Transport Board on route issues, that they've also cited concerns about the province's regulatory environment. So it's no surprise, again, Mr. Speaker, to the minister or shouldn't be.

What I do find astonishing is that the minister was warned about point blank by Greyhound in mid-August and that no action has been taken, Mr. Speaker, by the government to address the company's concerns, and so I believe that Greyhound reiterated their concerns a number of times to this government. I can't repeat it enough. They should have been making changes along the way over the last four or five years in regards to this and providing a better economic—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk to the matter raised with respect to the matter of urgent public importance raised by members opposite.

There is no doubt that members of the government are most interested in this issue and have been active on this for some time, Mr. Speaker, and, therefore, we support the opportunity to have a discussion. I do have to note not only do we support it because it's of vital importance to the people of Manitoba, but it also allows us to clarify remarks made by, again, the leader of the third party, inaccuracies that he put on the record in the hallway with respect to the issue and, for that reason alone, would justify discussing this.

You know, one could, one could, you know one—I don't want to—one could be cynical and talk about the first issue the members of the third party raised was the issue of a conflict of interest that was out of nowhere, *[interjection]* you know, but I'm not going to do that, Mr. Speaker.

The people of Manitoba and the business of Manitoba and the welfare of Manitoba, Manitobans, is more important than anything. We're prepared to agree to a number of speakers on this matter providing we can have sufficient time to get back to bills at the end of the day.

I think the opposition is prepared to agree. I think the third party is prepared to agree. We've going to put up a number of speakers. The opposition could be prepared to put up a number of speakers. The third party is. I think there's agreement that notwithstanding, not withstanding the rules, Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to agree to spend some time debating this important matter. *[interjection]*

Just in terms of direction, the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Hawranik) is suggesting, and the third party, that two hours or until speakers are exhausted, whichever comes first.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, I thank the honourable members for the advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) should be debated today. The notice required by rule 36(1) was provided. Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunity to raise the matter.

I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward; however, I was not persuaded that the ordinary business of the House should be set aside to deal with this issue today. Although this is an issue that some members may have a concern about, I do not believe that the public interest will be harmed if the business of the House is not set aside to debate the motion today.

Additionally, I would like to note that other avenues exist for members to raise the issue, including question period, members' statements and grievances.

Therefore, with the greatest of respect, I must rule that this matter does not meet the criteria set by rules and precedence, and I rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

However, despite the procedural shortcomings, there does appear to be a willingness to debate the issue. I shall then put the question to the House. Shall the debate proceed? *[Agreed]*

Okay, it's been agreed to. The debate—as agreed to by all members of the House, the debate will either last two hours or when there's—when all speakers that wish to speak have spoken. If it's under two hours, that will end the debate on the MUPI. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Okay, that has been agreed to. Okay, we will now start our debate, but I'll remind members that the speaking time limit is 10 minutes and there's no vote on a MUPI. Okay, just to remind members. Okay, now we will start debate.

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have this opportunity for a couple of reasons. One, it's important that accurate information be put on the record with regard to this issue because indeed bus transportation is an important essential service for Manitobans, many Manitobans, as has been pointed out by a number of speakers so far. And certainly we want to make sure that the information that's on the record is accurate so people have an opportunity to see what has transpired thus far.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say that, first of all, Greyhound made a proposal for their licence to the Manitoba Motor Transport Board. There were public hearings held in Manitoba. Greyhound, who is a monopoly in Manitoba, bought out Grey Goose, and they went and presented—as well as many citizens from throughout northern Manitoba and other communities, made presentations to the Motor

Transport Board with regard to Greyhound wanting to obtain a reduction in routes and their licence.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, we were taken aback, quite taken aback, with the drastic move on their part, given that only two months before they had made application to the Motor Transport Board to allow for the elimination of one northern route, Flin Flon to Thompson, and the board was awaiting further information at Greyhound's request. Greyhound stated: Let us provide you with more information to show you that there are losses taking place on certain routes.

Greyhound, No. 1, never came back with any more—with further information and they did not give the Motor Transport Board any opportunity to make a ruling at all and see the information in the case that Greyhound was making.

So, needless to say, Mr. Speaker, when I met with them at the beginning of September, and they notified me at that time that, as of October the 2nd, they would be shutting down all bus service and not just Manitoba. I mean, when you take a look at the map that they're referencing to, it's from Sault Ste. Marie all the way to Regina that all bus travel would be discontinued from Greyhound. Northwestern Ontario would be cut, and also the travel on the eastern side of Saskatchewan would be cut and, of course, all the routes in Manitoba.

So, needless to say, Mr. Speaker, we were taken aback and shocked by this because Greyhound had not come back with any kind of alternatives or any suggestions or even made the case as to why it was important that they would need subsidies or route change or route closures.

*Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

So they, in the meantime, prior to getting back to the Motor Transport Board, what they did is they had a meeting with the federal minister, Minister Baird. And they went to the minister saying: We want a blank cheque. We want \$15 million—I believe the amount was—to cover all of our losses that we're incurring throughout Canada. And, Mr. Baird, rightfully so, said: Well, where's the proof? Like, I'm not just going to sign a blank cheque for you. Well, give us some—show us why, why you're looking for a subsidy. To make up the difference in losses?

\* (15:00)

So they took the same approach with Manitoba when I met with them. Essentially they were saying:

We need money; we want \$15 million, from across Canada from different provinces and the federal government to make up a shortfall. Well, where's the proof? We're in charge of the public purse; we're not just gonna give you a blank cheque. They have not provided that. To the best of my knowledge, they have not provided us that information, nor did they not provide Minister Baird with that information, nor have they not—they have not provided the Motor Transport Board with that information, as to justify their losses to show where the routes that they're losing money on.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's certainly challenging. This government will do everything we can within our power to look at solutions, wheth—and we're looking at all options, meaning are there alternative carriers available? Are there—or is there—is it possible to work out an arrangement with Greyhound? But we need more information from Greyhound and we're gonna be meeting with Greyhound in the next number of days to try to clarify some of this, you know. And so I know that members opposite have raised, and rightfully so, members opposite are from—are hearing from—possibly hearing from their constituents and they—and people are concerned.

As I pointed out to the media that my mother takes the bus to come into Winnipeg when we're unable to go to Dauphin to pick her up to bring her into Winnipeg to visit us, or to Lorette or to La Salle to visit her family. She will take the bus in and she's 83 years of age. She doesn't have a driver's licence. This is just one example but, aside from that, there's many automobile dealerships, there's many rural and northern health authorities that depend—whether they're sending clients for dialysis or whether they're using it to ship blood. There's so many examples of the bus mode of transportation being so important to this province that we—and the term I used before was that it's an important essential service for Manitobans.

So this government will exhaust every means at our disposal to take a look at trying to find solutions. Number one, work with Greyhound; see if there's anything that we can work out with Greyhound. But in the meantime also take a look at other options that we may have to try to resolve this situation to ensure that Manitobans continue to have bus travel at their disposal.

Now the federal government, why does the federal government play an important role? I have to

actually thank Minister Baird. Minister Baird has been great to work with, not only on the Infrastructure file and Building Canada file, but also on this issue. When I phoned him and spoke to him, Minister Baird said, you know—well, he just said to me that it was important that we put this on the federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting, our next meeting, which is coming up very shortly, to discuss this issue because it's cross-border. It's not just in Manitoba that it's an issue. It's in almost every province in Canada, including Northwest Territories and the Yukon where this issue is usually important for them, where Greyhound is planning on cutting many of the routes or, in Manitoba's case, all of the routes. So, Minister Baird, I have to thank him for that, for putting that on the federal agenda to discuss this important issue on this mode of transportation.

The other piece of this is why is it important that the federal government play a role in this. The federal government, to the best of my knowledge, at least what I've been advised, they give subsidies to VIA Rail, they give subsidies to airlines, they give subsidies to marine travel. And when you take a look at the one that there's some resistance to is busing, and yet most Manitobans—and indeed one could argue that Manitobans that have the least ability to pay for other routes of transportation and other modes of transportation use the bus. So there's a certain segment of the population, aside from rural health authorities, aside from other agencies that need the bus to transport either patients or their goods, as an individual that is the least expensive mode of transportation for many, many citizens in Manitoba and elsewhere.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this issue is indeed important to us and we've made sure that we've tried to express that, not only to Greyhound but others who would listen. We are going to be meeting with them and we'll continue to meet with them as long as it takes to hopefully find a solution with them, or find other solutions that might be—might be good ones to take.

This is an evolving issue, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it's too early to really conclude what the result will be, but I could just say that there's a number of different organizations that are looking at the routes that Greyhound say are not profitable. They're—and, but we have to really look into these companies and see whether or not they are really viable and legitimate companies, because if Greyhound is accurate in what they're saying, that some of the routes may not be viable for them

financially, we'll also have to take that into consideration.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to say to the MLA for River Heights, for example, be accurate when you're making your comments with regard to Greyhound. For example, Greyhound gave north-gave Ontario a 90-day notice period because it's in their legislation. Manitoba doesn't have any kind of a notice period so they're not—so I've been advised by my officials that they gave us a month notice. They came and spoke to us with regard to October 2 date and they are trying to adhere, of course, to the labour code and so on with regard to notice to their employees, which is a really important portion of this discussion, which we have met with the union and have those discussions.

So everyone is in the room having discussions as to the importance of this issue, but I've been advised that there are no necessary time limits with regard to Greyhound giving Motor Transport Board a certain period of time, as is in Ontario where it's a 90-day limit. But I can clarify that and I'll certainly look at it, and I'll be the first, certainly, to make that comment to the member from River Heights if there is, indeed, a notice period that Greyhound had to give, but what I've been advised is there's no such thing in Manitoba as opposed to what is in northwestern Ontario.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this government takes this issue seriously. We've been working at it. We've been working at some solutions, and we hope to certainly be able to address this in the very near future. Thank you.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** I appreciate the opportunity to speak to what's a very important issue facing all Manitobans, not simply those in rural Manitoba but, indeed, I think all Manitobans should be concerned and should be interested in the resolution to this issue.

However, it is—it is clear that particularly in our rural communities, that the disruption or the ending of bus service by Greyhound within 30 days will have a particular impact on those residents who rely on the bus service, and I was glad to hear the Minister of Infrastructure refer to it as an essential service because for many of those Manitobans, it is an essential service, given the geographic nature of our province and the ability or inability sometimes, to move around in it in certain modes of transportation.

There are many who rely on that bus service, not just for ordinary transportation in between communities or in between cities, but as has already been pointed out in this House, often for medical needs and medical appointments to get into specialists in different areas where we have the specialized training for medical challenges that individuals may have. And so it's important to look at it from that scope and through that lens that this is, in fact, an essential service.

And we on this side of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, recognize that there are some regulatory challenges that have posed to Greyhound and the operation of their buses, and we know that the Manitoba government has responsibility because through the federal government have delegated the regulatory responsibility down to the Province and so it falls into the purview of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to look at the regulatory challenges that have been cited and put forward by Greyhound in terms of trying to come to a resolution of a very, very serious problem, and it's unfortunate that we hear from so many businesses and so many different sectors that regulations that have been put in place or kept in place by this government are impeding their ability to do business, that it isn't a very business-friendly climate, and this is obviously a very stark example of that and the decision of Greyhound to end service in 30 days. But we have heard this sort of story in the past before with many other businesses who say that the regulations that they face on a daily basis in the province of Manitoba prevent them from operating their business in a profitable or in a fully functioning way. And so, again, this is something that draws a lot of attention because of the fact it's an essential service for many Manitobans, but it's not a story that we haven't heard before.

\* (15:10)

I think that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) has to be a little clearer in terms of his role on this particular file. He says that he was shocked to learn about Greyhound's decision to cease service in the province of Manitoba and in some parts of Saskatchewan and northwestern Ontario. In fact, I think on the day that the announcement was made he was unavailable for comment, and so in his place the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) was acting, and made comments to the effect that they hadn't heard of this before and they were taken aback by this. And yet

we do know that Greyhound was in contact with the government on August 14th.

On August 14th a letter was, I understand, sent to the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux) and there was advice given by Greyhound foreshadowing this particular action, and so there seems to be a disconnect. There seems to be differences of information coming forward between the company and between the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), who was acting in his place, and I think that they need to be very clear in saying when they learnt about the possibility of bus service being ended in the province of Manitoba because Manitobans would expect it if, in fact, the Minister of Infrastructure believes that it is an essential service. And I take him at his word when he says that it—that he believes it is an essential service and that he should have seen this as a top priority and been right on top of the file, and if he was given that notice, if there was correspondence that was going to his office, if there was foreshadowing of this action to be taken, that he would have been meeting with his officials looking for a resolution, would have been active on the file and not caught off guard as he says that he was.

But here we are today in the Legislature debating a matter of urgent public importance, and so it falls to the government, regardless of the mistakes that they have made or the inattentiveness on the file—I know that they are distracted by many of the things that are happening in their party these days—it does fall to them to take responsibility for this particular situation to ensure that Manitobans, whether they be in Winnipeg or in rural Manitoba, have that access to that essential service.

And so I think that the Minister of Infrastructure needs to be more forthcoming in terms of what it is that his government is looking to do with Greyhound on terms of the regulatory side, what it is that they're doing to not only address the short-term problems and, obviously, there's an immediate problem that the government is facing, but the longer term issues that face the company as well, because we could probably see resolutions that deal with some of the short-term issues, but we still don't want to be facing this in a year or two years from now. There needs to be some sort of a resolution that ensures that those who rely on the bus service aren't put into this position in a few days, a few weeks or a few months from now, again, because it's clearly unsettling to them. Those who need it for work-related purposes or who need it for medical-related purposes, or just

simply to live their lives in a way that all Manitobans should be able to can't have this sort of uncertainty hanging over them.

And, of course, there are many people—I know the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) referenced it in question period—many people who are employed by Greyhound and it's their livelihood, and they, too, need that certainty not just for the coming days, but for the longer term future as well.

And so we are disappointed that it's come to this point. We are concerned that the Minister of Infrastructure had prior warning and prior ability to take action so that it wouldn't have come to this point and we're sorry that it has reached a situation where it does seem like there are many Manitobans who could lose this service in the next number of days. But I would, regardless of how we've gotten to this point now—and I think the government who takes some responsibility for that—but regardless of how we've gotten to this point it is now incumbent upon them to ensure that a resolution is worked out for the short term and for the long term for the benefit of the riders of Greyhound, those who may use it in the future: students, seniors, but also those—*[interjection]*—those who are also employed in the industry.

I know the Minister of Infrastructure is heckling something from his seat. I hope that he will use all of his energy not here in the House, but to try to apply it to finding a resolution to what is a very, very serious situation and one that should probably have never have gotten to this situation to begin with. He may have not have been a right on top of the file before, but I think now he's been focussed on it and I hope that he's right on top of the file now and it becomes one of his key priorities in his ministry.

I know, Madam, you're indicating to me, Madam Acting Speaker, that my time has ended, but we look forward to seeing the resolution to this problem so that the riders of Greyhound will be able to use it in the coming days in the years ahead, and that the employees of Greyhound will have the assuredness, the certainty that their jobs are in place now and into the future. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** Madam Deputy Speaker, regarding the Greyhound issue, for me personally, it's almost like the old saying *déjà vu* all over again, because I appeared before a committee a while ago, the Motor Transport Board, a couple of years ago, and we fought this battle and we fought it strenuously. So, when some members of the

opposition say we didn't try hard, we certainly tried hard then as we did now.

I was in Flin Flon this time around and also in Snow Lake, and we fought strenuously to keep our service, and I was also flanked by our wonderful young MP, Niki Ashton, whose father is probably busy doing other things at the moment.

Now it's a serious issue up north. It's a serious issue all across Manitoba, and it's somewhat disconcerting that it came, well, out of the blue. I certainly wasn't aware that Greyhound would make that kind of a decision before the Motor Transport Board had made its decision. And I know there was some criticism that the Motor Transport Board was taking too long to come up with this decision after our meetings all over—well, not all over the north, but certainly in Thompson and Flin Flon and in Snow Lake. But the Motor Transport Board can only render a decision or a verdict, if you like, if they have the necessary information. It seems to me that Greyhound didn't wait for that verdict. They just, you know, jumped the gun, and I think that was somewhat unfortunate.

Also, the chairperson of the Motor Transport Board—and I want to emphasize to those who seem to think that the Motor Transport Board is a hindrance, these are public-spirited citizens on that board who are looking for the best possible way to protect our citizens and our constituents and as well as to make the best transportation viable. I mean, they're playing a serious role and a good role.

Now I heard at one of the meetings in Snow Lake—I don't know if it was the last one or the one before—one of the representations from Greyhound, I believe it was, I'm going by memory here, was saying stuff like, you know, we liked it better in the United States. If we didn't get the ridership in one of these particular states, we just pull the plug. You know, on Friday you have service, on Monday you don't.

We don't want that kind of thing. We're much more civilized in Manitoba. Therefore, I want to put in a plug for the Motor Transport Board and the wonderful role that they're playing. Also, as the head for the Motor Transport Board said in his interview with the *Winnipeg Free Press*, he doesn't recall in the last two or three years any reasonable request made by the company that they haven't honoured. If they wanted a fair increase they looked at it and if it was warranted they would give it to the company. So it's mystifying to me personally why Greyhound couldn't

wait a little bit longer until a decision was reached by the Motor Transport Board. So don't blame the Motor Transport Board. They're doing their job.

Now, also I have difficulty figuring out exactly how Greyhound operates in terms of the vertical, you know, corporate structure. Like, I've been told, you know, you gotta phone Dallas, Texas, but then I was told, well, Dallas, Texas, is sort of part of it but you got to go further, you got to go to Aberdeen, Scotland. And I don't know, maybe you go to Aberdeen, Scotland, and they tell you to go to Vladivostok or something. I don't know, but it's a little bit mystifying, you know, that this kind of corporate line of power is weaving all over and it's somewhat vague and nebulous.

But, if it is in Aberdeen, Scotland—I'm not sure of that, but I believe it's somewhere in Scotland—I wonder if the head honcho there, by whatever name he or she goes, is aware of what a person in Snow Lake, Manitoba, really needs or a farmer in southern Manitoba really needs with regard to bus transportation. I can think of an elderly citizen, let's say in Snow Lake, a grandmother who needs to go to Winnipeg for urgent medical procedure, if there's no bus for her, how is she gonna get there?

There is no really functional airport with regular service. There is an airport, but only for emergencies. She doesn't have a car. Are you gonna ask someone to drive her all the way to Winnipeg? Like, we need bus service in northern Manitoba, and we need it in rural Manitoba. We can't do without it and others have already pointed out how buses are used. Not just for moving, transporting passengers and freight but also for medical reasons, for lab supplies, you name it, even students going to university, a multitude of reasons. Certainly the northern regional health authorities rely on bus service immensely.

\*(15:20)

And let's take a look at cost. If I were to fly from Winnipeg, or from Flin Flon to Winnipeg, back and forth on the airplane, on Calm Air or on the other one, the other—Bearskin, it's—if you just walk in and buy a ticket it's like \$1,300 or a little bit more or less. It's around there. That's a lot of money. A bus would cost about one-sixth of that, roughly. So the huge cost for our northern regional health authorities if the buses should cease functioning is immense. We can't have that situation.

Now, I happened to be in Lynn Lake and in Snow Lake last week, and I talked with various

people about the Greyhound issue. They raised it. So I'm actually quoting from notes I made in Lynn Lake and Leaf—pardon me—Lynn Lake and Snow Lake.

What were their concerns about Greyhound? Here are some of them, and they're fairly random and not well thought out, but as I jotted them down. They felt that Greyhound was not talking to their workers, to their unionized work force. The depots, or the depots, never knew when the bus was coming in. This was of particular concern in Lynn Lake. Nobody could predict that what hour the bus would actually show up—at the 11 o'clock schedule when it was supposed to be there or leave, I forget how that went.

But they were usually several hours late. The buses—the buses around—[interjection] well, the highways—that's another issue, but we're really working on that one. Put a lot of money in that. But, they were usually late. You couldn't predict when they would show up, and the other thing is they didn't always have a Greyhound tag on it. Sometimes there was a military one. They bought a bus somewhere on sale for whatever or somewhere else, and so you didn't even know it was a Greyhound bus really. They kind of objected to that.

There was no way you could use cellphones either around Snow Lake or around Lynn Lake or Leaf Rapids because MTS doesn't provide them up there. We don't control MTS anymore; it's not part of government.

So, you know, we could—we could argue the whole telephone system, but—so, like, there are such things, I guess, as the satellite phones, and I'll give you an example. I think it was last February when, once again, a Greyhound bus broke down leaving or coming to Lynn Lake, I'm not sure, but it was the middle of the night. There was a storm in a huge valley. They couldn't reach even via satellite telephone anyone because I guess they were blocked out of that particular valley. They even boosted the bus driver on top of the bus to make a call; it didn't work. Passengers made a bonfire, tried to keep warm. They were found many, many hours later. One person was taken to hospital.

One of these days somebody's going to die because we get that kind of inferior service. Inferior vehicles, particularly, and also, you know, slow, unpredictable service.

It wasn't much different with VIA Rail a number of years ago, either. Their most recent car on the

railroad line to Pukatawagan and Lynn Lake, it was 1913, and they had orders to run them until they fell apart.

The places where you need buses most are rural and remote areas and that's where we don't have the cellphones, we don't have the connections, we may not even have the roads quite up to the standards we'd like them. So, all these things, you know, work together in tandem or in harmony.

I think that we are working hard to try and adjust this, but I think we have to be also fair to Greyhound. They need to make a living. They need to make money. We're not asking them to run, you know, to run it without money or without making a profit. I'm just wondering why it worked so well with Grey Goose. They seemed to work quite well out of Manitoba for many years. Also, I believe by ceasing service, that some people call it bullying. I may call it a negotiation tactic. I don't know. But, it seems to be very odd that you would take the middle of this country, the Keystone province, and a little bit around in Ontario and Saskatchewan and say, no service here.

So, let's say you're a German tourist and you catch a Greyhound bus in Halifax, and you want to go across the country and see it. They dump you off at Sault Ste. Marie and then you gotta find your way to Regina, and how silly is that? That's not good for our citizens. That's not good for our image. That's not good for that tourist. So, obviously, we can't—we can't tolerate that kind of an approach.

Now, I don't know the immediate time line and how we're gonna solve this. I know it affects our unionized staff, our workers. It affects the people that need the bus, obviously. It's just not acceptable in this modern day and age not to have bus transportation. There are probably many different solutions and answers we could look at. I know we have a northern bus line in Flin Flon. They, perhaps, could temporarily be used to give some sort of service in the North. I don't know. I haven't explored that. I don't know if the minister has or who has.

But, there are—there are contingency plans. I think we're working hard at those plans. We have to be aware, though, that Greyhound pulled the plug kind of unexpectedly, and if I'm not mistaken, and I may well be, but I was under the impression that we have a new bus depot at the airport and I thought that Greyhound signed the contract last month, and the ink—and I think the ink is almost dry, for 40 years

service. Now, I could be wrong in that, but I thought it was for 40 years.

It seems peculiar that, you know, if you do that, then you would pull service, other than a negotiation strategy, I suppose, where you're saying, we need more money, we're truly losing money. But then I thought it would be more civilized if we sat down and try and negotiate before we inconvenienced our passengers, and the elderly lady from Snow Lake, or the person from Lynn Lake, or the person living on a farm who absolutely needs that bus service. I mean, we can't throw our people at risk like that. There has to be a more civilized way of doing that.

And certainly, we cannot have a vacuum in the middle of our—middle of our country. You know, where buses run up to the Ontario border, almost, and then resume again somewhere in the middle of Saskatchewan. You know, what kind of a country would that be? I think Greyhound has—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The member's time has expired.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I rise to put a few comments on the record.

First of all, I want to emphasize how important Greyhound service is to people in Manitoba. And it is of particular importance to people in smaller communities and in northern communities for affordable transportation. The member for Flin Flon has already made a comparison of the costs getting from Flin Flon to Winnipeg by bus versus by plane. Similar comparisons would apply to many other sites in northern Manitoba, Thompson, for example, Snow Lake, et cetera.

And so, clearly, this is a service which people in Manitoba need. And here we are, in a situation where we could be, you know, just two weeks or a little more away from shut down of Greyhound service, and the government has yet to give us any alternative plans in terms of if Greyhound does shut down. You know, that's the first point. And, you know, we should have had this laid out now so that people can be assured that there's going to be service, you know, even if Greyhound shuts down. I mean, what's going to happen to people? There are huge costs individually and for the Department of Health. This is the kind of information that, surely, we should've expected from this government so that, you know, people would be aware of what's going to happen, were able to make plans. And, of course, it's got a huge impact on people who work for Greyhound,

which is well over 200 employees. And so, you know, this is a vital service affecting lots and lots of people in Manitoba.

Now the—in various communities, the needs may be a little bit different. There were hearings in Snow Lake. I talked to people in Snow Lake. I was there this summer. The transportation is vital, not only for people who want to come to other destinations around Manitoba, but for the shipping of medical specimens for tests. They don't have an extensive lab. This is just absolutely vital service. And, you know, it would be a lot harder—very difficult delivering health care in Snow Lake without Greyhound or some alternate service, you know, for a community like Wawanesa. The people use the Greyhound to come for health care into Winnipeg, and certainly this is vital, a good example, vital for people who come in from, you know, Gimli, from communities all the over place.

Now the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) has said, oh, I was totally innocent, I was totally unaware that this was going to happen, Greyhound brought this forward, you know, completely out of the blue.

Well, you know, there are two reasons why I believe that the minister should've been aware. The first is common sense awareness. Look, you know, from the hearings in Snow Lake, from the discussion around Greyhound, Greyhound has had significant issues. You know, these came up at hearings in 2005. Greyhound has been talking about the costs of servicing smaller communities for some time. This is not totally new, and when you add to this that the economy, North America-wide, is in stress at the moment, and Greyhound is likely experiencing declining revenues, decreasing passengers, fewer tourists, so on.

\* (15:30)

So one of the common-sense conclusions of adding these two bits of information is that, you know, there may be a problem with Greyhound. We should be watching this file very closely. And from what I've been hearing from people that, you know, there may be some additional extra pressure in Manitoba.

When Greyhound moved to build its terminal at the airport, you know, this, in fact, although it was vital to have this service, Greyhound to Winnipeg, you know, for people coming from Gimli, they've told me, well, you know, it's really not very

convenient to end up at the airport because, quite frankly, when we end up at the airport, you then have to take a cab or you have to take some other means of transportation to get downtown if that's where you're going. And so, with this change to the airport, with the—you know, I don't know, but from what I'm hearing just with an ear to the ground—the minister doesn't appear to have an ear to the ground—that there are some changes and some problems associated with Greyhound going to the airport. The minister who's responsible for transportation probably hasn't even considered the implications of Greyhound taking people to the airport and the communication—and the transportation of people—you know, many of these are people, you know, who are taking Greyhound because they're not as well off—you know, that this is a more difficult situation for them. And maybe there are some additional reasons why Greyhound was having trouble in Manitoba and wanted, you know, to bring this forward to address it.

And lastly—and there's a major reason—the minister says that, you know, there's no requirement for there to be notice of termination, but I have, you know, employment standards for Manitoba. How much notice must employers give to terminate a large group of employees? Employer who intends to terminate a group of 50 or more employees within four weeks must provide more notice than for an individual termination. For a number of employees of 101 to 299, that is 14 weeks. For more than 300, it's 18 weeks.

So we presume that Greyhound should have obeyed and followed the employment standards and provided the government notice of at least 14 weeks and so, you know, it seems to me maybe the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) will say something different, but I'm looking at, you know, section 67.1: Notice of intent to terminate employment of 50 or more employees. Section 1: If an employer terminates or intends to terminate the employment of 50 or more employees who are entitled under section 62 to notice of the termination or a wage in lieu of notice, and the terminations will occur within a four-week period, the employer must give the minister at least the following amount of written notice before the date on which the first termination is to take effect . . . 14 weeks, if there are more than 100 and fewer than 300 affected employees.

So, you know, I—you know, maybe the minister can tell me something that is different. Maybe the minister is not aware of these employment standards

and the rules and the legislation around this, but I would—I would suggest that the government, you know, must have had some increased awareness of this issue, either from a common-sense perspective or because it's legally required. And so the government is accusing me of, you know, saying things in error, but in fact, you know, all the information that we have in this direction is that there is a requirement and that there is also a very common-sense reason why the minister should have known. These hearings were public hearings in Snow Lake. A lot of this information is public information for anybody who's got their ear to the ground and knows what's going on in transportation. So, you know, I think that if the minister didn't know, then there's a problem that the minister, you know, is not putting two and two together properly or the minister is not being informed properly by somebody.

But this, you know, this is a crisis which, in our view, should have been avoided. And, if it's not to be avoided and the crisis is going to carry through, the minister should have provided us an alternative plan. What is the minister going to do if Greyhound, as it has said, shuts down in a very short period of time? Manitobans should have something to go on. They shouldn't be left in the lurch as they appear to be lurching, left in the lurch, by this government.

And, you know, there is, in a government which is doing its job properly, there shouldn't be need to go from crisis to crisis in this kind of fashion. You know, we've already had two matters of urgent public importance in a row.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The member's time has expired. Order, please.

The honourable member for Agriculture and Food.

**An Honourable Member:** Minister.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Minister for Agriculture and Food.

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** I want to take a moment to put a few comments on the record about this very important issue.

And I want to say to members of this House how concerned we are that with the plan that Greyhound has indicated to us, that they plan to cancel passenger service in Manitoba and how strongly we feel that this is an essential service for Manitobans.

And I want to relate it to my constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, because Swan River is, in fact, one of the more—although it may not be in the north, it is quite isolated because we do not have air service and there are communities like Mafeking, Barrows, all of those along the road between The Pas and Swan River, a route that takes people to Winnipeg or other places where they might have appointments or families, and a loss of this service would be very serious for that part of the province.

But it also relates to how we deal with the other services that are provided in. Others have talked about the importance of bus service for our medical community, for our hospitals, for the regional health authorities. This service is also very important to the farming community because this is the way many parts—and given this is harvest season, this is a time of the year when a service like this is very important.

And I have to say to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we were very much taken aback by the move made by Greyhound that—you know, only two months ago they were making applications, they were making application to the Motor Transport Board to eliminate one northern route to Flin Flon and Thompson. And the board was—transportation board was looking at this and they had requested more information from Greyhound. And, of course, we were surprised because Greyhound has given the indication that they recognize Manitoba as a very important centre for transportation, a transportation hub. They are moving, building a new terminal, which is a significant investment here in Manitoba. But when the minister met with them and said on September 1st, and then they said—they declared their intentions on September 2nd, that was very much a shock.

But I want to give assurance to this House that this has been brought to the federal agenda. It will be on the federal table for discussion because this is not just an issue for Manitoba. Manitoba is very seriously impacted but other provinces are impacted and we need to have the federal government part of this as well. So I'm pleased that we're able to get it on to the federal table.

And I want to assure all members of this House that this government and this Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) and Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) are taking this issue very seriously and we're looking at how we can ensure that there is a service in our rural and northern communities. That is very essential and we will

continue to work on it with Greyhound. We will continue to work on it with the federal government and we will look at every option we possibly can to ensure that we can continue to provide service. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** I rise to speak on the MUPI today regarding the recent announcement by Greyhound Canada. It is disappointing that we have reached this impasse where services have been not only threatened. I believe that the minister, minister responsible for Transportation and—Infrastructure and Transportation, I think, was playing a game of Russian roulette, and they've called his—they've called his hand in this situation, and I think he has to bear the brunt of this.

I suggested it's his issue. He should have dealt with this in a—in a timely manner. He had plenty of notice. As I've heard today, there's been a number of different notices that the minister had in this case, and I know that he may have been preoccupied with building a certain bridge, but there was—there's certainly an issue here that the minister should have dealt with, and I think he had ample opportunity.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this—the service that's provided by the bus service in this province, it's certainly a rural issue. There's no question about that. It's not just a northern rural issue. It's a southern rural issue, as well. In the rounds before, in the 2005 round, one might remember that there were bus routes cut in the constituency that I represent, those—and I recall vividly riding those buses to and from the city when I was a young man, when I was able to come to the city to work, and that was my mode of transportation because we couldn't afford anything else, but as the—one of the members pointed out today that maybe it's the low-income people that are affected. No, it's not just the low-income people that are affected; it's people that actually have the environment at heart, the people that look at an environmentally—a friendly environment and try to capitalize on the footprint that they're leaving.

And so here we have the NDP government who continues—they continue to say, we are the most environmentally friendly party in the province of Manitoba, and in doing that, they have—they have actually killed the hog industry in Manitoba with a moratorium. Most recently, the Minister for Conservation (Mr. Struthers) has said the injector systems in the province are terrible. They leave a terrible footprint, environmental footprint, Madam

Deputy Speaker, and that they are a health issue and they go on and on and on. They over-regulate people completely out of the province. I would suggest that if we take the bus service out of the province, that environmental footprint that is left is going to be huge. There's thousands and thousands of cars and other modes of transportation that'll be on the road creating a huge, huge impact to the environment, a lot worse than what the injector system of the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) talks about, and yet they want to over-regulate, over-regulate.

It's obvious that Greyhound has had discussions in the past with the Minister of Transportation about the regulations, and I would suggest that we, on this side of the House, would encourage that minister to find solutions to this before the environmental footprint get larger and the services get smaller. But there are, as the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) pointed out, there's parts that go up and down the road, there's medical supplies that go up and down the road. There's many, many, many things that are carried by the bus that are essential services to rural Manitoba, and rural Manitoba is not just the north, it's also the south.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I can't impress any more than what I have, I believe, on the minister that this service needs to be carried on and that my colleagues, and many of my colleagues and constituents feel that this loss of the passenger service is going to create a hardship, perhaps, that can't be measured at this point.

The NDP government, I suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, has some serious explaining to do on the handling of this important issue. The minister today stood on his—on his—in his place today in the House, and he made some feeble excuses, I felt they were feeble excuses, of exactly what has taken place up to date, but he has act—has not put in place a plan of action.

So what is going to happen as we go forward? We know what is going to happen. We know that there's not going to be a service, so we know that we need to have a plan. You have—and the minister had the opportunity to stand in his place today and tell us what that plan could be.

**An Honourable Member:** What's your plan?

**Mr. Graydon:** My plan is to let the person that's responsible for this portfolio to put something before us that we can appreciate. That's your responsibility, Mr. Minister, and I would assume that you take your

responsibilities seriously, and if you don't, then I suggest there is an alternative for you. But, apparently, there's been no action taken to address Madam Deputy Speaker, the concerns that have continued to percolate at this point. So what we—what we have is 250 people that are facing no income. They are facing unemployment insurance; that's what we have initially. That's the first impact; that's the hurt.

The second hurt is going to be the people that can't get to—can't get medical services either sent to them whether that happens to be their X-rays, for example, these need to get to where they have to go. The medical specimens that need to be moved that the Greyhound bus is providing a service for, that's another huge impact, and when we talk about there's no air service in Norway House and there's no air service in Snow Lake. There's no air service, I'm afraid, in Sprague and there's no air service in Plum Coulee. There's no air service in Altona. There's no air service in a great deal of our rural Manitoba. The bus service is an essential service. The minister has dropped the ball.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

The minister has dropped the ball on the negotiations. He wanted to play hard ball with these people, with the Greyhound people, and he called their bluff and they've called his bluff. I would suggest the minister has a responsibility, not only to this House, no, the people in this House are fine, he has a responsibility to the people in this province. He has a responsibility to provide that service and, at least, at the very least, show a plan of where he's going to go next.

I would suggest that between the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan), who hasn't said anything yet today, and the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux) that they should present this House with a plan on how they're going to deal with the people that are laid off, and also with how they're going to provide this service in the province. And with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

**Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas):** Mr. Speaker, the issue of the Greyhound transportation in northern Manitoba is, of course, a major concern for all concerned, especially in my constituency, Norway House, Cross Lake and The Pas are major users of this transportation. They are indeed very concerned and have expressed their disappointment of this action taken by Greyhound, but they are also—they are also hopeful and know that this government will

do what's necessary to restore and bring this service back to them in a manner that they will not be left without any transportation at this level.

A plan of action, well, in my—in my world that I've been, in a plan of action requires discussion of all major stakeholders. Mr. Speaker, that includes the Greyhound, this government, the communities and the employees, the unions, everybody has to be involved, and this is what we're doing to make sure that all those views are put on the table for consideration that will help make a decision that will benefit all Manitobans.

I want to assure my constituents that we are doing what's necessary to continue these discussions, and we have talked with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs as well to let them know that we are taking the necessary steps to make sure that our people are not left out without proper transportation.

\*(15:50)

Yes, I agree that it's not just moving people from one point to the next town into Winnipeg, but there are also many vendors, businesses in the north that use this for transportation of their goods, medical goods, car parts, vehicle parts, whatever is necessary to be transported. This is the way it was done, and this is why the businesses in our constituency are very concerned, and I have let them know that this government will do all they can to make sure that they are not left without proper transportation.

I want to also say that what we're gonna do about the solutions, this, this is an evolving issue. This is something that, you know, that everybody was caught off guard. The people from the north were caught off guard. They had indications from Greyhound that when they build that \$6.8-million terminal at the Winnipeg airport, that was kinda like an indication of their commitment to future operations in Manitoba. And so, when this announcement was made, everybody was taken aback by that. But now that we know what we're dealing with, we are going to make every necessary steps to bring this critical issue to a result that will benefit all peoples. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, I do want to rise to support the matter of urgent public importance that's been brought forward by the Liberal Party here this afternoon. And I was just passed a note from the member from Ste. Rose who just received an e-mail from a constituent by the name of Len Davidson, and he's been declared

legally blind, so he is unable to drive and relies on bus service to and from Neepawa to Winnipeg, Brandon for essential services. And it's certainly important not only for Mr. Davidson, but also other members of the rural communities have which been mentioned earlier in the House in order to come to Winnipeg for doctor appointments, for other services that they need and, of course, also goods and services.

And I know, as a previous business owner prior to my experience coming into the Legislature as MLA, I used the bus service on a daily basis, and I got to rely on that service on behalf of my customers in order to get timely goods and services back to them. And I know the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) referred to it in her statement in regards to businesses that rely on that service and specially now in a time of harvest, a time of which we need to get those parts back. In fact, we were talking earlier about—again with the member from Ste. Rose, he lost a seal on his combine. You know it was probably a \$20 seal, but to get that part back in a timely fashion in order to make sure that he's back in the field, have that crop put in the bin so that he's able to collect the revenue that he's waited so long to get, and certainly we know that the service has been provided by Greyhound certainly is an important aspect just in the farming community alone.

So I know there's been speakers in regards to the north. There's been speakers in regards to the south. And we certainly realize that this issue is a matter of certainly urgent public importance. And I wish to ensure that the minister in charge, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Lemieux), I know he's said that he's taking this issue very seriously. We'd encourage him to proceed with negotiations with Greyhound in a very timely manner to make sure that the services on October 2nd, those services don't stop.

And we on this side of the House wanna make sure that the information that's been passed on to the public, that it's done in a forthwith way in order to ensure that we, in fact, do have all the information. There's been some information put on the record that I'm certainly not privy to have all the information as opposition, but we certainly feel that the government does have an obligation to negotiate in an open and transparent manner in order to make sure that those issues, in fact, are dealt with in a timely manner.

Also, the—my understanding is that the new bus garage that's been proposed at the—at the Winnipeg

airport is also a significant issue. It'll be a building that's now going to be sitting empty. It's going to be jobs to some 250 people that'll be added to that employment list. Certainly, jobs that we need to retain here in the province of Manitoba, and the ripple effect of any business, whether it be small community, large community is—has significant impact on the overall economic well-being of this province.

So we know that on this side of the House it's very important to sustain those industries that are important to us, especially these that we consider essential services, and this is essential service that we feel that needs to be dealt with, and encourage the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure to deal with this just as soon as possible.

And I know that whenever we're talking about these issues that we do have all the information. We know that the—there has not been a ministerial statement on it. I'm disappointed in the fact that there has not been, and I think that we as the representatives of the people of Manitoba need to be updated so we do have that information to us at our fingertips so we can talk about it with them and make sure their issues are brought forward in a timely manner so we're able to have that information in order to give government the opportunity and us the opportunity to work with not only Greyhound, but also our constituents, our business owners, our taxpayers and the people that are so important to making sure that this service does, in fact, stay viable within the province of Manitoba.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know there's others that do want to speak in this particular bill. I'm not going to repeat what a number of the other people have said, but there's one thing I do know that needs to be worked on, and that's a regulatory climate in regards to looking at some of these routes. And I know that it's up to the government to ensure that these regulatory climates, in fact, do get talked about. I know the member from The Pas certainly talked about it. I know the member from Leaf Rapids or Leaf—

**An Honourable Member:** Flin Flon.

**Mr. Eichler:** —from Flin Flon talked about it as well, and I certainly know that these meetings are important. We need to make sure that they are viable. We need to make sure that they are certainly moving forward, and looking to ensure that those people do have the same services that are so important for them to be able to get their families, their goods and

services to and from their points of destination, certainly, at a—at affordable rate for those people that's relied on the services, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the debate on today's matter of urgent public importance and, quite frankly, this is a very important issue for rural and northern Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, we've certainly fielded in my constituency office quite a number of calls over the last week or two since the announcement has been made by Greyhound that they were going to discontinue the passenger service throughout the province of Manitoba, and, obviously, it has a very, very big impact on my constituents. Certainly the bus service is used by a number of constituents travelling for medical appointments and travelling to visit family.

And, Mr. Speaker, sometimes when we talk in the Chamber about policy and public issues we quite often lose face of the public, and this is a very essential service to the public of Manitoba, and when we talk about the public it's quite often important that we put a face on the public.

And I'm getting calls from a number of constituents, and I've got an e-mail from a very distraught resident of Killarney who has been following this particular issue with certain—with, you know, some trepidation because it's going to impact their family quite dramatically. We went through this a few months ago with the minister and the Motor Transport Board in terms of a reduction in service along No. 3 Highway. Unfortunately, that particular reduction in service could not be avoided, could not be worked out. But we're hoping that the minister will take some responsibility and take the lead role in addressing this very important issue for Manitobans. And, before you know it, Mr. Speaker, October 2 is going to be here and Manitobans are looking for answers from our Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux).

Now, we've seen it in the past, where the minister hides behind the Motor Transport Board to do his dirty work for him. Well, we're hoping the minister will get away from the politics of it all and take the lead role in getting this issue resolved, Mr. Speaker.

\* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to an e-mail from Donna Mansfield of Killarney, and I'm going to quote from her particular letter. I know that she's also sent a letter to the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Lemieux) as well to outline her concerns, and I hope the minister will have some constructive comments back to Ms. Mansfield.

Ms. Mansfield says, I'm a very frequent user of the Greyhound service from southern Manitoba to Winnipeg for medical appointments, and my husband also has appointments, but a bit less frequently at the moment. Now, she goes on to say that they're back and forth as often as every two weeks. And she says, I sincerely hope our federal and provincial governments can come up with a solution. She goes on to say, in Manitoba, we have no other option than to attend specialists in Winnipeg, something that those within the Perimeter take for granted. We should all be entitled to the same medical care. She says, please do all you can to help rural Manitobans. It seems to be one issue after another for rural residents. I know we've been over similar issues before, but we have to keep trying, and this is a big one.

Mr. Speaker, I've also had calls from the mayor of the community of Cartwright, Mr. Bruce Leadbeater. And Mr. Leadbeater, again, was impacted with the reduction in service on No. 3, and he knows that his community relies on the Greyhound service in that community. And he knows it's very important for the economic fibre of that community and part of that economic fibre of that region. So Mr. Leadbeater is obviously very concerned about the reduction or elimination of passenger service in that particular area.

And I also get calls from people in Carberry. People like Carol and Roland LePage who just sent—had a call in today to the office to say that they're also concerned about the reduction or elimination of passenger service in rural Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about public policy and we debate issues like this, we have to remember that we're talking about people's lives in Manitoba. And that's the point that we're trying to make here, is that many Manitobans will be impacted by the inactions of this particular government. This is an essential service for people throughout Manitoba and we're hoping that the minister will take the lead role and provide some indication along the way as negotiations go forward with Greyhound, that they

are moving forward to come up with some positive solutions for this very important issue.

So those are just some of the issues. I wanted to make sure were on the record today, and I certainly, on behalf of my constituents, want to make sure that the government does all it can in the very near future and the very few short weeks that are going to lead up to the October 2nd deadline. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for this opportunity.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** First off, let me acknowledge and express my appreciation to the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) in terms of recognizing the value of allowing this debate to occur this afternoon. And I do very much appreciate that fact, because I do find, quite often, when we enter into debates of this nature, that there is the potential for a great deal of benefit. And I think that what we heard here this afternoon, in good part, is that we need to recognize Greyhound has an essential service to the province of Manitoba. And, as such, we need to respond accordingly, and that means, I believe, in an aggressive fashion to protect the interests of Manitobans. Further, I would go, Mr. Speaker, that we should do what we can to protect those 250 jobs that Greyhound is going to be handing notices to, from what I understand as early as this Friday.

I do, and I feel, that there is a need for us to try to find out in terms of what it is that a couple of the ministers specifically have been able to achieve. I was interested when the Minister of Infrastructure stood up and explained from his perspective what he has done representing everything from, you know, the motor industry, including the inland port, and there have been some discussions in regards to one of his meeting groups with respect to trying to get a better understanding of what Greyhound is up to.

One of the things that has surprised me this afternoon is I would've thought that the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) would have contributed to the debate because she has a critical role in this. My understanding is that the Minister of Labour was likely the first or one of the first Manitobans to hear about the layoff, and that's a major part of the emergency debate, Mr. Speaker, and I think that I wanna highlight that part because it seems that there's been a good discussion about the importance of the essential service for all of Manitoba, but, more specifically, the layoff.

My understanding is, through legislation, that Greyhound had a legal obligation to let the Minister of Labour and her department know 14 weeks prior

to the layoff notice going out. That was my understanding, Mr. Speaker. Yet I get the sense that the Cabinet and possibly even the caucus was caught completely off guard, that they had no sense of an upcoming layoff over at Greyhound, or that that is very recent information.

The government knew that this was going to be happening, from what we understand, for at least 14 weeks, and, you know, it begs the question in terms of what did the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) actually do. Did she inform the Premier (Mr. Doer)? Did she inform the minister of highways or anyone else in Cabinet or caucus that there's going to be 250 people laid off come this week, Mr. Speaker? She knew that. The question is: Why didn't she share that information so that the different ministries and the Premier would have been in a better position to be able to make stronger representation of just how much or how important, how essential this service is to our province? And it should've been given a higher priority, I would argue.

So I am very much concerned in terms of what appears to be the Minister of Labour dropping the ball when we could've had so much more done. So I'm interested in knowing in terms of did Greyhound maybe violate the law. Did Greyhound not tell the minister, and that's the reason why the minister didn't share with her Cabinet colleagues that this layoff was up and coming, Mr. Speaker? Even the employees wouldn't have known that far in advance. The government could've and should've had something more prepared, I would argue.

So I would, before the debate, because the debate does continue on, I would appeal to the Minister of Labour to stand up before the debate ends, to be the last speaker on this bill, and tell us what actions that she has taken to protect the interest of the Greyhound worker. As I say, I understand and I appreciate the essential services, it's been well talked about during the emergency debate. I want to give special attention to those 250 workers that are gonna be faced with being laid off this Friday, and I appeal to the Minister of Labour to address that issue. Now is the time to address that issue, and I look to the government to address that specific issue. Friday is coming up.

I'll sit down. I appreciate the fact that we've had this debate today, and I think a good way to conclude it would be for the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) to say what she thinks in regards to those 250 Manitobans and their families in terms of the

possibility of losing their jobs permanently, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there any other speakers?

Okay. The agreement was that it would be two hours or when we ran out of speakers. So, it looks like we've run out of speakers.

So now we will move on to other business, and now I will deal with grievances.

Is there any grievances?

\* (16:10)

### GRIEVANCES

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Portage la Prairie, on a grievance?

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** On a grievance, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House today and focus on a couple of issues that this government has overlooked and failed to focus on that are of vital importance not only to the—my constituency but to the city of Winnipeg.

I speak specifically of the Assiniboine River Diversion, and I hope that the ministers opposite will listen to my concerns that I raise here this afternoon because they will impact this province far and above any of those of us sitting in the House today can imagine if, in fact, the Assiniboine River flood control structures do not receive significant reinvestment.

Last spring when we were very concerned about the ice in the channel and blockages that caused river levels to rise in a matter of hours here in the city of Portage—in Winnipeg and the Assiniboine River Diversion was called upon to divert the—virtually all of the Assiniboine River water flow to Lake Manitoba. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Assiniboine River channel, having not been renovated or receiving reinvestment dollars as the Red River Floodway has over the past number of years with this New Democratic government paying attention to Winnipeg and basically forgetting about the rest of the province.

Well, I would like to say and emphasize your delinquency of lack of attention to the Portage la Prairie-based Assiniboine River Diversion is at your peril because the city of Winnipeg will be impacted unless action is taken almost immediately. Last spring, the west-side dike of the Assiniboine River

Diversion was breached. A temporary plug was placed in that breach just to hold the water within the channel on a temporary basis. That, Mr. Speaker, was over four months ago. This government has not taken any action whatsoever to make the necessary repairs on the breached area.

This temporary plug that was placed on the west-side dike will—in anyone's assessment, you don't have to have an engineering degree in order to put forward this assessment, that the plug, that was placed on a temporary basis in the breach on the west-side dike, will not sustain any considerable flows of water within the Assiniboine River Diversion channel.

This is significant because unless this flood control infrastructure is maintained and if, in fact, it is not and unavailable to divert Assiniboine River waters next spring, Winnipeg city could indeed see significant flooding. And further to this, Mr. Speaker, the west-side dike is also the access road to the University of Manitoba environmental studies research station, and it indeed is a vital facility to the instruction that takes place through the Faculty of Science at the University of Manitoba, and this roadway provides access to the field station on the southern beaches of Lake Manitoba. And the temporary plug does allow for road travel to the field station. But I will say that the temporary plug is very, very narrow, and anyone travelling on this access route to the university field station has remarked as to the narrowness of the roadway at the breach within the west-side dike, and it is very hazardous if a person is unfamiliar with the roadway. If they were to be a little off-centre when driving, they could very well end up with their vehicle in a very eroded deep gorge on either side of the crushed rock plug that was put in the dike.

So I want to impress upon government that before freeze up, which is not, on average, more than about a month and a half away, this government is going to have to move very, very quickly in order to shore up the west-side dike.

Further to this, Mr. Speaker, the entire channel of the Assiniboine River Diversion, which was the second of three major flood control infrastructure projects that came out of the 1950 flood that were initiated by the Duff Roblin administration to protect Winnipeg, and those being the Red River Floodway, the Portage Assiniboine River Diversion, and the Shellmouth Dam, and each of these very vital infrastructure projects were heralded as very

visionary. Not at the time. In fact, the Duff Roblin administration and that of Walter Weir came down through public vote because of the, basically, the provincial sales tax that was initiated to pay for these infrastructure investments. And later everyone in the province recognizes that it was a very, very prudent investment. And yet, at the time, change in government was the end result.

Further to the breach in the west-side dike, there is a necessity of channel regeneration because the diversion is now being used to control the water levels at The Forks through diverting of high water levels during the summer as well. And the channel was never lined because it was only to be operated when the water flow during the time when the ground was frozen and that has not been the case. And so significant erosion has taken place throughout the channel from its inflow to its outflow. And so a lot of money needs to be spent to either line the channel or effectively regenerate it to handle what it was initially intended to handle which was about 25,000 cubic feet per second.

I hope the minister is also listening on another point: that when the diversion is operated, because of the significant growth of hybrid cattails and willows and other vegetation within the channel, when the diversion is operated, the water flow carries a significant amount of debris. Not only just from—that is contained within the river water flow, but also that of what is contained within the 18 miles of diversion channel. And all of this debris, if he would like to call it that, ends up on the beaches on the southern end of the Lake Manitoba.

And again, because of the use of the diversion and the high water levels within Lake Manitoba, no beach clean-up has taken place. Even though the government has promised to do so, they have not. The beaches are fouled with debris, and this government has not taken any action, and now many cottage owners are talking about litigation at this point in time. But why do the cottage owners have to go to that extent? When the government is on record—and I can point to *Hansard*—as to their acknowledgement of their responsibility to clean up the debris.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity and look forward to the government's action emanating from my grievance here today. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any other grievances? Seeing none, we'll now move on to orders of the day.

\* (16:20)

**ORDERS OF THE DAY  
(Continued)**

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**House Business**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, just prior to outlining orders of the day, I would like to indicate pursuant to rule 31(8), that I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) and the title of the resolution is All Aboard.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, pursuant to rule 31(8), it's been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one that will be put forward by the honourable member for Wolseley. The title of the resolution is All Aboard.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, if you could please call Bills No. 31 and Bill No. 4.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS**

**Bill 31—The Manitoba Floodway Authority  
Amendment Act**

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, we will now resume debate on second reading of Bill 31, The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Arthur-Virden.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, this is—it's my pleasure to speak today to the—to Bill 31, The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act, as proposed by the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure, Transportation and government services, the member from La Verendrye.

I had a briefing session last summer with the minister when he brought this bill forward. It was brought forward on April the 30th and at first blush, this looks like a very innocuous bill. It's clearly being expanded to include the word "amendment" from the previous act that was there. And the previous act, of course, was the Manitoba floodway act, the Manitoba Floodway Authority Act, Mr. Speaker. I stand to be corrected.

This bill, of course, is The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act, Bill 31, and it is being brought forward to simply add, in the words of the minister, to put the Manitoba Floodway Authority in

charge of building an east-side road up the east side of Lake Winnipeg. And so—and we were assured that there would be—that this was a requirement because the department didn't have the staff to be able to handle such a project and that it would be merely, basically just a name change to allow them to build—to be the ones in charge of building an all-weather road up the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I guess there are—you know, I had some questions. We have the briefing note on it, but we had some questions in regards to the necessity of such an authority to build such a road, and I guess from that perspective I wanna raise the spectre here today as we move this bill hopefully to committee, that I would like the government to make some greater assurances, perhaps look at it again in regards to the necessary—necessity, rather, of providing such a bill to do such work.

Mr. Speaker, it's historically been the case that the Department of Transportation built the roads in Manitoba, and I think we need to have further clarification from the government in regards to why this particular authority needs to be expanded to the Manitoba Floodway Authority. The Manitoba Floodway Authority, of course, was put in place to build the Manitoba floodway. The—which is a special project that had a definitive lifetime to it and some urgency to build as well. Now, it's also urgent to build a road up the east side of Lake Winnipeg, but this will take, by the minister's own words, decades to perhaps finish this type of a facility, this type of access. It will be very well-used for the socio-economic opportunities in the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

We believe strongly on this side of the House that this road should be built. And let me be very clear about that. We believe strongly that this road needs to be built. It needs to go through the east side of Lake Winnipeg so that those communities can get access. There is many, many communities today in Manitoba up the east side of Lake Winnipeg that do not have access by road into their locales. And this is a limiting factor to the expansion of opportunities for those people in those regions.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear as well that we think that the Floodway Authority did a job in regards to the floodway. We had some concerns about the excess cost of bridges in that particular area. One of the main concerns that we had was the fact that once the Floodway Authority was put in place, they then turned to forced unionization of the

work being done on the floodway and added, by some estimates, over \$60 million in extra costs to this particular project, and we have to remember that even though the federal government came in and helped with the costs of some of these, with this project—and maybe it was the beginning of the infrastructure projects that we're seeing today with the types of dollars that were put forward. But we need partnerships to build these major projects in Canada and, fortunately, the federal government has come to the table in regards to not only the construction costs of the floodway itself but, with this particular case, the management of the Floodway Authority administration as well. And we're not sure in this bill whether the federal government has even been asked to be a participant in the administration of the new Floodway Authority Amendment Act in building the road up the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

We assume that the provincial government has been in contact with the federal government in making sure that there is dollars coming from the federal government to help support that project—that much-needed project. But I find it extremely ironic, as the shadow cabinet member for transportation to this House, that this government sees absolutely fit to build a road up the east side of Lake Winnipeg but they cannot see fit to build a hydro line down the east side of Lake Manitoba as well, or Lake Winnipeg as well, Mr. Speaker, and are forcing the line to go some 400 extra kilometres to the west at a cost of some, you know, hundreds of millions of dollars more extra costs in line loss on an annual basis by going around the west side of the—of Manitoba almost to the Saskatchewan border before it comes back to the east side of Winnipeg.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will, we have not changed our view and we will not change our view on the fact that the east-side road is the best place to put the hydro line. We feel strongly that the opportunity could be there to build a road into that area for access as well.

Mr. Speaker, not only will it provide increased opportunities, a road in this area would improve the living conditions of the area residents as well as provide them better access to goods and services. We are spending—the government should look at the fact that they're spending tens of millions of dollars now a year in regards to winter roads, and I think that those dollars partially could go—we'll always need some winter roads in this province, but a good deal of money could be saved on an annual basis by building the road up the east side and providing

access into some of those areas as well. And, basically, the government has done some of the clearing that could be required on that road by following the winter road path that they've already got. I would hope that they have looked at the opportunities from following some of those routes.

When I look at a map, Mr. Speaker, I see that there are opportunities in those areas to build a road in some of those areas, and part of the east-side road could well be on those winter road areas. And that, you know, I'm not sure that the government understands the concept of saving money and a—by building capital projects, but this is certainly one of the ones that makes ultimate sense this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we were concerned about the regulations and requirements that might be put in place from the authority having to continue on. There is nothing in the bill that states that they will have forced unionization or that unionized companies need only apply for a construction up the east side of Lake Winnipeg. But the history of the Winnipeg Floodway Authority—or the Manitoba Floodway Authority—in building the floodway itself is such that brings, that beg the question when we were in committee or when we were in the briefing with the minister and the Floodway Authority in attendance, and his staff, and they said, well, it's outside of the bill's mandate to be able to discuss that at this particular time.

But I think we can clearly see, Mr. Speaker, that there's, if there's a concern there it's because of the past history, and we don't want to see a situation put in place that forces Manitobans to pay excess costs on this type of a construction project again, particularly when, as I've mentioned earlier, history shows in Manitoba that the Department of Transportation has been quite capable, through its engineering staff, of building the roads that were required. And I only have to look at what's being done this year, with the federal infrastructure dollars that are there.

\* (16:30)

The government is now, quite rightfully so, spending money on highways throughout Manitoba in pavement and actually placing shoulders. I'll get a plug in for the shoulders being paved on No. 1 Highway, Mr. Speaker, and I think that that is very much a safety issue, and I commend the minister for doing that prior to increasing the speed limit to 110 on our major highways of particularly No. 1 and 75,

and it's something that we've asked for in this House and we've asked for privately. We've asked for it in Estimates a number of times, and I'm glad to see that the government was listening in regards to that area.

But my point is I think we need to take the opportunity to capitalize on the beginning of the construction of the road up the east side of Lake Winnipeg while these types of infrastructure projects are ongoing, and I don't know whether the minister has made it a priority or not. The first item of business seems to be getting the authority in place so that they can be in charge of it. However, we were told that that project wouldn't begin until the construction of the floodway finished in the year 2010, which is about a year away, Mr. Speaker, so we really need to urge the government to look more closely at whether the Floodway Authority could be just asked to finish that particular project and perhaps the department could begin some of the work on the floodway or on the east-side road.

Part of the obligations of the authority would be to establish arrangements with the Department of Water Stewardship to co-ordinate the floodway expansion with the department's ongoing operations of the floodway, Mr. Speaker, and we're somewhat concerned in regards to the impacts on the east-side road not being included in some of those areas, and so I just want to say that, as I mentioned earlier, this could take, it will take at least tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions of dollars to build such a much-needed infrastructure in this province. It will be built in stages, I would surmise, because it's a considerable distance and we haven't even built the main corridors that we have today without doing them in stages, and I believe it would be very prudent to look at the opportunities of beginning this particular construction project sooner than later so that we could gain access into those particular regions.

But it would provide, as I said, the better living standards, but it also would provide opportunities in tourism, perhaps mining and other industries, forestry, Mr. Speaker, that we have in this province, and I think, as I said earlier, that we need to consider in tandem the all-season road and the east-side line, and once again, I say that, you know, there's another area that we could have savings made to build the east-side road. One of them I talked about earlier, and that is using the money that's already being used for winter roads for partially, for savings down the road from being able to travel on an all-weather

highway or road up the east side of Lake Winnipeg, but the other one, of course, would be building the east-side line, hydro power line, down the east side of Lake Winnipeg, and that would save at least tens of millions of dollars if not hundreds of millions of dollars itself. In fact, some estimates are that it would save as much as the whole cost of the Winnipeg floodway—the Manitoba Floodway Authority, Manitoba floodway itself, and that is a tremendous, that is in the hundreds of millions of dollar range. The other, and those types of dollars would go a long way to building the road itself without any extra expenditures to Manitoban taxpayers and without a greater handout from the federal government in regards to the types of dollars that have been flowing to Manitoba.

We are obviously in a situation with deficits in other provinces that have been normally contributing to the formula of equalization and transfer payments, Mr. Speaker. Looking at a situation in Manitoba that while the government says we're in a have state today, we know that Manitoba is still a have-not province, being 40 percent dependent on its budget from federal transfers and equalization, and we think that we need to be somewhat more self sufficient but—and, of course, you can't do that on the back of one project, but we need to be prudent as any household would be, or business in Manitoba would be, in regards to the managing of dollars and funds, particularly when those of us in this House are using the dollars, the hard-earned dollars of every taxpayer in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So I think that Bill 35—Bill 31 defines the east-side road as an all-weather road or roads and associated structures following a route prescribed by regulation on and east of Lake Winnipeg, and so it would, as I said earlier, take some time to even discern where that road would be. The department has people that have done those types of things and the Floodway Authority would probably call on some of that expertise to do that work itself, Mr. Speaker.

I think that, you know, some of the members of the House, the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, or the acting minister at that time, Mr. Robinson, was—or, pardon me, the member from *[interjection]* Rupertsland—thank you, Mr. Speaker—was stating at that time that he was trying to argue that the Hydro project would not provide lasting benefits to the east-side communities as they would not even be able to access the power on the line.

Well, the region that's probably most isolated and most costly in terms of food, Mr. Speaker—and that was from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, a quote taken from May 1 of this year—would differ with the minister. The access would certainly supply—or—the region with a better and less-costly food supply and—because I agree that is remote, and some locations right now—but I also believe that it would also open up an opportunity for us to provide power back into those particular regions. It may not come off of that particular line, just like the Hydro lines that we have today coming down from the north; they have to come to substations before they're distributed back out to the rest of the province. But at least this gives us an opportunity to provide those regions with a better power supply.

I think that, as I said, when we looked at the briefing that we had—course, Mr. Gilroy was there as well, and I said earlier that he indicated to us that they couldn't guarantee that they wouldn't be using unionized labour only in that particular project. He said it would probably be a mix, and my—one of my major concerns was who would be doing the training for the workers, Mr. Speaker, in this particular project? And I think that, you know, his answer was very clear, that they would probably have a mix of those various authorities being able to supply the training as the government already is doing under Competitiveness, Training and Trade with some of the other jurisdictions. We have a good mechanism set up for training not only First Nations' persons, but others as well in regards to the use of heavy construction equipment and construction materials. I'm very, I very much commend those efforts in making sure that this is being done.

He indicated that there be—that the possible routes are being examined at this time by SNC-Lavalin Engineers and Constructors Incorporated, Mr. Speaker, and I think that that's a good opportunity for us here in Manitoba.

You know, the minister indicated that the provincial government, or provincial budget even included 27 million to kick-start the road project, which will take several years to complete, as we've said, but he couldn't offer a total cost on the project. And, of course, we know it's going to be massive, Mr. Speaker, but we have undertaken many major projects in this province's history. The building of Duff's Ditch, if you will, in the first place was a massive undertaking, as was the expansion of it this particular year. And I think that Manitobans need to know that we've got over 2,000 people—I think, I

think it's somewhere in that neighbourhood—of persons employed in the transportation department of the Province of Manitoba today. Course, they're not all in the engineering areas, but we have very competent engineers in this department and I believe that if, you know, the—as the minister indicated that there was—or the government—Mr. Gilroy indicated that they have about 35 to 40 persons on staff at the Floodway Authority, and they would be very competent, I think, in being able to handle the extra workload that would be required in this area.

\* (16:40)

But I believe as well, Mr. Speaker, that there is an opportunity to look at specifically a road project as opposed to differentiation of a, of building a floodway, Mr. Speaker. I can't come up with a better analogy right now of the differences in that area, but I certainly believe that we need to make sure that future projects like this are actually, I guess for want of a better word, under the management of the government somewhat better.

I understand that governments need to put a buffer between them and the decision making that will come about by having The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act put in place and having the Manitoba Floodway Authority in charge of such a construction project. I just question as I did the necessity of being able to do that and so, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to this bill going before committee.

I know that we will be looking at intently with there—there's at least one person registered to come and speak to this particular bill. It is very straightforward. It doesn't include the forced unionization in the bill as I've said earlier so it makes it fairly straightforward in regards to the intent of the government in regards to providing this bill—probably something that seems to be a little more of a housekeeping nature, Mr. Speaker, than something required to go forward with a major project such as this.

You know, I know that we're looking at opportunities for CentrePort development in the province of Manitoba and I had the privilege of moving that legislation through the House fairly quickly as the government brought it forward so that we could expand on an area like CentrePort for trade in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. And I guess I would say that the more routes that we have leading into Manitoba and throughout Manitoba, the better we could—the better opportunity we will have of

convincing the rest of the world that we are open to being a major trading route in the world.

And I think that you cannot ever underestimate the opportunities that I had this summer at the Midwest legislators forum in discussing the mid-continent corridor with some of our friends and counterparts in Kansas City, Mr. Speaker. We had the opportunity of meeting with some of their economic development people there as well and, you know, there is a route and Winnipeg to Kansas City is only part of it. It goes on into Mexico and it can rival the area to the north with Churchill and beyond.

And I think that there needs to be a greater vision in regards to how we enhance and provide opportunities for citizens outside the Perimeter and outside of rural and what we have traditionally looked at as northern Manitoba to be a part—a greater part of the economic activity of this province. And this east-side road certainly is a major opportunity to be able to do that to provide enhancements for the citizens—not only those who are presently there but the youth of the future of that region and of providing the opportunity of having more businesses and industries and even manufacturing and warehousing in that particular region, Mr. Speaker.

And so I really believe that this opens up not just cultural opportunities, business opportunities but opportunities for more youth to have a better education and a better opportunity to attend university and other venues as well. And with all of that for our youth comes a great opportunity to expand the development of the province of Manitoba not just as individuals but collectively so that we can have a stronger province and compete on our own footing with our neighbours to the west and the east in this country, never mind continuing to be able to be the largest trading partner for a lot of the states that are so closely aligned with us along the American border here in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I guess that one of the—pardon me, Mr. Speaker, that one of the mandates of the Authority is to ensure that the expansion of the floodway and the construction of the east-side road are carried out in a manner that provides increased benefits and to maximize benefits of the floodway and the east-side road they will provide. And I've just discussed a number of those areas that I think would be spinoffs of the building of the east-side road as we will see from the benefits of the Floodway Authority itself. And, I guess, I'm looking totally at the whole, I

guess, development of this particular project as being something that would be a huge benefit, but I wonder what the benchmarks are. I believe that the government should provide some benchmarks in regards to what those—what the situation is today in that region and utilize before we start so that we know the benefits that we'll be able to attain in the future.

And I think we probably went through this discussion in Manitoba when we were talking about building Highway 6 at one time, Mr. Speaker. We probably talked about it in building No. 10. Fortunately, the road to Flin Flon was straightened out a little bit over the years. I remember when I first started to visit my—well, it was future wife at that time, my present wife, Beryl, at the situation when she lived in Flin Flon. You know, that was a two-hour drive from The Pas to Flin Flon; it's been shortened to one. That created many opportunities for that particular city, and I think opportunities for further development.

But the government should benchmark the types of, I guess, economic activity that's taking place now so that we can look at what will be growth industries in the future. And that—from that, Mr. Speaker, if—I mean, we've done that in areas like No. 10, No. 6, and highways—No. 83, even, up the west side of the province. We've had a whole host of regions in Manitoba that have been able to expand and grow, and I think we have to have the vision of being able to—not I think, I know that we have to have the vision of being able to see what the capabilities are on the east side.

And I don't think that putting in authority is going to do that, Mr. Speaker. They're there to construct the road. We need to articulate the vision more, I think, of what the opportunities are in that region and, in order to do that, we have to be able to listen to the people that live in that region.

And they are telling us, Mr. Speaker, that they want access by road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, and I am very—I very much appreciate the opportunities that our leader and others of our caucus have had to discuss some of those issues with the people that live in those regions over the last few years, and it's with that that we have the, I guess, credibility and the—and feel very comfortable in being able to enhance our position in regards to wanting to have this road built.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close by just saying that I think it's a wonderful opportunity for Manitoba

to be able to go ahead and have a road built up the east side of Lake Winnipeg. I really—you know, and if the government is wanting to proceed on this, then they need to provide some more information in regards to the structure of the authority and the role that the Manitoba Floodway Authority would have in building an east-side road. The two don't seem to be as linked as I think the government first—the government's first impression, and so we need to know what the intent of the government is in regards to why they really feel that they need a floodway authority in place to build a road when for—throughout the history of Manitoba, for the nearly 140 years that we've existed, the government has built the roads in this province.

So I'm going to close by just saying that we support the road, Mr. Speaker, going up the east side of Lake Winnipeg. We support the Hydro line coming down the east side of Lake Winnipeg, and we will look with anticipation to see whether the government brings any amendments forward on this particular bill, Bill 31, The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act, to provide greater clarification as to why they want this bill to build a road up the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** I certainly want to thank the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) for his words of wisdom on this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, certainly the concept of building a road on the east side of Manitoba has been tossed around for a number of years, and it's certainly, from our perspective, a very—a worthwhile endeavour to have a road built on that particular area of the province. We certainly think it can lead to future economic development for a lot of the communities on that side of the province—

\* (16:50)

**An Honourable Member:** Hydro would be good.

**Mr. Cullen:** —and, certainly, that raises a lot of interesting discussions. And probably one of the biggest discussions we're having in the province is in terms of where we're going to develop another, the next bipole hydro line. And a lot of people in Manitoba, and I think probably the consensus of Manitobans would be that it makes the most sense to build a hydro line in conjunction with an east-side road, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and myself, we had an opportunity not too long ago to travel on the east side, using some of the winter roads at the time, and have a look—physically go there and have a look at what's going on in terms of the winter road situation and the current hydro development there in terms of transmission lines that already exist.

And it's quite interesting when you go up there, Mr. Speaker, that there is an existing transmission line running about two-thirds of the way up Lake Winnipeg. It's something that a lot of people probably don't recognize. When we're getting into this debate about the west-side line, the east-side line—when we were on the tour, we actually saw bulldozers working knocking down the trees within the transmission line where the hydro line was. And we could see that from the winter road that was there that runs adjacent to the existing hydro line.

Now, clearly, it makes sense from Manitoba Hydro's perspective at least, that if you had a road running parallel to a hydro line, it's a lot easier for them to get in there and service that particular line and service the existing line. But I think you just extrapolate that a little further, Mr. Speaker, that if we're going to build a slightly larger transmission line, having an all-weather road, access to that particular transmission line just makes sense. And that's something that Manitoba Hydro, themselves as a corporation, would probably agree that it makes sense to have a transmission line on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Unfortunately, the NDP government has decided that that's not the thing to do. And we'd like to have a good, honest debate about why we should not have a transmission line on the east side of Lake Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, you know, when this particular legislation was brought forward, you know, the communities on the east side recognize that it can be tremendous opportunity for them. And I know we've had a lot of comments from residents on the east side that it would be certainly very beneficial for them.

And I just want to refer back to a letter to the editor sent in to the *Winnipeg Free Press* back in May of 2009. And this particular letter is signed by Chief George Kemp, who is the chief of the Berens River First Nation. And I think it sums up, you know, the First Nations' viewpoint and it probably sums up what a lot of Manitobans are thinking too.

Mr. Speaker, it says: None of the vision for Manitoba's future is taking shape through CentrePort

plan. I offer this three-for-one deal for the vision. How about making the bipole transmission line project to the vision and build the line down the east side of Lake Winnipeg? With the savings of well over \$400 million on the east-side line, build a super highway down the east side direct from our inland seaport to Churchill to CentrePort in Winnipeg. Build the highway beside the transmission line. If this can't be done, can someone tell me what I am missing?.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's what we're asking on this side of the House. Common sense says to build the line on the east side of the province. Obviously, having the Province's moving forward on developing a highway of some description on the east side of the province—what are we missing? What crucial part of the puzzle are we missing that would make sense to build a line on the west side of the province? But we know that going on the west side of the province is going to add hundreds of kilometres of hydro transmission lines, and we know that comes at a tremendous cost.

The other thing is to get access to those transmission lines, we're going to have to build another set of roads on the west side of the province. It's counter intuitive to having an east-side road and transmission line on the east side of the province, Mr. Speaker. So we're going to spend, you know, hundreds of millions of dollars extra on a west-side transmission line that many people don't want. But we're going to have to cut down as much boreal forest with a west-side transmission line as we would with an east-side transmission line. And if we're going to talk about running a parallel road with a transmission line, it just makes more sense that probably less boreal forest would be impacted by the transmission line running congruent to an east-side road.

And one thing we talked about the capital costs of the line, and we know the—obviously, the west side is hundreds of million dollars more, but the other ongoing issue with the west-side transmission line, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we're going to be losing a tremendous amount of electricity, and that electricity is critical to the province of Manitoba and to Manitoba Hydro. And I reflect back here. Just in the last couple weeks, when Manitoba Hydro released its first-quarter report in terms of their U.S. sales, their revenue was down dramatically this quarter from a year ago. So it's going to be very important that we—all the energy that we produce in northern Manitoba, that we have, has to be for sale,

whether it be here in Manitoba or whether it's going to be on to the export market. So, by having a longer line running through western Manitoba, obviously, it's going to come at a cost, and it's going to come as an environmental cost as well in terms of greenhouse gas emissions.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's very critical that we take a long, hard look at our options here. And it's not—it's not too late to make the right decision. You know, especially when we're in very serious about building a road on the east side of the province of Manitoba, and that's under the authority that this particular bill would do—not completely sure that the Floodway Authority Amendment Act and bringing that whole organization into it is something that is completely necessary, but certainly will happen once this bill goes to committee. We'll certainly hear what Manitobans have to say about this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a lot of—we've had a lot of Manitobans and a lot of very prominent Manitobans weigh in on this whole debate about west side versus east side, and, of course, the idea that an east-side road would be built in conjunction with it. And we talked to somebody like Bryan Schwartz, who's a University of Manitoba law professor. He's been quite vocal on this particular issue, and he talks about, you know, the dollars and the economics of building it on—and wasting money on the wrong side, and that being the west side.

And then we get Professor Blatz, who is an engineer at the University of Manitoba, he weighing in on this—and they're both—they both agree that putting the line on the west side is gonna be a bigger environmental footprint. And they go on and talk about an east-side road. And quite clearly they indicate, too, that, you know, that sort of money might as well be used in putting it on an east-side road. So, you know, you get prominent Manitobans that come out and say that the NDP government is headed down the wrong side when they talk about a west-side line.

So all we're asking is some little common sense—that the NDP government should get onside with what Manitoba Hydro and the technical people over there wanted to do for many years was develop a line on the east side of Manitoba. And, obviously, that line would be in conjunction with the proposal under Bill 31 to develop a line on the east side of the province of Manitoba.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we certainly have all kinds of people weighing in on this particular option, and we just want to make sure that we have a proper consultation and engagement before it's too late. And, if we don't do it soon, it's gonna be too late and we'll get through the whole environmental process and it will be too late.

So, with that, I thank you very much for your time and look forward to having this important piece of bill—legislation move forward to committee. Thank you.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question before the House is Bill No. 31, The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

#### Voice Vote

**Mr. Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Mr. Speaker:** In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader):** On division.

**Mr. Speaker:** On division.

#### House Business

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Minister for Family Services and Housing.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Government House Leader):** Just as House leader, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to announce that, in addition to the bill previously referred, that Bill 31, The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act, will also be considered at the September 17 meeting of Legislative Affairs.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been announced in addition to bill previously referred that Bill 31, The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act will also be considered at the September 17, 2009 meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, September, 15, 2009

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