

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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 24, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

**Traffic Signal Installation—PTH 15
and Highway 206**

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 2008, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) stated that traffic volumes at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald exceeded those needed to warrant the installation of traffic signals.

Every school day, up to a thousand students travel through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts their safety at risk.

Thousands of vehicles travel daily through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts at risk the safety of these citizens.

In 2008, there was a 300 percent increase in accidents at this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate installation of traffic signals at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald.

To request that the Minister of Transportation recognize the value of the lives and well-being of the students and citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by A. Vaags, K. Cipriano, S. Howells and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

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

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 a 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 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 construction and expansion of the long-term care facilities in the region.

This is signed by Esther Peters, Jake Driedger, Abe Hiebert and many, many others.

Provincial Nominee Program—90 Day Guarantee

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:

Reuniting families through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program should be the first priority in processing nominee certificates.

Lengthy processing times for PNP applications causes additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider establishing a 90-day guarantee for processing an application for a minimum of 90 percent of applicants that have family living in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by S. Pascual, F. Ines, and M. Apuya and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

Midwifery Services—Interlake Region

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Residents of the Interlake Regional Health Authority do not have access to midwifery services.

Midwives provide high quality, cost-effective care to childbearing women throughout their pregnancy, birth and in the post-partum period.

Women in the Interlake should have access to midwifery care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider working with the Interlake Regional Health Authority to provide midwifery services to women in this health region.

Signed by Riane Lee-Cook, Christine Filion, Tanis Erlendson and many, many others.

Neepawa, Gladstone, Ste. Rose, McCreary— Family Doctors

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Access to a family doctor is vital to good primary health care. Patients depend on their family doctors for many things, including their routine health-care needs, preventive care and referrals for diagnostic tests and appointments with specialists.

Family doctors in Neepawa, Gladstone and Ste. Rose are unable to accept new patients. The nearby community of McCreary has not had a doctor available to take patients in months.

Without a family doctor, residents of this large geographical area have no option but to look for a family doctor in communities as far away as Brandon and Winnipeg.

Residents of these communities are suffering because of the provincial government's continuing failure to effectively address the shortage of doctors in rural Manitoba.

We petition the—petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider prioritizing the needs of these communities by ensuring they have access to a family doctor.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider promptly increasing the use of nurse practitioners in these communities in order to improve access to quality health care.

This petition is signed by Brenda Malcolm, Sheila McKay, Sam Warell [*phonetic*] and many, many other fine Manitobans.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Seventh Report

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Vice-Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Seventh Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on September 23, 2009 in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Auditor General's Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations dated December 2008: Chapter 1, Family Services and Housing: Employment and Income Assistance Program*
- *Auditor General's Report – Audit of the Child and Family Services Division Pre-Devolution Child in Care Processes and Practices dated December 2006*

Committee Membership

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Ms. HOWARD (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. JENNISSSEN
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. MAGUIRE
- Ms. SELBY
- Mrs. STEFANSON
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

Officials Speaking on Record

- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General
- Mr. Martin Billinkoff, Deputy Minister of Family Services and Housing

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee completed consideration of the following chapter as presented:

- Auditor General's Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations dated December 2008: Chapter 1, Family Services and Housing: Employment and Income Assistance Program

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- Auditor General's Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations dated December 2008
- Auditor General's Report – Audit of the Child and Family Services Division Pre-Devolution Child in Care Processes and Practices dated December 2006

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Southdale (Ms. Selby), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table the annual report of—[interjection] order, please.

I am pleased to table the annual reports of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission for the years ended March 31st, 2008, and March 31st, 2009.

Copies of the reports have been placed on members' desks.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the 2008, 2000 Annual Reports for Organization and Staff Development, Civil Service Commission; the Property Registry; Manitoba Employee Pension and Other Costs; and Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I'm pleased to table the 2008 Annual Report of the Municipal Board.

ORAL QUESTIONS**Gang Violence
Government Strategy**

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, after a summer of violence here in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba, we saw in this morning's newspaper the early indications of some steps to be announced by government to deal with the issue of gangs.

Mr. Speaker, we want this minister, we want this government to be successful in dealing with this challenge, but at the same time as we see this story appearing this morning, we see the words of Ralph Sanderson, the father of the young man who was set on fire when he was trying to—when he was trying to deal with a commotion in his yard, saying, and I quote, "I fear for my family."

I wanna ask this minister or this Premier: What assurance can he give to Ralph Sanderson and his family that this seventh announcement, the seventh gang strategy, is going to be more successful than the six failed strategies that we've seen today?

* (13:40)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): First of all, to Mr. Sanderson, I'd say that his fears are—would be expected in that horrific situation with his son, and all of us as parents, all of us with families, all of us with our spouses and partners, feel this issue when it affects us in our neighbourhood, in our community, in our province, in our country, even when we read about it, hear about it or watch it on the news. So I can understand the horrible feelings of any father if that situation was to confront any one of us.

In terms of the specific issues, I would note that we've hired close to a hundred police officers in the province of Manitoba from the provincial

government. I think we had 40 police officers in Winnipeg funded by the provincial government in 1999 even though the Hells Angels was documented in this province in 1995, and again in the summer of '99, just to keep the facts accurate and, Mr. Speaker, we continue to raise every year. We've increased prosecutors, increased police officers.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, Mike Sutherland, the head of the Winnipeg Police Association wrote in the *Free Press* today that the increase in resources has not kept up with the challenges that the police service is facing in this city, that it hasn't kept up to what's gone on in other cities across Canada, and even the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), the Premier's hand-picked successor, said today that there aren't enough resources available to the police service.

So I want to ask the Premier, that while the member for Minto is out on the campaign hustings criticizing the government, he's in the House saying that they're doing everything right. I want to ask the Premier: Who are Manitobans supposed to believe when people like Ralph Sanderson are saying that they fear for their family?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the comments made by the victim's parents are understandable, and our—all our thoughts are with them as a fellow citizen of this country and of this province. So it's not a question of right or wrong. It's a question that it was a horrific crime committed, and it's obviously unacceptable to everybody in this House and unacceptable to everybody in this community.

I want to point out that the mayor of the City of Winnipeg stated today that we have the highest per capita of police officers of any major city in Canada. The police union has a different view. But I just would say that we have a hundred more with this Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) and the former Minister of Justice in the province today than we had in '99. We have gone from 2 to 3 percent of funding from the provincial government—when you were chief of staff—2 or 3 percent of the budget of the police—and it's now over 10 percent from this provincial government with over a hundred more officers.

If the Crown prosecutors also have been increased dramatically under our watch, so you can throw all the mud you want, but you have a record, and our record is not perfect, and nor do we describe

the situation perfect, but it's a lot better than the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All members when either putting a question or answering a question, please put it through the Chair.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the comments made by the Premier are contradicted both by Mr. Sutherland and by the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) today. We know that when we speak to Manitobans throughout the province, whether it's in the—in the schoolyards, when we're taking our kids to school or anywhere else, that Manitobans believe that the problem has gotten worse.

The case of the Sanderson family is not an isolated incident. If it was the only terrible thing that had happened then it may be possible to simply get up and apologize and make these sort of statements. But the reality is that the numbers back up the fact that this is a growing problem, particularly the level of violence involved in crime, and that this is a problem that Manitobans believe needs to be addressed rather than getting up and making rhetorical statements and attacking people based on things that were the reality more than 10 years ago.

Why doesn't the Premier say today unequivocally that he's committed to dealing with this very serious problem on behalf of all Manitobans?

Mr. Doer: And again he's taking words about the victim's parent right out of context, and I think that's quite unbecoming.

Secondly, the police have said that all of us have to really be serious about illegal drugs that are in our community that are fuelling part of the gang wars and the gang activity. I am absolutely committed to saying that no one should purchase illegal drugs, including marijuana, because it fuels the drug trade and the gang activity. I think all of us should join in supporting the police saying—and I'd ask the Leader of the Opposition. We should be together calling on all Manitobans not to purchase marijuana or participate in marijuana because drugs fuel gangs and gangs participate in violence.

That's a strong message that we're going to take to all Manitobans in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Gang Violence Government Strategy

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Justice has been shamed into

announcing, after a false start this summer, his seventh gang strategy in 10 years, a decade in which gang activity has grown more violent and the offenders have gotten younger.

It was tipped to Sun Media yesterday that there would be an intensive monitoring of 50 gang members and that the police have a long list of known gang members, and they've known for a long time who these gang members were.

Mr. Speaker, after a decade in government, after six previous failed strategies, if you've known who the gang members were, why weren't you following them before?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, most of the leadership of the Hells Angels have their residence at Stony Mountain.

Mr. Speaker, we put them in jail from our gang unit that you did not have. So you are talking baloney. You're wrong. You were wrong yesterday. You scare the public. You say wrong things.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, you do. You drive in from Steinbach—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —and have press conferences—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Let's have some decorum here. Order. The honourable minister has the floor.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I go to West Kildonan. I talked to kids from West Kildonan today. There's a drug problem there. We've got to talk to the parents. We've got to talk to them about what drugs are like today, Mr. Speaker, instead of having you get off half-cocked coming into Steinbach and calling for strategies. We need to be in the street working with people, hiring police officers, hiring prosecutors and getting on with the job and working with the people that make the law which is the federal government.

I dare you to go to Ottawa like I—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: I talked to the federal government to change the laws. Come to Ottawa; support us.

Mr. Goertzen: I think—I think who is scaring Manitobans are the gang members who are lighting people on fire, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, he should have had Don Cherry who was on the grand steps of the staircase make the announcement. He'd have more credibility on gangs than you ever would.

Mr. Speaker, the six gang strategies failed. Now he's going to announce the seventh by monitoring 50 gang members. What this won't—government won't tell us, and other governments did, is how many known gang members there are in Manitoba. The last report we had was there are 3,000 known gang members in Winnipeg alone. So they're talking about monitoring 1 percent of the gang members.

Is that right? Is 3,000 still the current number? Is it higher? Are they only going to monitor 1 percent of known gang members in Manitoba, and that's what they think is going to make a difference?

Mr. Chomiak: Part of the problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the members only go after—the member for Steinbach just loves to run in and go after political hits. He doesn't talk about the Lighthouses. He doesn't talk about the Spotlight program that monitors 60—in fact, when we announced the Spotlight program for probation offenders, he criticized us. When we put in place \$400,000 to get—do undercover operations that put some of the gang members into jail, he criticized us.

I've got it on record, Mr. Speaker. When we put in place our auto theft strategy that's dropped auto theft 60 percent, he criticized it. When we put in place an additional 200 police officers, he voted against it.

I'd be—and you know what, Mr. Speaker? He headed up the Tory campaign. At their Tory campaign, what did they say about crime? They wanted to build a jail. That was it. There was no programs. They were gonna build a jail. There was nothing about support programs. There was nothing about gangs, nothing about police.

Mr. Goertzen: The sooner this Minister of Justice is removed from his office, the safer Manitobans will be, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a real and a comprehensive gang strategy would include extensive gang monitoring, bail recommendation reform, sentence recommendation reform, meaningful and measured consequences for lower levels of crime, faster trials, strict bail provisions, therapeutic addiction treatments inside prison and outside prison and a legal weapon strategy, all of these things that this government could do, and we'll find out this

afternoon whether or not they have the willingness to do it.

But they've had seven—this will be their seventh opportunity to try to reduce gangs. It's the seventh gang strategy they brought in in 10 years.

I'll simply ask the Minister of Justice: Will he make a commitment to Manitobans today that this seventh gang strategy in a decade, that it will reduce gang violence?

* (13:50)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I applaud the federal government for working with us. Let me go through the checklist that we—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chomiak: First week in office we put in the checklist: immediate proclamation of the organized crime bill, October 2nd, done, raised by this government.

Legislation on credit for time served before Senate right now, going to go to Ottawa to get it—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. There's a lotta yelling going, on and there's members that are obviously very interested in asking questions because they're trying to do it while the minister is speaking.

We're only on question No. 2. The members that are trying to raise questions will have their opportunity. Just be a little bit patient, please. Let's have a little decorum here.

The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Chomiak: Creating a drive-by shooting offence in the Criminal Code, never before done, as suggested by Manitoba, done.

Allowing judges to put reasonable condition to protect public on recognizance orders for gang members, suggested by Manitoba, done.

List criminal organizations in the Criminal Code suggested by Manitoba, we're still working on, Mr. Speaker, plus the prevention programs.

Every single item the member talked about, we've not only done or suggested be done. The member pretends—he forgets that the law is made by Ottawa. We've been out in front, and anything that could be done in Manitoba like increase police officers, increase probation officers, increase supports, have been done.

School Divisions Student Safety Concern Policies

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, a 17-year-old youth attending a public school in Winnipeg befriended staff members after being rejected by his peers. During this friendship, the youth asked a staff member, and I quote: What is the best way to clean up a lot of blood?

Alarmed by the line of questioning and concerned for the well-being of the youth, other staff and students at the school, the staff member took her concerns to senior management. She was brushed off, and nothing was done. Sadly, months later, that youth now stands accused of killing his father, dismembering the body and hiding the remains.

I ask this Minister of Education: Is it routine practice that under his leadership, serious red flags are ignored?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, certainly this is a very tragic incident that has occurred, and our heart goes out to all those who have been so deeply affected by this loss and the suffering that they are enduring as this has become a very public matter.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have contacted the school division in question, and we've contacted them on a number of occasions, and it's conducting an internal investigation into the claims that were made about this particular student. We know that the school division is taking this matter very seriously, and we're waiting to hear the response from the school division.

Mr. Schuler: Well, Mr. Speaker, after question period the minister can approach Tracy Rose, the staff member who tried to raise the red flags and he can do his own investigation. She has yet to be contacted.

Mr. Speaker, that same 17-year-old then asked staff: What is the best way to dispose of a body? One staff member took her concerns to senior management, and she was ignored.

Under this NDP minister, when a youth expresses an obvious cry for help, there seems to be no protocol or policy in place to ensure those cries, those red flags, are acted upon.

I ask this Minister of Education: After failing to prevent a serious tragedy from happening, what has he done to ensure red flags are not ignored the next time this happens?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, frankly, Mr. Speaker, it's this government that put in place codes of conduct and Safe Schools Charter. It's this government that put in The Safe Schools Act. It's this government that's been asking school divisions to go above and beyond to do the best that they can to address issues of student safety and safety concerns.

Again, it's quite distressing what has been reported about this particular case but, again, we have contacted the school division and an investigation is ongoing and we wait to hear from the school division the results of that investigation.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, I find it quite ironic that just now and even earlier on today in this House, the Minister of Education was bragging about his record of crime prevention in schools. By listening to this minister, you would never believe that last spring, a 17-year-old asked a staff member, and I quote directly: What is the best kind of gun to buy?

Mr. Speaker, in the environment we live in, the most alarming of red flags in the world is the word "gun," and when the staff member took her fears to the school management she was ignored and, even worse, she was fired.

I ask this Minister of Education: How can he brag about how closely he works with students to prevent crime on one hand, when he has no policy in place to ensure that the most alarming of red flags are taken serious? Will he now take this issue serious and start dealing with it himself?

Mr. Bjornson: And we do indeed take the issue of students' safety seriously. I took it very seriously as a teacher in the public school system for 13 years. I take it very seriously as minister in this government.

And as I said, it was this government—*[interjection]* As I said, Mr. Speaker, it was this government that brought forward the Safe Schools Charter. It was this government that enacted the laws. It's this government that has ensured school divisions to have policies and procedures in place.

This is a very distressing case. We have been in contact with the school division, and there is an inquiry into what has been happening as a result of this information that's been brought forward to the public, and we are waiting to hear from the school division on the issue, Mr. Speaker.

1999 Election

Support for Recall of Standing Committee

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): And there's a pattern under this NDP government that anybody who raises concerns or bring forward—brings forward information is summarily fired by this government and chased out of office. One such person, Mr. Speaker, was David Asselstine, the forensic auditor who was hired by Elections Manitoba in order to look into financial statements following the 1999 election.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of Mr. Asselstine's firing under pressure from the NDP, Manitobans remain in the dark about the full extent of their election finance schemes leading up to 1999 and beyond. This afternoon, we'll be debating a motion to recall committee, invite Mr. Asselstine to come to committee, and others, and tell Manitobans what they know about the election finance schemes undertaken by the NDP.

Will the Premier support that motion or will he continue his strategy of stonewalling?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I—we have this—we have this pattern of members opposite flinging allegations across the floor, most of them with no substance, and they're doing it regularly.

We appeared—Elections Manitoba before—appeared before the committee, the Chief Electoral Officer appeared before the committee, and he finally wrote a letter refuting—refuting precisely what the Leader of the Opposition has said, the Chief Electoral Officer of Manitoba. And what did the members of the opposition do? They attacked the third party independent Chief Electoral Officer. What does that tell you, Mr. Speaker, about the activities and the tactics about members opposite? It's throw mud, throw mud, and throw mud.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, it wasn't members on this side, it was Jim Treller, the former NDP official agent for Rossmere who brought the information forward about this scheme and another one that was engaged in by the NDP. It was David Asselstine, who's currently a forensic auditor for the IMF, who identified the issues following 1999, before the NDP put pressure on Elections Manitoba to fire him.

The Chief Electoral Officer's letter said nothing, but I don't have any obligation to tell you anything. We're going to hide behind a provision in the act that

we believe allows us to stonewall you on your questions and comments.

I wanna ask the Premier who has an opportunity to show leadership in his last days in office: Will he allow the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Asselstine, Mr. Milne and others, to come to committee, respond to questions and ensure Manitobans that we can have fair elections and that his party will no longer engage in tactics that rip-off taxpayers, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: It strikes me ironic that the Leader of the Opposition, just a few sentences ago, said, forget about that stuff 10 years ago, and now the only issue on their mind is an election 10 years ago after they lost three in a row.

Balasko wrote to the Leader of the Opposition, saying, it has always been the consistent practice of this office to rely upon the legal analysis and the final recommendations of the two legal counsel. I can confirm that my decisions were consistent with the fine legal advice I received from Mr. Michael Green, former counsel, and currently, Commissioner of Elections Manitoba, and Mr. Blair Graham. The same investigative processes was followed with respect to all investigations.

That in letter-in writing to the Leader of the Opposition who consistently twists these matters because he wants to deal with muck, and he doesn't want to deal with real, everyday issues of all Manitobans.

* (14:00)

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been dealing with H1N1. We've been dealing with gang violence. We've been dealing with a variety of issues, and if the Minister of Justice doesn't think that fair elections in Manitoba are a significant issue, then he has changed a great deal from the sorts of things that he used to say 10 years ago when he was on the other side of these kinds of issues.

Ten years in office, the arrogance has come in. He no longer thinks that it's important to have fair elections and a transparent process. He's come a long way from where he was a decade ago.

So we now know the position of the member for Kildonan on the resolution coming forward today. I assume that the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) is going to continue to stonewall. Will they at least allow the remaining members of their caucus to support this resolution so that they don't have to be party to the NDP cover-up, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, this caucus is going to support the position of the independent Chief Electoral Officer and the people that advised him.

And this caucus were on that side of the House when the member was chief of staff to the Premier, when the Monnin inquiry came out which was the worst scandal, election scandal, in the history of Manitoba since the—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —Roblin scandal of 1919, and people could have gone to jail but for leniency, and it was members of the Progressive Conservative Party that did that, Mr. Speaker.

That's why we've put in place rules that must be followed by all and we have an independent referee, the Chief Electoral Officer, who independently functions in this office.

You have challenged that position, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's just to get political advantage because you're not getting any issues off the ground. They don't talk policy. You all talk policy. All you want to do is attack.

All-Weather Roads

Lake Winnipeg East Side Project Authority

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, our PC caucus strongly supports the building of a road up the east side of Lake Winnipeg, but we have questions as to how the government will do it having the Floodway Authority assume responsibility for building the east-side road via Bill 31.

The time frame to upgrade the floodway was clearly defined. No one knows exactly how long it will take to build the east-side road, but it could be more than a decade.

Mr. Speaker, why does the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation want to offload the building of an east-side road to the Floodway Authority? Does he not have confidence in his own department to oversee the building of it?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, first of all, the member opposite votes against a 30 percent increase to the highways budget, a transportation budget, Mr. Speaker. Now we're over \$500 million.

That Department of MIT is very, very busy, No. 1, with all the projects they're doing in the

province and part of the \$4 billion, 10-year plan that we have.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the Floodway Authority has made sure that that project, that massive project in Manitoba, is on time and on budget, and I can't think of a better organization to run a massive project like the east-side road authority than the Floodway Authority.

Mr. Maguire: I guess he's afraid his own department can't do it on time and on budget, Mr. Speaker, but the Floodway Authority was put in place to expand Duff's ditch in a specific time frame.

We've learnt through the Freedom of Information that the authority has 38 full-time, part-time and casual staff, including a chief executive officer, three vice-presidents and five managers. Their salaries and benefits total \$2.575 million in '08-09 fiscal year.

Historically, Manitoba's provincial road construction has been overseen by the Department of Infrastructure, not an external body.

So, Mr. Speaker, why is the minister abandoning the engineering and technical expertise in his own department? Why does he need a separate authority to build the east-side road?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we know where the opposition sits. After decades of inaction on the east side, this government's proud to move ahead with regard to this initiative to provide hope for 34,000 people on the east side of Manitoba that live in isolated remote communities.

Mr. Speaker, all they had to say during the last election campaign is where do you stand on transportation. Oh, we'll take all of the money out of the north and put it into southern Manitoba—the hypocrisy of the minister opposite. Those comments were made right in his backyard in Virden.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, if the minister needs an external body, an authority to build a road, a project that his department should have the expertise to handle, what's next, an authority to build the NDP misguided west-side hydro line? Or is he doing this in direct-to direct attention away from his government's desire to use forced unionization on this project like he did with the floodway project, adding tens of millions of dollars extra cost for Manitobans?

Mr. Speaker, historically every road in Manitoba has been built by contracts tendered through his

department. Why won't the minister let his department manage the east-side road project like every other provincial road in Manitoba?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the floodway and why it's important that they lead this project, 40 percent of the 500 workers on the floodway expansion were Aboriginal workers; 58 percent of the workers trained through the floodway training initiative were Aboriginal.

They have a track record, a proven track record of working with First Nations people in a real productive, productive way. Mr. Speaker, the Floodway Authority, the Floodway Authority has had many meetings with communities on the east side and they will continue to do so in working with First Nation people.

We talked to First Nations people on the east side. It's something that they wanted, Mr. Speaker, in numerous meetings we've had. They want it for all kinds of reasons, not only for economic initiatives that they have, but for the food prices that they have to pay will go down, with regard to the initiatives on eco-tourism and I could go on and on with regard to the advantage of an east-side road. The members opposite were always against this road—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Bridge Inspection Reports Freedom of Information Costs

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, after the collapse of the St. Adolphe bridge on August 21st, we immediately sent in a Freedom of Information request for copies of all inspection reports undertaken on provincial bridges situated on the Red and Assiniboine rivers completed by either provincial government inspectors or contracted inspectors since March 1st, 2009, to date.

However, we cannot get the information from Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation without paying a fee of \$360. Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us why he won't release this important information, which is clearly a matter of public safety, without us having to pay for it?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): You know, Mr. Speaker, let me, first of all, take this opportunity to thank the hardworking men and women of the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation and, when they're doing the regular inspections they spotted a, they spotted a—noticed an issue that dealt with the

integrity of a bridge and, thanks to them, and an abundance of caution, that they stopped traffic crossing that bridge.

And thank goodness nothing more serious happened, but, again, the activities of those men and women that are doing daily inspections and weekly inspections and monthly inspections on our infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, we can be very thankful for them, for all the work they do and spotting this particular incident with regard to the Delorme bridge in St. Adolphe.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, that wasn't the question, and it's interesting that the department wants to charge \$360 to provide inspection reports for the bridges—and this comes from a minister who just spent \$12 million putting rock on a Z-dike which didn't even see any water this spring. But it's really a matter of public interest, public safety, and the public has a right to know if any other bridges on the Red and Assiniboine are compromised after this spring's flood.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate how many bridges over the Red and Assiniboine Rivers received inspections this spring, from March to date, which ones they were and what were the results?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I'd like the MLA for Morris to drive her Lexus over to LaSalle and if you see—let her find out whether or not they think the Z-dike is a useless piece of land.

You know, maybe the MLA for Morris wasn't around when they were dumping buses and bales on the Z-dike in the 1997 flood because they were afraid the dike is going to wash away, Mr. Speaker. The engineers have claimed that this is the best way to put riprap with limestone and it's money well spent for floods, going into the future.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, the minister is certainly living up to his reputation as a Broad Street bully but I don't know whether he expects me to go and do the inspections for him. That's what it sounds like.

But, Mr. Speaker, if the minister will not really release the information, what confidence can the public have when no, with—that no other structures have been compromised by the flood-ravaged, unstable riverbanks? The public knows better than to take the word of this minister. We want that report.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister today release all the inspection reports or will he force the taxpayers of Manitoba to fork out the \$360 to release the information, or will he force an Ombudsman review of this?

* (14:10)

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we've always depended on the information and the expertise of our engineers with regard to many different projects, including the Delorme Bridge, and they are currently—the sections that were in question have been removed. They are looking over the rest of the bridge to determine whether or not that, indeed, is safe as it stands, and then they'll be able to bring options forward, not only to myself but also to members of the community which I understand is a real concern there with regard to the main access to the community. There's a concern about possible flooding next spring and access to the community.

I've had many conversations with the residents, also elected officials from the area, and, Mr. Speaker, we told them, and they have confidence in our engineers, that when we have a solution, we will be bringing it to their attention so they're very much aware of where we're going forward.

Police Services Community Office Closures

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, as the Premier's (Mr. Doer) tenure is coming to a quick end, and I think that—the world taught me a little bit about the legacy, and if we look at the crime file, you'll see from the public's perception, whether it is grow-ops, child prostitution, gang activity, petty crimes, it hasn't disappeared. It has gotten worse in many different ways.

The excuse that the Premier and this government has always given is to point their finger east to Ottawa and blame Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, for all the problems. We know full well that this government has failed to take responsibility on the justice file, and as a result, we have had problems.

My question to the Minister of Justice is: Why does, for example, why did this government allow community police offices to close in Winnipeg's North End?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, first off, Mr. Speaker, the member for Inkster said we didn't need any more police officers. That's in the record. Secondly, the

City of Winnipeg police makes determination of where community police offices are. Thirdly, we have put 14 police officers, 10 to 12 police officers in the schools with the kids from this government and you voted against that. We let the City of Winnipeg police chief run the police. I'd rather have him run the police than the member for Inkster.

Secondly, the Criminal Code is made by the federal government. The Liberal federal government did not make any moves. At least the Conservative federal government is changing the Criminal Code. We asked for changes under the Liberals. They said no. To the credit of the Conservative federal government, they have put in place at least six of our anticrime initiatives because we don't have the power. It's called the Constitution. It's called the Criminal Code and it's made by Ottawa not by Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice should look to his seatmate, the outgoing Premier, who promised communities would be safer. Safer communities. This government, in its decision to allow community police offices to close had a very real, negative impact on crime in Winnipeg's North End. This Premier, this Minister of Justice, did nothing in preventing that. All this minister says, blame Ottawa. We're giving more police officers. In the last decade, we've seen more police officers in our hospitals, in our courts than we've seen on our streets. That's not providing better quality police service. It's not because of this government, it's because of the fine work that our police force does and they're challenged because you are not supporting them by, in the courts and in our hospitals, Mr. Minister.

The question is, Mr. Speaker: Why has this government failed Manitobans so miserably in terms of delivering community policing in the communities. Why don't you restore community offices?

Mr. Chomiak: This government, the government of Manitoba, funds 10 percent of the City of Winnipeg police force. No other government in Manitoba history has done that. You can phone the mayor today; you can talk to Chief McCaskill, who'll be with me in a press conference shortly. You can phone the head of the union, the police union and ask all of them which government has provided more support to the police than anyone else. I guarantee

you they will say this government, whether it's the police chief, the mayor or the City of the Winnipeg, or the head of the union. Phone them and ask them or talk to the average police officer on the street and ask them who supported them more than anyone else. I guarantee you I know the answer and you'll be afraid to ask.

Community Justice Committees

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I guarantee you Winnipeg probably has the highest per capita police officers in our hospitals because of this government's incompetence in addressing that particular issue. Check out some of the emergencies on Fridays and Saturday nights.

Mr. Speaker, if we take a look in terms of community justice committees, this is something in which this province has failed to recognize the valuable role that they have to play while other provinces have seen an expansion of community justice—community justice committees. Not in Manitoba—not in Manitoba, and this is, again, fighting crime in the communities.

My question to the Minister of Justice: Why has him and his Premier (Mr. Doer) allowed community justice committees to even get worse in the province of Manitoba in the last number of years?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, we have active community justice committees and programs all across the province. The changes in the YCGA affected—that the member knows that. We're trying to—we are trying to actually and, in fact, we've put in the resources to have more in terms of alternative dispute resolution, et cetera, through Mediation Services, et cetera. That's true. We want more preventative programs.

But I have a list here, Mr. Speaker, of about 20 preventative programs that we've put in place. I'll provide it to the member, and I'll guarantee you that that member voted against every single one of those programs. You can't yell and criticize and say you're not doing anything, and then when we come to you with the budget to pay for those things, vote against the budget. You can't have it both ways.

You have a record that we could look at, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to compare our record to any jurisdiction in the country. I'm happy to—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Wetlands Restoration Programs Funding

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, on occasion I have made mention of the need for proper drainage infrastructure in this Chamber, but issues of water quality are of equal importance to the people of Manitoba. Swamps and marshes are Mother Nature's natural filters for nutrients, but they need to be properly maintained as well.

I ask the Minister of Water Stewardship to brief the Assembly on an announcement that was made recently in regard to the maintenance of healthy waterways.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Now, Mr. Speaker, that's how to ask a good question.

I was very pleased this morning to announce a million dollars for the protection and restoration of the wetlands throughout the province of Manitoba. We are working in partnership with the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, Ducks Unlimited, Dr. Gordon Goldsborough of the Delta Research Station, Mr. Speaker. This million dollars that we announced today will reduce the nutrient inflow into Lake Winnipeg by some 6 percent. That's 6 percent of the nutrient reduction going into Lake Winnipeg, working with the Netley-Libau marsh specialists, working with the Delta Marsh specialists. We are going to tackle the problem of carp, which is an invasive species that was introduced into Delta Marsh some 40 years ago. We're also working with ag producers around permanent conservation easements.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Health-Care Services MRI Wait Times

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, in 1999 the NDP promised to reduce wait times for MRIs to eight weeks or less. Fast forward to today. Shannon Campbell waited six months, from August of '08 to January of '09 for an MRI on her jaw in Brandon. The MRI was unsuccessful because it lacked a cone. She now has to wait till January 11, 2010, for an MRI with a cone at St. Boniface Hospital. Ms. Campbell is 22 years old and, as the result of an accident, cannot eat without supervision as her jaw will lock and she can choke. She suffers constant pain.

If Manitoba Health cannot provide time–health care on a timely basis, why not send Shannon out of province where wait times are measured in days, not months and years?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, on two specific points raised by the member opposite. First, in relation to the specific individual about whom he is speaking, I'm going to encourage him to speak with me immediately after so I can discuss with him the importance of individuals, in consultation with their doctors, should their status change, so, too, can their position on a wait list. And that's a really important thing we need to work on and work with.

On the second point, we do know that we have seen an increase in our wait time from MRIs lately as a result of our family physicians being able to order directly. We're increasing our capacity in that regard to deal with that issue, and there is work to do there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

* (14:20)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Southdale Playgrounds

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, in June, I had the pleasure of attending ribbon-cutting ceremonies for two new Southdale playgrounds. Students at Shamrock School and École Guyot returned to classes this month to find that recess is better than ever.

At École Guyot, a multi-phased playground enhancement project was completed with the construction of a dynamic play structure. The structure was realized in part by parent-community fundraising with a \$10,000 provincial grant. It includes climbing apparatus, toss-and-score hoops and a basketball court. Fifty newly planted trees and shrubs joined seven student-designed murals to make École Guyot's playground a wonderful place in which to play and learn.

A similarly impressive grass-root project was completed at Shamrock School. On the very same day that École Guyot unveiled their new structure, the Shamrock Connects project was drawn to a close as the finishing touches were added to an extensive playground development made possible in part by a \$32,000 provincial funding grant. The final step saw the planting of trees throughout the playground.

Students are thrilled with the new playground equipment and versatile outdoor classroom.

Both projects are heartening examples of tireless volunteers partnering with Manitoba's Community Places program to match community goals with the necessary funding. Modern playgrounds are the key component to a comprehensive educational experience.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The new playgrounds at Shamrock School and École Guyot facilitate an invaluable combination of outdoor learning and play. Knowing that education and healthy living are central to any society, the time and resources contributed on behalf of volunteers and government is the definition of a smart investment.

And though I enthusiastically thank the parents, school staff and community leaders for their tireless efforts in the development of these playgrounds, I imagine that the smiles on the faces of the children themselves are reward enough. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pembina Valley Challenge

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Deputy Speaker, on September 5th and 6th of this year, Pembina Valley Tourism hosted their second annual Pembina Valley Challenge. Inspired by the television show *The Amazing Race*, Pembina Valley Tourism organized a two-day community event that showcased all of Pembina Valley's great attractions. With over 90 teams consisting of two to eight people, close to 400 people participated in the second edition of the challenge, more than doubling its number of participants.

Over the course of the contest, teams were asked to visit six communities per day to find hidden gems in the Pembina Valley area. Once found, teams accepted challenges that included washing clothes using an old-fashioned washboard, walking around town with wooden clogs and using the high wire zip line in Manitou. Each challenge had a number of points allocated to it in an effort designed to stimulate local tourism, and extra points were awarded for each dollar spent in achieving the challenges. The team with the most points at the end of the two-day challenge was declared the winner.

The event was open to people of all ages and from all communities. It gave members of the community the opportunity to discover and

appreciate the treasures found in their own backyards. The challenge's attraction was not limited to local interest, as there was even a team from Kansas that took part in the race. I would like to congratulate the winning team from the Rosenort Credit Union who walked away with a \$1,000 grand prize.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this House will join me in applauding Pembina Valley Tourism on its great success in organizing an original, fun, family-based community event that boosted the local economy, highlighted Manitoba's amazing communities and fostered community spirit. Thank you.

Sergeant David Cooper

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with great honour that I stand today to speak on the heroic achievement of Sergeant David Cooper, a search and rescue technician team leader with the Winnipeg-based 17 Wing, home base for the 335th Transport and Rescue Squadron.

On February 16, 2007, an Inuit hunter by the name of Bill Wolki became stranded on an ice floe when his boat was pushed out to sea by a large block of ice that broke loose and was swept away by the winds and strong current. Sergeant Cooper and his team were contacted and the Sergeant was faced with a difficult decision. Because winds were upwards of 60 kilometres an hour, 20 kilometres an hour stronger than search and rescue training missions allow, and temperatures had plummeted to minus 65 degrees Celsius, Sergeant Cooper was faced with the risking his own life, as well as the lives of his team members, or risking the life of an ill-equipped hunter.

In addition, Wolki needed to be rescued by means of a parachute jump, a perilous prospect considering there was much open water and only small pockets of ice to land on. Landing in the water would have been most likely fatal as there would have been no safety boats or means of rescue for some time. However, in an act of tremendous bravery, Sergeant Cooper and his partner decided to parachute the 900 metres onto the floe near Cape Parry. They camped with Wolki for the next 18 hours until a helicopter could touch down to pick them up.

On June 19th of this year, Sergeant Cooper was awarded the Star of Courage in a ceremony at Rideau Hall, making him only the 12th Manitoban to ever receive our country's second highest bravery

decoration awarded for acts of conspicuous courage in the face of great peril.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I commend Sergeant David Cooper for his actions and ask that the House join me in his recognition. Thank you.

National Forest Week

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): This week is National Forest Week and I am surprised and disappointed, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) did not stand up in his place this week when he had the opportunity to do so under a ministerial statement to celebrate this wonderful occasion. But because he wasn't going to do it, then we believe, on this side of the House, that this is worth celebrating and we will do that today.

The theme for this year's week, "Canada's Forests: Strong Roots, Green Shoots". The theme aims to highlight the importance of innovative research and entrepreneurial activity in the forestry industry. Canada is the world's largest exporter of forest products and the forest industry's contribution to Canada's GDP is about 1.9 percent. The goal of the week is to inform Canadians about their forest heritage and to increase awareness and recognition of this valuable asset.

National Forest Week is sponsored by the Canadian Forestry Association and various provincial and regional organizations, such as the Manitoba Forestry Association. There are many ways for interested Manitobans and, in particular, young people to mark the week. Suggested activities include: arrange a tree planting with Tree Canada at www.treecanada.ca, take a walk in the woods nearby and get to know your forest, care for a newly planted or neglected tree and study its species, identify products at home or school that are made of wood, learn about organizations and demonstrates sustainable forest managements, tour a forest-sector industry or processing site, learn about the prevention of forest fires.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Some of the facts about Manitoba forests and the forest industry: We have 34.3 million hectares of forest and other wooded lands; the main tree species by volume are spruce at 38 percent, a poplar aspen at 31 percent and pine at 23 percent; our forest industry has directly employed 7,800 people in 2008.

I think we can all agree that careful management of our forest resources is very important. Events like the National Forest Week are integral to raising awareness about the importance of our forests and the principles of sustainable development. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Eriksdale Wellness Centre

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to share with the House today an exciting new development that took place over the summer in Eriksdale. In July, this government committed \$720,000 in funding toward a new wellness centre to be built by the community. The centre will provide community cancer services, as well as health and wellness programs, ensuring that residents are able to access health services and recreation opportunities to maintain and improve their health.

Other services to be included in the facility are mental health supports, cancer services navigator to co-ordinate services for Interlake residents, enhanced palliative care services, the use of Telehealth to educate local health professionals, enhanced cancer-screening services and a fitness centre.

This funding builds on recent investments in health care in Eriksdale, including \$500,000 to renovate portions of the E.M. Crowe Memorial Hospital to improve patient flow. The investments also established a mobile ultrasound program to serve residents of Eriksdale, Arborg and other surrounding communities.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a part of a government that is truly dedicated to providing quality health care to rural Manitobans. This government has brought more health professionals to Manitoba and expanded and modernized health-care facilities across the province.

I would like to congratulate the community of Eriksdale for their initiative in building this project. The new wellness centre will provide residents and members of the surrounding Interlake communities with high quality health care and recreation services that are close to home. This is all a part of this government's commitment to a healthier future for all Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

ORDERS OF THE DAY**(Continued)****GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****House Business**

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Government House Leader): It's on House business, Mr. Speaker, just to remind us that we are on the Opposition Day motion today, as previously discussed.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. I will now, for—business for this afternoon will be the Opposition Day motion.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

THAT the Legislature ask the Government House Leader to call a meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs as soon as possible to consider the Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2003, which deals with certain matters arising from the 1999 general election, and that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call witnesses, including Tom Milne, David Asselstine and other relevant witnesses to testify at the committee, and to compel production of documents and records in the possession of any witnesses, and have the committee continue to meet without time limit until all outstanding questions are answered regarding the 2003 annual report.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Official Opposition—Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo,

THAT the—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, and it is unfortunate that we find ourselves in the position of having to introduce today's motion.

Members will recall that this arises from certain findings made by a forensic auditor who was hired by Elections Manitoba to examine election returns following the 1999 general election and in general elections subsequent to that.

Mr. Speaker, in the course of his review of election returns after the 1999 general election,

Mr. David Asselstine, who is a well-respected forensic auditor, a certified fraud examiner and somebody who has established a reputation in his work, both here in Manitoba and internationally as a—as a member of the Audit Committee for the Teachers' Retirement Fund, as a member of the committee that audits countries around the world on behalf of the IMF, and is somebody who has acted for law enforcement agencies around the world in connection with fraud investigations.

It was Mr. Asselstine who made the discovery, in his review of party returns, Mr. Speaker, that 14 returns filed by the NDP after 1999 had been—had contained false information. The finding was based on his review of records, and those records determined that there had been a series of cheque swaps, where cheques in identical amounts were swapped on the same day between the NDP and certain unions within the province of Manitoba. Those cheque swaps were done in order to create the impression of contributions and expenses made—contributions made by the unions and expenses incurred by the party as part of a—as part of a scheme to enable the party to claim election rebates to which they were not entitled. In the case of the 1999 election, it was over \$76,000 in rebates that were triggered as a result of the falsifications.

We as legislators and Manitobans and the media would not have been aware of these events had it not been for the fact that the former official agent for Mr. Schellenberg in Rossmere—Mr. Schellenberg who, I think, all of us regard as an honourable man—and his official agent, Jim Treller, who came forward with information that indicated that, subsequent to the 1999 election, returns were filed, they were altered within the central NDP office and returned back to official agents for signature, and then filed with Elections Manitoba. And subsequent to those filings, the party received in excess of \$76,000 in rebates to which it was not entitled.

Following that, Mr. Speaker, and following Mr. Asselstine's findings, these were presumably reported to Elections Manitoba. There is a period of time in which there were private communications that took place between Elections Manitoba and the NDP and, finally, what happened in the days leading up to the 2003 general election, was that a meeting was called of the official agents who were impacted by what had happened. The meeting was called not by Elections Manitoba, but by central figures within the NDP, including Tom Milne. And at that meeting, which included the NDP's lawyer at the time, official

agents were told that there had been an error with the returns and they're required to sign off on returns that had been re-prepared by the central party.

It was an extremely unusual event in that normally when there's an issue with returns, Mr. Speaker, there's direct communication between Elections Manitoba and the relevant campaigns, not an orchestrated event days before a general election, orchestrated by central party figures as opposed to communicated to official agents by Elections Manitoba.

That meeting took place in 2003, in May. The election then took place. Immediately thereafter, 15 days after that election, Mr. Speaker, David Asselstine, the forensic auditor, was forced out of his contract with Elections Manitoba by Elections Manitoba and had payment on his invoices withheld for an extended period of time until an agreement was reached that allowed him to be paid for all the very good work he had done on behalf of Elections Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what's disturbing about the sequence of events is that a letter was sent to Elections Manitoba by Mr. Milne on behalf of the NDP in 2002 indicating that they were of—the party was of the view that Mr. Asselstine had a bias against the party. It was their view that Mr. Asselstine had concluded that the party had acted illegally and for that reason they wanted him removed from any future work with Elections Manitoba, blatant interference in an investigation by a body that is supposedly at arm's length from any of the political parties here in Manitoba.

So the sequence of events is that we have the discovery. We have the complaint to Elections Manitoba. We have the cover-up meeting taking place just before the call of the 2003 election. We have the election and then we have the immediate removal of Mr. Asselstine from his contract with Elections Manitoba after 2003. The matter then went quiet, Mr. Speaker, for a long period of time until the 2003 annual report of Elections Manitoba was delivered to the Speaker in December of 2004 and distributed to members, as is the protocol.

That report, Mr. Speaker, is the report that we have grave concerns about in that it failed to make any—a proper description of what Mr. Asselstine had found, what were the proper conclusions to be reached from those findings, and how that ought to have been disposed of and dealt with by Elections Manitoba.

At the same time as the report whitewashed the findings of Mr. Asselstine concerning the illegal alteration of returns by the NDP, that report also made extensive reference to opposition party members who had been charged, had their cases extensively publicized, and who had their cases disposed of in a very public way prior to, and in the lead up to, the 2003 general election.

And this became a talking point for the Premier (Mr. Doer) and other NDP members, the fact that there had been inadvertent actions that had resulted in monies expended over limits that had no impact in the outcome of those campaigns, heavily publicized, dealt with in a very public way, and then reported on in that very same report in paragraphs immediately above the paragraph referring to this very deliberate, very complex scheme that was entered into involving a multiplicity of parties within the NDP to take money wrongfully from Manitoba taxpayers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Asselstine also made reference in his correspondence, that was made public earlier this year, to the fact that there were two other examples that he had found that were either questionable or illegal in terms of his review of the returns, Mr. Speaker. And we remain without the full detail of those other findings, although some of that additional detail does now seem to be—seem to be forthcoming.

One of those schemes involves the issuance of federal tax credits and there was another matter that he had referred to in his correspondence, Mr. Speaker, and I suspect we'll hear a great deal more about these issues as we go forward. But the sequence of events was that the government called an immediate committee meeting to deal with that report. They got it through very quickly at a time when there wasn't adequate opportunity and any knowledge whatsoever on the part of opposition members about what Mr. Asselstine had found and all the communications that had taken place between the NDP and Elections Manitoba in the lead up to that report.

*(14:40)

And it was only earlier this year, Mr. Speaker, that we became more fully apprised of what had happened thanks to the courage of Jim Treller, as the official agent for Rossmere, for the NDP, and thanks to the release of some documents that had been authored by Mr. Asselstine and others.

And so it's a very serious issue. It involves actions that have wrongfully taken money from Manitoba taxpayers, to the benefit of the NDP, covered up over an extended period of time, only made public as a result of decisions made to disclose information publicly, Mr. Speaker.

This committee meeting is needed in order to get to the bottom of what happened. There should be no time limits. Those with relevant information should be brought forward, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite shouldn't be afraid to hear from Mr. Asselstine. If they think he's wrong, they can challenge him at committee. If they think that Mr. Treller is wrong, they can challenge him at committee. If they think that Mr. Milne is telling the truth, they can bring him to committee and allow us to challenge Mr. Milne.

They shouldn't be afraid of having this open process in public, Mr. Speaker, and if they support the resolution today, that's exactly what we'll get, that's exactly what Manitobans will get, it's exactly what we owe them, it's what we owe to democracy. And if they vote against the resolution, then it simply indicates that the NDP, after 10 years in office, is so arrogant that they're not even prepared to hold a public committee meeting and get to the bottom of what took place here in our province.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, this debate is about the role of the Chief Electoral Officer and his independence and whether or not all honourable members accept his independence and respect it, and accept his findings and respect his findings. And it's also about accountability for Elections Manitoba reports.

In the 1990s, Elections Manitoba was never called to appear before the Legislature. In 2000, when this government first called the Chief Electoral Officer to committee, 17 reports going back to 1988 were passed. The Chief Electoral Officer has appeared in front of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs on eight occasions since 2000.

The issue of the 1999 refiling has been in the public domain for five years. Elections Manitoba reported the NDP's revised filing on page 17 of its 2003 annual report. The 2003 annual report was tabled on December 7th, 2004 and was discussed on

four occasions by the all-party committee on Legislative Affairs in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2009.

On June 15th, 2009, Chief Electoral Officer wrote to the now-member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) and reiterated that he followed the advice of Michael Green and Blair Graham. And I quote from this letter: It was always the consistent practice of this office to rely upon legal analysis and final recommendations of two legal counsel. As Chief Electoral Officer, I then made the decision as to whether charges would be laid, and I can confirm that my decisions were always consistent with the final legal advice I received from Mr. Michael Green, former counsel to the Monnin inquiry and currently Commissioner of Elections, and Mr. Blair Graham, general counsel to Elections Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table this letter for all members of the House, and I'd like to continue to quote on page 2 of this letter, where he says: The same investigative process was followed with respect to all investigations. Different investigations, of course, dealt with different backgrounds of facts, different evidence and different sections of The Election Act or The Elections Finance Act. Accordingly, decisions were reached to prosecute in some cases and not in others. However, the main point is that the same process was applied uniformly regardless of which political party was involved. As a legal matter, decisions on prosecutions were taken based on legal analysis and were consistent with the final recommendations from not one, but two legal counsel. End of quote.

This is consistent with what Mr. Balasko has said in the past: With regard to the comment "avoided charges," I think that welcomes the opportunity to reiterate that there is a sole point of decision with regard to charges being laid, that is, specific legal analysis and specific recommendations of two counsel, independently provided to the Chief Electoral Officer, and the Chief Electoral Officer acting consistent with the legal advice that's been received. And this is recorded in *Hansard*, May 25th, 2009.

Another quote from the same Legislative Affairs Committee: "There's a sole reason upon which charges were determined not to be laid: two independent legal opinions from, arguably, the outstanding experts in their field with a long track record to point to, and that's the sole reason that charges . . . were not laid."

Now, if one were to listen only to the opposition, you would think that the New Democratic Party was the only party that had to refile returns but that is not true. The Chief Electoral Officer clearly stated in the committee that the NDP was treated the same way as other parties have been treated in this circumstance, and the Chief Electoral Officer said there was not a political party in the House that hasn't refiled a financial statement, that has not repaid reimbursements at one point and, in some cases, more than once. So this has happened in the past across the board having not resulted in prosecutions in other cases either. *Hansard*, May 25th, 2009, and I would like to table another letter from the Chief Electoral Officer and this one dated December 12th, 2000, and I would like to quote from this letter and it says: The Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba has now agreed that adjustments are necessary to the form 921 as previously filed. Based on the adjusted statement, the total advertising expenses of the PC party were in excess of the advertising limit in 1995 by \$13,691. The adjusted 1995 form 921 is available at Elections Manitoba for inspection or copying.

So I would argue that the circumstances are almost identical. An election return was filed. There were some problems, and there was a refile. The same thing happened to the NDP. There was a filing. They were given the opportunity to refile, and we did so.

The Chief Electoral Officer has been clear that all these decisions were consistent with advice given to him by Michael Green and Blair Graham. *[interjection]* With regard to the comment, avoided charges. I think that welcomes the opportunity to reiterate there's a sole point of decision with regard to charges being laid. That is specific legal analysis and specific recommendations of two counsel independently provided to the Chief Electoral Officer, and the Chief Electoral Officer acting consistent with legal advice that's been received. I think I read that into the record twice but that's okay.

To summarize or paraphrase, what Mr. Balasko said was that he referred it to legal counsel. Legal counsel gave him advice. He acted on that advice and made a decision and the result was that not only our party, but in past other parties have been allowed to refile returns.

There has been an allegation that Elections Manitoba has been pressured. However, I would point out that Elections Manitoba operates

independently of government. Elections Manitoba investigations, and the time lines around them, are determined by Elections Manitoba without interference, and as Mr. Balasko said, on the record, *Hansard*, May 25th, 2009, "I have never personally felt pressured by any government over time to make a decision." He also said, "Elections Manitoba is completely independent and it is completely non-partisan and that is a factual statement." *Hansard*, May 25th, 2009. Mr. Balasko also said on the same day, the same Legislative Affairs Committee meeting, "At the end of the day, our decisions are based upon legal analysis and the advice from two outstanding lawyers whose strong reputations in this field providing advice independent of each other to me, and I acting consistent with that information."

So what we have here is three parties, according to Mr. Balasko, who have all filed revised returns and so we have that in common. What is the difference here? The difference is that we respect the independence of an independent officer of this Legislature. We accept the rulings of that independent officer. All of us have a chance to ask questions of the independent officer, the Chief Electoral Officer, at Legislative Affairs Committee meetings, but one side, the opposite side, do not accept his rulings, do not accept the legal advice that he got and so they're raising this Opposition Day motion today, which is their right.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) is wrong about what actually happened at the committee on May 25th, 2009. On June 4, 2009, the Member for Fort Whyte stated, "When we asked Mr. Balasko to explain the investigations, he said, sorry, I can't talk to you about that. We asked the question over and over again." On the contrary, Mr. Balasko answered a series of questions on the 1999 investigation, over four hours of committee meetings on May 25th, 2009, July 10th, 2008. And if opposite members want, they can look up May 25th, 2009, *Hansard* and they can read the questions and read the answers, and Mr. Balasko did, indeed, answer the questions that were asked.

* (14:50)

In 1999, the Conservative Party spent \$1,032,662 trying to get re-elected compared to \$1,029,147 for the NDP. All of our election returns in the '90s were independently audited and reviewed by Elections Manitoba. We were always upfront and transparent with the practice of hiring election

workers from unions and the way they were accounted for in our filings.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I'm running out of time here. But to summarize, we followed the rules of Elections Manitoba. We abided by the rulings of Elections Manitoba. We support the independence of the Chief Electoral Officer. We respect his findings and his rulings based on legal advice and if members want to ask him questions, next time he comes before this standing committee of the Legislature, they can ask him all the questions that they want.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I'm pleased to speak to this motion put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in which he wants the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs to be called as soon as possible to consider the annual report on Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2003, which deals with certain issues in regard to the 1999 general election.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting, the member from Burrows gets up to speak on this bill and yet he's one of the 13 campaigns implicated in this cheque-swapping scheme. So it's very interesting that he would get up and not so, not so unusual though, that he would try and make this about an issue different than what we're talking about today which is the Opposition Day motion.

He tends to want to talk about, well, he quotes the member of a chief—sorry, he quotes the Chief Electoral Officer from the meeting that was held and yet it was his party that shut that meeting down. It was the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) at that meeting, the architect of this whole scheme, that shut the meeting down, that didn't want to have any further questions asked.

And what we're trying to get to here is transparency, accountability and get to the truth here, Mr. Speaker. And the only way that we're going to get all of the facts is if we can call the Committee on Legislative Affairs and have our questions answered. Have witnesses called. Have no time limit on that meeting. Have the witnesses. We can ask questions. If we don't—if the members opposite don't believe, they can ask questions too, something they very rarely do at committee. But, Mr. Speaker, it's about getting the facts.

And he talks about, oh, well, this was, you know, the 2003 return. It's been in the public domain for five years. But yes, Mr. Speaker, new information has been made available to us by the

NDP official agent, Jim Treller, who came to us with information because it really bothered him that this illegal activity was going on. It really bothered him to the point where he had to speak up. He had to say something.

Now, what happens, Mr. Speaker, is if we don't get to the bottom of this, how can we or any party or anybody in the province feel that there is transparency and accountability when we're dealing with elections? We want to get to the bottom of this.

And he talks about all parties, all parties have the same issues. No, Mr. Speaker, that is not the case as we have seen. What happened in this case is election returns were falsified. Claims were made that were not allowed under eligible election expenses, which allowed the NDP to collect \$76,000 for their own use, which they should not have collected from the public, Mr. Speaker. They falsified returns to make it sound like there was more that they could claim so then they could get this money returned to them.

Now all of this was dealt with in a way that, yes, there were some meetings going on, because this wasn't exactly right, but they weren't very public meetings. And what happened is, it was determined that—okay, you know what, somebody's changed these election returns. Somebody's claiming something they shouldn't be claiming. So we're just going to say—okay, you know what, just pay the money back, and that will be the end of it.

And that's not the same thing as calling people out into the public domain, saying that they have overspent on their election expenses, naming them in the public newspapers, asking them and charging them and telling them that they pay that money back, or they'll be charged. This is not the same thing, Mr. Speaker. This is not the same thing to publicly denigrate one party and sweep the other information under the rug and just go: Okay, you can just repay it. We'll just put it in here in a little line, and we'll just sort of smooth that over.

That's not the same thing at all, and the member from, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) is chirping away that she's saying it's a public document.

Yes, it's a public document, but the fact is, the fact is, that Jim Treller, an NDP official agent, came forward to us because he did not like what the NDP were doing, and it was bothering his conscience. And he came forward to us, to tell us that you were doing,

that they were doing the wrong things not only in one campaign, but in 13 campaigns. And those campaigns were The Maples, St. Vital, Riel—the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) should be taking note here—Fort Garry, Gimli, Springfield, St. James, The Pas, Burrows, Lakeside, Rossmere, St. Boniface and Southdale, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now what happened here was the NDP decided that, well, you know, we could get a little bit more money back if we just switch this to, to look like—we could put it in another place on the return, and that way it allows us for a 50 percent reclaim from the public. And one of the official agents said to us, you know, I didn't agree to that, and I don't think that was right. I think that this was wrong, and I can't—my conscience won't allow me to be quiet on this issue.

And that's why he came forward and brought that information to us, and we have since then spoken with other people who have provided some other pieces of information.

But, really, what we do need to get to is we need to have, we need to have this Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs called, so that we call witnesses to determine all of the facts here. Let's get these witnesses on the record, and, Mr. Speaker, people like Tom Milne, NDP secretary—he'll have the background and documents and records that would be of interest to the committee. David Asselstine, whose credentials, the Leader of the Opposition outlined earlier, has a very in-depth knowledge, an understanding of this scheme, and can provide all of the relevant background and information to the committee.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that the public has a right to know exactly where their tax dollars have been used, and whether there's been abuse of these tax dollars. And I don't think that anybody in this Chamber should be afraid of calling the legislative committee, and having witnesses called, and having some transparency and accountability and truth come out.

I don't think that there should be any fear at all to have this committee called, because it's a very complex issue. There are a lot of questions. We have a lot of questions, and I'm sure that the NDP must have some questions. I'm sure that they must have some questions to ask. The only way to get to the bottom of this whole thing is call this committee, and

let's call the witnesses, and just see exactly what happened in the 1999 election, and what happened with the meetings, and what happened leading up to the 2003 election, where this report was not put out until after the election, and what has been happening in the 2007 election. We need to get to the bottom of what's been happening with the NDP financing in all of their previous elections. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:00)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, it's rather disturbing—rather disturbing, actually, to have to, and stand and speak to a Opposition Day motion that really need not have been tabled or filed if, in fact, the government of the day had have taken their responsibilities seriously and the serious—and the, and the responsibilities of democracy equal as, equally as seriously.

Mr. Speaker, the most important foundation of a democracy is a free and open and honest and transparent election. We in this country are very fortunate to have a democracy that is equal to none other in the world. We're very fortunate that we've had my relatives and your relatives and others go to wars to be able to protect an open, honest and transparent democracy. What has happened in the province of Manitoba makes a mockery of that democracy.

We need an unbiased, a fair and honest referee when it comes to elections in this country. And that referee we depend on is the Elections Manitoba. Elections Manitoba must be credible. They must have the confidence of not only this House, but they must have the confidence of the people of Manitoba that they are going to deliver an open, honest and fair election to Manitobans.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there are some questions that have to be answered with respect to that honesty, openness and unbiasedness of Elections Manitoba. And the only way that they can regain that credibility and confidence is to answer questions in an open forum—not hide behind some ludicrous legal arguments; not hide behind legislation that was put into place by an NDP government, but to answer honestly, questions at an open—at an open forum. The only forum that we have in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, is the standing committees that are struck by this Legislature. And that's all we are asking. Strike that committee. Do not stonewall that committee. Do not stop the people who have the answers from appearing before that committee. Make it so that the credibility is restored in this Legislature.

I find it either ironic, hypocritical that the member from Burrows would be the one to speak against Elections Manitoba appearing before legislators. Minister of—the previous Minister of Finance, Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) and the long-standing, suffering, back-bench MLA from Burrows are part of the accused—are part of the accused, Mr. Speaker. So the accused are going to stonewall and stop the truth from coming out. We in Manitoba are going to have to start asking—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, if it doesn't get fixed we're going to have to have observers come into Manitoba to look after our election process if this is not fixed.

There were, I believe, inquiries in other issues that came forward, but I don't see the member from Burrows or the other individuals who are accused of having falsified reports go forward. I don't see them suggesting that there should be an inquiry into this particular circumstance. And why would that be? Do they have something to hide? Does the government have something to hide not only from the '99 election, but perhaps elections previous and perhaps elections after the 1999? I find it very strange that a 1999 election report would come out after the call for the next provincial election. It seems strange that that would be a timing issue that may be controlled by government, Mr. Speaker. They had that opportunity to do that.

A committee was called. The member—the long-standing, suffering, back-bench member from Burrows—on May the 25th in 2009 said that there was—there was—a committee meeting that was called with Elections Manitoba. If you read that same *Hansard*, you'll find that, actually, for once, NDP members at that committee asked questions. Oh, they don't ask questions in other standing committees. In fact, we had a standing committee last night; I would have loved to have some of the members of that committee—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Rouge, on a point of order.

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): I just want to correct the record: that there were questions asked

last night by government members of that committee. In fact, I asked questions last night.

Mr. Speaker: The same—the honourable member for Brandon West, on the same point of order.

Mr. Borotsik: Absolutely. I would certainly suggest that the co-chair of the committee member—committee actually did ask questions, as did one other minister that was in attendance. Yes, I would agree with that.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised—order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Fort Rouge, it's a dispute over the facts, and let's continue with the debate, please.

* * *

Mr. Borotsik: But I do stand by my original comment. There are too many standing committees that are attended to by members of government and of the opposition where government members, unfortunately, whether they don't have the information or they just don't have the understanding of process, do not get involved in those committees, Mr. Speaker.

So, if you look in the *Hansard* on this particular committee that was called with Elections Manitoba, it seemed that there was an awful lot of interest, a lot of interest from the government members on that committee, so much interest that, in fact, questions from the opposition were refused, so much, Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, members from the government shut down that committee after four hours. They wouldn't extend the hours of questioning that were to go on and make sure that we got the proper answers from Elections Manitoba, so there was a stonewalling.

There was a blocking of parliamentary procedure by government, and why would that be? *[interjection]* Why would it be? Are they trying to hide something? *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Borotsik: Are they suggesting that there may well—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Borotsik: —be some information that could be gleaned that may well—may well, in fact, point to some not only irregularities, but perhaps some

illegalities when it came to filing their election financials in 1999.

But, you know, that's just the tip of the iceberg. It's just an ability to play with the numbers. It's just money, but, unfortunately, I think there's more than money at stake here. I think there's, as I mentioned earlier, not only the integrity of Elections Manitoba, but the ability of the NDP to win an election honestly in this province, Mr. Speaker. I think they have some serious concerns, and they should be concerned, because this issue will not go away. This issue will not go away.

One way that they can fix it is to support this resolution. Bring Elections Manitoba forward. Bring Mr. Asselstine forward. Bring Mr. Milne forward. Bring the people who know the answers forward so we can get to the bottom of it, 'cause if they don't do that, there are other avenues in order to battle this injustice.

There are other avenues, and they may be worse because at that point in time, maybe there will be other remedies and ramifications that the Education Minister, the Labour Minister, the previous Minister of Finance and, yes, the member from Burrows may well have to stand and be accused of something more, Mr. Speaker, than just simply absconding with the cash. There may be more that's there, that they—

* (15:10)

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

This debate is not gonna get out of hand. All members in the House are honourable members and accusing a member of the House of taking cash or absconding from—with the cash, it is not parliamentary to accuse another member of doing that. All members in the House are honourable members and every member will be treated as such. That's a caution for all members.

The honourable member for Brandon West to continue.

Mr. Borotsik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate that.

In closing, I would just simply ask that the members of the government side seriously consider this resolution a positive resolution, support the resolution so we can get this out in the air. So we can get it corrected, we can get it rectified, and we don't have to continue with this battle, Mr. Speaker. It's to

their advantage if they would support this resolution. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this matter and to indicate that we in the Liberal Party—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to indicate that we in the Liberal Party support this motion that we have a meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs as soon as possible to consider the Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2003, to have a better understanding of matters which happened during the 1999 general election, and it is important that witnesses be called and that we are able to learn more of what has happened.

In essence, you know, ensuring the integrity of our electoral process is one of the most important matters in our democracy. It is one of the most important matters that we must act upon here in this Chamber. It is one of the most important matters that we must speak out on, that we must ensure, that we must make sure for future elections has integrity and that we are proceeding with a solid democratic base instead of a democracy which has some significant concerns.

In the 1999 provincial election, as we understand it, the NDP party central headquarters gathered in submissions to Elections Manitoba from many of their constituencies made by the official agents and candidates from this election, and the NDP central party headquarters then altered a number of these submissions, apparently 13, to Elections Manitoba without telling at least some perhaps all of the constituency official agents and candidates. This action, in altering important Elections Manitoba forms, financial submissions, appears, based on what we know, to be completely and totally illegal and unwarranted, and it is this concern which it is important we investigate for all concerned.

These alterations in the submissions to Elections Manitoba, which were made by the central NDP party headquarters, appear to have been very specifically designed to take public money, about \$75,000, to enrich the coffers of the NDP party. This appears, based on what we now know, to be highly unethical and illegal. The act has the appearance no less of a robbery of the public purse to benefit the NDP party. The actions require this sort of legislative

committee investigation and understanding of what happened. It is important that there be a public investigation and study of what happened, and this is as important for all. In fact, you know, to date, although the general facts of the NDP attempt, it would appear, to take public money and put it in party coffers are known, there is much more that still needs to be known in terms of understanding.

Now, the only reason for the NDP to hesitate in having this matter coming before the Standing Committee of the Legislative Affairs would be if the NDP were actually guilty. If they were innocent, there would be no hesitation in coming forward because, surely, the NDP would be very interested in clearing their name and making sure, you know, that these accusations, you know, are explained.

The fact that the NDP don't want to have this matter come before the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs gives the suspicion that they are guilty, and I would suggest to the NDP that the last thing that you would want, but that, in fact, is what is happening.

Now, we were fortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP actions were caught by Elections Manitoba and that the NDP party was forced to pay the \$75,000 back. But it apparently took four long years, until 2003, until this actually happened. Why did it take four long years to get this matter straightened out? Why was the matter referred to so briefly, almost cryptically, in the Elections Manitoba 2003 report, without the details that one would've normally expected and without recommendations made, which one would normally expect to prevent such problems in the future. And we can also ask: Why did it take 10 years for more facts to come out which have raised these additional concerns and which, in fact, are leading to this debate this afternoon?

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very clear that it is a necessity for democracy in Manitoba. It is a necessity for all MLAs that this legislative committee meet to hear these matters and have the ability to bring in witnesses, as described, and so that is why we, in the Liberal Party, support this motion.

I have talked with our executive director, who has been involved in filing financial statements for the Liberal Party, and when he saw what had happened, I mean, he was shocked that a party would alter financial statements from a constituency election financing report without telling the official agent who had signed that off.

This was completely beyond belief that a party could do this and would do this, because it is the official agent who'd signed that who's got the responsibility, and that is what a lot of our financial reporting is based upon, the accountability, the official agent for the financial matters and, when you undermine that, when you deliberately, it would appear, change that and change the financial reporting without the consent of the official agent, this is flagrant abuse of the election reporting. And we must not only know what happened, but we must make sure that this sort of thing can't happen again.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important matter for democracy. It is important that we have the support of all members in proceeding with this, and I just want to emphasize that this is essential, and I hope that we will have the support from all MLAs in moving this forward. Thank you.

* (15:20)

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): During the past two weeks, as we have debated bills, we've had motions brought forward, resolutions brought forward. Most of those resolutions and motions and bills affect all Manitobans and, while this motion also affects all Manitobans, the difference is, this is internal housekeeping. This is a problem that is within this institution here, and it needs to be addressed and it needs to be addressed today.

There are three things that we can be sure of in the future—today and in the future.

First of all, we all agree—at least I hope we would all agree—that Elections Manitoba must be above any partisanship. It's absolutely critical that it is.

The second thing is that Manitobans must have confidence in Elections Manitoba, and that hasn't—that hasn't—it's not the case now, as we see this unfolding—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member for Carman has the floor.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure everyone will have a chance this afternoon to put comments on the record.

The third point I would like to make is that this issue is not going to go away. You can run but you can't hide. This issue is not going to go away. We know we're right on this. There are members who

can claim innocence, but it's—how ironic that the member who gets up who—the member—one member who did speak for the government side is one of those of the 13 who filed false returns. And, if memory serves me correct, they also have never signed off on that amended audited return.

In fact, even the former Minister of Finance realized the illegality of this whole scheme and demanded a letter absolving him of any guilt by the party—

An Honourable Member: And his official agent.

Mr. Pedersen: —and his official agent. He knew that this was not right, and this is the—was the Minister of Finance who oversees Elections Manitoba.

This issue of Elections Manitoba is so deep, when we watched the national news from time to time about elections around the world and how Canada has gone to monitor elections in other countries, Third World countries where democracy is under pressure, and we just say, well, isn't that good that we can go and help them and that we don't have it at here at home. Now, with this, we do have this here. And I know I've been somewhat glib in comments saying that we're going to have to bring other countries, some of those Third World countries in here to monitor our elections if there is no inquiry, if we do not stand up in this House and admit there are questions. You will have time to absolve yourself if it is—if the allegations are not true.

But what's happened is—we're talking about 10 years ago, a long time, but if this wasn't uncovered until now, what has happened since then? It's not that—you can claim your innocence from back 10 years ago, but if you—if you knew that there was something suspect back then, who knows what has happened since that time.

We know that there has—they have—this government has blocked the committee from meeting, from—not just from meeting, they have met. But they blocked the committee from having meaningful dialogue about producing documents and records that would answer the questions that we're asking. If, indeed, you are innocent, and in this country you are still supposed to be innocent until proven guilty, if you really are innocent, bring forth the documents into committee. Bring these witnesses. Bring Mr. Milne and Mr. Asselstine to the committee. Allow them to answer these questions that are being asked, because if you really have nothing to hide, what can be the harm of doing that?

And realizing too that this issue will not go away. We know that there was something wrong here. We believe there was something wrong. You can claim all you want that there isn't, but if it—if you have nothing to hide, open up the committee. We know that there was—13 of these returns were falsified. That's public knowledge now.

I know that when I ran first in 2007 the thoughts of falsifying an Elections Manitoba return was not—couldn't even be contemplated because in your, in your—going towards public office to think that you would falsify records is—was not even—was not even a consideration. But apparently back in 1999 this is what happened to 13 of them, and a number of them have been sitting in the House here this afternoon, that are sitting there and not saying anything, at least not putting anything on the record that they did—their returns were indeed falsified and they did not even— even though these returns were audited and returned to them, they still, to date, have not signed them.

And that is beyond belief for a country like Canada and like Manitoba to have a Third World, banana republic type of mentality within our elections. The \$76,000 that they, in effect, in effect took, in effect took from the taxpayers and then they repaid, but with no penalty, and while other candidates from other parties were fined and taken to court, and fined for much smaller amounts, and yet this—there has been, there was no interest payments for the money that was taken illegally. There has been no fines for doing that and at the same time this—they managed to—they managed to cover it up for a number of years.

Mr. Speaker, this, as I have stated, and I'll just say it again, that this issue is not going to go away. I don't know whether Washington is going to be far enough to get away from this issue because it's going to follow people wherever they go. And from my comment about, you can run, but you can't hide. I guess we'll have to see how far you can run away from this.

For those members that are sitting in here that were involved in these 13 campaigns, I think it speaks volumes if they won't stand up and support this resolution in that they have nothing to hide. By not supporting this, they're indicating by all means that they really do have something to hide on this, and they can talk all they want about how the money was paid back, but we know, we know there's other issues that are going to come forward in this.

We know that there was other actions, and there will be a lot more to come on this, on this file before it's ever totally brought forward. So, I'm looking forward to bringing out this information. I think this is—I think this is revealing of the type of character that some of these people were involved with. The fact that it was an NDP campaign chair, or campaign finance chair, was the one who came forward with a lot of this information because his conscience was bothering him, I think, speaks volumes for that person.

The forensic auditor who discovered this, and in all their, in all the talk around there, there's never been any question as to Mr. Asselstine's abilities and his qualifications to do a forensic audit, and yet what they did is they had him fired and have him under a gag order so that he cannot speak and reveal the information that he really does have. And that will only work for so long.

* (15:30)

Eventually, people with conscience will bring forward the information that's being suppressed right now. We know that there is—there is lots of information still to come on this. I think the government members who are attempting to hide information on this must realize that—at least I feel that they should realize—that they need to bring forward their information, get this out in the open, get it out to the public. The public has a right to know. We do supposedly work for the public of Manitoba, and yet if you're going to hide behind not releasing information, the public certainly has a right to question you—your motives on this.

And as I started out, Mr. Chairman, Elections Manitoba must be above partisanship and it's not with this. The government can claim all they want that the audit has been done, but it hasn't. There are questions, and as long as there's questions remaining, it must be brought out in a public. It's what happened in the past. When they use the 1995 Monnin inquiry, that's exactly what we're referring to. That was not a proud day in Manitoba, and I don't think anybody would claim to be a proud day in Manitoba.

But you're not going to get away from this at any time in the future. Call an inquiry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise to speak to this Opposition Day motion that's been brought forward by our leader, the PC leader of Manitoba, the

member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), on this very, very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that I think—I was interested to find that the government member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) spoke to this. And I think that as one of the—it seems as if he is one of the persons involved in the 13 different campaigns that had the fraudulent action that took place back in 1999, as a result of his party's indiscretions. I find it interesting that he would offer presentation on this.

As was pointed out by others, it's a grave concern to Manitobans that any government party, that any party in the Legislature, would purposely, as the—and these are the words of their own Finance Minister, who used to be our Finance Minister that's now running for Leader of the NDP made the comment in the halls that, well, it appeared as if his party did this deliberately.

And what they did deliberately was switch the donations part of the expenses for the election in 1999 from contributions in kind to election expense donations or expenses, pardon me, expenses. And so, when you do that, you get a 50 percent reimbursement which you don't get on donations in kind. And I'm just saying this for the general public that might be listening to this, Mr. Speaker, to go through the process. And that is a detrimental act in itself, basically illegal. There are ramifications to those kinds of impacts that you can actually lose your seat in the Legislature for some of these types of actions, if there's no one misreporting.

But, however, as was stated by most of my colleagues, this was—we don't believe that the constituency auditors in their own elections or the candidates, in some cases, knew about these switches that were taking place or that took place. So you can hardly say that they didn't know about it except that the Finance Minister at the time, when they were told about this, went to his own NDP-called meeting of those 13 constituencies at that time, as one of the two of the 13 candidates that showed up, along with their auditors, and demanded that he have a letter exonerating him from any future action by—from his own party, exonerating him from any future action on this particular switch because he was livid that this had taken place without his knowledge, apparently at that time, anyway. And the party wrote him a letter. They wrote him a letter that indicated that he would be exonerated from any future actions, I guess, that might happen on this issue. The only problem is, Mr. Speaker, that if that's really the case,

and he knew about this just before the '03 election, why didn't he make his other 12 colleagues aware of the action or ask for a letter of exoneration for them as well, because they would have all known because they got notices of it.

It's a very serious action, rebate-gate. I want to just say that it covers a whole host of constituencies in the 13 campaigns that were involved: The Maples, St. Vital, Riel, Fort Garry, Gimli, Springfield, St. James, The Pas, Burrows, Lakeside, Rossmere, St. Boniface and Southdale. That's quite a list, Mr. Speaker, and it's been stated publicly that, if the citizens of those constituencies and the citizens of Manitoba had have known this, as the NDP were let know by Elections Manitoba just prior to the '03 election, that it may have changed the outcome of that election, because many of those seats were very close in '03.

And so I think that the government, Premier (Mr. Doer) of the day, the one that's leaving to go to Washington now, cut and run, Mr. Speaker, if you will, is basically putting in place—well, you know, he's the one that has the right to call an election. And within weeks of his party being notified, they made a decision that they should do something about this. They called the meeting, got the candidates and the campaign chairmans together, and after that the Premier called an election, slightly earlier than would normally have been the case with the present legislation that we have. And, you know, now we may—we wondered at the time why the election was called as early as it was, and it's becoming very clear, or much clearer now, as to why that happened.

Mr. Speaker, I guess it's one thing to do this, but the public needs to know that \$152,000 worth of statements were misdeclared so that they could collect 50 percent of the refund that's available on those types of seats. Provided you get 10 percent of the overall election votes in that constituency, you get expenses back after the election from Elections Manitoba.

So that meant that the NDP were the beneficiaries of a \$76,000 cheque, which they didn't have to pay back for well over a year and a half after the '03 election. It was December of '04 when they finally paid it back.

And the members today said, well, do we have confidence in Elections Manitoba, the processes? Well, you know, my colleague from Fort Whyte, our leader, and my colleague from Steinbach, in the only chance, I was there along with the member for

Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) that night in the committee that we had in the Legislature with Elections Manitoba's Chief Electoral Officer there to answer questions. It was only a two-hour meeting. We were cut off by the NDP. They wouldn't extend the questioning of the Chief Electoral Officer that night, and so that's why we've come forward today with this Opposition Day motion, Mr. Speaker, and the motion is to ask the Legislature, or to ask the government, that the Legislature ask the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) to call a meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs as soon as possible to consider the Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2003, which deals with certain matters arising from the 1999 general election and that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call witnesses, including Tom Milne, David Asselstine and other relevant witnesses, to testify at the committee and to compel production of documents and records in the possession of any witnesses, and have the committee continue to meet without time limit until all outstanding questions are answered regarding the 2003 annual report.

Mr. Speaker, that's the Opposition Day motion that we've brought forward, that I know has been read in the House before, but I just wanted to make it clear that that's why this Opposition Day notice went out and that's why we're speaking to this today.

* (15:40)

Mr. Speaker, we're not asking for anything here, I guess, that hasn't already been made public, but we really want to talk about the actions of the central party of the NDP. You know, the member from—I believe it's from Kildonan was one of the co-chairs of the NDP campaign at that time. Irony of it is he is the auditor—Attorney General, the Justice Minister of the province today. And yet he, as the co-chair of that campaign, I would say a very veteran member of the Legislature for the NDP, could not have not known about this particular action. He and the Premier (Mr. Doer), I mean, had to be aware, Mr. Speaker, of this, and if he wasn't, I'd be glad to have him stand up in the House and say so. But this is a fraudulent act in regards to filling out the forms 922 from post-election reports for Elections Manitoba and—in the donation-in-kind expense category.

Mr. Speaker, it's a, such an extreme, important issue that, because it was not made public, because it was covered up by Elections Manitoba, because they,

because they didn't make it public, because at the same time as they were suing members of the PC Party for a small overexpenditure in one of the campaigns there, I mean we've got an opportunity—we've got an—oh, and of course, the—if the members feel that there's nothing wrong with the public report, then why won't they, as the member from River Heights just said, why won't they actually call the committee if they got nothing to hide? If they don't feel—if they feel that everything's there, then what questions can we possibly ask them that would create them any difficulty? Call the public inquiry, and we'll have a few questions to ask—

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it gives me, you know, pleasure in its own way to stand today and speak to what I think is a very important motion brought forward by the member from Fort Whyte, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), a motion that strikes at democracy, a motion that goes right to the democratic core principles I think that Canadians and Manitobans hold dear, and I want the members opposite to know what they're going to be voting against, if in fact they choose to vote against this motion later today in the House.

They're voting against an opportunity for a committee of the Legislature to come together and to hear from individuals who have information regarding transgressions and problems that happened in election. That's it. I mean, a committee of the Legislature, something that we have repeatedly over and over throughout the course of a legislative session. And they're gonna vote to not have a committee. And it shouldn't surprise me, I suppose, having borne a witness to what happened at the committee where the Chief Electoral Officer was there, and we were able to present for the first time some of the information regarding this election scandal which happened in 1999. And, you know, I can still remember vividly; I can see it in my mind's eye, the jaws dropping around the table.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I think the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) was there, and others, and their jaw started to drop as we tabled information that we, as an opposition, had received regarding the rebate scheme that the NDP put in place in 1999 and in previous elections, and I believe that some of their members had no idea that

this was going on. Obviously, a lot of them involved had found out beforehand at this secret, clandestine meeting that they had with their party leadership years before. But there were probably some members of the NDP who were surprised to hear about this revelation as we were when we received the information.

But there was somebody who wasn't terribly shocked and that was the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak). He seemed to have that flicker of recognition in his eye. He seemed to know what it was that we were doing when we were bringing forward information. He jumped into action. *[interjection]* Well, and the Premier (Mr. Doer) was there too and, you know, both of them jumped into action and not the kind of action you'd expect from leaders of a political party, not the kind of action you'd expect from people who were concerned about the democratic process, the kind of action that the Attorney General jumped into was to try to shut down the committee, to try to stall questions and to try to filibuster the opposition from talking to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Now, think of that, Mr. Speaker, this is a government who tried to stop the opposition from asking questions to the Chief Electoral Officer about problems that happened in the 1999 election. You'd think that they would have been interested to find out the truth. The reason the Attorney General wasn't interested in finding out the truth is because he already knew the truth. He, being the co-chair of the 1999 campaign, knew full well what had happened in that election and in elections previously.

So I would, you know, look to the members opposite, some of who I believe are uncomfortable with this situation and who probably didn't know anything about it in advance of that committee. I would look to them and their sense of decency and democracy to say we're going to support simply a committee, essentially a fact-finding committee, Madam Deputy Speaker, to find out this information. And I know if I could search into the hearts—*[interjection]*

Well, you know, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says that it might be a witch hunt, and he refers to a report that was posted—that was posted on-line by Elections Manitoba, I think, two days before Christmas. I mean, you know, if you're ever trying to hide something, if you ever didn't want something to be seen, you would post it two days before Christmas. And I wonder—I wonder what the

member for Burrows would have said if the same thing would have happened in—prior, when we came to other issues in the Legislature regarding democracy.

And, you know, I stand here without any shame when I say—you know, I hear the Attorney General in response to questions all the time when we bring forward this issue. He talks about the Monnin inquiry and, of course, you know, the members opposite talk about the Monnin inquiry. You know, I'm quite proud of the fact, not of what the transgressions that happened regarding the Monnin inquiry, but I am proud of the fact that there was a Premier who said, I'm not going to stand by and not know the truth. I'm going to call an inquiry so that I can find out the truth, and so that all Manitobans can find out the truth.

And yet, you know, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), the Attorney General, stands up as if though to say, that was a bad thing. You know, that that was a horrible thing that the Premier (Mr. Doer) did by calling a public inquiry, that we should be ashamed of the fact that there was once a Premier who sat in the Premier's chair who believed in enough about the fundamentals of democracy to try to get to the bottom of something.

You know, I could refer to the federal Liberals—and members will know that that's not the party of my choice when it comes, either federally or provincially. But, you know, I do say that I have some respect for the former Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Paul Martin, for the fact that when there were problems of—significant problems raised—with his party's handling, they called a public inquiry. And he probably knew at that time that calling the inquiry would be at his public—or at his political peril, that it would be something that would hurt him and he believed enough about the fundamental rights of a democracy, about the fundamental principle of the transparency in democracy, that he called for that inquiry and put aside his own political fortunes.

This is a government and this is a Premier (Mr. Doer)—and whoever takes the Premier's chair after we'll see what their opinion is on it—but who care more about their political skins, Madam Deputy Speaker, than they do about the principles of democracy and about fair elections, which each of us—which each of us rely on here in the Manitoba Legislature every day that we come here.

And, you know, I've heard the member for Burrows and others talk about the independence of the elections officer. You know, and I wish that they would have taken that same message back to their own party, who tried to interfere with the independent elections—Chief Electoral Officer—by trying to have David Asselstine, who has an international reputation with IMF and other places in the world, an international reputation, trying to have him removed from the file because he believed that the NDP had broken the law after the 1999 election.

And so, instead of, you know, the leader of the party or the Minister of Finance, who was aware at some point, coming and saying, well, we are going to go and try to find out what happened, get to the bottom of this, find out who was involved and try to get them punished and have this corrected for all Manitobans and for the sake of democracy, instead of doing that—which others have done, like Mr. Martin, the former Prime Minister, and like Mr. Filmon, the former premier—they took a different route. Oh, let's try to get rid of David Asselstine. Let's try to move him out of Elections Manitoba from doing his contracted work. That's how we'll get rid of the problem, not in trying to figure out what happened and trying to get to the root of things. We'll try to get rid of the whistleblower, the person who's actually bringing forward the information. That's how they have decided to handle this situation, and today is simply an extension of that.

You know, some of the members opposite, the member of Burrows, others, they might say, well, you know, that was Tom Milne maybe. He was one of our party operatives. I didn't really have a lot to do with that. Tom Milne tried to get rid of David Asselstine. It was Mr. Selinger who decided to cover his own—or to try to protect himself as opposed to trying to protect the taxpayers of Manitoban, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I know some of the—some of the members have lined up behind the former Minister of Finance, who wanted to protect himself over the interests of taxpayers, and others flee to another leadership candidate probably because they didn't want to be any more associated with the hint of scandal than they already were. It's a pretty tough choice.

* (15:50)

I agree with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) when he says that maybe this is a situation where you should have none of the above on the ballot, because I suspect that none of the

above would win out in this particular leadership race. You know, you've got one who's going back and forth on decisions every other day. You've got another who recognizes that crime has skyrocketed in the province, and the other one is tainted by scandal. That's a pretty tough choice for delegates to make.

But the Minister of Finance had that opportunity. He had that choice at some point to say, am I gonna look after the interests of Manitobans or am I gonna look after myself. And he made a clear choice simply to look after himself. And Tom Milne made a choice and the NDP party made a choice by trying to chase, unsuccessfully, unfortunately, chase David Asselstine out of Elections Manitoba and that investigation.

But I am proud to say that there's others who have made better choices. I'm proud to say that the former premier of the province, Mr. Filmon, said, when there are problems with elections, we will get to the bottom of it. We won't try to cover it up. It's not all about protecting a political party; it is about protecting democracy.

And each of the members opposite, even though they may not have been directly involved through their individual campaigns or through individual knowledge, they're gonna have the opportunity, they're gonna have the opportunity to do the thing that others have done, the former premier, the former prime minister, and say, we will put the interests of democracy—democracy's how we all got here. I shouldn't have to remind everybody that democracy is the reason each of us are here, regardless if we agree with each other on political stances or political positions, we're all here as a result of that democratic principle.

And they have this opportunity today to say, we're gonna put that democratic principle ahead of our own personal party position despite the fact, despite the fact that others in the past have decided to do something different. And I believe that there are people that are honourable on the other side. I don't know how much the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) or the Interlake or Gimli or Southdale or Kirkfield Park or Riel or Fort Rouge—I don't know how much each of them knew along the way about this particular scandal.

But it really doesn't matter today what they knew then. What matters today is that they'll do the right thing going forward, allow the information to come

forward at this committee, have the courage of conviction, have the integrity that other leaders in this province have had in the past, make sure that that committee is held. If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear from a committee. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I really welcome the opportunity to speak to this particular issue. I really wish that we would see more members of the government side address this issue.

I think it's really important, Mr. Speaker, that we realize just what the NDP, the member from Riel, the member from Burrows, the member from Gimli and their campaigns were up to in 1999—[interjection]

You're—the person that you replaced or Riel. You weren't a part of it. Okay.

The member from Gimli and the member from Burrows, those two—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

We're having a debate on a motion, and we'll have a civil one. Order.

The honourable Member for Inkster has the floor.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I don't blame them. I, too, would be saying, I wasn't there, please don't point your finger at me.

The member from Burrows was there, Mr. Speaker. He and 12 other candidates and what they actually did, let's be very clear what they did.

They had some individuals from—I understand from the different unions come in and volunteer on their campaigns. So, as the member from Burrows was campaigning in 1999, he had some volunteers around him, and those volunteers were actually donating their time towards his campaign and 12 other campaigns, not just his campaign, Mr. Speaker.

And then what happens is, after the election, his official agent, just like Jim Treller in Rossmere, said that we had some volunteers on our campaign. It was a donation of kind, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the brain thrust of the New Democratic Party said, well, just wait a minute; We can rip off the taxpayers here. All we have to do is take the

MLA from Burrows' volunteers and classify them as workers, and we could say that they were an actual election expense, thereby getting a rebate from the taxpayers of Manitoba.

Many would argue, Mr. Speaker, that is, in essence, stealing from the taxpayers. I would be one of those many, Mr. Speaker—

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

The word "stealing" has never been accepted in this House, and I ask the member to withdraw that.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that.

But let's be very clear. What happened was these volunteers and the official agents, such as the official agent for the member of Burrows and individuals in 12 other campaigns, including Mr. Treller, actually said that they were donations of kind.

And it was—and I believe it was the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), the Government House Leader, who chairs—or co-chairs the central campaign, so I suspect he would have been aware. We don't know. We'd love to know, Mr. Speaker.

But it was the central party that said, just wait a minute, we can make some money here. What we gotta do is just say that it was a—not a donation of kind, but an actual campaign expense. And, as a result of making that change, Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats, the party, received in excess of 75,000 tax dollars, as a result of that little change in books. They didn't even tell the official agents of the local campaigns. The member from Burrows' official agent wasn't even told about it.

What—well, what do the—what does happen is that we have one of the official agents, Jim Treller, that comes forward, and what does Jim Treller actually have to say? Quote: When I filed the return in 1999, I put everything down that was perfectly right, he said. I found out that my donation in kind had been transferred to a legitimate election expense that was to be compensated, said Treller. Mr. Speaker, that's what one of the official agents responded when he found out what had taken place.

What I think is really interesting is the MLA from St. Boniface. What does the MLA from St. Boniface do once he finds out, hears what the central party has done? And the official agent in St. Boniface was also, I believe, I trust, a little upset at the actions of their—of the central party. The Minister of Finance knew that it was dirty. This

actually comes—you know, the *Black Rod*, periodically I am provided information that the *Black Rod* publishes, and I like what they say here. [interjection] The moment—the moment he—well, you know, members opposite say, well, that's reliable. I can—I can tell you that this is something in which many Manitobans believe to be true. This is something in which members of the media, members of opposition, and most importantly, the public believe to be true, Mr. Speaker. The moment that the Minister of Finance found out, what did he do? Well, he demanded a letter exonerating him from any responsibility.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's truly amazing. We have the minister of—we have an official agent who is so upset about it, he ultimately makes the public that much more informed on the issue. We have a Minister of Finance who says that, well, you know what, this is—this isn't really aboveboard; I need to get something that's going to clear my name if, in fact, it ever becomes public, and gets that. He's the only one out of the group of 13 that actually covered himself. I don't know what the member from Burrows or the other candidates' actions that they had taken. I'm very much interested in knowing. And that's why, I think, that we need to find out more. Is it serious? Of course, this is serious.

You know, Asselstine, an auditor, many—some would suggest, you know, a very well-known, respected auditor that has done all sorts of things, not only in Manitoba, Canada, but also the world, Mr. Speaker. What the NDP back then did—was very significant. It did affect future elections. Here's what—here's what an independent auditor, Asselstine, had indicated in a letter to Elections Manitoba: In the letter, in late 2004, auditor David Asselstine raised serious objections to the way that the agency alerted the public to major changes to the NDP's 1999 campaign election returns.

* (16:00)

It would appear that we agree that, had the general public learned of the details of the material, public material, public amendments to the '99 Manitoba NDP returns, it would have damaged, been damaging to the reputation of the Manitoba NDP, and may have influenced the outcome of the last provincial election, wrote Asselstine.

This is something in which an independent auditor has written, and that's because the manner in which it was actually released. We should be concerned. You know, I heard a previous speaker

about, you know, how wonderful it is that we live in Manitoba, in Canada, and we have this great democracy, and sometimes I think, Mr. Speaker, that we have people that take that democracy for granted. And I believe that members of the New Democratic caucus are doing a great disservice to democracy in this province if they, in fact, vote against this motion. This motion is seeking to find the truth—to find out exactly what took place. And, yes, it might cause some damage to the reputation of a few members of the New Democratic caucus, but I would like to think that democracy is more important.

Having a healthy democracy is more important than the NDP. And the NDP believe that they are more important than having a healthy democratic system in the province of Manitoba, and we'll see how the individual NDP MLAs vote on this, on this motion.

If you support democracy in the province of Manitoba, and do not want to take democracy for granted in our province, you should be supporting this resolution, Mr. Speaker, and, you know, members might make light of it, and at the end of the day, this issue will not go away. I suspect that it will be brought into the next election, and the NDP will be out of government within two and a half years. They will not be in government, and it's because, it's because of their arrogance and their refusal to do the right thing. And this is going to be one of those critical issues that Manitobans will be, will be told about. That, in fact, unless we get a public inquiry, unless we see leadership like Paul Martin and Gary Filmon, unless we see that kind of leadership coming from this government, this New Democratic Party will not be in government after the next, after the next election. There will be a change, and only an arrogant New Democratic MLA—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take up the invitation of members opposite to tell—to tell my story, my story of the 1999 election. It's interesting, very interesting story, indeed, and it's coincidental, coincidental that what occurred in the Interlake in 1999 follows up on what occurred in 1995 in the Interlake, which we're all familiar with—the vote rigging scandal that Justice Monnin informed the province about, a truly heinous act. Absolute low point in political history in Manitoba was what they attempted—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: —to do, how they attempted to corrupt the electoral process there. But was that enough in 1995? Did they learn their lesson from the Monnin inquiry? Obviously not, because when I ran in the Interlake, I was a new candidate. And I know the Tories were thinking, if they could only win the election in the Interlake, they could prove to the people of Manitoba that all that stuff in '95 was just nonsense.

So what they did against me was even worse, I think, than what was attempted in 1995. And I'm referring to the smear campaign, the phony police report that they drafted up and circulated on me, and they put it out to the Aboriginal communities, which makes it truly despicable—and I don't know if that's an unparliamentary word, Mr. Speaker, if it is—but certainly their actions were unheard of. To try to smear somebody like that with that phony police reports and information was—I couldn't believe it, to be quite honest.

Now, it was an interesting story how they did it, and there's, there was, there was a search on my so-called criminal record which didn't show up anything really, and I admit I made a few mistakes when I was a young man, roughly 30 years before I sought political office. But what they did come up with wasn't juicy enough for a true story, so they had to embellish that. They had to draft up this phony police report suggesting that I was a drug trafficker, a break-and-enter artist. It was unbelievable what they put on this and circulated it to the public.

And I know that one person was charged with it, and I was really disappointed when my uncle was charged with this, but there was another individual as well, who used to be the chief of staff for the Conservative caucus in this building. Her name was Heather Campbell. And, ultimately, they created enough reasonable doubt that Uncle Cubby was able to get away, and they did that by actually doing four separate searches on my record, which was—one by my uncle, one by Heather Campbell, and two separate searches by the Conservative Party campaign office, and that was enough to create a reasonable doubt, which is why my uncle was able to get off.

But the fact is that the campaign manager for Betty Green, who was running against me in the Interlake, was convicted of obstruction of justice and was also convicted of defamation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: –of a candidate.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: That is the true story of the 1999 election.

And members opposite can go on about people filing election expenses, and we all know how complicated that is and how confusing that is and the possibilities of making a mistake at that point in time are pretty easy. And I think there was complaints against all political parties, weren't there? Or at least against members opposite, as well. But to compare confusion during the height of an election campaign with an orchestrated, deliberate attempt to smear a member using the most—the lowest of the low accusations, drug peddling and breaking and entry and so forth, I don't think there's really any comparison.

So, that is the true story of the 1999 election, and it almost worked. It almost worked. They timed it very well. They timed it for the last week of the election campaign knowing full well that, you know, by the time we did our damage control and recovered our feet from a blow like that that, you know, the election would be over, and it almost worked.

If it wasn't for the intervention of Ed Schreyer, a former premier here who, coincidentally, was coming out to my constituency the day after this smear campaign was initiated, and he took it upon himself to make this information public. And he was threatened by members opposite: members opposite were going to charge him with slander, themselves, and ultimately that never went anywhere because, obviously, they were complicit and totally aware that this was taking place. So it was the courage of Mr. Schreyer who brought it to the public attention and—as only Mr. Schreyer can do so—and it became knowledge across the province, in fact, across the country. This was—they were exposed right across this land for smear campaigners and slanderers. So, thankfully, Schreyer intervened.

The public was sickened by this, to say the least, and once again, the NDP was successful in winning the seat in the Interlake, which was only just because that is where the Monnin inquiry and all that chicanery with vote rigging and the creation of—what was it called?—Native Voice, I believe. This was the—this was the Aboriginal party, so-called Aboriginal

party, because it wasn't. It was a—it was a Conservative-orchestrated party. And that, in itself, one should look at that action. For them to try and use Aboriginal people to try and siphon off the Aboriginal vote—that's—you know, to lie like that and to abuse people and to manipulate people the way they did—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

That word, "lie, liar," has never been accepted in this House and I'm not going to accept it now. I ask the member to withdraw that word.

* (16:10)

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Okay, absolutely. I apologize for that. I apologize for using the word "liar." I seem to recall—I seem to recall a book title though, *As Many Liars*, that was published and told the story of the Monnin inquiry. So, you know, I just thought that in this debate—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The member for Portage la Prairie, on a point of order.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I believe that you had gave clear directions on the member for the Interlake to withdraw, rather than apologize, and your instructions, I believe, have not yet been complied with.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

A withdrawal or apology is, to me, is satisfactory. If he apologizes for using a word, to me it's equivalent as withdrawing the comment, because he's apologizing for using the word.

So, I'll caution the member of—when you continue your speech, to pick and choose your words very carefully.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker, and I just wish that the members opposite had picked and chosen their tactics a little more honourably than they did in 1999, but that was not the case, unfortunately. It was a repeat in the Interlake of the same type of misdeeds that occurred in 1995.

So, I just thought I'd take a few moments, Mr. Speaker, to remind the House of that truly regrettable course of action that members opposite took in the 1999 election in the Interlake constituency. Thank you very much.

Mr. Faurshou: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity to rise and participate in debate as it pertains to the Opposition Day motion, as brought to the Chamber by the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), and seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

Indeed, this motion is one that, I believe, should have full support of the House as we are all honourable members of this Assembly, and should always want to rise above partisan politics to make absolutely certain that the voting public can be assured that all practices and procedures by the respective political parties in this province are, indeed, legal and completely disclosing of the manner in which they conduct their affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I am the only sitting member of this Chamber—the only sitting member of this Chamber that, in the 1999 election, was fully investigated by Elections Manitoba. My activities throughout the election in 1999 were completely exonerated as being one of exemplary practice, and I'm very proud of that fact. And anyone that worked with myself in that campaign was complimented for the activities and accounting that took place in that particular election.

I, though, was very, very disappointed in some of the allegations that had been made, that resulted in the, in the investigation and, actually, indeed embarrassed of some of the tactics of—that the investigators utilized during their investigation. One of the individuals that was interviewed, and I would like to perhaps modify that word by using interrogated, was our Anglican church minister, and the only thing missing in the interview—in the minister's own words—was the spot lamp of high intensity lighting, because the cross-examination that took place was embarrassing to myself, embarrassing to our church minister as well, and at the end of the day the investigators found that there was no impropriety whatsoever, and went away satisfied that everything was, indeed, in order. However, the activity that did take place has left a lasting memory in both myself and the minister of our church, and one that we will not ever forget.

But the member for the Interlake has gone on at length about the activity that was conducted in the

1995 election, and I want to remind him that the Leader of the Conservative Party at that time did the most honourable thing possible and called a public inquiry. And that leaves us all wondering why the same activity cannot be called upon in this particular manner. It leaves one wondering as to what this party, the governing party, is hiding. And I think they are hiding something, because what I have been able to ascertain is that, indeed, there was some improprieties carried out during the 1999 election that I don't believe were thoroughly investigated and completely documented, and this is why this Opposition Day motion is so very, very important. And I hope members on the government side of the House feel that it is their obligation as a democracy, and leaders within that democracy, to make absolutely certain that the voting public has that assurance, that all elections in this province of Manitoba are conducted in the—in the most honourable and forthright manner.

And the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) quoted a number of times the former premier of our province, Mr. Ed Schreyer. And I know that he only made quotations from Mr. Schreyer or referred to Mr. Schreyer in—more than a decade ago. However, I would have appreciated if the honourable member for the Interlake had been a little bit more current and related to this House some of the more recent comments and—from the former premier as to the performance of the current NDP government, because it would not be in the same light, because the former premier is rather—ah, I choose my words very, very carefully here, but—rather unsatisfied with the performance and conduct of the current NDP government of Manitoba and would very much like to see a change in practice and policy. And so, I know the member for the Interlake did not—did not allude to that, but that, indeed, Mr. Speaker, is the—*is* the fact of the day.

So I look to members opposite that are less than participatory in today's debate. Only two members opposite have taken that opportunity to engage in discussion of this Opposition Day motion, which really, really is perhaps an admittance that they are uncomfortable with the current situation, and they themselves would like to see an investigation that will, indeed, exonerate all of the MLAs sitting on the government side of the House. Because even though there was only 13 individuals that were cited within the report, it does implicate the balance of the sitting members across the way. And I looked, in the very

short order when the question is put to this Assembly, that members on the government side of the House support the motion so that, indeed, committee can be called, witnesses examined and a no time limit imposed upon the proceedings of the—of the committee that will get to the bottom of the—of this very important matter, because I truly believe that there are so many unanswered questions that the voting public here in Manitoba deserves answers for.

*(16:20)

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I would encourage all members, all honourable members of the Legislative Assembly to support this motion because it speaks to the integrity and respect of every member in this Legislative Assembly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): I delayed getting up there as soon as the member for Portage (Mr. Faurshou) was done. I was thinking there might be a member of the government there waiting to speak to this particular motion, to defend their position, and why they're not willing to come clean with Manitobans, and actually either call for a complete review of the situation, or at least have a Legislative Affairs Committee called on this particular issue.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the government members that are present certainly must feel compelled that they don't want to bring forward this issue. There must be something on that side of the House that they feel that they're hiding, and certainly I can speak on behalf of most Manitobans, and certainly the constituents that I represent in Turtle Mountain that believe that we should be able to have a fair and equitable and honest election here in the province of Manitoba.

When issues arise surrounding an election, Manitobans feel that there should be proper scrutiny done after an election has been completed, and simply that. That's what we're asking for in this particular resolution, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a fair, a transparent, accountable method to review the actions of the NDP party during the 1999 election. And, you know, as you dig deeper into this whole fiasco back in 1999, and some of the comments that have been made by the members of the NDP party, this particular issue may not pertain just to the 1999 election. There may be other issues, or similar issues, that go back in previous years, in previous elections or, Mr. Speaker, there may be issues that

have carried forward from 1999, that somehow may have been covered up.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you have someone like a special auditor come in, like a David Asselstine come in and investigate the books after an audit and determine that there has been some kind of fraudulent activity go on, it deems the question is why don't the members of the NDP party have the backbone to investigate those fraudulent activities.

Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of discussion today, and the debate going back to the Monnin inquiry prior to that time, and it raises a very important issue. The premier of the day at that time said, okay, if there's any irregularities, that are suspect irregularities, why don't we have an open investigation so that people and Manitobans can understand the repercussions and what went on. The premier at the time had the backbone to call that inquiry. All we're asking today is for the NDP to have the backbone to answer some questions about their activities for elections from years gone by.

If these members are not willing to stand, ask those, answer those hard questions, put their hand on a Bible, answer those questions, what does it say about the NDP party we have running the province today, Mr. Speaker. There's questions here within Elections Manitoba going forward, too, that have to be addressed. I know certainly we have concerns moving forward if we have the same group of individuals running Elections Manitoba who are unwilling to bring forward those issues from 1999. So how can we, as politicians, go forward on this without having all these important questions answered?

And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want to have the answers going forward, because they are going to be asked to go to the polls within the next two years or two and a half years, or maybe some time before two and a half years, to put their X on a ballot, and they want to know that their X is going to count and that the whole process is run according to proper procedures.

We want to make sure that the gang of 13 that was involved in these particular allegations in 1999 have the opportunity to come forward and come clean with all Manitobans. It's pretty clear that they signed documents, returned documents—and then subsequently signed—[interjection]—oh, revised documents, Mr. Speaker. Now that in itself lends itself to questions going forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, we believe that there's obviously some improprieties going on there in terms of the \$76,000 that was improperly received by the New Democratic Party. There's tremendous allegations being made here by auditors, and obviously it goes without saying that Manitobans deserve the right to know.

We know the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the day is moving on here in the next couple of weeks. He only is going to have a short time to—maybe he'd like to clear his name right now, go and put his hand on a Bible, clear up these allegations. Then, when he goes to Washington, he'll go down there with a nice clean conscience. Now if he doesn't—if he doesn't do that in the next couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker, he's gonna go to Washington, act on our behalf—he will have that on his conscience for many, many years to come.

So we're simply asking that this issue be brought forward to a Legislative Affairs Committee. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, maybe the new Leader of the New Democratic Party will want to come forward once he's elected to that position, and he'll want to clear the air. Hopefully, then, we'll—we, as Manitobans, will get the air cleared before we go on to the next general election, and we'll know exactly what the NDP party were up to during the 1999 campaign. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): It is—I did sort of hesitate to get up there myself, as well, just after my colleague spoke, hoping that, again, someone from across the way would get up and put some words on the record in defence here of their situation that they are in.

But, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we see once again that this government has things to hide. They are afraid of this, and they have been told not to get up in this Legislature and speak on this particular motion. And I think it's unfortunate because what we see is that—and when people refuse, in this Legislature, to get up and debate motions that are before them—what that means is that they have something to hide, and I think it's unfortunate that that is the case here. And if it's not, I challenge members opposite to get up and speak in defence here.

But, you know, the problem is, Mr. Speaker, is that they are, they are afraid of what is to come and—with respect to this issue. And what we have seen before us are some very serious allegations so far, but we know that there is more to come with this,

and I think that members opposite should be very afraid of what's gone on.

This is about democracy. It's about democracy in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and what's happening here is that members opposite don't want to debate this. They're afraid of the democratic process. They are afraid to stand up for their constituents, and I believe that there are constituents that members opposite represent and they should—and they deserve to know where members opposite stand when it comes to this motion.

Because this is about accountability and transparency and the government, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's unfortunate because members opposite don't stand up and speak for their constituents and let them know where they stand on this motion. I suspect there's many people in their constituencies that would be in favour of this motion, but unfortunately, we don't know where members opposite stand because they refuse to stand in this Legislature and let people know where they stand.

So, Mr. Speaker, I again challenge members opposite to stand up and speak in favour of this motion that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and members on this side of the House have brought forward. I think it's unfortunate. I know the Premier (Mr. Doer) is on his way out the back door to Washington—[interjection]—and it's, well, maybe the front door, okay, so he's—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —front door and the back door and whatever door he wants to take, Mr. Speaker, but it's a door where he's ducking this very issue, and I again would encourage him to stand up in this—on this issue.

But, unfortunately, in question period today, he didn't stand up and answer the questions of the Leader of the Opposition that—when he brought those forward because he is afraid, he knows what this is all about and he—they have things to hide, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's extremely unfortunate he is still the Premier of our province. He should be standing up for Manitobans. He should be standing up for accountability in this province—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

* (16:30)

Mrs. Stefanson: —and he is refusing to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 28(14), I must interrupt the debate to put the question on the motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

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

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 Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

The question before the House is the motion moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Division

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

Yeas

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Pedersen, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Nays

Allan, Altemeyer, Bjornson, Blady, Blaikie, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 15, Nays 29.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): I wonder if you seek leave of the House to call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

Okay. The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 24, 2009

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