

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

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

Vol. LXI No. 11B – 1:30 p.m., Thursday, December 4, 2008

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
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.
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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.
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SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Elmwood	
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 4, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Speaker's Statement

Mr. Speaker: Order. I'd like to draw to the attention of the House that today is the final day that John Statham of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism will be in the translation booth to provide service to the Assembly, as John is retiring later this month.

Although an employee of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, John has provided translation service to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly for 26 years. In fact, John has been doing House translation since the translation booth was first implemented 26 years ago.

On behalf of all honourable members, I'd like to thank John for his contributions to the work of the Assembly and wish him a very happy retirement.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 9—The Social Work Profession Act

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I'd like to move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irwin-Ross), that Bill 9, The Social Work Profession Act; Loi sur la profession de travailleur social, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: The Social Work Profession Act sets out provisions for a professional college to regulate social workers practising in Manitoba. It establishes a governing body responsible for the self-governance of persons who call themselves social workers in Manitoba. This will ensure greater protection for the public, better quality of care and facilitate a higher level of professional development. Thank you.

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

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by Norm Janzen, Basil Agnew, T.C. Stambuski and many, many others.

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

Manitoba Liquor Control Commission— Liquor Licence Fees

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

The Manitoba Liquor Control Commission has substantially raised the cost of annual liquor licences for restaurants, cocktail lounges and other Manitoba businesses.

The MLCC justifies this increase by stating that the cost of the annual licence is being increased to better reflect rising administration costs.

For small-business owners, the cost of an annual liquor licence has more than doubled. These fee hikes are a significant burden for business owners.

The decision to increase the annual licence fee, while at the same time eliminating the 2 percent supplementary licence fee payable on the purchase of spirits, wine and coolers, has the effect of greatly

disadvantaging smaller businesses. Small businesses which do not purchase liquor from the MLCC in large volumes will not receive the same benefit from the elimination of this supplementary fee. Instead, they are facing substantially increased costs simply to keep their doors open.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act (Mr. Swan) to consider working with MLCC to find alternate means of addressing rising administrative costs.

To request the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider working with the MLCC to revise the decision to implement a significant annual licence fee increase.

To urge the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider ensuring that the unique challenges faced by small businesses are better taken into account in the future.

This petition is signed by Mark Potapoff, Erika Kupchak, Harry Moore and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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 the petition is as follows:

Reuniting families through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program should be a 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 R. Fajardo, C. De Leon, E. Fajardo and many, many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport (Mr. Robinson), I'd like to table the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation First Quarter Report 2008-2009, and the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation Second Quarter Report 2008-2009.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following reports: Materials Distribution Agency 2007-2008 Annual Report, Fleet Vehicles Agency '07-08 Annual Report and Crown Lands and Property Agency '07-08 Annual Report.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, pursuant to The Regulations Act, a copy of each regulation registered with the Registrar of Regulations since the regulations were tabled in this House in November 2007 and more than 14 days before the commencement of this Session.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to table the Evaluation of the Victims' Bill of Rights Summary of the Final Report.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Legal Aid Manitoba, L'aide Juridique du Manitoba 36th Annual Report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008.

* (13:40)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I have a ministerial statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, December 6, 1989, is a day that will forever be engraved in the collective consciousness of Canadians. On that day, 14 young women were murdered at École polytechnique in Montréal. They were singled out only because they were women.

The loss of so many young women with so much promise, ambition and dreams left unfulfilled in one senseless act was, and still is, shocking and horrifying. That day became a galvanizing moment. It was not enough to mourn; action needed to be taken to address the tragedy of violence against women.

The anniversary of the Montréal massacre has become a national day of mourning to pay tribute to the 14 women murdered that day as well as all women who have lost their lives in acts of violence.

The tragedy of violence against women continues, and, sadly, there have been six Manitoba women who have died as a result of violence in the last year. We also honour their memories today. They are: Debbie Anne Owen, Joanne Nadine Hoepfner, Jennifer Ward, Shannon Scromeda, Magdalena Labossiere and Esther Harper.

This morning's sunrise memorial, held by the Women's Advisory Council at the Legislature, provided an opportunity to reflect on the lives lost. The sunrise memorial and other events held across the province also provide an opportunity to consider what we, as Manitobans, can do to work toward the goal of eradicating violence against women. These memorial events are important, not only as a means of raising awareness, but also of reaffirming our own commitment to addressing the issue.

December 6, 1989, must never be forgotten. As we remember the past, we must look to the future with hope and vision. In continuing to work together toward ensuring the safety of women in their communities and in their homes, we honour the memory of those we have lost.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that following the statements by my colleagues, we observe a moment of silence together.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): We'd like to thank the minister for her statement today.

We commemorate the national day of remembrance and action on violence against women today. We recognize the senseless tragedy that took place at l'École polytechnique in Montréal on December 6, 1989, when 14 women were murdered by a gunman. We recognize that these women were targeted because of their gender and a non-traditional choice to study engineering. We recognize the tragedy that takes place every day when people engage in violence. We recognize that violence is too often gender-based with women disproportionately receiving the brunt of the blows. We recognize all these things, Mr. Speaker, and we stand together in solidarity remembering the women whose lives have been ended or altered by violence.

We make a commitment to do better, as a society, for our daughters, our sisters and our mothers.

The 1989 Montréal massacre stands out in our collective Canadian consciousness as a call to action. That day women in engineering were specifically targeted for the choice they made to enter a traditionally male-dominated profession. The man who murdered them sought out women, in particular, convinced that he was threatened by their femininity. Ever since, we have dedicated December 6 to raising awareness on the issue of violence, mobilizing our communities as a promise to the 14 women that their deaths shall not be forgotten. It's a promise that women should be able to choose whatever path they see fit regardless of traditional roles. It's a promise that a fundamental belief in women's equality is a philosophy we can embrace no matter what.

We cannot let gender divide us, for both men and women can unite with a common declaration that we will not tolerate violence. Nineteen years have now passed since that terrible day. Sadly, we cannot say that gender-based violence has been eradicated. We've heard the stories of women that are missing, abused and murdered in our province, our country and our global community. We've heard the staggering statistics of just how many women are affected by rape and domestic violence.

What we hope today is that others will hear our message of zero tolerance towards violence for all must hear that together. We must commit our minds and hearts to ensuring women's equality, in all respects, is fully realized. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Liberals join other MLAs in this Chamber in remembering the tragedy of December 6, 1989.

The sunrise ceremony this morning which I attended along with many other MLAs was an important step in our efforts in this Legislature to bring attention to this important cause. I particularly appreciated the words of Marilou McPhedran, the president of the Global College. She spoke of the importance of preventing violence against women, not only in Manitoba, but around the world. Indeed, the extent of violence against women in many countries where there are conflicts like in the Congo is incredible, almost unbelievable.

So we need to dedicate ourselves not only to doing what we can here but to taking this message and doing what we can around the world. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Lisa Jennissen who is the wife of the honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), Joyce Delaronde-Cable from Cranberry Portage and also Marcella Fenner from Cormorant, who are the guests of the honourable Member for Flin Flon.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Federal Government Budget Government Response

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I think at some point in today's proceedings there will be acknowledgement of another important event and that is the 104th birthday of the Member for Minnedosa's (Mrs. Rowat) Aunt Sue, who is also with us today in the gallery, and we'll look forward to hopefully getting everybody together singing Happy Birthday to Aunt Sue in the gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the economic issues that are facing our province and our country today are obviously very significant. We had news today about a significant decline in building permits from month over month here in Manitoba and obviously national reports that are of great concern to all Canadians and Manitobans. Manitobans are understandably worried about their pensions, their incomes and their jobs.

In just 53 days from today, the Government of Canada will introduce a budget to the Parliament of Canada which will arguably be the most important budget in half a century.

I want to ask the Premier, who will be meeting with the Prime Minister in the new year, if he will be open and transparent with Manitobans about the advice that he is providing to the Prime Minister in connection with the budget and whether that advice

will be consistent with the advice that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) will be taking to the Finance ministers' meeting in less than two weeks in Saskatoon.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: I want to thank the Premier for that. We know that Manitobans will have a great interest in the advice that's being offered by their government to the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, one of the major issues that will be debated in Manitoba and across the country over the next 53 days between now and the budget will be the question of whether Canadians are in favour of a weakened federal government that plans to run large budget deficits as proposed by the coalition, or whether Canadians and Manitobans favour a strong Canadian government with fiscal prudence as proposed by those Canadians who are opposed to the coalition.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) indicated that he's—*[interjection]* Yesterday, the Minister of Finance—*[interjection]* I know they're agitated, and I wonder if they could just allow me to finish the question because it's an important one. The Minister of Finance, yesterday afternoon, indicated that he believed the coalition presented new possibilities for Canada, and he mused about how that coalition might operate.

Is the Premier on the same page as the Minister of Finance, or does he favour the position of those who support a strong government and prudent financial management?

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, all of us have said that the situation in the United States was interesting last year. That didn't mean to say Conservatives were supporting Democrats or somebody else was supporting somebody else. It was interesting. It was. In fact, some of you even travelled down and I think were part of a rally. The Republican cousins were part of a rally in Grand Forks because it's interesting. Was that an endorsement of the Democratic Party? I know the member—you know, it's silly.

Yes, it was an interesting U.S. election. I remember, I was asked, are you endorsing any candidate? Well, first of all, it didn't matter in the United States, and, secondly, although I might get condemned for it from a member opposite, I said we'd work with whoever the people of the United

States elect, and we're now dealing with Cabinet ministers. Richardson's now proposed, that we know. Napolitano is somebody we know. There might be others we know that have worked with Manitoba in the past. If the Republicans had won, there'd be other people we may know like Governor Pawlenty from Minnesota. That's just the way the world works.

It is interesting, but that, Mr. Speaker, does not change the fact that, as I said yesterday, I predicted yesterday in the House, in spite of the fact that he burned off all his questions, nothing on agriculture, nothing on country-of-origin legislation, nothing on some of the issues facing Manitobans—he's just dealing with all his questions on the kind of intrigue, the punditry and intrigue of Ottawa.

You know, in the time that Ottawa has gone from a state of suspended animation, we announced a \$280-million new dam project in Wuskwatim. Now, that is interesting. We went and announced \$800 million. The Minister of Finance, as the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, announced over \$800 million in wind power. Now, that's interesting.

Mr. Speaker, we announced a 10 percent increase in the highways budget to deal with the highway deficit that many members always ask about and should ask about. We also announced—or we had announced yesterday, after we made the announcement, not to log in Whiteshell and Nopiming. The member opposite wants to take a chain saw through there. We negotiated with the logging companies when the contracts expired. I might point out that when the Clean Environment Commission, the conservative Clean Environment Commission, recommended that there not be logging in the Whiteshell Provincial Park with the Abitibi-Price, later to be Tembec licence, the members opposite at Cabinet overruled the Clean Environment Commission.

It's taken a while for the logging rights to expire, and now the International Institute for Sustainable Development, in a little story, says that that boreal forest and a UNESCO World Heritage Site are worth over \$100 million a year. That, Mr. Speaker, is interesting.

If he wants to comment on the comments on the commentaries, go ahead. We're going to work for Manitobans. We're not in a state of suspended animation. We're in a state of action here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: The reports from the so-called state-of-the-province address that was just given, Mr. Speaker, paint a very different picture of what he's saying. Not a single mention of agriculture in the speech that he just gave to the Chamber, but, nonetheless, one thing he's good at is trying to divert attention from the major issues that face the government and the country today.

In 53 days the federal government will introduce a budget that will be arguably the most important in half a century, and his Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) is expounding theories on the radio, yesterday, about the new solution to the impasse in Ottawa, according to the newscast, Mr. Speaker, the coalition solution that is being proposed by the Minister of Finance.

I want to ask the Premier: Given our heavy dependence on federal payments from Ottawa, almost 40 percent of the budget coming from Ottawa, does he think it's constructive for the Minister of Finance to be fantasizing about a new coalition on the radio yesterday, less than two weeks before a meeting with the Minister of Finance for Canada, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the only fantasy that took place about Ottawa was the member opposite. I know he loves his backroom stuff, but the only fantasy was that the member asked me about 20 times yesterday to talk about the vote that's going to take place on Monday of next week. I said it probably is not going to take place because they were going to request a prorogue. I was right and he was wrong—again.

He can be a little water bug skirting around the surface of what's going on in Ottawa and we're going to keep building Manitoba. We're not going to indulge in this immature behaviour. We're going to keep working on behalf of Manitoba. That's what we're going to do. That's what we talked about.

Let me just say—I did say, and what I've said before in terms of transparency—what we're taking to Ottawa. The pension, he hasn't taken a position on 71 versus a higher age. We took a position on that; no position for the member opposite. That's interesting. The whole issue of pension solvency: We have a similar view to Minister Flaherty a week ago. That's interesting because he has no position on it. In fact, he's got the other position on it. We took a position to advance infrastructure. That's interesting.

Mr. Speaker, we have *[inaudible]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: —Aboriginal issues yesterday in the hallway when asked about the meeting. I said the meeting would go ahead. I said yesterday, with all this fantasy going on, that the meeting would take place on January 16 and that we would be there.

You said we wouldn't have a meeting or something else would happen in your fantasy. I said the meeting would take place. I was right. You were wrong—again.

Federal Coalition Government Government Response

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier hasn't addressed the issue of the budget that is coming in Ottawa 53 days from now, arguably the most important budget in half a century in terms of the position he's going to take forth on behalf of Manitobans.

And the fundamentally large issues confronting the country are whether the three federalist parties in Ottawa, the three parties that got 90 percent of the vote only 52 days ago, Mr. Speaker, are going to be called upon to co-operate in the approach to that budget or whether the new coalition being promoted by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) is going to be promoted by the government opposite.

I want to ask the Premier: Is he on board with the Minister of Finance's proposal for a new coalition involving the separatists, or is he promoting a coalition among the federalist parties that got 90 percent of the vote only 52 days ago?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The Minister of Finance said the situation is interesting. That is not an endorsement.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that if it wasn't interesting, it wouldn't be on the front pages of all the papers all week. It wouldn't be the lead item on all the talk shows and it wouldn't obliterate the local newscasts last night, or whatever happened. I don't know, I was at the Geldof event. So it is interesting and a lot of people are talking about it. But, as I said yesterday, it is interesting, but he didn't fantasize. The only member that fantasized was the member opposite who said the government was going to lose

to this group on Monday next week. Well, he was wrong. We were right.

I said I was going to go to a meeting with the Prime Minister on January 16, 2009. We will be calling for the acceleration of infrastructure. We will be calling for an education and training strategy for all Canadians and especially targeted to Aboriginal people. We will be calling on the pension solvency issue to have a common national approach. We will endorse the proposal to have the registered retirement savings plan rigidity at 71 go to a higher age. We will support ideas of not having the unfettered Republican marketplace that we saw in the United States, but a more balanced approach. We don't want the extremism of greed on one side, which they support, or statism on the other side. We want a regulated marketplace, Mr. Speaker, with transparency.

We will support, Mr. Speaker, developments that will be helpful in terms of consumer confidence on internal trade. The Prime Minister's letter, being very positive, talks about labour mobility on April 1, 2009. It talks about internal trade. It talks about international trade. I can keep going on about what we're taking into the meeting with the Prime Minister, but, you know, they don't want to hear it. They actually don't want to hear it.

We're also going to raise, Mr. Speaker, the country-of-origin legislation, the whole issue of hogs, and we're going to tie that back to manufacturing. It's been our view that we should improve the processing in Manitoba. That's why we're putting money into Neepawa. That's why we're putting money into Brandon. We're going to talk with the national government about country-of-origin legislation.

I wish he would stop fantasizing and ask me a real question about country-of-origin legislation instead of backroom stuff in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

Mr. McFadyen: And I want to just say to the Premier that we very much appreciate his flip-flop on the issue of support for the hog industry in Manitoba that he's just expressed in that response, Mr. Speaker.

We appreciate his newfound support for an industry in Manitoba, an industry that employs thousands of Manitobans. That is a great reversal. I want to ask him whether he will also ask his Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) to reverse his pro-coalition

position before he goes into a meeting of Finance ministers in less than two weeks from now, or whether he thinks that that is a wise position in light of what he's already said on his position of neutrality in the middle of the debate going on in the country, whether that's a wise position to say, and I quote, it's a new solution, going into a Finance ministers' meeting in just under two weeks from today.

Is that a smart position to take on behalf of the people of Manitoba who count on Ottawa for almost 40 percent of the money in the budget, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance—and for us as government—has a responsibility to work with the federal government.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) was the Minister of Finance when Minister Flaherty was the Minister of Finance in Ontario. They actually know each other. They work with each other. They share some of the same views on behalf of Canadians together. They sometimes disagree together. For example, on the issue of a common regulator, we have a similar position as Alberta on that issue, Mr. Speaker, because some of our companies want to have—we want common regulations, common accreditations. We want co-chairing between the federal and provincial government on something completely within provincial jurisdiction, but at the same time our companies here actually want to get capital in different markets across Canada.

That was actually the same message that Alberta took to the meeting, the same message as our Minister of Finance. He's going to represent Manitoba businesses. If Manitoba businesses say we appreciate one common set of regulations, that it makes sense not to have 13 sets of regulations but one called the passport system, that's what he's going to take, and we're going to be supported by the Province of Alberta in this regard, as we were with the Prime Minister. We took the same view to the meeting with the Prime Minister in that regard.

So, Mr. Speaker—[interjection] Well, the member opposite, you know, he's just flailing away, flailing away.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and sorry about my raspy throat here, but we certainly know that the Minister of Finance has a great relationship with other ministers. He co-chairs the group on regulation

with Québec, Madame Jérôme-Forget, and is working with Alberta to make sure that small-cap operations in Alberta can still have access to capital.

We're talking to very major companies here in Manitoba. I don't know whether he's listening to any of them. Has he got a position on Flaherty's position on a single regulator? What's the Conservative position on that? Does he support Flaherty or does he support Alberta and Manitoba?

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Public Utilities Board's Access to Accounts

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the people of Manitoba are fast losing confidence in this government after the statement that the minister made in favour of the federal coalition.

Mr. Speaker, Crown corporations should operate in a transparent way for the benefit of Manitobans. This week the Public Utilities Board approved the Manitoba Public Insurance premiums for 2009 and '10. The PUB cautioned that it is, and I quote, experiencing increasing difficulty in assuring itself of the corporation's overall financial situation and prospects.

The PUB wants some authority to look at MPI's books and an MPI official claims the unregulated side of this operation is none of PUB's business.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister responsible explain why MPI doesn't think it needs to open its books to the PUB? What is it afraid of?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, the position taken by MPI, I think is consistent with the position that was taken by MPI when the PUB was created by the Conservative government with respect to dealing with public utilities, and it hasn't changed.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the minister's had requests from '04, '05, '06, '07 and, again, in '08.

Mr. Speaker, ratepayers have a right to know if MPI has its fiscal house in order. The PUB said it would not direct MPI to issue rebates in '09, citing concerns about a depressed and unsettled investment market. PUB also noted that the MPI is experiencing rapid growth in both overall expenditures and employee complement. MPI has more on its plate than ever before, but for years this government has refused to provide greater transparency to the financial operation.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister stand by his officials' views that the unregulated side of MPI's operation is none of PUB's business, or will he finally take the steps needed to ensure public transparency in the way that MPI operates?

Mr. Chomiak: The position taken by this government, Mr. Speaker, is the same position that was taken by our predecessor government, I think, under Premier Filmon. The Public Utilities Board has a very valuable and important role as the oversight of public utilities, has always had, always will be.

There's always been a disagreement on the commercial side with respect to that. We follow the same position that was followed by the Filmon government. We're always willing to work with the PUB and we'll review the ruling. I've asked MPI to sit down with the PUB to discuss the matter.

Marijuana Grow Operations Increase

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Manitoba's economy is shrinking. The number of building permits in Manitoba is declining and is well below the national average. However, Mr. Speaker, there is a part of Manitoba's economy that is growing faster than any other province in Canada, and that is the marijuana grow-op business.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Is this his way to stimulate Manitoba's economy?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I guess this is the ag question.

Mr. Speaker, if you go after drug smugglers, if you go after drug gangs, you're going to get the product. I'm happy that we have almost a thousand homes shut down because of our safer communities act.

I say, go get them, go get those grow-ops and let's get as many as we can. There are a lot in this city, Mr. Speaker, and we're not done yet, not only in the city, but in rural Manitoba. We're chasing them down because we have an integrated crime unit that goes after these operations. There are a lot more coming.

By the way, building permits are up 23 percent.

Mr. Hawranik: The minister should have read the StatsCan report this morning. They're way down.

Grow-ops are springing up all across the province, and it appears that crime is the only

business that's doing well and expanding in Manitoba. So far this year, 69 grow-ops have been dismantled and police are saying at least half of these grow-ops have been set up by people from outside Manitoba, coming into Manitoba to set up a grow-op, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why are criminals coming to Manitoba to set up grow-ops? Could it be because of his policies, his soft policies on crime, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, if you don't enlarge the police force as much as we have, then perhaps you wouldn't catch as many grow-op operations. If you didn't do a preventative program on crystal meth, as we have done to thousands of people in Manitoba, we wouldn't have tips. If we didn't have the Crimestoppers line to bring tips in, we wouldn't find out. We put out publications.

I am very pleased with the fact that we're discovering grow-ops every week, Mr. Speaker, and shutting them down and shutting off the avenues.

These are sophisticated operations, Mr. Speaker. Organized crime has been one of the most underutilized or under-expressed issues in this country. I wish members would get on board with the other members and the other ministers in Canada. In fact, the minister in Alberta, of Justice, visited me two weeks ago to talk about how we can co-ordinate our efforts on organized crime because she recognizes it, as we do, as the No. 1 issue respecting crime in Canada, organized crime.

* (14:10)

Child and Family Services Agencies Holiday Bonuses

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): In the spring we raised a number of questions with the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) regarding serious mismanagement and misspending at the Cree Nation Child and Family services agency. This misspending included significant holiday bonuses, \$2,500 each for the management and the board of the agency. This was happening while front-line workers, Mr. Speaker, were told that they couldn't see children on their caseloads because there wasn't enough money.

My question for the minister is: The holiday season is upon us again. Is the minister confident that

money intended for child protection is not going to holiday bonuses again this year?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Family Services and Housing): I think it's been very clear, and the member knows this, that the minister and the department have been very clear in terms of provincial funding for child welfare agencies, that it is, in fact, prescribed for the care of children.

There are agencies, of course—many agencies do have additional funding, including private fundraising, but not only have we made that clear in a policy sense, we've given clear direction in terms of that.

That will continue to be the policy of the Province, Mr. Speaker, which is that the Province provides funding for the care of children and, clearly, agencies will act accordingly.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But there are rumours again within the agencies that there are going to be bonuses paid to board and management, Mr. Speaker. The minister did say that there would be a new era of accountability and that money that flows to child welfare agencies was going to go to the children. This was several months ago.

I've heard the answer from the acting minister, but there's a very simple question: Can members of this House and all Manitobans—because there is only one taxpayer—be assured that the board and the management of each and every Child and Family Services agency is not awarding itself holiday bonuses at the expense of child protection?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I note that the opposition critic talked about the rumours. This is question period, not rumour period. If the member opposite has information that she would like to bring forward to the minister and to the department, we will certainly respond in terms of that.

But, I'll state once again, Mr. Speaker, and this is something that our minister and the department has made very clear, and that is that we fund the agencies, where part of the funding, the funding that does go, is specifically prescribed in terms of the care of children.

If the member has information, not rumours, I would suggest she raise it directly with the minister responsible.

Targeted Advance Payment Eligibility

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Affected by this year's heavy rains, flooding, farmers are finding that the Targeted Advance Payment is simply not working. As a cattle producer, Lynn Henry, recently explained in *Cattle Country*, and I quote: "The majority of cattle producers do not have anything but negative margins, and as a result there are no payouts." I will table this for the House.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Agriculture: Does she intend to address the concerns of producers like the Henrys who will not be eligible for funding under the Targeted Advance program?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, the farmers, the cattle producers of the Interlake are facing a serious situation and that's why we took steps very quickly and introduced a few programs. In fact, the first one was a ruminant assistance program that the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) commented on and said it was a very good move that I was making to introduce that program. We then—*[interjection]* with assistance, and I thank him for making those comments.

In recognition of the challenges there, we worked with the federal Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Gerry Ritz, and continue to work with him to put in place whatever possible.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, what the minister fails to understand is these payments that they talk about don't get in the pockets of the farmers who really need them. They're just not working.

Mr. Speaker, in spite of the government's claim, Lynn Henry's accountant told her that only a tiny percentage of producers will qualify for the Targeted Advance Payment. Our cattle producers have been hammered financially for several years in a row; in fact, since 2003 when BSE broke out.

One cattle industry official recently stated that we could have 20 percent fewer cows on the farm by year end than we had at the start.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister going to continue to allow the Manitoba cattle herd to shrink, or is she finally prepared to table a plan to ensure the long-term health of this very significant sector?

Ms. Wowchuk: Indeed, this is a very important sector of the economy and that's why we have put forward the Targeted Advance program. In that

program, 850 producers are eligible and they will get an average \$8,400 payment. Not every producer will qualify, but there is also the advanced program.

If I look back at question periods in the past, the member opposite and his colleagues kept saying, get a cash advance program in place, get a cash advance program in place. We have a cash advance program. The cash advance program works like the cash advance program for the grain producers, and rather than criticizing the program I would encourage the member to get on board and start saying to farmers, I wanted a cash advance program for you and we have a cash advance program. Take advantage of it, because it is interest-free money and they can use that money to borrow against their herds, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House will get on board with any program that works. This one does not work. The minister knows it doesn't work.

People are calling day after day talking about this \$8,400 that is magically going to appear in the mailbox. Well, guess what? It's not going to come. They don't qualify. Five negative years puts you out of the Targeted Advance program. She knows that. If she doesn't, she should resign.

Get some money in the hands of producers. Do it now. It's Christmastime, the farmers need it today.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I'm very pleased that on the last day of the session that we are getting an Ag question, Mr. Speaker, because it is a very important issue.

I want to say to the member opposite, instead of criticizing the programs such as the increased AgriStability payments, such as the targeted cash advance, which will flow money to 850 producers at least—Mr. Speaker, those producers will get a letter. They will tell them how much they're eligible for and then they can make a decision as to whether they want to take that advance or they don't. If they don't want to do that, they can apply for AgriStability. If they don't want to take that, they can apply for the cash advance that's available through MCPA. There is also the ruminant freight assistance program.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that those producers are facing a very big challenge, but I ask the member opposite, instead of being critical of every program that is there, maybe he should sit down with some of them, as my department is doing,

and work through the program and encourage them to apply rather than just criticize.

* (14:20)

Lucentis Medication Coverage

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, each year about a thousand Manitoba seniors develop age-related macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness in seniors. Lucentis was approved by Health Canada in June 2007, and by Ontario and Québec months ago. The drug can greatly improve, indeed transform, the lives of seniors suffering from this serious eye disease. It can prevent blindness and often improves vision.

I ask the Minister of Health why, for a year and a half, the Province of Manitoba has not covered the cost of Lucentis under Pharmacare for those who need it.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I'm pleased to inform the House, of course, that in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority at the eye care centre of excellence at the Misericordia hospital, which was established in 2001, the treatment for macular degeneration is provided as an insured benefit through the program.

General practitioners, of course, refer their patients to a specialist at the eye care centre. The eye care centre does a diagnosis of the issue facing that patient, whether it's macular degeneration or otherwise, and, of course, prescribes the most appropriate course of treatment.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, instead of coverage being the exception rather than the rule, coverage should be the rule rather than the exception. Clearly, Manitobans who are seniors, many grandparents, should be able to get access to Lucentis when they have age-related macular degeneration and are at threat of going blind.

It is important that all Manitobans have this opportunity and are covered by this drug, so that they are not at threat of losing their sight, when they could be able to, in fact, prevent further deterioration in their sight and often have improvement in their sight.

Why is the minister not fully covering it under Pharmacare?

Ms. Oswald: Of course, when it comes to the eye care and the eye health of all Manitobans, seniors and otherwise, we rely very heavily on our

ophthalmologists, our health professionals, to make appropriate diagnoses, to prescribe the appropriate treatment and the appropriate drugs. We know, of course, that there are a variety of treatment options for macular degeneration and that the outstanding health-care professionals that we have at the Misericordia eye care centre of excellence, and indeed across Manitoba, prescribe the appropriate treatment.

I think, also, the member opposite knows that we have one of the most comprehensive, if not the most comprehensive, Pharmacare program in Canada, and we're going to continue to work to ensure that we maintain that.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Inkster, are you up on a point of order?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): No, a question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the agreement I have for Thursday is a question and two supplementary questions.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): On a clarification.

Mr. Speaker: On clarification?

Mr. Hawranik: On a point of clarification, I believe there's an agreement between the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) and myself, as Opposition House Leader, to have allowed today in any event, for today only, the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) to take the first question and first supplementary and then the Member for Inkster to take the final supplementary question. I believe that's the agreement.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for one independent member to ask a question and a supp and the other independent member to ask one question?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Is there agreement for that? I need to be able to hear if there is a no, because under our rules of the House, if there's one no, it stops whatever work. So I ask the co-operation of members. If I'm bringing the ruling or addressing the House, please, can I have your attention because I need to hear every word.

The honourable Member for Inkster, there is agreement. So please ask your question.

Gaelin Ross Death Investigation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that it would appear that the RCMP are going to be giving a second look and investigate the death of baby Ross, the baby that had in excess of 40 bruises all over her body.

Mr. Speaker, the issue then becomes the initial investigation and the concerns that came out of that initial investigation, concerns that dealt with staff shortages, concerns in regard to the Crown's role, to what degree the Department of Justice was aware, to what degree the Department of Family Services was aware.

Mr. Speaker, the only way we'll get those types of questions answered is if there is a public inquiry as to what went wrong that allowed baby Ross to fall through the cracks.

My question to the Minister of Justice: Will he not concede that there is indeed a need for an independent inquiry regarding the death of baby Ross?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member has asked this question for the last several days, and I indicated in the House to him yesterday that the RCMP was doing a review of the investigation. In light of that, I don't think it would be prudent for me to interfere in that particular process nor, in fact, is it appropriate for me to interfere in that particular process.

I also advised the member yesterday that any individuals, any members of the public who have any information in regard to this ought to and should bring that information to the attention of the RCMP, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Targeted Advance Payment Government Initiative

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Tuesday was Farmer Appreciation Day and finally, finally, out of members of the opposition, we got a question on agriculture. I, too, want to ask the Minister of Agriculture about the Targeted Advance program because the Interlake is the region that I represent and it's been under incredible stress over the course of this past summer.

Would the minister please explain further what she intends to do in regard to this crisis?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question and also for the work that he has been doing in the Interlake. Rather than criticizing the program, he has been encouraging people to make application. I would encourage my critic, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), to do the same thing, to talk about the programs that are there.

Mr. Speaker, the people from the Interlake are facing very serious challenges, and we have looked at another program to help get cash into their hands. That program is the Targeted Advance Payment.

Will it work for all producers? No, Mr. Speaker, it will not work for all of them, but over 700 producers will qualify for payments, and the producers will have to make a choice. If that program doesn't work for them, they should make an application for the other programs.

Skilled Labour Worker Retention

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has a skilled labour shortage. We need to train and keep skilled labour. On the government's widely advertised Opportunities Manitoba Web site, they advertise training and apprenticeships, asking, and I quote: "Want a career where you use your mind and your hands, work in other provinces . . ." Let me repeat that: work in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain how training people in Manitoba and then suggesting they go work in other provinces is helping the government's objective to retain skilled labour in Manitoba?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a real pleasure on the very last minute of the very last question period of this session to finally have a question on something in Competitiveness, Training and Trade.

It's a real pleasure to be able to remind the member of the steps that our Province is taking to move ahead with 4,000 more apprenticeship seats in this province over the next four years, to improve our highly competitive environment and provide opportunities for young people whether it's in Winnipeg, whether it's in the member's home constituency of Carman or any other constituency in this province.

We are very pleased as well to make the investments—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I can also tell you that we're very pleased about the investments whether it's at Red River College, for example, the heavy-industry program, which will be opening in January 2009.

Certainly, I'm thrilled about the improvements to the Len Evans Centre—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for oral questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us Mrs. Sue Joyce who will be celebrating her 104th birthday on December 7. With her are her niece, Sandra Hewlko of Winnipeg; nephew, Don Rowat and his wife, Joan, of Russell; great-nephews, David Rowat of Inglis and Brad Rowat of Souris. She and family members are the guests of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

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

Happy Birthday was sung.

* * *

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker: For honourable members, I have a quick statement.

I have a quick statement as the Assembly will be recessing today until the New Year, and particularly, because we will have a Youth Parliament meeting here in the Chamber later this month. I'm asking that all members empty the contents of their desk before leaving today. I encourage members to use the blue bins here in the Chamber to recycle their *Hansards* and copies of bills.

Any other material you have to recycle should be placed in the larger blue bins in the two message rooms. I thank all honourable members for their co-operation.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Carissa Nikkel**

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to pay tribute to a wonderful talented young woman named Carissa Nikkel.

Carissa was born and raised in Winnipeg and is currently completing her education degree with the faculties of Education and Science Integrated Program at the University of Winnipeg. Carissa is an active member of the community whose impressive résumé is three pages long.

Carissa has been the chair of the organizing committee for the Terry Fox Run for the past three years. She has had a great effect on the event and played a role in its amalgamation of the run from four into one at the Assiniboine Park. This past year, the run was one of the most successful ever, bringing together thousands of Manitobans to raise money for Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope.

Carissa is also an accomplished Ukrainian dancer and has served on the board of directors and represented the company in various ways. She is a dedicated dancer and is committed to the preservation of Ukrainian culture.

Carissa was diagnosed with insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus when she was seven years old. Ever since then she has spent many days in the hospital and has tried to maintain a healthy lifestyle. She views diabetes as a challenge rather than a disability and has dedicated herself to raising awareness about diabetes to the public. She has participated in a number of different clinical research studies, presented her own diabetic research study and spoken at numerous diabetes awareness days.

For her outstanding academic ability, research in diabetes and community services, Carissa has received numerous awards. She was honoured with a Terry Fox Humanitarian Scholarship Award in 2002 and just recently became one of the 2008 recipients of the Premier's Volunteer Service Award where Premier Gary Doer honoured her for the great work that she has done.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise in the House today and share the life and accomplishments of Carissa Nikkel. She is a role model for everyone and shows us not only how valuable giving back to our community is but the great things that can come from that as well.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When making reference to members in the House, please use the ministers' titles and other members by the name of the constituencies.

Sue Joyce

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to share some comments about a woman who means so much to me, Auntie Sue Joyce. Auntie Sue will be celebrating her 104th birthday on December 7. Amazingly, she lives on her own in Winnipeg and is still energetic and full of life.

She along with her family are sitting in the gallery here today. Her niece, Sandra Hewlko of Winnipeg, her nephew Donald Rowat with wife Joan of Russell, her great-nephews David Rowat of Inglis and Brad Rowat of Souris.

Auntie Sue was the youngest of four children in her family. Her father, Duncan Cameron, was a Conservative MLA for the constituency of Gilbert Plains starting in 1908. Mr. Cameron was a man of action. He often found the legislative process slow-moving. He also found it difficult being away from his family and community for extended periods of time. Duncan Cameron finished his term and did not seek re-election.

Auntie Sue was very proud of the work she accomplished at Osler, Hammond Nanton in the insurance section as a confidential secretary. She worked in an environment that expected things to get done and where can't get it done was not a common phrase used within that office. This is where she practised the value of hard work, a concept she strongly still believes in today.

Sue married Wilf Joyce, who was employed by Investors Group. The two enjoyed many trips together to the United States and the Caribbean, along with regular outings to Rae & Jerry's, the popular Winnipeg eatery, where they were treated like royalty as they were friends with the owners. Auntie Sue and Uncle Wilf were happily married for 25 years.

Even though Auntie Sue never had any children of her own, she always treated her extended family with love and support. She has always been a strong advocate for a family and for this we truly love and appreciate her. Sue has consistently been strong and vocal in her beliefs and has often offered me political advice. I have had the privilege of quoting Auntie

Sue in this House on a number of occasions, so I want to thank her for that advice.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish my Aunt Sue a very happy birthday. She is a true inspiration not only to me but also to anyone else who has had the pleasure to meet her. I hope she knows just how much we love her and we adore her.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ville de Saint-Boniface—Centenaire de son incorporation

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Monsieur le Président, c'est un honneur pour moi de vous parler des célébrations 2008 qui ont marqué le centenaire de l'incorporation de la Ville de Saint-Boniface. Le 12 février, à l'occasion du début du Festival du Voyageur, les festivités du centenaire ont été lancées à l'ancien Hôtel de Ville de Saint-Boniface.

Pour l'occasion, le premier maire de la ville, Jos Bleau, était présent et il a participé à tous les événements au courant de l'année.

En même temps que le centenaire de Saint-Boniface, nous marquons aussi des anniversaires importants des organisations ou établissements suivants : le Centenaire de la Cathédrale de Saint-Boniface; la fondation du Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface; l'établissement du Couvent des Sœurs Grises; la fondation de l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph; la mise sur pied de *La Liberté*.

Il est vrai que la Ville de Saint-Boniface a depuis fusionné avec la Ville de Winnipeg, mais son importance historique et culturelle n'est pas diminuée pour autant.

Dans le vieux Saint-Boniface historique, nous retrouvons une communauté pleine de vitalité. Premièrement, je veux souligner l'importante contribution des Sœurs Grises qui ont bâti plusieurs de nos établissements de santé : le premier hôpital à Saint-Boniface, le Centre de Santé, le Centre Taché et le Foyer Valade.

En plus, nous avons des associations qui assurent une présence politique et culturelle, la Société franco-manitobaine, le Centre culturel, l'Association des Résidents du Vieux Saint-Boniface, et bien d'autres.

Du côté patrimonial, nous avons la Cathédrale, le Musée de Saint-Boniface, la Maison Gabrielle-Roy et la Résidence Langevin.

Tout au long de l'année, nous avons eu l'occasion de participer à des célébrations telles que FrancoFête, le concert Terre Ouverte, la messe à la Cathédrale, les Cent Ans de la Chanson, et juste ce matin l'ouverture du Marché de Noël. Ces activités ont permis aux Manitobaines et aux Manitobains de fêter un patrimoine unique et une richesse culturelle spéciale.

En terminant, permettez-moi de féliciter chaleureusement les co-présidents du comité consultatif, Mariette Mulaire et Normand Gousseau, les membres du comité directeur, ainsi que la coordinatrice de projet, Julie Turenne-Maynard, qui ont travaillé toute l'année pour organiser ces festivités d'envergure.

Les Célébrations 2008 ont été un franc succès. Merci, Monsieur le Président.

Translation

It's an honour for me to talk about Célébrations 2008, which marked the centennial of the incorporation of the City of St. Boniface. The festivities were launched at the old St. Boniface City Hall on February 12 at the start of Festival du Voyageur. Jos Bleau, the City's first mayor, was on hand for the occasion and participated in all the events throughout the year.

In addition to the St. Boniface centennial, we are also marking the following important anniversaries: the centennial of St. Boniface Cathedral; the founding of the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface; the establishment of the Grey Nuns' convent; the founding of the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph; and the launch of the weekly La Liberté.

While it is true that the City of St. Boniface has since amalgamated with the City of Winnipeg, its historic and cultural importance has not diminished. Historic St. Boniface is home to a very vibrant community.

I would first like to emphasize the important contribution of the Grey Nuns, who built several of our health care institutions: the first hospital in St. Boniface, the St. Boniface Health Centre, Taché Centre, and Foyer Valade.

We also have associations that ensure a political and cultural presence: the Société franco-manitobaine, the Centre culturel, the Old Saint-Boniface Residents' Association, and many others.

On the heritage side, we have the St. Boniface Cathedral, St. Boniface Museum, Gabrielle Roy House and Langevin Residence.

Throughout the year we have had the opportunity to participate in celebrations such as FrancoFête, the Terre Ouverte outdoor concert, the mass at the Cathedral, a celebration of 100 years of music and, just this morning, the opening of the Christmas market. These activities have provided occasions for Manitobans to celebrate a unique and rich cultural heritage.

In closing, I would like to heartily congratulate the co-chairs of the advisory committee, Mariette Mulaire and Normand Gousseau, the members of the steering committee and the project co-ordinator, Julie Turenne-Maynard, all of whom have worked throughout the year to organize these large-scale festivities. Célébrations 2008 was a resounding success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:40)

Asessippi Ski Hill 10th Anniversary

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Asessippi ski hill on the west side of the province. Mr. Speaker, the anniversary that is being celebrated is the result of the determination of individuals and entrepreneurs like Damon Gillis, Lynn Spurway, Bob Cross and their board of directors who pushed ahead despite much opposition to this project in the mid-1990s.

Today, Mr. Speaker, this ski hill boasts three chairlifts, 25 runs, two bunny hills, a tubing park and, indeed, a skateboard park as well. The facility also hosts summer and winter activities. Special events are held all season long. Last year, this facility hosted 100,000 visitors and employs 190 people on a full-time and part-time basis. As a result of the hospitality and the can-do attitude of the people who work there, this facility has become in Attractions Canada, the best new attraction in 2000. In Travel Manitoba's magazine, it was the 2002 Tourism Marketing Award-winner. It is a Manitoba Star Attraction. *UP Magazine*, in 2008, designated this ski hill as the reader's choice for ski areas.

Today, Mr. Speaker, there are 52 cottages that have been built in the last year and a half in the little Cottage Cove development, and in the next few years we will see up to 250 cottages. Today, Ski Asessippi is hosting an event in the Leg dining room at 5 o'clock. All members of the Legislature and staff

are invited to this celebration. It is the launch of the 10th year anniversary.

I want to thank, Mr. Speaker, Damon Gillis, Lynn Spurway, Bob Cross and all of the board of directors and owners of Ski Asessippi for enduring and showing determination in making sure that this attraction in Manitoba is a reality and is working for all the people in this province. Thank you.

Western Canadian Music Awards 2009

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce in the Manitoba Legislature today that the Western Canadian Music Alliance has selected Brandon to host the 7th Annual Western Canadian Music Awards in the fall of 2009. This great honour was made possible by the tremendous efforts of Brandon First and the Brandon host committee, who have been working hard behind the scenes since last January to bring this event to the Wheat City.

The Western Canadian Music Awards is a three-day event featuring some of the country's most talented artists. Music industry professionals from all over Canada will be in Brandon for a music industry conference, multigenre music festival and two high-profile award shows honouring recording artists and the many talented people working behind the scenes in the recording industry from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon.

Western Canadian Music Awards Executive Director Rick Fenton has stated that Brandon is an excellent pick for host of this prestigious event. Brandon's physical resources are more than adequate and Brandon First and the Brandon host committee have displayed tremendous and incredible enthusiasm and attention to detail in making their successful bid.

This year's event was hosted in Edmonton this past October and proved to be successful for Manitoban artists like Steve Bell, Tracy Bone, The Weakerthans, Twilight Hotel and The Liptonians.

I ask the Legislature to join with me in congratulating the city of Brandon in receiving the honour to host the 2009 Western Canadian Music Awards, and I look forward to the talent the event will bring to our province. I invite all Manitobans to volunteer for the event or simply bring their families out to Brandon for world-class musical performances from western Canada's many up-and-coming artists. Thank you.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
(Continued)**

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might have leave of the House, on House business, with regard to the special committee on Senate reform. I'd like to ask leave of the House to waive rule 4(6) regarding the requirement for 10 days' notice of intersessional committee meetings.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to waive rule 4(6) regarding the requirement for 10 days' notice of intersessional committee meetings? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if you might call Bill 3, The Forest Amendment Act; Bill 4, The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act; Bill 5, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Bill 6, The East Side Traditional Lands Planning and Special Protected Areas Act; Bill 7, The Food Safety and Related Amendments Act; and Bill 2, The Animal Care Amendment Act, in that order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The bills we will be dealing with under government business for second readings, we'll be dealing with Bill 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 2.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 3—The Forest Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: I'll be now calling Bill 3, The Forest Amendment Act.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 3, The Forest Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les forêts, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

An Honourable Member: Banning logging.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I reminded honourable members just a little earlier that if I'm doing a process in the House, I need to be able to hear everything that is spoken because sometimes you miss something, and it comes out, out of order. So I'm asking the co-operation of honourable members

to at least give me an opportunity to move this motion first.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Struthers: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* Yes, for heaven sakes, members opposite should at least be nice to the Speaker. It doesn't matter if they get wound up and oppose a very progressive law like this. Go for it. I encourage you to speak out against such draconian measures. Good grief, why can't they for once just stand up and support something that's progressive? That's their choice. As long as they're nice to you, I'll be happy.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 3, The Forest Amendment Act, does in fact remove logging from 79 out of 80 parks. That's a good thing. We're doing this in such a way that we've co-operated with Tembec and Tolko and quota holders across the province who are way ahead of members opposite when it comes to these kinds of questions. We've been able to do this without the loss of jobs that members, it seems, some days, you're hoping for, so they can ask a question in the House. We've done that without impacting the economics.

We know, and, you know, if members would read through the whole bill that we were dealing with today, they'll see that we're working with forest companies to make sure they have every opportunity to be successful here in Manitoba. That's a part of this bill as well, Mr. Speaker. If they would only settle down long enough to read through the whole bill instead of just reacting, reacting, reacting, they'd see that—maybe that's asking a little much, isn't it? But, you know, if they would only look through the other clauses in this very good bill, they would see—they claim to be the big free marketers over there—we're taking the stumpage fee and we're hooking it to market conditions. If they would just think about this for a minute or two, Mr. Speaker, they'd understand that that's good for forestry in Manitoba.

You know, they defend Alberta in this Chamber all the time. That's what Alberta does, Mr. Speaker. Maybe they don't know that, and maybe now that they do know it, they'll support this bill, I don't know. But what I do know is it's a good idea to take the stumpage fees that companies pay in our province and tie it to market conditions so that when the market is depressed like it is today, then companies get a break when it comes to working and

employing people in our great province. Then, when the market turns around, and it will, I'm confident that it will in the forest industry, when that market turns around and companies are making some profits, then their ability to pay increases.

* (14:50)

Do you know who else likes this, Mr. Speaker? The companies themselves who come to us to ask for this. Members opposite, maybe now that they know that, will jump on board, I don't know. They might find that there's a political angle to this that they might want to try to exploit. Good luck to you on that one.

But, Mr. Speaker, this bill also helps us in regenerating those forests that need to be regenerated after they've been cut. This allows third parties, on behalf of quota holders, whether they be big quota holders or little quota holders, authorize a third party to take on that very important responsibility of regenerating our forests after they've been cut. This bill makes it much easier for that to happen.

It also makes it much easier for us to keep track of what's going on out on the landscape. We, in this bill, will have the right to inspect vehicles that are taking timber out of our forests. That's essential, absolutely essential, for us to know that kind—

An Honourable Member: Don't let them take the Christmas trees down.

Mr. Struthers: Well, the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese), he's coming across as the Grinch who stole the Christmas tree by not supporting this kind of legislation. I don't know why he's chirping in the background, being so negative about, not this list, but everything else it seems.

An Honourable Member: And free enterprise, Stan.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, well, free enterprise is attaching things to the market, which is what we've done with the stumpage fees, and he should be all in favour of this, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, the last point about this legislation that I want to make is that this increases our ability to inventory, to take stock, of what's coming out of the forest, so that we know that our regeneration efforts are far ahead of our depletion efforts.

So, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is good for the environment. It's good for the economy. I suggest members opposite should vote with us in favour of it.

Thank very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), that we adjourn debate.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 4—The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 4, The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act; Loi sur le financement fiscal de la revitalisation urbaine, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce this very important bill. I want to note that we did introduce a similar bill in the last session of the Legislature, and I want to indicate that the prime purpose of this bill remains the same as the original bill that was introduced.

In this particular case, it is to make sure that we have a viable tax increment finance mechanism available, here in the province of Manitoba, to support economic development, revitalization of neighbourhoods and the kind of projects that are identified in the bill.

I want to note that there are a number of important projects that are dependent on the passage of this bill, most particularly rapid transit, a very historic announcement that we as a Province are partnering with the City of Winnipeg and using some federal funding to have a rapid transit system that will go in a very short period of time to the University of Manitoba. Tax increment finance is very important to that.

Mr. Bidhu Jha, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I want to note that many of the developments that we're looking at in the downtown of Winnipeg and, potentially, in Brandon as well, with the renaissance of Brandon, are also dependent on tax increment finance.

I want to note that the Downtown BIZ and CentreVenture, that are both very significantly involved in downtown revitalization, are very much in support of tax increment finance legislation.

I want to note that the cities of Brandon and Winnipeg are very much in support of tax increment finance legislation, and I look forward to their comments when this bill goes to committee.

I want to stress that, as with the case of the original draft, the scope of this is directed at the municipality in which the tax increment finance provision takes place—TIF, as it's often called. This bill includes a couple of changes which do—I like the fact that there will be consultation with school boards and consultation and a partnering with municipalities which again is, I think, important. That was the intent clearly stated and in the previous bill, but we have strengthened that.

We also have put in place a number of provisions to ensure full accountability of the fund, including an audit of the fund and a statement of the purpose and the particular expenditures under TIF. This is transparency and it's accountability. We see this as being very important.

I want to stress by the way that TIF has been used very extensively in other jurisdictions—in the United States: in Chicago; in Minneapolis, St. Paul; in Portland, Oregon. It's also been used in Michigan; Augusta, Maine. There are provisions in the city of Calgary which also used new provincial TIF legislation which revitalized the Rivers District.

We believe that this can be very important here. I did mention rapid transit. I want to indicate that it's potentially also available for the Winnipeg inland ports, very significant potential prospects for downtown and affordable housing.

We believe this bill is important. We encourage members opposite to consider it with some dispatch. We also would point out that rather than wait for a committee, we have responded to some of the concerns that were expressed initially, even though I want to stress the bill is essentially the same in terms of its actual function, but this is an important bill.

I want to urge members opposite to support this, to stand with city ventures, stand with the Downtown BIZ, stand with Renaissance Brandon, stand with the cities of Brandon and Winnipeg, stand for the inland port, stand for rapid transit, stand for the redevelopment of housing and business in many neighbourhoods in Winnipeg and Brandon and across the province. We see this as very innovative legislation.

I know the members opposite have difficulty with that and I know the C in PC doesn't stand for creativity either, but this is one case where I mentioned those that are supporting this legislation—I would hope that we would get unanimous support of this because, quite frankly, without this, rapid transit is at risk—[interjection]—CentrePort, exactly, is at risk.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Much of the potential development of our major cities is at risk, so the time to discuss and debate this legislation is now. I urge members opposite to consider passing this as soon as possible so, in the year 2009, we can have TIF legislation that works for Manitobans.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 5—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Promoting Safer and Healthier Conditions in
Motor Vehicles)**

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move on to Bill 5, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Promoting Safer and Healthier Conditions in Motor Vehicles).

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 5, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Promoting Safer and Healthier Conditions in Motor Vehicles); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (promotion de la santé et de la sécurité dans les véhicules automobiles), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Promoting Safer and Healthier Conditions in Motor Vehicles).

I'm very pleased to speak to my honourable colleagues today regarding Bill 5.

* (15:00)

Bill 5 is comprised of two initiatives under the Highway Traffic Amendment Act that will serve to enhance the safety and well-being of vehicle occupants. The Minister of Healthy Living, the MLA for Fort Garry (Ms. Irvin-Ross), has played a huge role with regard to this first piece of the legislation, prohibition against smoking in vehicles with children present.

Mr. Speaker, the first initiative will help protect children from the hazards of second-hand smoke. Research shows that second-hand smoke in a vehicle is 23 times more toxic than second-hand smoke in a house. Young children are more vulnerable to second-hand smoke than adults because they are smaller and have higher respiration rates. This causes children to absorb more tobacco-smoke toxins. Children exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to suffer sudden infant death syndrome, acute respiratory infections, ear problems and more severe asthma.

A new offence will prohibit smoking tobacco in a vehicle when a person under the age of 16 is present. It will also prohibit all persons under the age of 16 from smoking in a vehicle, regardless of whether there are other people under the age of 16 in the vehicle.

The law will apply to both moving and stationary vehicles, regardless of whether there is an open roof top, sunroof, door or window. Four other Canadian jurisdictions—B.C., Ontario, Nova Scotia, and the Yukon—have implemented legislation to prohibit smoking in a vehicle while children are present. The offence will be enforced by the police who are authorized to stop vehicles and issue offence notices under The Highway Traffic Act.

Mr. Speaker, the second part of this important bill with regard to safety and health and well-being of our citizens of Manitoba is a prohibition against using a hand-held cellphone or text-messaging device while driving. The second initiative under Bill 5 will help make Manitoba roadways safer by prohibiting the use of hand-held cellphones and text-messaging devices while driving. The public is becoming increasingly concerned about the driver distraction associated with the use of cellphones and other electronic devices while driving. A 2007 poll conducted by the Manitoba Public Insurance

revealed that 20 percent of Manitobans identify drivers on cellphones as the single greatest driving problem. Studies indicate that there's a positive correlation between driver cellphone use and a deteriorated driver performance. There's also evidence that indicates cellphone use while driving leads to a fourfold increase in the likelihood of collision. A recent study by the transport institute of Virginia Tech indicates that nearly 80 percent of all crashes and 65 percent of all near crashes involve driver inattention just prior to the onset of the incident. It identifies hand-held wireless devices as being associated with the highest frequency of distraction-related events for both incidents and near crashes.

Four Canadian jurisdictions—Québec, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and P.E.I.—have implemented driver cellphone bans. Ontario recently introduced legislation to ban the use of cellphones and other wireless electronic devices while driving. Six U.S. states—California, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Utah, Washington—and the District of Columbia have state-wide bans against driver use of hand-held cellphones. Similarly, 10 municipalities in other states, including the cities of Chicago and Detroit, have banned hand-held cellphones.

Manitoba is following the lead of these jurisdictions by banning drivers' use of hand-held phones; drivers' use of devices that can send text messages will also be prohibited. Bill 5 includes an exemption for drivers using a hand-held cellphone or text-messaging device to contact the police, fire department or an ambulance service in an emergency.

This new offence is a step in addressing the problem of driver distraction. It should help get drivers' attention back on the road and their hands on the wheel, and to improve safety on Manitoba roadways for all use. Bill 5 will come into force on proclamation. This will allow the government time to provide the public with education and awareness about these new initiatives prior to the offences becoming law. It will also allow the public time to come into compliance with the new law by purchasing hands-free cellphones. Public education will be a key factor in the success of this law since it's about changing a mindset.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to discussing the details of Bill 5 with my colleagues at law amendments committee. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), that we adjourn debate.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 6—The East Side Traditional Lands Planning and Special Protected Areas Act

Mr. Speaker: Okay. We will now move on to Bill 6, The East Side Traditional Lands Planning and Special Protected Areas Act.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): I move, seconded by the Minister for Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 6, The East Side Traditional Lands Planning and Special Protected Areas Act; Loi sur l'aménagement des terres traditionnelles situées du côté est et les zones protégées spéciales, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill and I table the message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, for too many years people living on the east side of Lake Winnipeg living in First Nations have been left out of the decision-making process. This bill enables First Nations and Aboriginal communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to engage in land-use and resource-management planning on Crown land that they have traditionally used.

Mr. Speaker, a First Nation can request—it's not an imposition on the First Nation—they can request that they work with us in terms of land-use planning in their traditional areas. These are areas that they have hunted in, trapped in, collected in, buried their parents and grandparents in, taught their kids in. This is where they have lived for generations. This government thinks it's time that those folks have a say in what happens in their backyards and this legislation enables that.

This legislation doesn't supersede any section 35 obligations that every provincial government has when it comes to natural resources. It doesn't knock to the side any of the northern flood agreements that we have. I'm thinking specifically in terms of Norway House. If Norway House doesn't want to

request the benefits of this legislation, there's no requirement that they should.

Mr. Speaker, we have consulted with chiefs and their councils and elders on the—[interjection] The Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) maybe is bucking for a Speaker's position at some point and she's exactly right, and I will make darn sure that all my good advice to members opposite is channelled through the Speaker, but I hope after it's channelled through the Speaker that they listen to it because they may have a chance to vote in favour of some progressive legislation once they do hear that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that this government is taking not only First Nations participation seriously, but also protection of the boreal forest seriously. Many people have referred to the boreal forest as the lungs of the planet. Many people, including myself, and others, I'm sure, on all sides of the House, understand that we have a responsibility to protect the boreal forest not only for your future here in Manitoba, but from a perspective from around the planet. We need to be able to do that to make sure that good environmental decisions are made on a go-forward basis.

So, Mr. Speaker, this bill includes First Nations on the east side in decision making. It provides for protection for boreal forest and it also guards the Province's ability to protect the public interest. To protect the public interest, we know that this Legislature needs to make decisions. What we're saying is that we do that in co-operation with First Nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

So, Mr. Speaker, I highly recommend that the members opposite read this bill carefully and consider supporting our government in this progressive step forward.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that we adjourn debate.

Motion agreed to.

* (15:10)

Bill 7—The Food Safety and Related Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move on to Bill 7, The Food Safety and Related Amendments Act.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration

(Ms. Allan), that Bill 7, The Food Safety and Related Amendments Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table that message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, food safety is important to all Manitobans, and we must be diligent in protecting our citizens. Recent events, such as the listeria outbreak, have shown the challenges that are there to ensure food safety. The new act will provide tools necessary to carry out this important work.

The act will require operators of food premises to ensure that food is safe and that unsafe food is not sold or distributed. It will enable Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives to enhance the regulatory regime in the food safety continuum, from the farm to the back of a retail store.

It will enable the department to work co-operatively with its provincial partners, including public health and federal counterparts as well as the industry, to provide a seamless regulation for food safety from farm to fork.

The new act will provide the flexibility and authority for officials to identify, prevent and deal with new and changing food safety risks. In particular, Mr. Speaker, the new act will enhance a licensing regime for food premises, regulated by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, including food warehouses, distributors and processors and enable the transitioning of premises to the new regime.

It will allow for the establishment of a public registry for licensed food premises and enable the appointment and designation of inspectors, as well as provide entry and inspection powers to these inspectors. It will empower inspectors to seize and destroy or dispose of food or other things that pose a risk and food that does not meet food safety standards.

When we look at food, food means food that can be eaten or drinking products, Mr. Speaker. The act will also empower inspectors to give orders in relation to food safety risks and non-compliance with the act. This includes the safeguards in relation to the exercise of the authority.

It requires the reporting of food safety risks by food-premises operators, and it allows for employees of premises to report food safety risks with protection from retaliation for doing so. The act also empowers the director under the act to require the reporting of information as necessary to monitor and deal with food safety risks and to administer and empower the act and to disclose information for these purposes.

Mr. Speaker, it includes broad regulation-making powers to ensure the safety of food, including establishing standards and requirements of food and food premises, food safety programs and tracing. It also enables a minister to issue recall orders and to order, establish a control area to contain food safety risks.

It also will incorporate food safety existing legislation, repealing The Dairy Act and food safety regulation authorities currently under the act.

Amendments are also being made to The Department of Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives Act, to enable the minister to require information to deal with disruptions in the food supply in Manitoba, caused by a major emergency such as a pandemic.

Thank you very much. With those words, I look forward to seeing this bill passed to committee where others can make comments.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), that we adjourn debate.

Motion agreed to.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Government House Leader?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As Government House Leader, in my caucus, I often get to bootleg information into caucus, but I don't get that occasion in the House.

There ought to be a point of order allowed for House leaders to—during periods of time to allow the House leader and all House leaders to thank the staff, the Clerks, the Speaker, and for the hard and incredibly intense and terrific work that you do.

And also, for me to be allowed to say that I don't think I've had occasion to work with more honourable people than the two House leaders I work with. It has been, certainly, a credit to them as

individuals, both the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) and the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), the high regard I have for them, after working with them for the period of time that I've worked. As people, I don't think that you could work with finer people than I've had the occasion to work with as House leader, and I want to thank them publicly for both their integrity and the work that they've done with me during the course of time that I've been House leader.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's a legitimate point of order. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, he does not have a point of order, but he has a good point.

Bill 2—The Animal Care Amendment Act

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan), that Bill 2, The Animal Care Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill and I table the message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Ms. Wowchuk: I thank my colleague for seconding this very important bill, Mr. Speaker.

In the past decade, Mr. Speaker, The Animal Care Act has helped us protect the welfare of animals in Manitoba. The act complements the federal animal cruelty legislation as it emphasizes the prevention of animal neglect, abuse and cruelty.

However, Mr. Speaker, The Animal Care Act is unique, because it goes beyond the prevention of animal cruelty through ensuring that owners meet a minimum standard of animal care to prevent suffering. The act references the most up-to-date standards in the code of practices for each species of animal, thus ensuring that the current standards for animal care are always enforced in Manitoba. The act also makes Manitoba unique, as it requires the licensing of breeders and kennels to ensure dogs and cats are raised under suitable conditions.

However, experience has shown us that there are gaps and deficiencies in the act that need to be

addressed. The Animal Care Amendment Act will address these gaps and deficiencies and provide animal protection officers with new progressive tools to protect animal welfare. With these amendments, Manitoba will continue to lead the way in Canada in the area of animal care and animal welfare.

* (15:20)

The Animal Care Amendment Act includes a new requirement for veterinarians to report suspected cases of animal neglect and abuse, and for the prompt investigation of these reports. New measures will also be put in place to deal with livestock unfit for transport. These measures will complement existing federal regulations under The Health of Animals Act governing the humane transport of domestic animals. Animals unfit for transport will be prohibited from being transported except for the purpose of medical treatment or slaughter providing that such animals can be loaded and moved humanely.

Animals unfit for transport will also be prohibited from being unloaded or accepted at auction marts and assembly stations for resale or further transport. Any operator of a market or assembling station that receives an unfit animal will be required to report this to an animal protection officer. Animal protection officers will now have the authority to deal with abandoned animals as well.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The licensing requirement will be streamlined and will no longer be limited to premises dealing with cats and dogs. Kennels, companion animal breeding premises, and pet stores dealing with hamster, gerbils, rabbits, and other pets will also be required to be licensed. Pounds, dog shelters, pet rescue facilities, and other such facilities will also be required to be licensed to meet appropriate standards.

In addition, Mr. Acting Speaker, a registry of licensed premises will be established and the information on this registry will be made available to the public. This will allow potential buyers to make sure they are buying animals from a licensed operation that is taking proper care of animals.

With this additional consumer awareness, unlicensed facilities and agencies who buy pets for resale from these unregistered facilities will be exposed and eliminated. The director appointed under the act, the chief veterinary officer, will also be able to issue orders to owners regarding the care of their animals in situations where animals are in

distress and where owners are not carrying out proper care for their animals and they are in danger of being in distress.

Failure to comply with any order may result in charges or seizure of the animals. In the case where a person has had animal seizures before or has surrendered their animals because they have too many to properly care for or continues to collect more animals, a justice may make an order restricting the number or type of animals a person may have to prevent the situation from happening again.

Entry and inspection authorities for animal protection officers will be updated and strengthened. Animal protection officers will now have specific authority in the act to inspect licensed premises as well as places where they believe there is an unlicensed business in operation. They will also have specific authority to monitor the compliance with orders of the director and of a justice.

The animal care appeal board will be established. This is a new, independent body that will hear appeals of seizure orders and licensing decisions. The measures to deal with owners convicted of offences under the act will be strengthened. Fines will be doubled to \$10,000 for the first offence and \$20,000 for the second or subsequent events.

In summary, Mr. Acting Speaker, Manitoba has had the reputation since the passage of The Animal Care Act in 1996, of having one of the most stringent and effective animal care systems in Canada, a regulatory regime that many other provinces have since emulated. The Animal Care Amendments Act re-establishes Manitoba as a leader in the standard of animal protection legislation in this country. Thank you very much.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): I rise to speak on Bill 2. Certainly, we're supportive of the parts of this legislation where to rid our province of puppy mills and other activities such as that. As one who has looked after livestock all my life, the thought of that is really a disgusting thing, so we will certainly support that.

When I was reading through my briefing notes—I will look forward, though, to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) supervising the breeding of hamsters, rabbits and other pets. I will look forward to that.

Seriously, though, there are a couple of parts in this legislation that do concern me, although I have said that, generally, we will be supportive of the bill. It pertains to the livestock sector.

This comes from experience in our area. We had a horse feedlot that was feeding horses for slaughter and human consumption. There's a long and storied history of this operation with the public, with certain sectors of the public, that supervised this operation fairly intensely. *[interjection]* I won't share some of the instances that happened there, but the fact is that the owner was harassed rather strenuously by some sectors who didn't agree to that.

If this legislation, though, is going to open up the livestock operators to some undue hassling, this is more than what we need. If a person is driving down the road and sees a cow or a horse lying out in a pasture, it's my understanding, and I stand to be corrected from the Minister of Agriculture on this, but if they see something that they don't agree with, they can actually report this to their veterinarian or to the livestock police, if I can use that word. Those livestock inspectors can actually enter the premises to investigate this. We're always concerned about property rights. We certainly don't condone any inhumane actions towards livestock, but just where does the line get crossed on this here?

There are parts of this bill that I have real concerns with. It states that an unfit animal cannot be transported except to take it for medical attention or slaughter. As I understand it right now, and, again, I ask the Minister of Agriculture to clarify this for me, but under CFIA rules, Canadian Food Inspection Agency rules, you cannot move what we frequently call a downer animal to slaughter. It cannot go to slaughter. Yet, as I read through this legislation, it says they can be. So my question is, I always thought that CFIA trumped all the rules when it comes to federal-provincial. We need clarification on this. If this bill does go to committee here, I hope to see clarification on that. I know I've talked to some producers who have that concern and who are very familiar.

In terms of actual transport, I would like to tell the House, or inform the House, that the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the CCA as we like to call them, they actually have a code of ethics for the transportation of livestock right now. In there, they have a very specific code of ethics for hauling cattle—particularly cattle because they're dealing with cattle

only—that are weakened and that, and they've been very good at being proactive on this.

I hope as we go through this bill in committee, and go through it line by line, that they are in harmony with what the industry is actually doing. Hopefully, they've listened to the industry as to what is really happening out there. We know that there have been instances in the past, but we know the industry as a whole has been very active, very proactive on this. We look forward to this bill keeping in faith with the industry that has acted proactively on here.

With that, again, I just want to reiterate there is absolutely a need to be able to shut down the puppy mills and the inhumane premises that are operating out there for the breeding of companion animals. That is absolutely essential. As this bill will possibly go on to committee today, we will look forward to input from all industry people and all Manitobans. Thank you.

*(15:30)

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and put some words on the record about Bill 2, The Animal Care Amendment Act.

There are many good parts to this act. I concur with my colleague, the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen); there are also a few concerns that probably need to be addressed. Anything that stops or has any impact on the atrocious conditions that have been used in some of the puppy mills—and some of the stories we've heard over the years in Manitoba—needs to be stopped and needs to be stopped now.

Whatever it takes to do that needs to be done. I think on some of the larger-animal regulations in this legislation, there is some overlap with CFIA. I don't think we need two agencies doing the same work. I think there's opportunity to work out the differences and the concerns there between the two agencies and, in some cases, CFIA is quite capable of handling the issues that seem to be the concern in this bill.

I, as a matter of fact, have a son that is a CFIA meat inspector. They do have responsibility for the transportation of animals and for the general welfare of the animals. They are the ones that check the number of animals loaded in a vehicle; they make sure there are standards on how many animals—they can't be overcrowded. They have to be transported in a humane way.

I know that, at the Springhill hog plant in Neepawa, trucks are all checked by CFIA inspectors as they're unloaded, and appropriate actions are taken when somebody contravenes the rules.

The Health of Animals regulations on handling non-ambulatory animals, say, unloading a live, non-stunned, non-ambulatory animal from a conveyance, or causing such an animal to be unloaded, is a contravention of the Health of Animals regulations.

This looks like it's a case of, maybe, overlapping here and getting into the same area, but if one organization's doing it, another shouldn't have to. It goes on to say unloading a live, non-stunned, non-ambulatory animal in the absence of CFIA inspection personnel is unacceptable. Appropriate enforcement action must be taken.

So those are some areas that, I think, maybe there is some concern. I also think—and I'm going to speak a little more on the larger animal side of things. I certainly agree with the parts of the bill that deal with the small animals and the animals that people keep for pets but, on the larger animals—and that's where some of my concerns lie. In my own municipality, over the years that I was on council in the R.M. of Langford, three times we had to take the same producer to court over cruelty to animals.

If there are regulations which are going into place, that are going to shut that down the first time and never allow that person to raise animals again, I'm certainly supportive of it.

Usually, when an operation is shut down like that, there'd be a time frame put on it. They can't keep certain animals for five years or something like that. That's inappropriate. They should never keep animals again, in my view.

That being said, there is a misunderstanding at times between the general public and the agricultural producers in the province on actually what is considered good animal husbandry. I have heard of cases, and I've seen cases, where there were some concerns from the general public about what they saw from the road, driving by an operation and thinking that it was maybe not good care of animals, and the care was totally acceptable care.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Since BSE hit in our cattle herds here in Manitoba, we've been required—and I do have cattle

at home—by the whole system that's caused us to keep some animals a lot older than we normally would have into basically old age. Some of those animals have tooth problems and they can't get as much nutrition as they need at times and are not in as good a condition simply because of their age. They aren't being treated inhumanely. It's a case of they're animals that should have probably gone to market quite some time ago. Since BSE hit, there are an awful lot more animals that are actually—especially cattle—that are actually dying of so-called old age on the farms. Those are animals that at one time would have gone to market.

You know, another thing that occurs to me, and we've asked repeatedly over and over again, the wet conditions in the Interlake and on the west side of the narrows, is that these farmers, these cattle producers up in that area are tapped out. They're short of funding. They're short of feed. There are going to be some problems in that area this winter on feeding the cattle. The government makes great claims of helping those producers out, but we're hearing from those producers—and I'm certainly hearing from them in my area—and they're desperate. They've got a disaster situation where they haven't got enough feed for their animals, and it's getting to be quite a big problem.

I think, as always, it appears to be a great idea to pass some legislation and we will support this legislation, but the key to any piece of legislation like this is inspection of enforcement. I know it sounds awfully good to make the rules, but sometimes the resources and the enforcement part of it are sadly lacking. So we'll see what occurs along that line.

With those few words, I think I'll stop now. Once again, I am pleased to put the comments on the record, and I will look forward to what happens in committee hearings and we may well be looking at putting some amendments forward to this bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): It's with pleasure that I be able to speak to this bill.

You know, there's been a great deal of media attention that has been given over the years to what we classify as puppy mills. Just the other day, I had seen on CBC a story about puppy mills in—

An Honourable Member: You couldn't have been watching CBC.

Mr. Lamoureux: *Hansard* might have picked that up, you know—puppy mills that were in the province

of Québec and how you have hundreds of dogs being stored, in an inhumane fashion, in these small cages, being starved in good part, and it's just hard to comprehend how people can be so cruel to animals. But the sad thing is, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that far too often this occurs, and it's not just in the province of Québec. It's also in the provinces across Canada, including Manitoba. It was interesting, and the reason why I bring up the province of Québec is that in the story they made reference to the importance of enforcement, and they believed that the problem was as serious and severe in the province of Québec because they didn't have enough enforcement officers going around and doing what was essential to do, and that is to take a look at some of these individuals and their operations in making sure or ensuring that certain standards were being met.

*(15:40)

When we look at this particular bill, the principle is good, and we want to be able to see it go to committee. We support it going to committee. We've got a nice little break that's coming up, and I anticipate that we will get others that will come forward and make presentation on the bill. I know myself, personally, that I suspect that we will see good support for the bill.

But there have been other issues that have been raised that I'm aware of, in regard to animals, that go beyond cats and dogs. The other day, on the way down, on a radio station, there was some discussion in terms of why some animals are being excluded in our rural communities.

So I think that there needs to be an educational component, also, to this. The legislation should in no way harm our agricultural community, Madam Deputy Speaker. So we look forward to the presentations, as I'm sure that there will be a number of them coming to the committee. But, for now, suffice to say that the principle of the legislation is something that we support, and we look forward to it getting into the committee.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I, too, want to put something, as the critic in regard to The Animal Care Amendment Act, on Bill 2, on the record.

We're looking forward to see this moved to committee. As you know, it was first introduced on September 18 of this year, and then re-introduced as Bill 2 on November 24. This bill is a substantial bill

as far as changes are concerned. It not only deals with puppy mills and other pets that are sold and housed within places for sale, or on farms as well.

There are a number of key changes that include the animal protection officers are given specific authority to deal with abandoned animals and stronger inspection and search and seizure powers. The other change is a licence is now required, not just for breeders of cats and dogs, but also breeders of hamsters, rabbits and other pets. The criteria for determining who needs a licence have been changed. Pet stores will be required to be licensed, as will pounds, animal shelters and similar facilities. The director is authorized to keep a register of the licensed premises to make information from the register public. A new appeal process is established with an independent appeal body to appeals about licensing decisions, animal seizures and orders made by the director.

Veterinarians are required to report suspected cases of animal neglect or abuse to the director. The director can issue orders to owners about caring for their animals. If a person has had animals seized before or has surrendered them, a justice may make an order restricting the number and type of animals that the person may have to prevent the re-occurrence.

Penalties are increased for any offences under the act. For example, a person convicted for the first time under the amendment act is subject to a fine of not more than \$10,000, or to imprisonment for a term of not more than six months, or both. A person convicted of a subsequent offence is subject to a fine of not more than \$20,000 or imprisonment for a term of not more than 12 months, or both. The last is, someone convicted of offences under this act could also be subject to a lifetime ban on owning animals.

We have sent out a number of letters to the stakeholder groups within the province of Manitoba. I am pleased to put on record in the House that I have received very little information back criticizing the bill for anything that's in the bill that they find unacceptable.

I do know there are four presenters that have registered to date. When the bill was introduced before, in September by the minister as Bill 48, there were four presenters there as well, and it's my understanding it's the same four presenters that have now registered again to present on this particular bill.

So we are looking forward to it going to committee for the feedback from the public and consultation for those that feel they have concerns about it. So we'll look forward to those comments that will be coming forward into committee.

I know it puts an awful lot of onus on the inspectors, and also on the veterinarians, and I'm certainly looking forward to hear what they have to say. Also, I know that the other concern that came—but they're not presenting as of yet. We know that there's still ample time for others to put their name forward to present in committee, and that's the auctioneers of these various livestock marts. So I know some of them are concerned about downed animals as they come into market, and we know that, in particular with the hogs and sheep and cattle and horses, transportation is the only way they can get them to market other than driving. Those days have long gone.

Sometimes we have animals that slip and fall from the farm to the auction mart. They're perfectly healthy whenever they leave the farm, but for one reason or another there are accidents that happen on the way to the auction mart. Those auctioneers, or auction marts, are concerned about whether or not they will be reported as a result of animal neglect or abuse. Certainly, it would be through no fault of their own as producers, and so I know there'll be debate on that particular point. Certainly, we look forward to that input from those producers and how we may be able to resolve that, if there is a need to resolve it. We'll be looking forward to those comments.

So, with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will see this bill move forward to committee and look forward to the reports back from those various sector groups.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 2, The Animal Care Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered. I declare the motion carried.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to announce, on government business, House business, that the Special Committee on Senate Reform will be meeting this afternoon, December 4, at 4:30, in room 255, to consider arrangements for consultations with Manitobans on Senate reform.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Special Committee on Senate Reform will be meeting this afternoon, December 4, at 4:30 p.m., in room 255, to

consider arrangements for consultations with Manitobans on Senate reform.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, barring any notices of motion or matters arising in the House, I wonder if you might query the House to see if it might be advisable to call it 5 o'clock.

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

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until the call of the Speaker.

All the best in the season to everybody.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 4, 2008

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