

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
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BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
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EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
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GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
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LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, September 30, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Brenda Wieler, Millie Bayless, Elsie Davidson 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.

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by S. Finkel, R. Sigurdson, Lisa Laberge and many, many other Manitobans.

Parkland Regional Health Authority— Ambulance Station

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Adele Baptiste, Mark McDonald and Gwen Hunter, and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Whiteshell Provincial Park—Lagoons

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial parks were established to protect our natural resources and the environment for future generations.

In July 2009 the lagoons in the vicinity of Dorothy Lake and Otter Falls in the Whiteshell Provincial Park overflowed, creating concerns that untreated sewage made its way into the Winnipeg River system and ultimately into Lake Winnipeg.

In addition, emergency discharges had to be undertaken at the lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park four times in 2005, once in 2007 and once in April 2009.

Concerned stakeholders in the Whiteshell Provincial Park have repeatedly asked the provincial government to develop plans to address the shortcomings with the park's lagoons and to ensure the environment is protected, but the plans have not materialized.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) to consider acknowledging that more timely action should have been taken to address the shortcomings with the lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park in order to protect the environment.

And to request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately developing short- and long-term strategies to address the shortcomings with lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park and to consider implementing them as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by Troy Valgardson, Geoffrey Johnson, Naomi Gregoire and many, many others.

Midwifery Services—Interlake Region

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

Women in the Interlake should have access to midwifery care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Dianne Grocholski, Melanie Thomas and Pam Banman and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:40)

Seven Oaks Hospital—Emergency Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by R. Johnson, J. Collins, and J. Grabowski, and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the 2008-2009 Annual Report for the Department of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport.

Also like to table the 2008-2009 Annual Report for the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

As well, I'm tabling the 2008-2009 Annual Report for Manitoba Film and Music.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I'm pleased to table the 2008-09 Annual Report for Intergovernmental Affairs.

As well as, I am pleased to table the 2008-2009 Annual Report of the Public Utilities Board.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Text Book Bureau Annual Report 2008-2009.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public—order please, order. I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Springs Christian Academy, we have 54 grade 9 and 11 students under the direction of Mr. Brad Dowler. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Influenza A (H1N1) School Communication to Parents

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, just over two weeks after the government assured Manitobans that they had the H1N1 planning at hand, we've had, over the past 24 hours, nothing but chaos and contradictions coming from members of the government on a couple of critical issues related to their handling of H1N1.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) said on CJOB radio that, if there's a serious outbreak in a school, that he would rely on the rumours brought home by his children in order to find out what was going on with respect—with respect to what was going on in the school. That is not leadership. It's not government policy.

Will the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) indicate to Manitobans today: Does he believe that parents have the right to know if there's a serious H1N1 outbreak in their child's school. Does he believe they have the right to know?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is, of course, yes.

First and foremost, I want to say to the member opposite, in reference to his question, on all matters concerning pandemic H1N1 and the preparedness, it's really important that we keep the facts on the record, that we keep the public informed and calm. I can let the member know—I can let the member know that we are clarifying today for Manitobans that it has always been the practice for schools to report unusually high absenteeism to public health. That will continue. We will also enhance communications with parents by asking schools and school divisions today to publish unusually high rates of absenteeism for parents to see every day.

Mr. McFadyen: I thank the minister for that response. It is at odds with what the Premier said this morning. It's at odds—it is at odds with what school board administrators were saying this morning in the media. The Premier said, in response to the question: That's what I got to find out; I wanna know whether there's a protocol. He said: I could see either side of it.

Mr. Speaker, it was one contradiction after another this morning. The word from school board leaders this morning was that they were not going to notify parents about a serious outbreak.

Can the minister just indicate what is the trigger that will be used in order to authorize schools, or school boards, or the department to advise parents as to whether there's a serious outbreak of H1N1 in their child's school? Can they be clear about that today?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I will clarify, again, that it has always been the protocol for schools to inform public health officials when there is an unusually high rate of absenteeism.

It is not the place of school principals or school guidance counsellors to do diagnosis or epidemiological analysis. That is the job for public health. They report the unusually high rates of absenteeism which may be different in one school than another, based on many circumstances. When those unusually high rates are reported to public health, they will investigate.

In addition, we are announcing today that we will ask all schools and school divisions, through the school division Web site, to report unusually high

rates of absenteeism on the Web site so that parents can see those rates every day, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, and, obviously, this policy is being developed just in time for question period, but it is a significantly better response. It is a better response than what we've been hearing over the last 24 hours.

The minister has said that if there's different absenteeism levels in a normal situation in different schools, but the issue is when there's a variance from the normal absentee rate, what is the trigger going to be, and will the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), who's responsible for school board policy, stand up today and indicate where the leadership is coming from on the issue?

Will he discharge his duty as Minister of Education to ensure that all Manitoba schools are on the same page, that they're not handing this off to somebody else in the way the Premier (Mr. Doer) was trying to this morning, that he's taking responsibility for schools in Manitoba and ensuring a consistent—a consistent, a clear and a transparent policy planned out in advance, not just in time for question period, Mr. Speaker, but in time to benefit the families of Manitoba.

Ms. Oswald: I do want to be explicitly clear with the member and all members of this House, once again, that when it comes to preparedness and planning for pandemic H1N1, it is critically important that the facts are on the record, not political posturing, but the facts.

So I will repeat them. It has been the practice over time for public health officials to receive information from schools for unusually high absenteeism. The officials in schools know what is unusual and what is not, Mr. Speaker. We are working in partnership, that is education and health and public health, to inform parents, to inform them in the best ways that we can, and we're hearing from parents today that they want that information coming from the schools and school divisions.

We support that. We're going to go forward with that information and keep public—the public informed, keep them as informed as possible, not inspired into fear unnecessarily, but keep them having the most information [*inaudible*]

Influenza Vaccination Locations Impact on Seniors

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): On Monday I asked the Minister of Health for clarification about her department's plans to administer the seasonal flu shot to seniors.

Previously, the WRHA had planned to do mass vaccination clinics, and many seniors in Winnipeg would have to take multiple buses to get to their—to get their flu shot.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, that plan changed. Now Manitoba Health will focus on vaccinating seniors 65 and over and those living in personal care homes, but there still is mass confusion among seniors about where and when these flu clinics will be held, how many there will be and how transportation to and from the clinics will be arranged.

Can the minister tell these seniors today when and how she plans to communicate these important details?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It is an important one.

We know that there was a protocol in place for a mass vaccination clinic of seasonal flu vaccine to prepare for the vaccination for H1N1. Since those plans were in place, data has emerged from a study in British Columbia, still being analyzed through the nation and around the globe. But, in an abundance of caution, we have amended Manitoba's protocol to match many other provinces in the nation, incidentally, so that for over 65 and people in long-term care will be the priority populations for that vaccine and, accordingly, we will amend the mass vaccination plan. Those amendments are under way right now, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to provide them for seniors as soon as they are set. They're still under way.

I'm sure the member opposite doesn't want us to stick with the same plan when a research project tells us that we should change.

* (13:50)

Mrs. Mitchelson: But seniors are just wanting to know what the plan is, where they can go and how they can get their flu shots, Mr. Speaker, and there's much confusion today among seniors.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has said that the campaign will focus on seniors 65 years old and

those living in—over 65 and those living in personal care homes. That leaves a significant group of seniors over the age of 55, many of them living in 55-plus seniors housing, who will not be prioritized for the seasonal flu shot.

Many of these seniors do not have a family doctor. Many that do have a family doctor will have to wait two or three weeks or longer to get in to see their doctor before they can—and before they can get an appointment.

Can the Minister of Health explain to these seniors who are at risk of complications from the seasonal flu, how will they get their flu shot before flu season begins?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, to clarify the release concerning the protocol in Manitoba, it captures, of course, as a general application, 65 and over, long-term care. But listed in the release as well, are those individuals with chronic conditions for whom the seasonal flu shot will be more benefit than risk in connection to the B.C. study. Those individuals will be welcome to attend flu clinics as always, welcome to go to the places they've always gone for their flu shot if they're available, as always this year, welcome to go to their family doctor.

The most important thing here is that the seasonal flu vaccine will be administered by health professionals who will offer professional advice, admittedly in an environment with emerging data is not as clear around the globe as everyone would have wished. So those health professionals right at the arm'side of the individual will give appropriate advice, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But seniors are wanting to know where they can go and what they can do to get their flu shots at what clinics in—[interjection] Well, the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) has said from her seat: She just told you.

Well, I don't know where the seniors in River East are going to go to get their flu shots and they don't know either, Mr. Speaker. It hasn't been communicated by this government or her department. What is the plan? When is the communication plan going to be delivered so that seniors will know when and where they will get their flu shots?

Ms. Oswald: I'll be very clear with the member again. There—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Oswald: There was a seasonal flu mass vaccination plan in place. Since that plan came in place, it has been amended because of a research study that suggests it should be amended. We are going to, in the coming days, when the new plan has been laid out, in a very clear and accessible way, we're going to inform seniors about that change.

By the sounds of members opposite, from what I'm hearing, you know, chirping across the seats, it seems that they want us to give the vaccine to absolutely anyone and disregard the emerging B.C. data. Hmm, seems odd to me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River East, on a new question?

Manitoba Housing Authority Unit Availability

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Yes, on a new question, Mr. Speaker. Heather Kretchner, who is a 30-year-old, legally blind, diabetic mother, who has been sharing a 9-by-10 windowless bedroom with her 12-year-old son for the past six years in her mother's house, has been dealing with Manitoba Housing for over a year and is still waiting for some straight answers from the department, from the minister and from her MLA.

Why hasn't the Minister of Housing, who is Heather's MLA, responded to his constituent's many pleas for help around finding affordable and proper housing for her and her son?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously the needs of Manitobans and make best efforts to accommodate that.

Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that I—well, first of all, I—this was brought to my attention last month. I understand that there have been six contacts with the individual or her mother over the period of time of application, and it was my understanding that a unit that was to meet her needs was offered to her and she rejected that unit.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister to apologize for the comments that he just made that indicated that he heard about this last month, when a letter was delivered, that I will table in this House, to his office personally, directly to him, asking him, pleading by his—by Heather and her mother for him to come out and look at the situation and the circumstances that they were living in.

His own constituent, Mr. Speaker—and they had to come to me because he would not respond to their questions. I'm sure he went out and asked for their vote at election time, but after that he's completely ignored them.

I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, if he thinks it's acceptable for a blind 30-year-old woman and her 12-year-old son to accept accommodation on Furby Street, which is one of the highest crime areas in the city of Winnipeg. Is that what he—is that what he calls adequate housing?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, the member made an allegation that there was no response to this constituent and this person who's seeking other accommodations other than her mother's house, and my answer was that there have been multiple contacts made, that this individual had been offered accommodations in the West End, and she has rejected that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the department is going to make other efforts to see if there's other accommodations available, perhaps in the private sector. But for the member to get up and, of course, typical, take the broad brush, take a neighbourhood that has been working so hard to rejuvenate itself, and stand up in public and make that kind of comment, she does all of us a disservice.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, and I'm not sure that Heather Kretchner and her mother Darlene, who are sitting up in the gallery today, would appreciate the kind of applause that that kind of answer got from members of this government.

Mr. Speaker, Heather's mother was told that if she evicted her she would get priority placement, and then she was told by the department that if she was evicted, it would look bad on her record.

This Department of Housing, and this minister, this MLA responsible, Mr. Speaker, is playing games with the lives of vulnerable people within his own constituency. It's too bad he wouldn't go out to their house.

I'm asking him whether today he will meet with Heather and her mother after question period,

because he's ignored them for four months since he received the letter, and meet with them today to try to find a solution.

Mr. Mackintosh: I just wonder how the member opposite, or any of them opposite, think they have the credibility, Mr. Speaker, to stand up on public housing issues. The last public housing that was ever built in Manitoba, before we came into office, was in 1992-93. That's their commitment to low-income housing for Manitobans. How dare they stand up in this House?

But, Mr. Speaker, there is a need, no thanks to the members opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Mackintosh: That is why we are building 450 new units over two years, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're rejuvenating buildings in downtown and the West End—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mackintosh: —so that our accommodations, Mr. Speaker, are safe and affordable.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Let's have some decorum. Order.

Order. Lets have some decorum. Order. The honourable minister still has time.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, there are 450 new affordable households that are being built. In the downtown there is almost \$23 million being invested to refresh buildings and enhance living accommodations. We're working for people, not—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Interlake Flooding Forage Assistance Program Extension

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I guess that means no.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture's habit of taking a wait-and-see attitude has all but killed the pork industry. Her ditherings are also hurting producers affected by excess moisture conditions like the ones met last week in the Interlake.

Some producers like Dave Ablonski, the R.M. of Armstrong, are going to have to haul thousands of

bales of hay from other parts of Manitoba to feed their cattle this winter.

* (14:00)

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture extend the Manitoba Forage Assistance Program to help producers short of feed supply due to conditions like excess moisture? Yes or no? Stop stalling. Do your job, Madam Minister.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I want to assure the member that this government and my department looks very closely at the situations, and certainly we looked very closely in—at the situation in the Westlake-Interlake area, Mr. Speaker.

Producers are very pleased at the way the weather has co-operated with them. It's my understanding, and especially with those producers, that their grazing season has been extended and their demands for hay have been somewhat reduced.

However, there is a great demand in the north part of the Interlake. My department is reviewing that, and as I indicated to the member last week, I indicated that an assessment of the area is being done to see whether AgriRecovery would apply to that area. And in the meantime, those producers should be working with our staff on rations that they could use in that area.

Mr. Eichler: I take that as a no, Mr. Speaker.

We need a minister who advocates for farm families and who's there for them in times of need. Instead, we have a minister with a wait-and-see attitude on this disaster. Freeze up is fast approaching. Producers in areas like Interlake and Westlake are desperately in need of feed in this time of need. They need to decide whether or not to buy feed or sell off some of their livestock.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: When are the programs going to be put in place to help our farm families? If you have no intentions of introducing a plan, then just admit it. Otherwise, announce a plan so our producers can plan accordingly.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that producers are assessing the situation, and they're making decisions on their livestock, and they're making decisions on their feed supply. We've met with producers. My staff is meeting with producers. They are looking at what type of feed they can have, and certainly, with the harvest that has

been able to be completed, there is straw supplies in the area, they are able to harvest more grasses.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'll stand beside my record and this government's record and their support for the agriculture industry anytime in comparison to the member. Just let him look at the budget numbers and let him look at how much we have invested in agriculture and the programs that we have put in place to help producers, whether it be through AgriRecovery, AgriStability, AgriFlex—all of those programs. We've been there for the producers.

Mr. Eichler: Again, I guess that's another no.

Mr. Speaker, pastures and forage crops, Interlake and Westlake, have been damaged by excess moisture. Fields are heavily rutted and need to be repaired so crops can be planted next year. Restoration programs are needed. Producers need to hear from this government.

What is the action plan? Is it to sit and wait and hope the problem goes away or is this NDP government going to kill another industry off like it has done with the hog industry?

Will the minister commit to extension of the Disaster Assistance program and to the development of program for crop farmers? Again, Mr. Speaker, yes or no? Is she gonna be there for the producers?

Ms. Wowchuk: The member opposite seems to have a memory lapse. He forgets that there was a Forage Assistance Program to repair forage fields. There was a program that this government put in place without the assistance of the federal government, his counterparts, his brothers and sisters. They would not put in assistance to help with the grain fields.

Thank goodness that my—the colleague—my colleague from the Interlake continues to raise it, and through this government, through emergency measures, we were able to get some assistance. There is forage assistance, Mr. Speaker. Some of those programs will have to be extended if they couldn't do the work this year. There has been money invested. And I would just ask the member to look at the various programs that have been put in place for the beef industry, for the pork industry, in budgets that the member opposite voted against every time.

Cattle Industry Feed Supply Shortage

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): The Rechovic, Cayer, Crane River, Meadow Portage area recently received 250 to 275 millimetres of rainfall. That

rainfall has caused severe hardship to cattle producers in the area who have been unable to access fields to produce winter feed supplies for the cattle herds.

What steps are being taken by the minister to address the concerns of the ranchers in the Westlake area of Manitoba?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): As I indicated in the previous question, staff in my department is assessing the situation, Mr. Speaker. Staff in my department is working with the producers to look at their rations, as to what they might use for feed supply. There will be—and I thank the Lord for the good weather that we have, that there is there will be some additional ability to harvest crops and to put up additional hay.

But, Mr. Speaker, farmers will have to make that decision as well. The price of hay is very high. They will have to make a decision as to whether they are going to buy some feed or whether they are going to have to reduce their herds. Farmers do this all the time, just as people in other businesses do. When their costs go up, they make a decision, but we are looking at whether an AgriRecovery program can be put in place in this area.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, Morgan Sigurdson, a constituent of mine who lives at Reykjavik, is short of feed and straw to winter his cattle herd. He's been forced to source both hay and straw anywhere from 80 to 140 miles away from his home. Access to hay and straw is cost prohibitive without the freight assistance program. Morgan says, without the freight assistance program, he'll be forced to liquidate part of his cattle herd.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit today to putting a freight assistance program in place, yes or no?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that there is significant pressure on the cattle industry with the feed supply and the cost of hay this year, and just as other people have to make a decision on their businesses, farmers are going to have to decide whether they are going to buy hay, whether they are going to move hay, or whether they are going to have to sell some of their cattle and take advantage of the tax deferral, and then buy cattle back next week—year.

Farmers know that they cannot pay this amount for hay, at 5 cents a pound or more, and then feed it

to cattle. So, Mr. Speaker, farmers have to make a decision and, as government, we are assessing it, and we are looking as to whether an AgriRecovery program should be put in place, and this has to be done jointly with the federal and provincial government.

Mr. Briese: That certainly sounded like a no. I'll pass that message on.

Morgan Sigurdson is a young cattle producer who was forced by weather-related problems to liquidate part of his cattle herd last year and may be forced to do the same this year. When actions such as this are taken by people like Morgan and many of his neighbours, this not only affects cattle producers themselves, it's felt throughout the community, the trading area and, eventually, the province.

The AgriRecovery program was designed to aid farmers and ranchers who are impacted by circumstances beyond their control. Will the minister do the right thing, stand up for our producers and announce AgriRecovery programs for the Westlake area today?

Ms. Wowchuk: Again, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the member opposite was listening to my previous answer. I said that the federal and provincial governments' staff were doing an assessment of the area. This is a federal-provincial program, and even though—we want to see everybody at the table, but an assessment of the area has to be done to see whether there is a program to be put in place.

But farmers also have to make a decision on the price of hay and whether or not they can keep cattle. The movement of the hay is a small portion of the price, Mr. Speaker. They will have to make a decision on whether they buy hay, but I would encourage those producers to work with my staff on rations and look at what other options there are, because there are other options besides hay that farmers can use to feed their cattle, and my staff is working with—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Marais River Drainage System Maintenance

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): This minister's slaughter plan failed, and so now she wants the cattle people to fail to make her look good for not building the plants.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there's been unprecedented rainfall throughout the Interlake

causing severe crop damage, loss of hay production and damaged pasture land. At the same time, we know from talking to producers that the situation is compounded by the lack of maintenance by the Province on provincial drains. Inadequate maintenance of the provincial drainage system is leading to millions of dollars in needless crop losses, and the problem is not confined to the Interlake.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick). Is she aware that there's a drainage problem on the Marais River?

* (14:10)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite covered such a broad range of issues. I have to take this opportunity to talk about slaughter capacity that he referred to.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite will remember that when we were trying and working with producers to build slaughter capacity, they did everything they could to sabotage it. They would not work with us. We could've had a slaughter—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: —in Dauphin at Ranchers Choice but the members opposite, with their support, did everything they could to see that go down. Now they say, why didn't you do it?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, to build slaughter capacity we need partnerships. We need the government. We need the private sector. We needed the producers. They did not get on board with us.

Mr. Graydon: The question was to the Minister of Water Stewardship, but the fact is she didn't hear the question I guess, and the other minister is rivalling the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) on the failures that he has had in dealing with crime.

Mr. Speaker, the Marais River area residents have faced a number of spring floods, including the flood of the century in 2009. They are prepared to deal with these natural phenomenon; however, when they do get a chance to seed, the producers expect to harvest their crop. The land is rich, highly assessed, fertile, Red River basin land. Their concern is that a two- to three-inch rain, which is common in the

valley, drowns out the crops. The municipalities have done their due diligence. The farmers have done their due diligence when it comes to drainage.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Water Stewardship, today, commit to addressing her share of due diligence on the Marais River drainage problems?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): When we talk about drainage, Mr. Speaker, we can talk about the wild west of the 1990s when it was just drainage everywhere, quite often onto First Nations land without permission, or we can talk about the last 10 years—[interjection] Now, I know you want me to answer, I think—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. I need to hear the question. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. We need some decorum here, I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. The honourable minister has the floor.

Ms. Melnick: We can talk about doubling the water resource officers from nine to 20, which the members opposite call the water police. We can talk about the five water resource officers that are now working in the Interlake. We can talk about the department taking steps to further refine the licensing process by developing a process for the timely authorization of minor works. We can talk about the fact that we announced a new policy just a few months ago around minor works. We can talk about the 21-plus million dollars that my colleague, the Minister of MIT, announced just a few weeks ago around drainage, or we can live in the past, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe this minister has a grasp on the business of farming or her portfolio for that matter. She makes announcements after announcements, but she does nothing. Perhaps the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) can help her out with the math if I give her the numbers that are involved.

According to the petition delivered to the minister by the affected farmers, there's roughly 16,000 acres affected. At an average seeding cost of \$200 an acre, when the water can't get away it results in approximately three and a half million dollars in lost revenues. The farmers know if the drainage is properly maintained they will harvest their crops. The minister must realize that an investment to clean

the drain will cost considerably less than the repeated payouts through crop insurance and AgriStability.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister do the math and commit to cleaning the drain?

Ms. Wowchuk: Since the member has put this information on with regard to the agriculture industry, I want to say to him that we fully recognize the importance of this industry and the value of this industry to the province. Unfortunately, during the member's years—and they don't like to look back to their time in office—but I will remind him about what some of their previous members said, and I think it was his predecessor who talked about how the Conservatives had cut the drainage budget and we—the Conservatives—and they want us now, in our time, to fix them up. We have increased drainage budget, Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: —and we've improved drainage. The members opposite all—have to also recognize that this is an extremely wet year. That's why, when we took office, we put in place excess moisture insurance, a program that they voted against.

This—farmers want to make their money from the marketplace, Mr. Speaker, but when they can't, when there is excess moisture, they have a program in place that we brought in.

Provincial Nominee Program Family Stream Processing Times

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, quite often this government likes to go back to the '90s, and I'd like to remind them that it was actually the former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Premier Gary Filmon that came up with the Provincial Nominee Program. And that particular program—that particular—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, that particular program has been—has been a gold mine for the province of Manitoba. If it was not for that program, we would never have achieved the 1.2-million population base that we have today, in fact.

The concern that we have is that the government's inability to be able to process Provincial Nominee applicants in a reasonable amount of time, Mr. Speaker.

And I ask for the Minister of Labour if she would be prepared to give a guarantee of 90 days for those that are being sponsored through the family stream, where you have a family member here sponsoring someone through the family stream. Will she give that guarantee?

Back in the late '90s, in the first few years of their office, they were prepared to give that guarantee. Will they give that guarantee today?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

I always find it really interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition is always so ready to take credit for Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. The honourable minister.

Ms. Allan: In 1998, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba welcomed 200 newcomers to Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Obviously, some members are not concerned about hearing the answers. We have guests in the gallery, and the viewing public that are very interested. That's why they come down here: to hear the questions and the answers. At least they're interested. Let's have some co-operation here, please. Can't hear the—can't hear the questions, can't hear the answers. Let's have some respect for this institution and for the guests we have here.

The honourable minister has the floor.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Stats Canada report that came out the last couple of days showed that Manitoba welcomed over 13,000 newcomers—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Allan: —and, Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the dedicated team of people—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: The minister is starting, I think, to make my point. There has been a dramatic increase, and one doesn't have to be a brain scientist to understand when you increase the numbers that you should also be increasing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: —increasing the resources at the Provincial Nominee office.

It's not a reflection, Mr. Speaker, on the current staff that is there. It's more of a reflection on the minister's inability to understand that you need to adequately resource in order to provide a much faster, streamlined system that would allow families to be reunited in a quicker fashion.

At the New Democrats laugh at the families that are trying to sponsor, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. I just asked for some co-operation just—only a few seconds ago. That goes to all members.

The honourable member for Inkster has the floor.

Mr. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The families that are waiting, are waiting for months on end as this minister refuses to provide the adequate supports to ensure that they can get their approvals in a much quicker, timely fashion. Will she give that 90-day guarantee today?

* (14:20)

Ms. Allan: Well, as I was saying, Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back just for one quick moment, to the previous question, in regards to who should take credit for this program.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the dedicated staff in the Immigration branch who have been consistently on top of this program, and are always innovative in making changes so that we can still have the most successful provincial nominee program in Canada. Seventy percent of all of the provincial nominees that come to Canada come to Manitoba.

I had the honour 10 days ago to meet with Minister Jason Kenney, the federal Minister of Immigration, when he was in town, and he came to my office and it was an opportunity to talk to him—

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I guess the current minister wasn't around when the program was actually put together, and I can tell the minister that even back then we anticipated that the numbers were going to be growing. It was the first year of operation.

It's the issue of the management of the program and adequately providing enough resources so that we can process, in a timely fashion, applicants for the certificate. We have hundreds of Manitobans today that have waiting months on end. In some cases, they wait longer, Mr. Speaker, here than they will in the country going through the embassy-embassies.

The question is very specific to the minister: Will, out of respect for the family members here in the province, will the NDP government today give a 90-day guarantee in processing the family stream applicants to the province of Manitoba?

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I had the opportunity to meet with Minister Jason Kenney, and we are going to continue to work together to enhance Manitoba's immigration strategy.

In regards to processing times, Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]*

In regards to processing times, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to assure the member that we have an announcement coming up very shortly, and I'm sure—and I'm sure that he would be interested in what that announcement will say. We always invite him—we always invite him to our announcements. We will invite him to this one and he's most welcome to come because I'm sure he'll want to hear all about it when we announce it. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired. We'll move on to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Minnedosa Community Childcare Cooperative

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I hope the House will join me in extending our heartfelt congratulations to the community of Minnedosa on the opening of their community day care. The opening of the Minnedosa Childcare Co-operative on August 24th was a fruit of many years of organization, fundraising, and hard work by the community.

Led by a volunteer board of directors, the day care fulfills an essential service long needed in the community. The co-operative offers a safe and healthy environment for children of the community. The early childhood educators at the centre are trained to ensure the children's education is complete, encompassing physical, emotional and intellectual as well as social growth.

Through the support of the Manitoba Family Choices Building Fund and the community fundraisers, such as Skate the Lake and many others, Mr. Speaker, the community was able to raise the needed funds for the day care.

With the day care in place, the community will be able to continue to expand due to the new economic and educational opportunities provided by the centre. Early childhood education is a cornerstone of preparing our young ones for success in the future. This centre will ensure that a first-class early childhood education is available to the children of Minnedosa, and I would like to commend the community of Minnedosa for making the necessary investment in not only their children but also their community's future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ross Wedlake

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share in this House the outstanding accomplishments of my constituent, Ross Wedlake, highly respected educator and coach. Ross received the Manitoba High School Athletic Association's first Nick Laping Leadership Award this past June, recognizing his dedication to and support of high school sports and his strong leadership and motivational skills, demonstrated by his many years of coaching basketball and cross country.

Ross's love of sport and athletics began in the North End of Winnipeg where he grew up. He started playing basketball at St. John's High School. It was evident that he was a gifted player. Ross then played basketball at the university level where he excelled and gained a berth on the Canadian national men's basketball team.

In 1971, he graduated from education and began his decades-long and distinguished teaching and coaching career, first at Kildonan East then Tec-Voc. Ross recently retired as vice-principal of St. John's High School. He is chair of the Manitoba Basketball Hall of Fame and has served on the Manitoba High School Athletic Association's board of directors and the Council on Post-Secondary Education. He is currently an active referee and is the education representative on the Sport Manitoba board.

The leadership award, created by MHSAA is in honour of Nick Laping, a former coach at St. Paul's and John Taylor high schools, who passed away earlier this year. That Ross was the first recipient of the award is fitting, given his over 40-year friendship with his fellow coach.

Mr. Speaker, our communities are enriched by the contributions of individuals like Ross Wedlake. His work as an educator and as a coach has been important for many young people. He has often said that the most important part of his coaching career was that he got to share it with so many. It's an example we can all use in our lives. Thank you.

Métisfest

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize the overwhelming success of the first ever International Métisfest, which took place from August 28th to the 30th at the International Peace Garden. Intended to be an international rendezvous, Métisfest is a celebration of Métis culture and heritage on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border.

As an inaugural event, Métisfest drew over 4,000 people, surpassing the expectations of the event's organizers and attracting visitors not only from throughout Manitoba and other provinces but also from New York, San Francisco and overseas, truly an international event.

Some of the main attractions included performances by Johnny Sereda, Taylor Dayne, the Riel Reelers, the Asham Stompers and more. In addition to the music and dance, there was a buffalo dinner which garnered rave reviews. One of the key highlights of the weekend was the honouring of Métis veterans on Saturday, recognizing their service either in—either the—recognizing their service in either the Canadian or U.S. armed forces. A Red River cart parade was held as well. The weekend was filled with great entertainment and food, but it was also an opportunity for everyone to unite with friends, relatives and make new acquaintances from across North America.

Such festivals recognize and celebrate Métis culture and its contribution to our history, not only here in Manitoba but throughout North America. This was the vision for which co-chairs Daniel and Roxanne Goodon of Boissevain and Mr. Gene Lafromboise of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa of North Dakota and their volunteer supporters had hoped.

As the member of the Legislative Assembly representing Arthur-Virden, I want to congratulate them and all the volunteers of the International Organizing Committee for their efforts and success in co-ordinating the first ever Métisfest. Their hard

work is what made this event such a success. With over 4,000 visitors in its inaugural year, Métisfest has established itself as a premier cultural festival. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Healthy Start for Mom & Me Program

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, Healthy Start for Mom & Me is an important and successful community outreach program in Winnipeg that deserves to be highlighted. Operating from nine community locations, Healthy Start particularly reaches out to families who avoid or are uncomfortable with mainstream services and experience the risk and barriers of poverty, isolation and other social factors.

Named by women who had experience with poverty and pregnancy, Healthy Start originated from a community development process and came to offer both prenatal and postnatal programs. The prenatal program operates drop-in sessions that provide information and answers about pregnancy issues, nutrition, alcohol, drugs, stress and community resources. In addition, this program offers participants the option of one-on-one time with outreach workers, nurses and dietitians and provides child minding for preschoolers and milk coupons for parents. The postnatal program also operates drop-in sessions, offering mothers and families information about breastfeeding help and support, parenting, infant development, health and safety.

Partnerships with other agencies enable outreach workers, dietitians, community and public health nurses and others to work together in teams at each location, providing a collaborative, holistic approach for families. The program has continued to flourish over the years and now sees between 1,300 and 1,400 women and their families per year.

Mr. Speaker, this essential program would not be possible without the commitment of volunteers and staff. In particular, I would like to recognize the outgoing chair of the board, Ruth Diamant. She was made an emeritus member of the Dietitians of Canada at its national conference in Winnipeg last year and has contributed her time, immeasurable strengths and dedication to the program over the past 11 years. Ruth is now retiring from the board, and though her involvement with Healthy Start will be missed, her legacy will certainly live on.

* (14:30)

Midwifery Program (Norway House)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to talk about the botched NDP midwifery program. In the spring of 2006, the NDP Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) announced, with much fanfare, a midwifery program at Norway House and The Pas.

The Minister of Advanced Education promised up to 10 students will be enrolled in the first year of the program with five students in each subsequent year. But while nine students were enrolled the first year, no new students were enrolled in any of the three subsequent years. The solemn NDP commitment to five students in subsequent years was broken, indeed thrown out the window, as the NDP failed in many ways to give appropriate support to the program.

A major problem was the lack of deliveries at Norway House. The number was six in 2004; three, 2005; four in 2006 and three in 2007. The average was four births a year. It was preposterous to have a midwifery program at a location with so few deliveries. There was a huge failure of the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to ensure there was a viable obstetrics service to deliver babies in Norway House.

So now we have a situation where both ministers of Health and Advanced Education, have completely goofed to the detriment of the midwifery students, the midwifery program and the badly needed training of midwives from the north of Manitoba. The goal of the program, to train midwives from northern Manitoba, was laudable, but to have goofed up the program so badly and to waste the \$1.6 million in federal funding provided to start the program was unconscionable.

The students who entered the programs have had their lives turned upside down and in some cases gave up already established careers to move into midwifery. The minister promised a consistent stream of graduates but failed to deliver. Of the nine students entering the program in 2006, only three are left. The attrition rate speaks to the problems with the program. At the very least, the minister should ensure the remaining students have a good final year, but the minister's—but with the minister's wavering reply in question period this week, even that's in doubt.

The minister promised in March, 2006, that additional training sites will be established in other

northern communities by UCN. The minister couldn't even deliver the program she promised in Norway House and The Pas. There are no additional training sites for midwifery in the north and the programs in The Pas and Norway House have done so poorly that one has to wonder whether they will still be around after this year.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, after much thought, I stand to grieve today on the decision by the government, over its term in office, to eliminate the data base that tracked gang members in the province of Manitobans and Manitoba.

And I wanna give some history to the House in terms of how the data base was established in the 1990s. It was seen, along with many other jurisdictions in Canada and North America, as a helpful tool. It's a helpful tool to track those who are active gang members and to track those who were suspected gang members. And, you know, it's easy and it's apparent to see the value of such a tool, not only in terms of police work, but certainly in ensuring that programs that are being put in place, by any particular government, are either effective or ineffective, because if the gang—if the known gang members on the data base were increasing, then one could easily presume that whatever work was being done by the government, it was not working well enough because the numbers were going up.

In 1999, in this very Chamber, the now Premier, the member for Concordia, (Mr. Doer), then as Official Opposition Leader, asked a question in the House to the government, to the Premier, about the number of gang members who were on that data base. And because the former Conservative government had established that data base, they were able to give an answer. And the answer was that there were 600 active gang members on the data base in 1999 and that there were 1,500 suspected gang members. Of course, it was also noted in the answer to that question, that about 400 of the 600 active gang members were in jail. And so that was an important part of the—of the answer.

A few years later after the NDP had won election and come into government, that number had grown from 1,500 to 3,000 in just a few years. It had doubled. The number of known and suspected gang members had gone from 1,500 to 3,000 in a very, very short period of time. And what was the government's response to the fact that gang membership had doubled in the province under their

watch as government? It wasn't to try to crack down on the gang activity. It wasn't to try to ensure that the numbers went down. Instead, they decided to unplug the data base and to stop tracking gang members because the number had just gone up and up and up under their watch.

And so today when we asked what—how many known and suspected gang members there are in the province, we can presume that there are five to six thousand because of the growth rate that had been happening up until the time that the NDP government unplugged the data base, but we don't know for sure. And it's important because how do we track success if we don't know what the actual numbers are.

And it's important in terms of the relative context of the gang strategy announced by the government last Thursday, where they were only—announced that they were only going to attract 50 gang members. Those 50, out of five to six thousand gang members in the province, would be less than 1 percent of all known or suspected gang members, hardly a dent.

You know, I want to commend the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who last week made an announcement that he would bring back the data base if he were elected leader of the party. And for a variety of different reasons, I suppose, the member for Minto didn't continue on that leadership bid, but he was right in coming forward and saying that that data base should never have been unplugged. And I give him credit in being able to stand up, in contradiction to his own government, and saying that this data base would be a helpful tool, a helpful crime tool. He was right then and I suspect that the member would believe it was right today, that that data base should still be in place.

Unfortunately, at some point over the last couple of days, he took a change of direction. And so we're left to wonder about whether or not the government itself, whether it has an intention to go back and get that gang data base re-established.

You know, almost every other jurisdiction in North America uses this as an important tool to determine gang membership, the trends of gang membership, where individuals are joining gangs, whether or not they've been incarcerated for certain periods of time. You know, it can be used in a lot of different ways.

It can be a helpful analysis in terms of why individuals are joining gangs, but most importantly, it's about measuring success, because otherwise what you have is a government that simply makes announcements from day to day and gives itself a pat on the back and tries to put out press releases and get good media, which did work for a certain period of time for the New Democrats. That's not working so much these days when it comes to crime, but it worked for a while. But you really can't test whether or not those strategies are working. And so, when you hear about programs like the Spotlight program or the Turnabout program or Lighthouses, you know, on the face of it they all sound like they have merit, but then you turn around and find out the gang membership has actually doubled, or tripled, or quadrupled under the NDP government, from 1,500 suspected and known gang members in 1999, to five to six thousand today.

And you wonder, well, what is the value of these programs? What's the value of them? Are we really getting anything out of them when the gang membership seems to be going up and not down?

And so, I mean, I hope that the member for Minto will be able to take that good idea that he had and continue to bring it into his caucus and maybe into the Cabinet in the future and say, you know, this wasn't just a campaign issue, this wasn't just something that I was doing because I was out on the hustings; it's something that I really believe in.

And I know that at the time the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) was supporting the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) in his leadership bid. And so I would hope that the Attorney General, in his own way, was putting his stamp of approval on the suggestion by the member for Minto that this gang data base be re-established.

I'm not sure if that co-ordination was there. I know there are other issues like the police helicopter for Winnipeg, which the member for Minto was opposed to, which I would have great concern about because, you know, the member, the Attorney General, at one point had indicated that he was supportive of having a helicopter for the city of Winnipeg.

And, you know, I thank the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) for reminding me that, you know, that's what the—what the Attorney General said then. It may have changed now because we've certainly seen the Attorney General change his position on a

number of different issues, whether it was the photo radar issue, where, I think, there was four or five different issues about giving out tickets, that the court said should never have been issued, for individuals driving in a construction zone where there are no construction workers.

* (14:40)

We've seen the change of position, originally, on the gang plan, which was sort of announced in June and then sort of announced again last week. The gang data base, of course, was unplugged by the government when the numbers got to be too high and the member for Minto rightly said that it should be plugged back in, it should be started up again.

So, you know—and the helicopter issue, I hope that the member for Minto will come around to the way of thinking of many people in the province and in Manitoba and in Winnipeg, that it would be a helpful tool for police, that it would be something that would help reduce crime, that it would help protect officers and protect citizens on the streets. So we'll see, you know, whether or not the proclamations for the member for Minto find their way into the Cabinet and back into the thought process and agenda for the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak).

I recognize—Mr. Speaker, you're indicating to me that my time is running short on this grievance, but I do want to leave the member, the Minister of Justice, with the strong indication that we need to have this data base re-established.

I applaud the member for Minto; he did the right thing by saying that the gang data base needed to be plugged back in. He recognized it as a mistake that this government had made. He recognized it as a problem that the government had done, and I think that he did the right thing by standing up and demanding that his government re-establish the data base. I hope that he's not looked upon badly in the government for that.

I also applaud the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for recognizing that crime had skyrocketed, and also the former Minister of Finance, who said that the government failed on crime. Those are all good admissions, I think, from the leadership candidates and we look forward to future admissions as the leadership unfolds. Thank you very much.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call Bill 38 for second reading, followed by report stage on Bill 9 and, with leave of the House, third reading of Bill 217 and—and third reading on Bill 217 and 226. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed. The order of business for this afternoon, we will deal first with Bill No. 38 and, if—once completed, we'll deal with Bill 9 and, once completed, we'll deal with Bill 217 and, completed, 226.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 38—The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Right now I'm gonna be calling second reading on Bill No. 38, The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill No. 38, The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, Bill 38 will amend The Addictions Foundation Act to provide the health-care system with better clarity and consistency in relation to the role and expectations of the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

The bill will strengthen accountability in the operating structure of the foundation and make it consistent with the framework in which regional health authorities and CancerCare Manitoba operate. It will facilitate more effective co-ordination of the foundation's activities with that of the regional health authorities and other entities to optimize efficiencies in the use of resources, and it enables streamlining of access to services.

Key points of this legislation are similar to the CancerCare Manitoba. It will enable the minister to give direction to the foundation in relation to the use of any funding provided to it by the minister or an RHA and in connection with the delivery of services. It will enable the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) or Healthy Living to provide grants to the foundation

rather than the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) to reflect current practice. It will require the foundation to submit to the minister for approval an annual health plan unless otherwise determined. It will permit the foundation to manage and allocate its resources in accordance with any ministerial direction, approved health plan or agreement that is entered into with an RHA. It will facilitate board continuity and renewal by enabling appointment of board members up to two consecutive three-year terms. The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba was consulted on this legislation and is in agreement with these changes.

I am very pleased to present this bill to the Legislature and urge all members to support it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to be able to put a few words on the record, in regards to Bill 38, and to start off by expressing some concern in terms of the whole timing of Bill 38, and I don't quite understand why it is that the minister has decided, at this point in time, to try to push—to push the bill, as opposed to bringing in back in June or earlier in the year.

People should be aware of the fact that the minister just stood up just a few days ago, back on September the 23rd, when I first heard anything about Bill 38, where the minister responsible stood up and gave it first reading. And, now, we have the minister standing up giving second reading, and I guess that, in itself, isn't that bad in the sense that give second reading a few days after you give first reading, but what we should be concerned about is that the session, which is expected to end next week, and—who knows what'll happen beyond that point? Will it become a prorogued session? We don't really know. I suspect that the minister has an expectation that this bill will, in fact, pass before the end of—end of next week, and that's where one of the primary concerns that I have with regards to Bill 38 is.

I don't believe it's appropriate for a government minister to bring in a bill. I don't know what sort of consultation she has had with the—with the official opposition. To the best of my knowledge, I don't believe she's had any consultation with members of the Liberal Party or the Liberal opposition inside this—inside this Chamber. And she's expecting us to buy into it because she's the minister, and she's got this idea that she shared with us less than a week ago, and now she has this expectation that she's going to be able to pass the legislation.

And I think that we should all be concerned about that, Mr. Speaker, each and every one of us, because, you know, I think that there is a responsibility that ministers have that go beyond just being self-serving to themselves, and when I look at this particular bill, it would appear to be a bill of significant substance. It's not like you're just changing a word or two. There's significant changes that are going to be happening to the Addictions Foundation, and the minister believes that she can just kind of rush it through the Chamber.

You know, I would be very interested in knowing when it is that the minister, for example, had any idea that she was going to be bringing this legislation forward. Why wasn't there any discussion? Towards the tail end of her remarks, she says, well, you know, we, I had a consultation with the Addictions Foundation and they're in agreement with what it is that the bill—the bill is.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you know if—I suspect that it wouldn't have been that difficult in terms of, as a minister, walking up to, and I don't know the format—if it was a formal board meeting that they had and she made presentation. Was there any dialogue? Did she do any listening? Was there any genuine consultation that ultimately led to the need to see this bill printed in the fashion that it—that it has been printed.

What we do know is that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and the regional health authorities are gonna have a much more significant role with the—with the Addictions Foundation, Mr. Speaker. All of us should be concerned in terms of that. You know, I, and representing my constituents, can tell you that we have a great deal of issues and problems with Winnipeg regional health-care authority and the issues, and their inability to deliver the type of health-care services that I believe that Manitobans deserve. And here we're talking, in particular, of that upper-end bureaucracy and some of the decisions that it has made.

*(14:50)

Well, now, this bill is taking less of that accountability from—or will ensure that there's less accountability for the Addictions Foundation to the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), who is responsible for, in part, gaming in this province, Mr. Speaker. And we all know the problems of gaming—but we'll leave that for a moment—and less accountability to the Ministry of Finance, and more

accountability to the ministries of Health in the province.

And, if this government has proven anything over the last nine years, is that it can spend a great deal of money on health care and not deliver the type of goods that are necessary, that are going to make Manitobans believe and feel that health care in the province is actually improving.

So I think that we should all be concerned about this particular—about this particular bill. And, you know, once it does go to committee, it would be interesting to hear more of a report from the minister in terms of what it is that is bringing this bill forward. Was this just an idea that she had? Where does the idea originate from? Is it something that the Minister of Finance brought forward?

Based on our comments, I don't think the Addictions Foundation brought this issue forward. The greatest growth, I suspect, with the Addictions Foundation has likely been in the whole gaming area, and I don't know that for fact, Mr. Speaker. But I would have—anticipate over the—or I suspect, I should say, over the last decade that the number of addictions in gaming and the problems that have occurred in—as a direct result of gaming is one of the reasons why the addiction foundation's demand for services has increased in the way that it has over the years. And, you know, how is that affected by making the change that the minister is talking about?

You know, these are the types of issues that I believe that the minister should have been making reference to as opposed to reading her scripted speech, Mr. Speaker, when she introduced the second reading. And, you know, that is even becoming more of an issue inside this Legislature. Time and time again we see New Democratic MLAs, whether they're ministers or they're backbenchers, stick to the caucus script, or in this case it was probably the minister's script. You know, and I think that that's—that that is something in itself, and maybe it's being dictated to them through the Premier's (Mr. Doer) office. You know, I have no idea in terms of how it is, who wrote the speech that the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) just provided this Chamber, but I suspect that that speech has very little to do with any form of consultation that was done in the—in the affected areas. I would even question whether or not there was any sort of legitimate debate inside Cabinet.

Where does the bill come from? You know, who's the one that actually initiated the need for

change on this—on this issue? And, given that we're changing the Addictions Foundation's act, one would like to think that it was the Addictions Foundation. But, as I say, when you listen to the minister you don't get that opinion. You know, it almost sounded as if she came up with the bill, and prior to bringing it in for first reading she maybe had a little telephone call, a two-minute telephone discussion with someone that answered the telephone at the Addictions Foundation. That could be her consultation. I wouldn't be surprised, Mr. Speaker, and, maybe it was a bureaucrat. Maybe she had one of her—maybe it might have been Brian Postl that made the phone call. Who knows?

Someone maybe made that one phone call saying this is what's going to be happening, and then, it's, well, they didn't say don't do it. So that means they're comfortable with it; so that means I can go ahead and read my scripted speech that's been provided to me from—well, I don't know where it came from, Mr. Speaker. But the point is is that this particular—this particular bill, in the fashion in which it's being brought inside this Chamber, I think does a disservice to the whole process of how we make legislation in the province of Manitoba.

And I suspect that even if you compare our jurisdictions to other jurisdictions—and there's things that we do well, I must say. We do—I love the fact that we have in, after second reading, we go to a committee stage and public is provided the opportunity to provide input and see amendments that are quite often made in the committee stage and so forth, but there's other aspects that are questionable, and what the Minister of Healthy Living is trying to do today, I would suggest to you, is very questionable.

I really suspect that she would have known about this more than a couple of weeks ago. I suspect she would have known about it awhile back. You know, if, and I hope I'm not giving her too much credit, but you know, if this is the standard procedure, a minister has a light bulb that goes on, and then they bring in legislation, and then two weeks later it's going to become the law, well, that's a scary process. That's a scary process.

Did the minister actually have any dialogue with her caucus colleagues, or anyone? Was the member from Elmwood or any other member actually approached and told about this particular bill? Well, knowing this particular minister, Mr. Speaker, I don't

think so. I don't think that this would have been an issue.

Yet, is addiction an issue in the province of Manitoba? Well, I would suggest to you that addiction is a very serious issue in the province of Manitoba, whether it's alcohol addiction, drug addiction, gambling addiction or gaming addiction, Mr. Speaker, a very serious issue, and one of the leading groups that is out there fighting this issue on our behalf, on behalf of all Manitobans, is in fact the Addictions Foundation. I would love to hear if in fact the minister responsible had any discussion whatsoever within her caucus in regards to this bill.

We know, I believe, they meet on a weekly basis, at least during session. I don't know if they've had any meetings in the last two weeks when she's actually, you know, obviously had it printed and brought into the Chamber. *[interjection]* Yeah. That could be the case; you never know. The issue is that, even from a backbencher's point of view, if you're sitting in the back bench, you do have more of a role to play in terms of scrutinizing what the government and the ministers are in fact doing.

Ministers are doing a disservice if they are taking you for granted, believing that you're going to have to be quiet, you're not going to be able to say anything and the bill's introduced. Now try to raise it in your caucus, and you're going to be completely never listened to because now it's in the printed form and it's inside this Chamber. So it'd be very interesting, and I look forward to seeing any NDP MLA stand up and tell me that this bill was actually debated in their caucus, and I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that we will not have an MLA that has integrity that would, in fact, stand up and say that it was debated in caucus and there was, in fact, a discussion. It wasn't just something that appeared on the agenda saying, here are the bills that we're going to be passing over the next few days where there was actually a genuine discussion, because I can tell you that the addictions issue is a very important issue. It's an issue that deals with phenomenal social consequences, and, for the government to take it for granted and not do their homework, they have done a great disservice to all Manitobans.

I'm not convinced that the minister has done a good selling job in her speech, or she definitely wasn't very convincing to me. I, like others, are quite busy at this time of the year because we're into that session speedup and if, hopefully, there'll be the opportunity, hopefully, the minister will provide

some time before the committee meets ultimately to deal with this bill so that the Addictions Foundation and others will be made to feel comfortable to participate and tell us really what they think about this bill or other related issues because, Mr. Speaker, I think that we should be supportive of the Manitoba Addictions Foundation and recognize the critical role that they play in our society.

* (15:00)

Far too often we see that addictions kill people. Addictions cause issues, such as—or compound issues, such as child poverty, crime on our streets, you name it, any negative aspect in our society, you will find that there is, quite often, a very strong correlation with an addiction.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe, ultimately, that the minister would do a service to this Chamber if, in fact, she were to speak on the bill again and tell us what she knows, even if it's not much more. I think that she needs to tell this Legislature more about where this bill originates from, where the need for the change has come from, to what degree was the Addictions Foundation and other Manitobans consulted on this, or was this just an idea that she had some evening and thought that she wanted to have some sort of bill passed at the Legislature so that she could say that she passed some legislation? Because if all she wants to do is see some bills pass that will deal with her areas of responsibility, there are private members' bill that would have a significant, positive impact in the province of Manitoba.

And I would suggest even the one, the other day, in which this particular government was mocking, in particular, the member from Wolseley, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the fetal alcohol syndrome, and putting labels and warning signs in establishments on alcohol. Instead of giving lip service and trying to pass the responsibility, there are things that they can, in fact, be acted on. And I can tell you, there was probably a whole lot more effort in that particular legislation than we've seen in this legislation, a lot more in terms of accountability and respect of the Chamber and the procedures that legislation should be going through in order to be able to, ultimately, become law in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I'm prepared to sit down but would strongly recommend that the minister make contact, whether it's the official opposition or Liberal members inside this Chamber, and provide a briefing on the bill. At least, let's

provide that sort of a courtesy, especially if you expect this legislation to pass without any sort of genuine consultation or genuine respect of procedures inside this Chamber.

I have a very difficult time in supporting Bill 38, Mr. Speaker, because I, ultimately, believe that addictions is a serious problem in this province and for some odd reason I suspect that the minister maybe hasn't done her homework in bringing this bill forward. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Bill 9—The Social Work Profession Act

Mr. Speaker: Okay, now call report stage amendments to Bill No. 9, The Social Work Profession Act, and there's three amendments standing in the name of the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), and one amendment standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). So we'll first deal with the amendments—we'll first deal with the amendment—*[interjection]*

I have a big correction to make: they're not standing; they're in the name.

An Honourable Member: We all make mistakes, George.

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, yeah.

An Honourable Member: It happens.

Mr. Speaker: That's a huge one, so I'll take responsibility for it.

The first amendment is that we'll deal with the first three amendments in the name of the honourable member for River East, then, once completed, we'll deal with the one amendment in the name of the honourable member for Inkster.

Okay, so we'll deal with the first amendment.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, do I have to move and second these, or do I—*[interjection]* All right.

I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

THAT Bill 9 be amended by adding the following after Clause 6(2):

Faculty of Social Work representative

6(2.1) One of the board members must be the dean of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba or a member of the faculty designated by the dean.

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

THAT Bill 9 be amended by—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: I don't think I had my mike on. Sorry about that. I'll do it again, I didn't have my—

It's been moved by the honourable member for River East, seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo,

THAT Bill 9 be amended by adding the following after Clause 6.2—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It's clear from the presentations that were made at committee on Bill 9, that not a significant amount of consultation was done throughout the community that would be impacted by Bill 9 and it crossed a broad spectrum of individuals and organizations.

Mr. Speaker, it was clear that the Faculty of Social Work had some significant concerns about the bill. One of them, of course, being that they were not included at all when it came to composition on the board and that the faculty has the only accredited program for social work in the province of Manitoba.

And this, Mr. Speaker, was a huge oversight by the government and by the former Minister of Finance, who himself was a social worker. You would of thought that he would have consulted with the faculty at the university before he introduced the—a piece of legislation that excluded them completely from any of the decision making around what a social worker or who a social worker could or should be. And we heard from Dr. Harvy Frankel who certainly—is the dean of social work at the University of Manitoba—who had other concerns beside this.

But, Mr. Speaker, this amendment is here for government to consider. I asked many of the other

presenters that—both for and against the bill, whether they would have any difficulty with a representative from the Faculty of Social Work being on—mandated, as part of the composition of the board. And certainly there wasn't any presenter that I asked that question that said, no, it wasn't a good idea.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping that the new minister will take that into consideration and that the government will consider supporting this amendment. There are others to come, but this one, I think, is a significant amendment that will, in one small way, make this bill, that certainly isn't a very good piece of legislation, just a little bit better.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Oh, okay. I, too, wanted to put some words on the record with respect to this—with this amendment. And I agree with my colleague the member for River East, that—and she, in bringing this forward—and I was pleased to second this amendment.

Of course, what we heard at committee the other evening when this Bill 9 became—came before committee, from a number of presenters in the community—and a number of presenters had very significant issues with respect to this piece of legislation. And we have a number of concerns based on those presentations and, based on some background research that we have done, and my colleague as the critic responsible for this area has done, in her due diligence, work out in the community.

And what we see, Mr. Speaker, is that we believe that there was a serious lack of consultation with respect to this bill. And that was very much reflected in the comments that were made in committee the other—the other evening. And I know the minister was there and the minister heard many of them as well. And I hope she seriously takes those into consideration because I think what we heard is that there is—there is so many issues with respect to this bill that this bill actually should probably be pulled all together. They probably should go back and consult. Do more consultation in the social work community so that we can come—so that people can come together and have their say with respect to this bill, because this type of a bill is a very important thing for Manitoba, and we have no problem with that.

* (15:10)

We want to see this type of a bill come forward, but what we want to do is we want to see it done

right, Mr. Speaker, and unfortunately, once again, where you've got a government—and, again, it was the former Minister of Finance who introduced this bill in this House and, of course, he introduced it quickly. It looked—you know, unfortunately, what happened here is that it looked like he brought forward this piece of legislation very quickly in the dark of the night without consulting really anyone in the community, and he did it because, you know, he knew that he was going to be running for the leadership of his party, and so he knows that, you know, he did this as quickly as he possibly can because, while he's going out and trying to sign up new members for their political party, the NDP party, he didn't want to do anything as a former social worker himself. He didn't want to have to go out and face the electorate and the public and try and sign on a number of his friends in the social work community without having brought forward some type of a piece of legislation.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that when you do these things in the dark of the night, when you do these things when—you know, a half-assed job, or a job that was perhaps not done in the best way, that I think this is the type of thing that can occur, and I think it's unfortunate because, again, I think it's an important piece of legislation that Manitobans would want to see come before it, but what's happening is that—or what's happened is unfortunate the way this came about.

And I think, certainly I know my colleague, again, the member from River East, the critic responsible for this area, asked several people and, if not all the presenters, whether or not they had a problem with the dean of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba being a member of the board, and we didn't see that anyone really had a problem with that. And so I think if there's enough people out there that are in support of this piece of—of this amendment, Mr. Speaker, that I think it's incumbent upon this government to listen to what people are saying out there, and I think there were what?—there were some 20 presenters, 20-plus, maybe even 22, as I recall, presenters that evening who came forward and took time out of their busy schedules that evening and came forward, and I know that there was a nomination meeting on at the time or a delegate selection meeting I believe at the time, but many of them took time away from that to come to this, because this they believe and know is much more important than any NDP leadership campaign that's going on out there.

And I think what's important for us all to learn from this is that leadership campaigns are leadership campaigns, Mr. Speaker, but we need to move forward with pieces of legislation. We need to move forward and this government needs to be focussed on what is best and in the best interest of Manitobans in general, and I think what's unfortunate is that many members across the way have been caught up in the leadership where some of the day-to-day business of governing this province has maybe slid aside, and I think this, and I hope that this is one of those pieces of legislation that has just sort of slipped through the cracks. And I hope, and the minister still has the opportunity to pull this bill if they choose to, to go back to the drawing board to make sure that there is proper consultation that takes place so that a new better piece of legislation will come before this Legislature in a much better form.

In the meantime, we hope—and certainly for this piece of legislation, we hope that they will accept this amendment so we can move forward, and, again, there are many amendments that we have, again, many issues that I think we heard from committee about people being genuinely concerned about this bill. So I hope that members opposite and the minister will see fit to support this—*[interjection]*—that they will support this amendment. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put a few words on the record regarding this amendment. I want to commend my colleague the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), who, not just on this amendment but certainly on this bill, I know, has spent a great deal of time reviewing it, and with her own expertise and her own experience, and also with those in the field who also bring forward their level of expertise. And I would hope that the minister, the former minister, who's operating on the bill would have had that same level of consultation. There certainly is concern among members on our side of the House that that level of consultation wasn't reached, and that there wasn't that same breath and depth of discussion with those who were impacted that you would expect a minister to undertake on behalf of the individuals who'd be impacted by a bill.

So why the premise of the bill may, in fact, have some merit, the implementation of it and how it came to the floor of the Legislature has left us with some concerns.

I do look forward to the minister putting some words—the acting minister, some words on the record regarding—oh, she's not acting any more. She's not—she's the real thing now. She's been fully vested with the powers of the ministry—looking forward to her putting words on the record, in terms of how this amendment will fit in and maybe some of the other concerns that the member for River East has brought forward on the bill.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I want to just say a few words about this, and I want to remind everybody that—or the opposition know that there was extensive consultation as this bill was developed, and we now know that if you read the bill, Bill 8 is a very—is a permissive bill that provides social workers with the—Bill 9, pardon me, Bill 9, wrong number. Bill 9 provides social workers with the right to choose whether they wish to be registered social workers, and it allows the registered social workers to be self-governed.

The members opposite have put forward an amendment to try to determine who will be on the board, and I think, Mr. Speaker, that the more requirements that are entrenched in the proposed act, the less self-governing the social work profession will be in Manitoba, compared to other provinces. The college, under the bill, the proposed college and its members can, through by-law, determine many things, and they can determine who will sit on their board, who will be included in that membership, what education standards will be required for registration, and the level of knowledge and skills acquired through other education and training.

So, Mr. Speaker, we do not—will not support this amendment, because it is putting restrictions on what the college can do, and the college, when they are established, when this bill receives royal assent, will develop the by-laws that they will operate under. And then they will bring those forward, and putting kinds of restrictions will prevent the college from doing what it is they are supposed to be doing in their by-laws. So we will not be supporting this amendment.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): On division, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

THAT Bill 9 be amended in Clause 10(1)(a) by replacing subclauses (ii) and (iii) with the following:

(ii) has successfully completed an education program that the board has approved as being equivalent to one of the programs referred to in subclause (i), or

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

THAT Bill 9 be amended in Clause 10(1)(a)–

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

* (15:20)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, it's clear and we made it clear, supported by some in committee, that this legislation, although we believe it's very worthwhile to regulate the profession of social work, this bill takes the professionalism right out of the word "social worker." And, you know, for the Minister of Finance, who is a former social worker, to bring forward a bill that basically guts the profession of social work indicates that he has sold

out the profession that he should so proudly belong to.

And, Mr. Speaker, we, on this side of the House, and many others believe, and I've said before, that professional bodies or organizations in the nursing profession wouldn't allow people to call themselves nurses, and be registered as nurses, without the academic training. If they only had volunteer experience in a hospital, we would not allow them to apply, and they would not be registered as nurses.

We know that in the teaching profession, that teachers cannot be registered with volunteer experience in the classroom; it's unheard of, Mr. Speaker.

We do know, also, that early childhood educators that work in our child-care system cannot call themselves, or be registered as, early childhood educators unless they have the academic training behind that designation. And, Mr. Speaker, it makes common sense, and we pride ourselves in the province of Manitoba for having the highest standards for early childhood educators, and it's something that we've all talked about as being a positive thing.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we now have the social work profession that's going to have the lowest standards across the country. We're moving to the bottom of the barrel with this legislation, dead last across the country, and if this is the legacy that this government wants to leave, and if it's the message that they want to send to social workers who have worked hard to get their degrees, that no longer are you going to need any academic qualifications to call yourself a social worker, you could have volunteer experience and maybe a little bit of training and you can call yourself a social worker. You can be registered as a social worker.

Mr. Speaker, we have grave concerns about that when it comes especially to dealing with the 8,000 vulnerable children in our Child and Family Services system. We've talked about standards, and we've talked about training, and we talked about raising the level of education and training so that front-line workers have the tools and the knowledge to understand how to deal with the most vulnerable children in our society.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're throwing that out the window with this legislation and saying it doesn't matter. You don't need to be trained. You don't need education. You don't need a certain standard. We

will register you, and you can call yourself a social worker, and you can work with the most vulnerable children in our communities throughout Manitoba without the academic qualifications that a social worker has.

And, you know, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day in the province of Manitoba, when we see this kind of legislation coming forward, and, you know, presenter after presenter after presenter at committee said that they weren't consulted. There are—I don't believe many at committee that didn't say that we needed to license and to regulate, but they said that this bill was ill-thought-out, that it needed more time, there needed to be more consultation to try to find a workable solution.

And, Mr. Speaker, there were some at committee that blamed the social work association, MASW, for all the problems that were encountered, and they were laying blame, not on the shoulders of the government that introduced the legislation. This wasn't the association's legislation. They may have had a hand in developing it, but it was this government and this Cabinet that brought the legislation forward here, and it is their legislation. And if anyone is to blame for the lack of consultation and the terrible process that was—went through to arrive at this legislation, it falls squarely on the shoulders of the government, this NDP government, who talks the talk but can't walk the walk when it comes to ensuring that our professions are upheld and that the academic training that is required to register as a social worker should be equivalent or higher in a province that has a significant number of children in care in our Child and Family Services system.

So, Mr. Speaker, this amendment ensures the academic qualifications that should be there in order to register as a social worker, and there are many, many social workers who have worked hard and studied hard to be able to call themselves social workers in the province of Manitoba. And, with the stroke of a pen, if this legislation passes the way it is today, those social workers will find themselves working alongside of others that can call themselves social workers that don't have the academic training.

It's a sad day in the province of Manitoba when we've dumbed down the profession and when the Minister of Finance, who is a social worker himself, sells out his profession for the sake of a piece of legislation and turns it over to the new Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk).

And, Mr. Speaker, it's unheard of across the country to have the Department of Finance introduce this kind of legislation. Why isn't the regulation of nursing under the Department of Finance? Why isn't the regulation of teaching under the Department of Finance? Why aren't early childhood educators monitored under the Department of Finance? In no other province across the country does the Ministry of Finance have responsibility for the regulation of social work.

So why, Mr. Speaker, would—*[interjection]* And, you know, the new minister sits and talks from her seat, and I know that there are people that have had grave concerns about this that have contacted the minister and said, these are some of the amendments we would like to see in the legislation. Do you know what she said? She said to those people: Go and talk to the opposition; they're the ones that will be able to make the decision.

Mr. Speaker, where's the ministerial responsibility? It's unconscionable to think that this government would try to—and I hope the minister will stand up and refute that because we have heard that people have been told, well, go talk to the opposition if you want amendments; we can't do anything for you.

Well, Mr. Speaker, who is in charge? Who has the responsibility, who has the majority, and who's going to ram this legislation through the House? It's the NDP government who has sold out the social work profession, the Faculty of Social Work, and really have done a disservice to the children and the families that need the kind of support that they should be getting from the Child and Family Services system in the province of Manitoba.

It's a sad day for the most vulnerable children in our society, and it's a sad day for the professionals in the social work profession that have been sold out by this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), the critic responsible for this portfolio and for this piece of legislation, for bringing this amendment forward today.

I think this amendment goes to the very heart of what is wrong with this bill, and I think it cuts right to the chase and differentiates sort of who the NDP is and what they stand for and what we stand for, Mr. Speaker. And we stand for—with social workers in this province because we believe it's very important

that we not water down the educational and practice standards of social workers in our province.

* (15:30)

We know that this type of legislation, again, I mentioned before, is extremely important. We know that other jurisdictions across Canada have brought forward legislation of this nature similar to—or—that—regulating this industry, the social work profession, and we believe that's very important. Unfortunately, what they have done in other jurisdictions, they have not chosen the path of watering down the educational and practice standards, Mr. Speaker, in other provinces.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And we would have hoped, Mr. Speaker, that this government could get it right, but the problem is they didn't, and the reason why is because they didn't have proper consultation, a proper consultation process out there with various stakeholders in the community, and we heard from those people. They came forward at committee. They spoke that evening about what they felt about this legislation, and they had serious concerns with respect to this legislation.

And the problem is, if the government had properly consulted with various stakeholders in the community in the first place, we probably wouldn't be here having this kind of a debate right now. But this happens time and time and time again with this government, where they bring forward legislation without a proper consultation process, then they pass legislation that does an extreme disservice to those that are intended—that it's really intended to help out there. And the problem with this is, not only does it hurt the social worker profession, but it also hurts the most vulnerable in our society and the kids in need and in care in our province. And I think what's important here is that the government understands that if the legislation does pass as is, it is doing nothing but a disservice.

So I think it is in their best interests. It's in the best interests of Manitobans that we take this legislation—unless they pass this amendment today—you take this legislation and you go back to the drawing board and you consult those people that should have been consulted in the first place.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, you know, I suspect that members opposite, you know, won't support this amendment today. But I hope that they will and I hope that they will listen to what various stakeholders are saying in the community, and the

importance of not watering down standards and watering down the education system for social workers. It's very important. We don't do it within our education system. We don't do it for teachers or for teacher's aides or for part-time teacher's aides in classrooms, so why would we do it for the most vulnerable citizens in our society? It makes absolutely no sense.

So I think it's extremely important that members opposite listen to what is being said today, listen to those people out there in the communities who are extremely concerned about this, and they look towards not watering down the educational and practice standards of social workers in our province.

Again, I mention that other provinces have done this. They have achieved something significant for social workers as a profession in other provinces, and they've done it through various ways without watering down the educational standard practices by listening to the Canadian Association for Social Work Education and looking at those—that organization, that is representative of many different universities across our country. And those universities are accredited universities with the Canadian Association for Social Work Education, and these—that's what's done in other provinces. And I think maybe when we go back to the drawing board here, we need to look at that organization and look at what they have done and the people, and the organizations that are involved for the accreditation process and ask whether or not they can be involved in this, because I don't see them anywhere in this legislation as well, Mr. Speaker.

So, again, I think it's important that members opposite look at this amendment, that they look to support it. It's extremely important. It goes to the very heart and root of this type of a legislation. We need to protect the social work profession, and we need to protect those that are the most vulnerable in our society. Unfortunately, this legislation doesn't, but if members opposite choose to support this amendment, I believe we're closer to getting to that goal.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to say to the members opposite that, although they talk about lack of consultation and this being drafted very quickly—in the dark of night, I heard the member opposite talking about—this legislation has been under discussion for almost 10 years now. In fact, if I'm—if my—the information I have is accurate, I think

the member opposite—members opposite tried to—were wanting to bring this legislation forward but were never able to do it, to give the professional recognition to social workers that they very much deserve.

Mr. Speaker—Mr. Acting Speaker, again, I will say that there are several amendments here, and I will say to the members opposite that we do not believe that these amendments are necessary because under Bill 9, the proposed college and its members, through its by-laws, will make the determination. And they will determine, as I said, who will serve on the board, the education standards that are required for registration, the level of knowledge and skill acquired through other educations and training or experience that provides an equivalency, level of competence to register as a social worker.

Those by-laws will be developed and they will be reviewed, and I have confidence that the college will listen and bring forward good by-laws. The members opposite talked about the people who opposed the bill and brought—made comments forward. We listened very carefully, and we believe that most of those concerns that were raised can be addressed through the by-laws, and it is not necessary to entrench all of these requirements within the proposed act because if we do that, there is less ability for the social workers to have this self-governing of their profession that they have asked for. And these people want to be treated the same as they are in other provinces and this is—we are the last province to bring this legislation for professional recognition.

And so I will just say that we do not support this amendment or the other amendments that are being brought forward by the members opposite because it will then restrict the ability of the college to establish by-laws. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Pleasure to put a few words on the record regarding the amendment from my colleague the member for River East. Again, I want to commend her for the work that she has done in analyzing this bill and in listening to those who'll be impacted by the passage of the bill and then responding.

I heard the minister say that she also listened to those at committee and, perhaps, at other places about their concerns, but there is a difference between listening and responding to the concerns that you then hear. Listening is a very passive act; responding is something that you actually do in

response to what others have said. And so it's probably little comfort to those who brought forward suggestions to the minister that she listened. That was a good first step, but she didn't then take the necessary next step to actually act upon the concerns that they brought forward.

My colleague for River East, however, did act on those concerns and has brought forward these amendments. And, I think, she's expressed it better than I'll be able to, but certainly the key concern about protecting the profession and the standards of the profession to ensure that the high quality of education, the standards that are put in place for social workers, continues to be there for the sake of the profession, to give it credibility and to give assurance to those who are relying on the profession that they, in fact, are getting the service from those who have the right accreditations and the right professional and academic experience. And that's important.

You know, I think as legislators, we often go to our constituents and talk about issues related to quality and how we are trying to better things, and I think that they send us here to this House to try to better things on a variety of fronts for Manitobans, whether we're trying to better the standard of education or better the safety of our communities. This is something that's sort of been reversed.

The now-Minister of Finance—I recognize that she had this bill foisted upon her when the foundations of their party started to crumble—but she should have come forward, I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, and been able to put a halt to it because she was starting with a clean slate as the Minister of Finance, and the first question she might have said is, why is this bill before me to begin with? Why would the Minister of Finance be dealing with this bill? And she failed, obviously, on that level of—that check. And then she could have looked further into the bill and said, well, you know, I think that when we get sent here as representatives from our individual ridings and then, perhaps, in ministries that we're here to better things for Manitobans, not to make things worse and not to lower standards, but to really make things at a higher level for the future and for today.

* (15:40)

Also, those who are relying on social workers, I think would—and often they're not able to speak for themselves and they don't have a national advocacy group for themselves, so they rely upon us to do that

advocacy for them—but I think that they would be concerned that there is this, I think the phrase was dumbing down of the—of the profession.

I know that the existing social workers who've gone through the current accreditation, the current standards, I think would, by and large, defend those standards and say, you know, there's an important reason why they were in place, through their experience and actively in the field of social work would say, you know, there's a lot of good reasons why we had to go through these different criteria, why we had to go through these different levels of experience, and I'm sure that they expressed concern about the changes as well.

And so it's not too late. I know that we have set in place a legislative framework, a set of—an order sheet that we are going to follow in terms of legislation, but there's nothing in those rules that we've agreed upon that says that the minister can't withdraw this bill and come back after looking at it again. I mean, there—it's unlikely that the government, even though it might feel to them that they're imploding, the sheer numbers indicate that they're not going to fall in the next little while, and they could certainly pull the legislation and have it reviewed over the course of the next weeks or months, and you know, who knows, the new leader of the party might have a different view that might seem, you know, surprising. If it ends up being the former member, Minister of Finance, the current member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), but he might, if he wins the leadership, or the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), he might have a different view.

I've been surprised at some of the different views that have come forward from these members. The member for St. Boniface, who indicated that the government had failed on crime, the member for Thompson who indicated that crime had skyrocketed under the NDP government. I mean those were great admissions. I mean, they clearly show that there maybe was a change of vision among some of these members.

We had the member from Minto wanting to put the hydro line on the east side before he left the race, so you never know what could change in the—on the context of only a few, short weeks. And so perhaps she'd want to withdraw the bill under that guise to see if the new leader would have a different opinion than the previous leader and then under the previous direction.

So I want to, again, commend my colleague for River East for bringing forward some well-thought-out amendments that were based in consultation with Manitobans who were impacted by the legislation, and I hope that the government, even at a later stage of the overall legislative session, will take the opportunity—you know, I always say it's never too late to listen to Manitobans. It's never too late to listen to Manitobans, and it's not too late for this minister to heed their advice and to change the legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion—adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): All those in favour, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): In my view, the Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): A recorded vote has been called. Call in the members.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable member for River East.

Division

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

Yeas

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Dyck, Eichler, Fauschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon,

Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson.

Nays

Allan, Bjornson, Blady, Blaikie, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Martindale, McGifford, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Selby, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wowchuk.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 18, Nays 25.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

We'll now—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

THAT Bill 9 be amended by striking out Clause 60(1)(b).

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for River East, seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo,

THAT Bill 9 be amended by striking out Clause 60(1)(b).

* (16:10)

Mrs. Mitchelson: This amendment was just a companion amendment to the previous one that was just voted down by the government, and it's a clear indication again that they've sold out the social work profession very clearly and that the former Minister of Finance, a social worker himself who sponsored this bill, has sold out his profession, and it's unfortunate but this amendment really will be inconsequential because the former—the amendment that we just voted on and the amendment that the government defeated, that tried to ensure that academic qualifications for social work were in place, is not, obviously, a priority of this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable member for River East.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Goertzen: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll now move on to the next amendment in the name of the honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member from River Heights,

THAT Bill 9 be amended in Clause 6(1) by striking out "and" at the end of the clause (b) and adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) three board members being Aboriginal persons, at least one of whom is a Métis person; and

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Inkster, seconded by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard),

THAT Bill 9 be amended—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I, like a number of other MLAs from the Chamber, sat through a number of hours of discussion and presentation on Bill No. 9, and we believe that, within the room, that there would've been very solid support for this particular amendment. I was surprised, in fact, that the minister that's now responsible for Bill 9 didn't see the merit of allowing for a guarantee of

Aboriginal persons being on the board, and I would've thought that it was an issue in which the government could've easily resolved, even when we spoke to and had questions of individual presenters from different backgrounds and asked them in terms of what they felt regarding the make-up of the board, it seemed that everyone was quite prepared to see a guarantee of Aboriginal persons on the board.

When you take a look at the social work and the clients of this particular service and the high correlation in terms of the Aboriginal people as a whole and, just hearing the feedback, I thought that there would've been a great support for what it is that we in the Manitoba Liberal Party are suggesting, to have someone of Métis background and others being guaranteed, in legislation, representation, and I believe the minister is doing a disservice to our Aboriginal community by not accepting this. To stand up and to say, well, we anticipate that it will be the case, is quite different than having a legislative mandate that would clearly indicate that there would be Aboriginal persons on the board that's in question.

So I look to the minister responsible to show good will to the Aboriginal community by allowing this amendment to actually pass. Let there be no doubt that if it doesn't pass, it will only be because the government, in whatever wisdom that it's using, decides to defeat the legislation.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the minister responsible that there was wide support for bringing it in in the form of legislation that was there, that was present at the committee meeting, and I believe that the bill would be better by having this amendment accepted and passed. And we, within the Manitoba Liberal Party, would ask that the government respect what we believe Manitobans would ultimately respect and want to see happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I just want to, again, put on—put on the record that we do not, in this bill, want to put too many—get too many requirements entrenched into this—into the act, and then restrict the self-governing body of the social work profession in bringing this—their by-laws forward.

Mr. Speaker, an interim board will be put in place. The interim board will develop the by-laws and, it may be, that the by-laws that they bring forward will address the member's issue, or the issues that were addressed previously, but that will be the role of the college and the interim board to

draft the by-laws and then bring them forward to address these kinds of issues, whether it be the structure of the board, whether it be education standards and equivalencies and levels of education. All of those will be addressed in the by-laws.

So we will not be supporting this amendment because it puts restrictions on the ability by getting these kinds of things entrenched into the act, does not allow the college and the interim board to make the decisions that they feel are the ones that have to be in place to get professional recognition to the social workers of Manitoba.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we're quite disappointed in the approach that the minister is taking to abandon an appropriate representation of Aboriginal people as she is doing. It's just wrong and inappropriate given today's world.

The problems—the problems that we have had in the Child and Family Services—a number of children who are in care who are of Aboriginal background really makes it essential that there be Aboriginal people represented on the board and make sure that we are including Aboriginal people in decision making here.

I think that—I would hope that the member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead) would get up and speak to this bill because his input would certainly be valuable.

But I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it would be a real shame if the government doesn't support this and, because—you know, there has been so many problems, as we all know, with the residential school system. There have been problems since then. I have had to deal with decisions that have been made by social workers without adequately taking into account the cultural background of Aboriginal people, and, you know, I think that that it is—it is vital that the views of Aboriginal people are considered here and people in the Aboriginal community feel included in the decision making.

So it's quite a disappointment. The minister—acting Minister of Finance, is going to make this decision, and so I just hope that there is some coming to reason by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) quickly. But I think it's sad that the Minister of Finance won't, and the whole NDP caucus won't support this.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment moved by the honourable member for Inkster.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we would request a recorded vote.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support? Any members show support, please stand.

No, the honourable member does not have support.

* (16:20)

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 217—The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act

Mr. Speaker: We will now move on to Bill No.—concurrence and third reading of Bill No. 217, The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I move, seconded by the member from Dauphin-Roblin, that Bill 217, The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Eichler: I do want to put a few things on the record in regards to this particular Bill 217. And first off, I want to thank the members of the House, in particular, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), the member from Dauphin-Roblin, in regards to his second of the particular bill, and also the member from Interlake for their amendments to the bill. I think it strengthens the bill and adds the type of change that we needed to make sure that this

bill does, in fact, leave a legacy for that next generation, for those who want to be involved in the hunting, fishing and trapping that is so important to this province as a whole.

And I want to also to just put on the record in regards to a statement that was made by Ducks Unlimited, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Richard Wishart. And in part—it says in his presentation, in part, this bill highlights the important role that hunting, trapping, fishing have played in shaping Manitoba's social, culture and economic heritage that recognizes that this merit inclusion in the legislation of our province. And he goes on to talk about when European settlers and explorers came to Manitoba in the 17th and 18th century, where they depended on hunting, fishing and trapping as part of their trading with the Aboriginal peoples. And then, of course, on with Hudson Bay and the North West Company, developing settlements along the rivers. So we know that the heritage goes back a long way. Also, it goes on to talk about late in the century when the Icelandic settlers arrived in Manitoba. That this ultimately led to the important commercial fisheries being developed on Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, other northern lakes. And today, Manitoba commercial fishing is comprised of over 3,600 fishers who produce 25 percent of Canada's freshwater catch.

Also, I want to point out on this presentation as well, and that goes on to say that the final point I'd like to make in support of Bill 217 is the important role that hunting, fishing and trapping play in educating and engaging youth and adults alike. In the outdoors and through the greater education will come a greater caring for the environment. With increased urbanization, other demographic and social economic changes, Manitobans are spending less time with their leisure time and outdoor activities. Enrollment such as groups of 4-H and Scouts Canada has been declining significantly over the last decades. Indeed, the number of waterfowl hunters has declined by 70 percent across Canada since the 1970s. People who are not connected with wilderness and wild places, are less likely to care about conserving and protecting these viable natural spaces.

A recent review paper by the National Wildlife Federation, connecting kids with nature, concluded that hunting and fishing, like an array of other outdoor activities, have a significant, positive association with environmental attitudes and behaviours of both youth and older people. Time

spent outdoors in activities, including hunting and fishing, is correlated with people developing an environmental ethic.

In summary, the hunting, fishing and trapping have played an important role in historical, cultural and economic heritage of the province since people first settled in Manitoba and it continues to the present day. Hunters, anglers, trappers have made important contributions over the seven decades to the understanding, restoration, management of Manitoba's fish and wildlife resources. The North American model of wildlife conservation, which links grass-roots resources, users to the big-scale conservation programs, continues to function as an integral part in the environmental fabric of this province. People engaged in hunting, fishing and trapping care about the environment and this environment is demonstrated by the conservation and ethic in actions.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that I did have an awful lot of help on this particular bill, and I want to pay tribute to—to John Williams and also Lintott, and the new president, Dale Garnham, and as well as a constituent of mine, Bruce Brunger, who also had talked to me about this particular bill that I brought forward back in November of 2008.

I think it's important to realize how important that the example that we set for our next generation in regards to hunting and fishing and trapping be carried on in a sustainable manner, that not only just protects the environment, but ensures that environment is to be there for them to enjoy in the future years.

So, with that, we look forward to passing this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It is my pleasure to rise to speak in support of this bill and to speak in a spirit of co-operation, which is not always the case when I address this Chamber and members opposite, but I think it's noteworthy that the majority of times we agree in this House on issues and the vast majority of legislation that comes through this Chamber is passed unanimously. So this will be an example of that today, I hope.

I'm in favour of this bill because I have a strong personal tie to hunting, fishing and trapping. I own a fishing lodge up in northern Manitoba. I'm an active hunter, and, in my youth, did some trapping as well. So I've grown to appreciate the value of these activities, not only from a physical activity

perspective, but also from a healthy foods perspective and from the appreciation of the natural landscape that I've acquired over the years. I might add that these activities also instil a lot of natural skills in people when it comes to things like wilderness or winter survival, that a person's experience in these activities could save that person's life.

So I would like to focus on the importance of enshrining these rights in legislation. And I know I raised a few of these points in committee when I spoke, but I think they bear repeating here.

From a hunting perspective, for example, it's said that about 10 percent of our population hunt, about 10 percent of our population are adamantly opposed to hunting, 80 percent of our population are largely ambivalent to this activity, but they can be mobilized either for or against it with public pressure. So—and I look to, for example, the spring bear hunt in Ontario. There was a strong public push against it, and, ultimately, the province made the decision to ban it, which, I think, was a mistake.

We did not follow suit here in Manitoba. We did our research and we learned that the spring bear hunt plays a positive role. But I compare that to our ban on the penned-hunting industry, which we did when we came into office in 1999. This was one of the first three acts that passed through the Legislature, and I compare those two. Either one of them could have mobilized that 80 percent against the activity of hunting, so I think it's very important that we enshrine this so that future generations will have to take this to account should they ever come after either one of—either of these industries.

I look to the trapping industry and the impact that the green movement in Europe has had on this industry. And I know that these people probably had, you know, probably had good intentions toward, you know, basing their activities, but the result was that trapping was falsely maligned in the international arena, and, as a result, the price of furs plummeted and the impact that this has had on our Aboriginal people is very evident today.

Aboriginal people—these were their activities, fishing, hunting and trapping. It was a good source of income for them. Some of my ancestors were—well, they were Aboriginals, some of them, and others were Hudson Bay fur traders. So this is an industry that goes back in my family for hundreds, if not thousands of years, and to see Aboriginal people today without having trapping as a base of their, of

their income, certainly, what happened in Europe was poorly thought out, I think.

* (16:30)

So I would like to speak just briefly on the amendment that I made. I know that the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) had good intentions when he drafted this, but there was a slight issue with the wording, which we covered off with the amendment so that what is enshrined in our Constitution, which is supported by what was written in The Interpretation Act, that there was no ambivalence whatsoever in this legislation. So the amendment made the language between this act, the Constitution Act, The Interpretation Act, consisted across the board, and it is no threat whatsoever to the Aboriginal right to hunt, fish or trap.

So, with those few words, I'll conclude by saying, it's my pleasure today to speak in favour of the bill put forward by the honourable member for Lakeside. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we support this bill to recognize the traditions of Manitoba which go back many years, and we also recognize in doing this that some of the people who come from a culture of hunting and fishing and trapping have made major contributions to stewardship and conservation. And certainly, historically, people who have been engaged have often been those who have been most concerned about the survival of species, caribou and so on, on which they have relied.

And I would speak specifically to one of the people who was an early champion of conservation in North America, and that would be Aldo Leopold. He was a hunter and, I think, probably a trapper, certainly a fisher, and you know, yet and out of his experience, he grew an understanding of the importance of conservation. And there have been many, many who have followed in that tradition, and it is important that we not forget the work of people in this area in terms of the stewardship.

Certainly, there have been many people who were involved in the effort at Oak Hammock Marsh who themselves—they're hunters or fishers or trappers and that I think all of us can acknowledge that the Oak Hammock Marsh has been a significant contribution to wildlife in Manitoba and to people in Manitoba, and it's another example of what we need to be doing in at least recognizing traditions that have gone on in our province for many, many years.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before us is concurrence and third reading of Bill No. 217, Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act.

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

Bill 226—The Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day Act

Mr. Speaker: Now I will call Bill No. 226, The Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day Act.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Steinbach, that Bill 226, The Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day Act, be reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Minnedosa, seconded by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill No. 226, The Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased today to rise and speak again to Bill 226, which establishes October 15th of every year as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day.

This bill is not about reminding families who have lost a baby through miscarriage, stillbirth or shortly after birth. Families who have suffered from a miscarriage or a death of a baby need no reminding. For many of them, not a day goes by where they do not think about their loss. Time goes—does not necessarily heal all wounds, and some wounds simply never heal. However, I hope that by establishing a Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day, we can help ease the pain that these families suffer.

None of us in this House can presume to know what is best for someone else in a particular situation, but I can speak to the experience—the experiences shared by the women, the men, the grandfathers, the grandmothers, who I've met with and who have told me that what they need is understanding. They need friends and family to be comfortable and speaking to them about their pain

and their grief, and that is the objective of this bill. By establishing pregnancy and loss awareness day, we do exactly what the name says: we raise awareness. We share these families' pain—share in these families' pain and make a statement that there is no shame in it.

Each year in Manitoba, many families suffer the heartbreaking loss of a pregnancy through miscarriage, stillbirth or during delivery. In other cases, a newborn's short life ends before they even leave the hospital. These losses can be a source of tremendous grief for parents and families. After losing a baby, everything changes, Mr. Speaker. A day to commemorate these losses and to acknowledge the grief these families face will help to build awareness, establish support, and most importantly, help those families heal. Even the shortest of lives have a profound impact on parents grieving a loss. This grief is especially difficult because we don't always know how to grieve the loss of someone we never got the chance to know very well.

The last time I rose in this House, I spoke to the perception that exists in society sometimes, when it's considered unhealthy or morbid to grieve this loss. And it was stated very, very elegantly and passionately by Brenda Brand, Brenda Brand from Portage who said: We are much more educated about science and math, hard facts, than we are about the nuances of providing emotional support in uncomfortable situations. By establishing Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day, I hope we can change that attitude towards recognition and support. A miscarriage or stillbirth is always a tragedy to the person experiencing it, and just as we would not presume to tell someone how to grieve the loss of a parent, a sibling, a friend, we cannot presume to tell someone the right way to grieve the loss of a baby who perhaps lived only a few hours or a few days. But Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day is about—more about acknowledging and trying to understand this grief. It's also about celebrating the lives of these babies, which were tragically cut short, but were a source of joy for parents and families for however brief a time.

As I mentioned when I spoke to this bill briefly, if a similar day of remembrance has been observed on October 15th in New Brunswick since 2005 and most U.S. states, by passing this bill, Manitoba will be a leader among other provinces in creating a day of remembrance in support to the families that have

lost—have lost someone this way. In many places, events are held to commemorate October 15th.

In 2007 in Manitoba, A Walk to Remember was held here for the first time in Winnipeg. This weekend will be the third annual walk taking place, and I am just excited about the people that are organizing this because they'll have something extra special to celebrate and to recognize.

I want to take a moment to pay tribute to some of the courageous women and organizations who brought this issue to my attention, to the men, to the grandparents, to the grandfathers who encouraged me to bring this legislation forward.

I want to thank Brenda Brand and Colleen Johnson for their powerful presentations at committee; they were few, but they were mighty, Mr. Speaker. The presentations that they provided gave a personal perspective on the challenges and the—and the pain that they feel as family in dealing with such a painful, painful loss. They both shared personal experiences, each different but very similar in many ways, and I think that their presentations were very, very powerful and will never be forgotten.

*(16:40)

I'd like to thank Janice Desjarlais, the woman behind Heaven's Little Angels. As I mentioned when I spoke to this bill before, Heaven's Little Angels is a registered charity in Winnipeg that exists to help eligible families to fund funerals and monument costs for babies. Janice has since moved to New Brunswick, but I thank her for her efforts and for her sharing her story with me.

I want to commend the front-line workers, health-care professionals, counsellors, spiritual care advisers in hospitals and others who deal with this kind of tragedy every day and provide support and understanding to parents and families grieving the loss of a baby. I know that they treat every family as an individual and act with compassion, and I thank them for their work. It takes a special kind of person to deal with these tragedies day in and day out.

A significant amount of time specifically has been devoted to revamping the mementos and memory-making processes and place for situations of stillbirth and neonatal deaths and as well as miscarriages which support individuals who belong to organizations. They take the time to go into health-care centres and actually make sure that families who have lost a child receive some type of memento that will be a remembrance of their, of

their loss, of their child—places like the Compassionate Friends of Portage la Prairie, or Portage Plains, who have provided many little extras to help families, such as little memory boxes for miscarriages and other symbolic objects and poems, anything that can be used to help remember their lost, their lost child.

I want to finally say that I want to pay tribute to the moms and dads and families that have suffered a loss of a baby. Many have suffered in silence; others have openly shared their stories. But all have suffered real and deep wrenching grief, and I just want to acknowledge their strength. After a life is lost, all we can do is help with the healing process. Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day is about paying tribute to the memories of these babies and the enduring love their parents, grandparents, siblings, friends and family extended; otherwise, we'll always feel.

In closing, I would like to just share a brief poem by LisaMarie Emerle called "I'll Never Know": "How do I say goodbye . . . when I didn't get to say hello? / I want so bad to keep you . . . how do I let you go? / I have so many dreams, so much love I want to share / There's nothing I can do . . . why is life unfair? / You're my perfect angel . . . I dreamed you long ago / I never got to hold you but it breaks my heart to let you go / The pain and confusion I feel inside / I cannot explain . . . I cannot describe."

I hope all members of the Legislative Assembly—I want to thank all the members of the Legislative Assembly for supporting this legislation. I look forward to commemorating Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day, this October 15th, in Manitoba, and I want to thank everybody for their support and comments on this very, very important piece of legislation. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I want to, first of all, thank my colleague for bringing forward this bill, which I think is important to many Manitobans who we'll never know but who have their individual stories. I have my own story.

Today is actually the third birthday of my son, Malachi. So I'm hoping that we don't go too long so that I can go home and celebrate with him. But prior to that and some members of the Chamber will know that my wife, Kim, and I had some difficulty having a child, and she suffered—we suffered a number of different miscarriages which were difficult both for her and for me and for our family.

And one of the things that I discovered through that process is there are so many people who've had a similar sort of experience who never talk about that experience. Because we are public figures in our constituency and because these challenges were becoming somewhat known in the community, we did—we were quite open about those difficulties and about the loss that we were suffering and the difficulty that it was causing us in our family. And it was amazing to see how many people came to us with similar stories, and often they would say, you know, we've never spoken about this before, about the miscarriages that we had in our own family, and we're glad that you've talked about it because it's given us some ability to talk about it. And you could tell, in speaking with them and in sharing our mutual pain and in sharing the mutual loss that we had that it was very deep, that it was difficult for people to talk about, that there was, for reasons that I can't explain, some sense of shame or some sense of reason why people didn't want to speak about it, but when they met somebody else who'd gone through the same thing, they were much more open to speak about their own grief and were glad for the opportunity to speak about their own grief.

And so my colleague has provided some notes for me, and, of course, I'm speaking from the heart and not from the notes, but she did mention in there about how it's important that this is about raising awareness, and I think—and also opening the door for others to speak about their experience. I think before my wife and I went through our experience, there were probably many situations where I was either insensitive or unaware of some of the challenges that others were facing and didn't have the sensitivity that I should have, and only having lived through our own personal family experience that I gained that sense—that I gained that sensitivity. And so, hopefully, this day in October that will mark an awareness day will help others who, thankfully, have never gone through the loss of a child, either through miscarriage or through an early infant death, to gain some of that awareness that many of us have gained through difficult circumstances.

And I am proud to have been able to second this bill, not on my own behalf and not because of the challenges that my wife, Kim and I experienced and our family experienced, but really on behalf of all those Manitobans who have had this loss, but, for whatever reason, never felt they could come forward and speak openly about it, so that they would know that there is no shame in what's happened, that many

of us share that loss together, and that I think that regardless if we've had that personal experience, that as a collective whole as Manitobans, that we all embrace each other and say we recognize that loss and we're aware of it. And today, we'll be able to now, because of this bill, in the future, we'll be able to recognize that loss in a very formal way.

So I appreciate the fact that my colleague, the member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), has a heart for this and many other issues and has brought it forward, because it certainly has touched me and will touch us in the future, and many other Manitobans. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise, Mr. Speaker, just to add my support to the bill brought forward by the member from Minnedosa. I think this is an important measure and it recognizes the significance of loss of a child very early on, and as a pediatrician who's had to deal with families in such circumstances, that, I think, is a tribute to all those who've been involved in bringing this forward, and it will be an important measure. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill No. 226, The Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day Act.

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

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, I think it should—could be noted that the bill passed unanimously, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, it will be noted that the bill passed unanimously.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I wonder if leave to call it 5 o'clock, Mr. Speaker.

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

Okay. The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, September 30, 2009

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