

Second Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

Vol. LV No. 16 – 1:30 p.m., Monday, March 8, 2004

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
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MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
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ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
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ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
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SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 8, 2004

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

International Women's Day

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

Mr. Speaker, every year, on March 8, women and men from around the world gather in celebration of International Women's Day to celebrate women's achievements and renew their commitment to the challenges that lie ahead. International Women's Day, as you know, has its roots in the labour strikes that took place March 8, in both 1857 and 1908, in New York City, where women workers protested exploitative, dangerous working conditions. Their cry was for bread and roses, bread symbolizing economic security for women and their families and the roses symbolizing a better quality of life.

This Government has moved on many fronts to improve the living conditions for women and their families. For example, the Province has joined with Status of Women ministers across the country to promote awareness of the overall situation of Aboriginal women in Canada, particularly their vulnerability to violence on and off reserve.

In September 2003, ministers responsible for the Status of Women directed the establishment of a working group of senior officials to develop a plan of action and to guide the work in this very important area.

As well, in January of this year, the Province restored the full National Child Benefit Supplement to all low-income families with children under the age of 18 in Manitoba. This puts \$13.7 million more in the hands of families with low incomes, the majority of which are headed by women.

In addition, we have one of the best early childhood education programs in the country due in large

part to our early childhood educators. This Government continues to support these educators, as can be seen in the most recent improvement in salaries for child care providers.

* (13:35)

On this day, I believe it is important for us to celebrate International Women's Day by showing gratitude to the trailblazers of the past and present by honouring their hard work and tenacity which helped to make our lives today possible. Women such as Grace Easter, who helped establish the Manitoba Indian Nurses' Association; Jean Folster, of Norway House, who became the first woman chief in Manitoba; Dr. Shannon McDonald, physician with the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada and one of the driving forces behind reshaping Aboriginal health care in Manitoba; Elder Gladys Cook, who helped establish the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program; and Crystal Laborero, the first Aboriginal woman to chair at the Women's Advisory Council.

This year, Mr. Speaker, in recognition of International Women's Day, the Government hosted a reception honouring women in Manitoba. This year's theme will emphasize the many varied and diverse contributions made by Aboriginal women. Manitoba women have always been in the forefront of change in our country. On this International Women's Day, I believe it is important for us to take a moment to remember that, although much progress has been made with respect to women's full equality, challenges still lie ahead.

Today I would ask all members to join me in renewing our commitment to women in Manitoba. Thank you.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I am pleased to rise and put a few words on the record about International Women's Day which is marked today, as well as International Women's Week, which is celebrated from March 7 to 13.

International Women's Day is an opportunity to celebrate women and their remarkable achievements and contributions to society. At the provincial level,

this year's events are focussing on the accomplishments of Aboriginal women in Manitoba. One need look no further than the appointment last fall of Crystal Laborero as the chair of Manitoba's Women's Advisory Council and the first woman in this position. She brings a wealth of experience and ideas to the position, and she is dedicated to enhancing opportunities for Manitoba women.

Some of us had the opportunity to attend today's event in the rotunda which featured a number of displays on matters such as domestic violence, education, health and work-related issues. I must say that I find it interesting that at a time when we are acknowledging Aboriginal women's significant contributions to Manitoba's society, this Government is waffling with respect to protecting the health of Aboriginal women who might be employed in casinos in First Nations communities. I hope they will review their stand with respect to this issue.

There are a number of other issues we are debating this session with respect to women and families such as The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act. This legislation, coupled with initiatives such as the Family Violence Intervention Program in the city of Winnipeg, is integral in helping women and families in need. It is critical that we support programs such as the Family Violence Intervention Program which has played an important role in helping women and families escape the cycle of domestic violence.

At the national level, the theme for this year's International Women's Day event is She Is On A Roll, in recognition of the tremendous accomplishments that women from all walks of life have achieved both close to home and at the international and national levels. I am pleased to see a wide variety of events taking place around the province to mark International Women's Day.

Mr. Speaker, some of the events include a variety of guest speakers at the University of Manitoba, sponsored by the U of M Women's Centre, a care shop for women in Steinbach that is being organized by 14 community organizations, a celebration dinner in Portage la Prairie's Art Council and, of course, today's events at the Legislature. These are a few of the events being marked in Manitoba in conjunction with International Women's Day and

International Women's Week. Please forgive me for those events I have neglected to mention.

Last Thursday I had the pleasure of attending the Women of Distinction Awards in Brandon, and it is always impressive to see the resumes of the nominees, especially the young women of distinction whose resumes are clearly something to be admired and appreciated. These women come from the broad range of life experiences, yet they share a common purpose to helping others. All our lives are enriched because of their efforts. I would like to thank all of the nominees and the recipients for their ongoing contributions.

In closing, I would like to encourage each and every one of us to take a moment to acknowledge the extraordinary women in our lives and the contributions they have made towards improving our society. Though they seek not recognition, we owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:40)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I request leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to International Women's Day, and I am pleased that this year there is a focus on Aboriginal women and the contributions that Aboriginal women have made to our life in Manitoba. A number of Aboriginal women have been mentioned so far. I will mention several others because I think there is a very broad spectrum of contributions that have been made by Aboriginal women to Manitoba society.

I would mention, for example, the work of Mary Richard in the development of Thunderbird House and in looking at Aboriginal needs in an urban setting.

I would mention the work of Southern Grand Chief Margaret Swan who has been a steady and

forceful advocate for the role of women and the issues of women in the Aboriginal community.

I would mention Myrle Traverse, who has been working very hard to bring together the traditional knowledge and western science and bridge these two in ways that can be very helpful to all of society. Myrle has served on the Clean Environment Commission. She was part of the Lake Manitoba task force which gave a report recently, and she has been recognized for her contributions not only in Manitoba but internationally.

I would also mention people like Mary Lou Bourgeois, who ran as a Liberal candidate in the last provincial election and continues to exercise her commitment to the people in the area, going back and helping clean up graffiti and other problems in the area which had not been attended to.

So, at a wide range of levels, Aboriginal women have contributed to our society in Manitoba and will continue to do so, and it is fitting that we recognize their contributions today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 29—The Public Trustee Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 29, The Public Trustee Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le curateur public, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: This deals with the role of the Public Trustee as litigation guardian for minors in unrepresented estates.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us Jeanette Bergmann, who is the guest of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

Also in the public gallery we have from Champlain School 18 Grades 5 and 6 students under the

direction of Ms. Ellen Cook. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh).

Also in the public gallery we have with us today second-year journalism students from Red River College.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Construction Industry Wages Act Review

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of talk recently about the pending floodway expansion. In a radio interview, comments from the Manitoba Floodway Authority CEO, Mr. Ernie Gilroy, suggested that a political decision has already been made to impose a master labour agreement on the project.

* (13:45)

Mr. Speaker, if the goal of this Government is to increase the wages of construction industry workers and create a level playing field, then the way to do that is by opening up The Construction Industry Wages Act and, after public input, make the necessary changes.

Considering the act has not been reviewed in about a decade, and since opening up of the act will allow for proper debate and discussion that will lead to improved wages for all construction industry workers, will the Premier (Mr. Doer) agree to open up the act?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, since the member referenced his question in terms of discussions involving the floodway, to put on the record that we have had a great deal of experience in this province with major projects. Going back to the Duff Roblin period in terms of hydro construction that has been based on the model that the Leader of the Opposition is referencing, indeed, the floodway authority has made it very clear that they have been looking at that type of model. In fact, one of the key goals of that is to try and attain the same kind of

stability throughout a very major construction project, \$660 million, that we have seen in terms of hydro development.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is also important to put on the record that that kind of model has also resulted in very cost-effective construction. I look at the Limestone—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Red River Floodway Expansion Master Labour Agreement

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, if there was true interest in the wages of all construction workers, he would not be so selective in just cherry-picking and ensuring that those who just work for the floodway expansion are the ones that can be affected. He would open up the act for all construction industry workers.

Will this Government just admit that a master labour agreement for the floodway expansion to ensure the project is using only unionized workers, because that would result in millions of dollars of new union dues? Will this minister or any minister on that side commit to scrapping plans to a master labour agreement, or is this his way of publicly funding the floodway expansion to pay back his union bosses by filling their pockets with union dues?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, if there is any doubt just how far this Opposition has moved to the right, it is the fact that they cannot even agree with what was good enough for Duff Roblin in the 1960s.

The model that is being discussed has everything to do with getting stability, getting predictability, getting the job done. I think the members opposite might want to ask questions about the floodway itself because it is indeed a very important project. We are going to get it built and we are not going to listen to the right-wing ideology which seems to be getting the Leader of the Opposition in some trouble even in his own party. Those days that kind of rhetoric is gone.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that when we ask for a level playing field for all

construction industry workers, which is the right thing to do, then this Government should do the right thing and open up the act. A master labour agreement ensures that those companies, those non-unionized companies, of which there are 95 percent or so according to the industry standards, there is about 95 percent that are non-unionized, they somehow will either be forced under this Doer government to become members of the union or somehow not be able to bid on a very important project in Manitoba.

This is hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. If the Government really wants to ensure that all construction industry workers across Manitoba, if there is a level playing field, then simply open up the industry construction act. That is the right thing to do. By introducing this kind of agreement, this master labour agreement, it is ensuring that there are more union dues for union bosses and the bottom line is that the floodway should be built at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayers. Not about union bosses.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, let us put aside the right-wing rhetoric from the member opposite who ran in the election on right-to-work legislation. We know that any issue they get a chance to talk about involving labour will get into the same stale rhetoric, but it worked for the Roblin administration. It has worked as a model in the sixties, seventies, eighties and nineties in terms of hydro.

It is a cost-effective model. Those discussions are ongoing between the floodway authority and contractors and workers, so let us not get into that kind of rhetoric. We are going to build the floodway, and we are going to build it in a cost-effective way for all Manitobans.

* (13:50)

Manitoba Hydro Rate Increase

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Last spring, despite the Doer government's unprecedented raid of over \$200 million from Manitoba Hydro, the Premier was firm that rates at Manitoba Hydro would remain frozen. That was pre-election talk.

We now see that Hydro is seeking a residential rate increase of 7.5 percent over the next two years. Can the Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) explain why rates of Manitoba Hydro, our residential rates, are

increasing by 7.5 percent when just a few short months ago, and just prior to the election, both he and the Premier indicated rates were frozen and there would be no increase?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Well, Mr. Speaker, last spring at this time we had not had the lowest water flow in history since 1940. So the primary reason is we had hoped the drought that had begun the year before would ease off and we would have sufficient revenues and sufficient reserves to see us through that low period and still maintain our debt ratios, our target ratios, that are set by the Public Utilities Board and by the Crown Corporations Council.

We have also absorbed, during the last 12 years of no increases on the commercial side and 7 years of no increases on the residential side, we have absorbed 26 percent of inflation by the productivity of the corporation and by the robust exports. Those are the reasons we have had to seek a rate increase. It will still allow us to have the lowest public rates in North America.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, it has been the policy of Manitoba Hydro to ask for moderate rate increases that are lower, or less than the rate of inflation. Will the minister simply admit to Manitobans that Manitoba Hydro is having to ask for an exorbitant rate increase strictly as a result of this Government's raid on Manitoba Hydro of over \$200 million?

I would remind him that precipitation rates are above normal for this winter. Why does Manitoba Hydro need such an exorbitant rate increase at this time?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, the trouble with reading off questions, in spite of the previous answer, is that you usually get a silly question. I answered the question which the member just asked. We had a 26% increase in inflation since the last increase that we have requested for hydro rates.

We have requested 3 percent this year, 2.5 next, in aggregate, and that is some 21 percent lower than inflation has been in the period since the last increase.

No, Mr. Speaker, precipitation is not normal across the Saskatchewan River base. It is not normal

across the Red River basin base. Yes, it is slightly above normal in the Lake of the Woods base, but in total, our precipitation in the vast area we drain still remains below normal.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that the Doer government has resorted to setting hydro rates at the Cabinet table. It is one rate before the election. Right after the election the freeze is off, despite the Finance Minister's, the minister responsible for Hydro, and in spite of Premier Doer's promise that rates would not increase.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that they raided Manitoba Hydro for over \$200 million and that is resulting in consumers in Manitoba being faced with rate increases of over 7.5 percent in the next two years.

I would ask the minister to explain to Manitobans why a freeze before an election, and immediately after an election a freeze taken off, and now they are faced with a 7.5% rate increase. Explain that to Manitobans.

*(13:55)

Mr. Sale: The actions of this Government in making uniform hydro rates across this province were opposed by members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

We provided a \$14-million decrease for the members of this province that many of them represent, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if they are still against that move by this Government to make rates equal across the province. When you do that, at some point between inflation, the drought situation, rate equalization and, in fact, decreases ordered by the Public Utilities Board for large industrial consumers, you have to face the fact that after 12 years, you cannot keep rates the same.

So, a very modest, lower than other provinces are requiring, a very modest rate increase has been requested, not of the Cabinet, Mr. Speaker, but of the Public Utilities Board that sets rates in Manitoba.

Manitoba Hydro Rate Increase

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): When the Doer government raided Manitoba Hydro for over \$200 million, it was described by the *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial board and I quote: A smash and grab

approach to balancing budgets. I quote again: It will cost something, regardless of how the Province tells Hydro to find the money.

Less than two years later, Manitobans are finding out that it is from their wallets that Hydro has found the money to pay off the Doer government's bill. My question to the minister is: Was the editorial board of the *Free Press* out to lunch, or will he now admit that Hydro's request for a 7.5% increase by next April in the residential rates is a direct result of the Doer government's smash and grab budgeting approach?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, the smash and grab that happened was in January of 2001, when the federal government told us that they had been screwing up the books for the last eight years. We were faced with \$140-million loss in our revenues 11 months into our fiscal year.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sale: That is what we were faced with, Mr. Speaker. We took a look at the history and saw that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sale: We took a look at what would be prudent. We saw that Manitoba Hydro, while they had projected robust earnings from exports, had in fact earned \$370 million more than they had projected in their export earnings. We took a look at that and we said what are the alternatives for Manitobans to balance our Budget? One of them, and we thought the prudent one, 11 months into the fiscal year—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Once again, I would like to remind all honourable members, I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. An editorial in the *Brandon Sun* two years ago stated, and I quote: Now there are lies, damned lies and hydro bills. They went on to call the Doer government's dividend policy and I quote: A hidden tax, a regressive tax.

Next April, Hydro customers will see their hydro bills rise by 7.5 percent. What happened to this Premier's (Mr. Doer) promise to Manitobans? My question is simple. Was the editorial board of the *Brandon Sun* out to lunch, or can the minister tell me what happened to the Premier's promise to Manitobans that he was not elected to raise taxes? Does he think that he was elected to raise hydro rates?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (14:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing the honourable minister, I would just like to remind all honourable members about using parliamentary and unparliamentary words. It is not parliamentary to use an outside source to quote from to use unparliamentary language. I just want to remind all honourable members of that, even if you use a quote from another source.

An Honourable Member: Since when?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has always been the rules. So I am reminding all honourable members.

The honourable Minister of Energy, Science—
order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for River East, on a point of order?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to indicate that if I have used unparliamentary language, I would like to withdraw that. They were not my words, but I will withdraw those comments.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member for her contribution.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, when we had the difficult situation face us 11 months into our fiscal year, the decision we made was a prudent one, that was to draw down a maximum of \$150 million in the first year and no more than 75 percent of the profits in ensuing years which, if there was no profit, there would be no draw, which is why we have only drawn \$203 million.

I have put that in the context, Mr. Speaker, of the over-revenue from budget that Manitoba Hydro earned in the previous several years of \$370 million above its projections. We were faced with a problem. When the Opposition was in government and they were faced with what they thought was a problem, they sold MTS and ran through the profits. We have Manitoba Hydro. We will always have Manitoba Hydro.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the minister's logic holds and he says that he is taking revenue from the past, some \$350 million of profit from Manitoba Hydro, when we see Hydro today losing \$350 million, is he prepared to put that money back into Manitoba Hydro's coffers so that residential rates do not have to increase by 7.5 percent over one year?

Mr. Sale: First, Mr. Speaker, let me correct the member. The requests are for two years, not one year. They are part this year, part the next year. It is a relatively minor point in this whole somewhat strange debate.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro had over \$1.3 billion in retained earnings when it went into this unprecedented drought. No one expected the drought to be as deep or to last as long as it has. Manitoba Hydro has also absorbed some 26% inflation since the last rate increases 12 years ago on the commercial side, 7 years ago on the residential side.

Much as it would be desirable if we could never have rate increases, I do not think any business in Canada can absorb continuous inflation, continuous fair wage increases, continuous operating increases and never have to face the fact that small increases are required, Mr. Speaker.

Mental Health Care Quality of Care

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): On January 3, Sharon Horn, a resident of Brandon, was found

frozen to death. Miss Horn died of exposure and when found was only wearing light cotton pants, slippers and a winter jacket. The family of Miss Horn, who are in the gallery today, are asking Manitoba's Chief Medical Examiner to review the circumstances that led to Sharon's death.

Myrtle Woolridge wants people with mental disabilities to be able to live and die with dignity. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health is: Why, after receiving care and support all of her life, did Sharon not receive the support from his department to ensure she was coping on her own? Why did our mental health system fail her?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it is a tragedy and, unfortunately, part of our overall society that there are far too many people who are in the mental health system who take their own life or who die in very unfortunate circumstances. That is one of the reasons why we have been very aggressive in terms of our mental health renewal policy and have adopted some significant changes in our mental health policy and continue to do that, such as having families involved in care planning, such as for the first time ever having co-addictions and co-mental health services trying to be offered together so that we are off the awful treadmill of having mental health services in the schools.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, this family wanted to provide health and support to Sharon but did not receive the support or the guidance from his department. The minister must give some leadership to ensure that the shortfalls in the mental health system are addressed. This Government owes it to the Horn family to make sure that future deaths are prevented.

While we are looking forward to the outcome of the review, what measures is the Minister of Health prepared to take today to ensure there will be no future situations that will lead to an untimely death such as the case with Sharon Horn?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, when Miriam Toews, a prize award-winning author in Manitoba had her father walk out of a mental health centre and walk in front of a train and commit suicide about five or six years ago, I met with the family. I put Miriam Toews on the mental health renewal group that works with us to make recommendations to deal with this situation.

It is unfortunate and it is tragic. It is something that every single member in this Chamber is touched by and every single member in this Chamber is moved by. That is—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker, if the member for Roblin wants to put a comment in about mental health and mental health renewal, I am happy to hear his suggestions because we have put in place caregivers and family to deal with these issues. It is all too frequent that it happens, but mental health issues and issues relating to mental health death are something we all must work on every single day and continue to do so.

As I said, when Miriam Toews came on the Mental Health Advisory Committee she gave us good advice, and she has written a book about the experiences of her father, Mr. Speaker, that deal with some of the issues that continue, all of us, to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, Sharon Horn's sister, Myrtle Woolridge, wants answers from this Minister of Health. If she can be a part of that process, I think she would be more than willing. She is an articulate woman and would provide great insight and assistance.

I quote from Myrtle: Obviously, you cannot bring a person back, and I am looking for better care for the next person.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Health: What specifications has the minister initiated to ensure better care for the next person?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member asked that specific question because for the first time in history we have performance deliverables to each RHA dealing with mental health, asking that families of caregivers be given the ability to work with the regional health authority, something that never happened during 11 years of Tory government.

Mr. Speaker, we put in place a mental health renewal process that includes families and caregivers, a Mental Health Advisory Council, an education plan for young people, a suicide-prevention plan, expanded funding and resources. While we do all that, unfortunately a quarter of the people, for example, who are schizophrenic, will meet their death by their own hand. That is unfortunate. That is

something we must work on every single day, all of us, to deal with mental health and mental health issues.

Mental Health Care Quality of Care

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, what happened to Sharon Horn was a tragedy and it should not have happened. But, not only did Sharon Horn die, so did Dennis Robinson, a mentally challenged man from Portage la Prairie who was forgotten on a bus after an outing and he, too, died.

Can this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) tell us how it is that Sharon Horn was abandoned, why she was left alone, why Dennis Robinson was left alone and how it was that these two mentally ill individuals have recently died under his watch?

* (14:10)

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): It is true that these are two tragedies that we are discussing in the House today, and I hope that we will respond in the spirit of dignity and respect for the issue we are dealing with now. I know that MDC is very concerned about what has happened last week. As minister, I have asked for a full briefing as soon as possible, and we will deal with the issues that arise from that.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, when this Minister of Health was in Opposition in 1998 he railed that, and I quote: There is a lack of standards and accountability in the mental health system.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Minister of Health: Where are the standards and accountability today? Where is his accountability to deal with Sharon Horn's death and Dennis Robinson's death?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I am glad, I am very happy that, after being in this Chamber now as Government for four or four-and-a-half years, the members of the Opposition are actually asking questions about mental health issues. When we came into office, we approached with a very aggressive strategy with respect to mental health, realizing that there was an area that the members opposite had totally failed to deal with from about 1998 onwards, Mr. Speaker, that had been totally left behind.

We reinvigorated the mental health issue by enhancing programs in place, by creating a program of taking mental health people who were in the system, training them and having them have work assisting other mental health people, never done before in the province of Manitoba, done now; by taking education materials and putting them in the classroom to identify early mental health difficulties, never done before, now done.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, in 1996 the Minister of Health said and I quote: Mental health tends, or has on occasion been a forgotten part of the consideration in health care. Roy Romanow went further and called mental health the orphan of the health care system.

We asked this Minister of Health to put in place a mental health advocate, and he has refused. Can this Minister of Health tell this House and the many Manitobans who have lost loved ones: What is he prepared to do so that not one more person in this province will suffer the indignity and tragic death that Sharon Horne and Dennis Robinson suffered?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are tending to take individual tragic situations and bring them to the attention of the Legislature. That is their right and we will deal with that. We were dealing with mental health issues and tragedies long before members opposite started reading the newspaper and started trying to be political on this issue. I am trying very hard and we have had education sessions, we have had sessions and we have put in place a plan for mental health.

Mr. Speaker, mental health has been and continues to be the orphan of the health care system, but this is the first time in the Chamber members opposite have made an issue of this, have even talked about the Romanow report. It is like the Romanow report did not exist for members opposite. We put deliverables in the health regions on mental health for the first time in history asking them to be responsible for delivering mental health programs and deliverables that they have to report back to us on.

Family Violence Intervention Program Funding

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the Family Violence Intervention Program

will close on June 30 if the Doer government does not agree to co-fund the program with the City of Winnipeg. A team of two police officers and two social workers attend a family violence call, usually a day after police officers respond to a 911 call to diffuse the violence. Will the Justice Minister commit to co-funding the program with the City of Winnipeg?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Mr. Speaker, as we all are aware in this House, today is International Women's Day and it is a time to reflect on the achievements, the advancements of the status of women in our communities. It is also a time to think about how we can further pursue the objective of greater empowerment, a greater role, a greater status of women in our society. It is also a time, in the context of the question, to reflect on the fact that, since 1974, spousal homicides against women have decreased 62 percent.

Mr. Speaker, that should signal, not complacency, but vigilance. It also sends a signal the responses to domestic violence that have evolved are starting to show some positive improvements, but there is much to be done. We are certainly pledged to do that.

Mr. Hawranik: A study by the University of Manitoba indicates that 80 percent of families who are contacted by the Family Violence Intervention Program were helped. As a result, family violence was reduced. A provincial funding commitment of \$500,000 will be enough to keep the program going. Will the Justice Minister commit to spending \$500,000 to ensure that this important program continues?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to see the City of Winnipeg put in place this pilot initiative. I was very pleased to see them prioritize it. I understand that the mayor of the City of Winnipeg made its permanent establishment part of his election commitments.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time we recognize that there are fiscal challenges out there. I am very pleased to announce today that the Province has made available to the City of Winnipeg new revenues from fines that will enable the City of Winnipeg to continue this valuable project.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the City needs the Province to participate in this program in order for

the program to continue. The program is an extremely important one to end family violence. The U of M study recommends that the program be continued and expanded. Why has the minister refused to specifically co-fund this program with the City of Winnipeg?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the member heard my answer to the last question. I will say that we are very pleased that we have here an example of a municipal government that is also looking to see what it can do within its area of jurisdiction. We are all in this together, every Manitoban, every level of government.

But, with regard to this particular initiative, I am very pleased that we have been able to identify a source of revenue for the City, new revenues, Mr. Speaker, a total \$1.4 million. Of that, \$900,000 must be spent on public safety initiatives through fine revenue. I do hope and I anticipate that the City program will continue on a permanent basis.

Sleep Disorders Testing Waiting Lists

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, 35 people have died while waiting for testing for a sleep disorder. This is not a waiting list to purchase a luxury like a new car. This is a waiting list to receive a critical and important service for the diagnosis and treatment of a very serious medical disorder. Sleep disorders like obstructive sleep apnea are serious and can be potentially fatal.

Now that the minister has had a week or more to investigate the causes of death of the 35 people who died waiting for sleep disorder testing, I ask the Minister of Health if he can tell us if any of these individuals died because of fatal conditions known to be associated with obstructive sleep apnea such as heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure or its complications, from mental problems associated with lack of sleep, or from stopping breathing due to sleep apnea.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I believe I mentioned to the member last week when he raised this question, that he FIPPA'd the regional health authority, as I understand it, and asked for the number of people that had died while being on a waiting list for receiving a diagnosis of sleep apnea.

He extrapolated last week that somehow these 35 deaths were related to the fact that they were waiting. I indicated to the member that I thought it was very inappropriate for the member to make that kind of a connection and, in fact, I thought it was irresponsible of the member, who I think is trained in this area, to go off and make that kind of a connection.

Notwithstanding that, I know he is trying to raise a legitimate issue, Mr. Speaker, but to make the connection I think is totally inappropriate and irresponsible of the Member for River Heights to do so.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, June 25, 1998, the MLA for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), a member of the minister's government, stood in this House and he said, "I believe there are waiting lists for people to be tested in a sleep lab of approximately two and a half years."

Sleep disorders can be quite serious. In fact, they can be potentially fatal. Did the minister think his colleague representing Burrows was fearmongering, inappropriate, irresponsible? No. This is an important medical condition that deserves attention.

* (14:20)

The minister and his Government have known about the seriousness of this condition, and yet the waiting lists are no shorter than they were when he came to power. When will the minister start including waiting times for sleep disorders in his posted list of waiting times? When will he provide information on the causes of death of these 35?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, again, and I note that the member very carefully crafted his words, and it is interesting that the member from Burrows raised a very legitimate question in fact, and we have acted on that, I might add. The member likes to murky the waters and talk about the connection which is statistically inaccurate and irresponsible for the member to talk between the deaths and people on a particular waiting list.

I want the member to know that since that time, we have put in place a new medical tariff that recognizes, actually a treatment, there is actually a new medical tariff that we put in place in 2001 to recognize sleeping disorders.

We have expanded the sleep lab operating dollars from 1999 by over \$100,000. We have expanded the HVADS operating, that is the money going to sleep disorder treatment, from \$151,000 to \$537,000. We have expanded by more than double, specialized equipment from \$734,000 to \$1.6 million.

Health Care Services Multi-year Budgeting

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, this year we anticipate that we will spend over \$7 billion. The NDP have committed to spend an additional \$1,295,342,000 annually since they have taken office in 1999. Wow, can you guys spend money. That is incredible, over 21 percent. This is not about service.

A clear majority believe that our health care system is worse today than it was in 1999. My question to the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) is: What do you project our annual budget to be when 2005-2006 comes around? This Government, more than any other government in the province's history, Mr. Speaker, needs to have annual budgets, or multi-year budgets being presented to this Legislature, or we risk this Government bankrupting our province.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we conducted together with the federal government, of which I think the member is affiliated, and all of the provinces, that is the federal Liberal government, pre-Chretien—I am not sure, but the member's affiliate—we conducted a study of services in Manitoba that was put up on the Web site to see what people's satisfaction was on the health care system.

It was 86 percent, Mr. Speaker, since we came to office, on a study done in conjunction with the federal Liberal government. Now I know they have their differences on certain days and certain months, but we have put in—*[interjection]* Yes, we have. But 60 or 70 percent of the costs of health care go to wages.

It was the members opposite, particularly the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), who said give more money to the doctors, give more money to the nurses, give more money to health care technicians, and we have. That is 70 percent of our budget, Mr. Speaker, and we do not apologize for hiring more nurses, hiring more doctors, hiring more health care aides.

MIR Test Wait Times

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. I understand that the Canadian Association of Radiologists has recently named this province as having the third-best wait times in the country for the MRI testing. What is the Government doing to ensure that wait times continue to decrease for this critical diagnostic test?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is when we came to office, they were doing 6000 or so MRIs a year. As of today, we are doing 17 500. Today I had the honour of opening the second MRI at Health Sciences Centre. When we came to office, I do not think there was an MRI there. There were two at St. Boniface Hospital. That was it, the second at Health Sciences Centre.

Later on this year we will be opening another one at Brandon hospital to further reduce the waiting lists for which the radiation therapist of a national body, who are nonpolitical, who assessed the situation, said we had the third-best waiting list in the country. We used to have the worst when members opposite were government.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Fisher Air Cadets

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to tell the Assembly of a very special event in which I had the pleasure of taking part on the weekend of February 13 to 15 of this year.

The Fisher air cadets were mustered under the capable leadership of Captain Len Huff to journey up to their cabin on the shore of Lake St. George, where they underwent three days of intensive winter survival training. The focus of the excursion was to give the cadets training on how to construct a variety of different shelters, such as lean-tos and quinsies, how to get a fire going in adverse conditions with just one match, how to build a signal fire to attract search parties and so on. Coupled with the map and compass orienteering training they received last fall,

on a previous excursion, these young men and women should hold up well if ever thrust unexpectedly into an emergency survival situation.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the parents for having the foresight to enter their children into this worthy program, the volunteers for dedicating their time to ensure the safety of the participants, and the sponsors, especially the Canadian military, for making this all possible.

In the electronic world that we live in today, with systems in place such as the Internet and satellite TV, our children are becoming more sedentary to the point where their good health is in jeopardy, to the detriment of our society as a whole. The cadet program, with its focus on discipline, physical fitness, leadership training and survival in the wilderness is a direct counter to this trend and should be acknowledged for the good that it does.

Keep up the good work, Captain Huff and company. The people of the Interlake are better off as a result of your efforts.

BMO Skate Canada Junior Nationals

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): It is my privilege to share with this Assembly the accomplishments of Kathryn Fenske and Martin Nickel of Thompson, Manitoba, who recently extended Manitoba's medal-winning streak in national ice dance to five years with their gold-medal performance at the BMO Skate Canada Junior Nationals held in Ottawa February 4 to 7.

Tied for second, heading into the final round of the competition, Kathryn and Martin were virtually perfect in their final number, a two-and-a-half-minute polka rhythm dance which earned them top votes from six of the seven judges and moved them to the top of the podium, where they were awarded the Canadian juvenile title.

Mr. Speaker, Kathryn and Martin have been partners for almost four years under the guidance of coach Sue Sutherland of the Mystery Lake club, and spend their summers training in Calgary with Murray Carey, one of Canada's elite ice dancers from the 1970s.

Kathryn and Martin, both Grade 9 students at R. D. Parker Collegiate, are eagerly looking forward to

next season, when they will graduate to pre-novice competition. The move to the next category will require hard work and dedication if this dynamic duo is to remain on top of the podium, but Kathryn and Martin are ready for the challenge and are intent on claiming another national ice dance medal for Manitoba in next year's competition.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate these two very talented individuals on their gold medal at the BMO Skate Canada Junior Nationals and to extend our sincere wishes for continued success in the future as they continue to represent Manitoba on the national figure-skating stage.

Special Olympics Manitoba

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to attend the opening ceremonies of the Manitoba Special Olympics Winnipeg Region Kinsmen Winter Games on Saturday, February 7 at St. John's Ravenscourt School in my constituency. The games were a tremendous success and a proud moment for the young athletes who participated in the games.

Mr. Speaker, these games were arranged with the great support of Special Olympics Manitoba, which continues to do an outstanding job of providing quality sport and recreation programs for Manitobans.

These programs might not be possible, if it were not for SOM's very impressive team of volunteers who give their time and talents to help others enjoy the fun and excitement of sport. Together, the SOM volunteers, athletes, coaches, board of directors and staff have earned a reputation as one of the most innovative and progressive chapters in the entire country.

These games are also an important asset to Manitoba as they provide an opportunity for athletes with mental disabilities to compete in a variety of sports that involve strength, endurance and physical skills. Therefore, the amount of preparation, passion and dedication is an integral part of the athlete's participation. Their drive combined with their athletic talents has helped them overcome many challenges. Therefore, this momentous stage in their lives is commendable.

* (14:30)

Further, Mr. Speaker, their participation in the training for and competition in these games has enriched their lives and the lives of their friends and families and has helped them become an integral and valued part of the Manitoba community. They have cultivated integrity, innovation and leadership and embraced the challenges of being an athlete.

I would like to finish by recognizing and celebrating their personal achievements. Finally, I would like to congratulate all the athletes and thank all the volunteers, staff, coaches and board of directors at Special Olympics Manitoba for their time and dedication to this event. I look forward to the national Special Olympics to be held in Brandon in 2006. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Jean Marshall

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): On December 4, I was in attendance for the presentation of the Caring Canadian Award to Mrs. Jean Marshall of Woodlands, Manitoba. Mrs. Marshall has a long tradition of volunteerism, and I was privileged to be among many in attendance. The attendees included family, friends, the honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Mihychuk) and the Lieutenant-Governor and his wife.

It was a very special day for Mrs. Marshall as many people acknowledged her outstanding contributions to her community. As the South Interlake Seniors Council noted many times over, she has done great and lasting things for the council, the Woodlands Seniors Home, Oak Park Lodge, and for all seniors in her community. Mrs. Marshall exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism, and I am pleased that she was recognized for her efforts. The constituency of Lakeside, and more specifically the community of Woodlands, are fortunate to have her as a resident. She is a model for all of us and a true community leader. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dan "Heavy" Evason

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to commemorate the life of Heavy Evason and to offer sincere condolences to the Evason family on the passing of this outstanding Manitoban this past weekend.

Heavy Evason was a well-respected and inspiring presence in my home community of Brandon.

Most recently, he was a leader in securing the 2006 Special Olympics for Manitoba. As chairman of the Brandon Special Olympics committee, Heavy was a natural. In his day job at Career Connections, Heavy worked each and every day with mentally challenged and disabled people.

He had a heart as big as his body, and his passing represents a huge loss both to Brandon and to our province. Heavy Evason was taken from his friends and family far too soon, at age 41, and his passing will be profoundly mourned by all who knew him. Perhaps fittingly, he left us while playing hockey and with his best friend, Kevin Smith, at his side.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of both myself and my colleague from Brandon West, who like so many others considered ourselves friends of Heavy, and on behalf of all of our constituents who will profoundly miss his presence in Brandon, we offer our sincere condolences to the Evason family.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS

Bill 20—The University College of the North Act

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton), that Bill 20, The University College of the North Act; Loi sur le Collège universitaire du Nord, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House. His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill and I table this message.

Motion presented.

Ms. McGifford: I am honoured today to have the opportunity to address the House on Bill 20, The University College of the North Act, establishing the University College of the North, or UCN as many people are referring to it.

As a Manitoba post-secondary institution, as I said at first reading, this is history in the making. Not only will the act establish a new entity in Manitoba's post-secondary education system, but the University College of the North will, as well, ensure that Aboriginal and our other northern people are the primary

decision makers regarding post-secondary education in their community of the North.

Mr. Speaker, peoples from all across northern communities have long expressed their desire to access a range of post-secondary educational opportunities and to access them close to home. The University College of the North will transform aspirations and dreams into reality.

I take the opportunity, to thank those who presented the early vision to our Premier (Mr. Doer). These include former Grand Chief Francis Flett from MKO; Dr. Verna Kirkness, who led the consultation team; Don Robertson, chair of the implementation committee; and Kathleen Leary from Norway House, who is the chair of the steering committee.

I mention these few, but of course I ask members of the House to understand that this is a community project, a community endeavour and results from a consultative process. Many others are contributors to this very important initiative.

Mr. Speaker, one of the major challenges which the University College of the North will face is to offer meaningful services to the 80 000 persons who are unevenly distributed over the 200 000 square miles that constitute northern Manitoba. The geographic and educational challenges, I think, are immediately apparent and are enormous.

Through the passage of The University College of the North Act, we will create a cohesive, effective post-secondary education network throughout northern Manitoba. It is anticipated that this network will offer a range of post-secondary programming at both the college and university levels in a community-based, distributed manner across northern Manitoba. This approach is significant with what northerners, for many years, have envisioned. We will, of course, build on the facilities, programs and human resources that are already present and in place.

Mr. Speaker, this Government's commitment to all northerners through the expansion of educational opportunities is clearly evident by the tabling of this legislation. Access to education plays a major role in community development, and community capacity building is essential to the overall social and economic well-being of this vast region. Ensuring that post-secondary education is an accessible and viable option for all of Manitoba, including northerners and

young people, is an important aspect of our Government's Northern Development Strategy.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, as well, our education strategy, including UCN, is essential to our economic strategy. Education and economic development go hand in hand. Aligning post-secondary education with labour market needs and thus creating a skilled workforce which is poised and ready to fill jobs is also key to the overall development of the North. Preparing northerners to fill jobs in the North is a commitment we have made through our Northern Development Strategy.

* (14:40)

The ability to identify and respond to new opportunities for labour market focused programming as this region continues to develop its resources is also essential. This legislation enables us to fulfill that commitment, which is vital not only to northern Manitoba but indeed to all Manitobans. The North, after all, is an integral part of Manitoba, and its economic and community well-being affect us all.

Again, I repeat, Mr. Speaker, and here I echo our Premier (Mr. Doer), our educational strategy and economic strategy mirror, reflect and strengthen each other. As the Premier says, you cannot have an economic strategy without an education strategy.

I make the point as well that the University College of the North will keep young people in their communities, close to their families and support systems, and so encourage the likelihood of completing programs and enriching local communities. For too long there has been a drain from northern Manitoba to the south.

I would like to take the time now to speak to the legislation itself. As I indicated earlier, the legislation will establish the University College of the North. This new entity is an institution that will be devoted to community and northern development and one which reflects the Aboriginal reality and cultural diversity of northern Manitoba.

In addition to establishing the institution, the legislation will integrate existing programs and services from Keewatin Community College into the new University College. This legislation is a hybrid, a careful blending of current Manitoba community college and university legislation.

It also includes aspects of university college governance from structures across provinces, most significantly from B.C., where university colleges have been part of the landscape for many years. I do take this opportunity to thank the individuals from B.C., who were so extremely helpful and offered their experience so willingly and were always happy and willing to give us insight based on their experience.

With the passage of this legislation, it is anticipated that the University College of the North will be established with the clear mandate to serve the educational needs of Aboriginal and northern Manitobans and so enhance the economic and social well-being of northern Manitoba. Once again, we know that a sound economic strategy requires an educational strategy. The UCN will reflect this belief.

Through the legislation, the University College of the North will have the mandate to provide post-secondary education, training and instructions. It will have the mandate to grant degrees, certificates and diplomas; to provide career counselling, basic education, upgrading and literacy programs as well as post-secondary transition and preparation programs for under-prepared students; to develop and to deliver joint academic programs with other accredited post-secondary institutions; and carry out the work of an educational institution in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that I have met with all presidents from the universities in this province. They are all 100 percent supportive of this institution, and that pleases me tremendously. One of the early initiatives recommended by Dr. Verna Kirkness during her consultations, one of her recommendations was the development of an Aboriginal study and research centre, a development important to our Aboriginal people, and particularly important to the preservation of history, culture and language. I think this will be a decided benefit to the educational offerings in this province.

The University College of the North will be governed by a bicameral system, which includes a governing council and a learning council. Both bodies will have specific responsibilities related to their areas, as well as requirements to advise and seek advice from each other in areas of which the other has responsibility. This model attempts to move the overall governance of the institution to one

that has more of a consensus approach and therefore is more reflective of the traditions and principles of Aboriginal governance models.

Mr. Speaker, the governing council specifically will be responsible for governing and managing the affairs of the University College, with roles and responsibilities reflective of the current university and community college models. The learning council reflects aspects of the academic senate and the education council. The senate is the academic structure currently in existence in Manitoba universities, while the education council is the academic body of British Columbia's university colleges. Again, I am thankful for the co-operation and advice we have received from British Columbia.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, there is a council of elders which will play an advisory role within the institution. The council of elders is unique to our Manitoba legislation and quite possibly to Canadian post-secondary legislation. I do not know this for sure but this is what my department advises is likely the case.

Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal Manitobans have stressed the need to have an education system that reflects, responds to and respects their needs. One role of the council of elders will be to promote an environment that embraces Aboriginal culture and values. The other major role, as I have already stated, will be to provide advice, and I imagine that the council of elders will be extremely important to young Aboriginal students and even older ones who are enroled in this institution because we know the wisdom of older folks.

When the University College of the North is initially established, there will be an interim governing council created which will assume the duties of both the governing council and the learning council for a period not to exceed two years. The learning council, as an academic body, will be established when more university programming is developed and delivered. It should take several years.

It is anticipated that the governing council and the learning council will be in operation by July 1, 2006. In anticipation of their establishment, the legislation contains a sunset clause terminating the interim governing council on July 1, 2006, or a day fixed by proclamation, whichever comes first.

As I indicated earlier, the integration of programming and services from the existing Keewatin Community College is also covered through this legislation. All employees, property, assets, liabilities, agreements and any bequests are transferred to UCN when the legislation comes into effect. In respecting current students of Keewatin Community College and their individual wishes, the legislation will also create the option for those students upon graduation to choose to receive their certificate or diploma from either Keewatin Community College or the new University College of the North.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, if the legislation effectively integrates Keewatin Community College into the University College of the North, the current Keewatin Community College board must be dissolved, and is, through the act. I would like to take this time to thank the current Keewatin Community College board members. Their dedication and efforts to the ongoing development of the college have been very much appreciated.

As we move to establish the interim governing council, current Keewatin Community College board members will certainly be considered.

I thank all those whose vision and efforts have lead to the development of the University College of the North. It is through your leadership, hard work and ongoing efforts that we have reached this point in our collective history. It is also through your ongoing commitments that the University College of the North will be an institution of which all Manitobans can be proud.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I was particularly pleased to learn that the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) has changed his mind and decided to support this initiative. I remember during the last election he specifically said that he would not go forward if elected.

* (14:50)

At least he was reported in the media as having changed his mind. I thank the member opposite for his change of heart. I am sure all northerners will appreciate his support. As the expression goes, better late than never. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I move, seconded by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that debate on this bill be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 22—The Water Protection Act

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Just on a point of order, my understanding is that the member is being swarmed by a relatively large size of journalism students out in the hallway on an issue.

Mr. Speaker, if we could just await his return to the House, which I think is in a matter of just a few minutes—Steve is getting scrummed like crazy out there.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if we can postpone the item for a minute and deal with another bill. I know the House leader has several bills that he identified that we could move through. Perhaps we could just change the order and continue the work in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, it is not a point of order; it is a dispute over the facts.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 22, The Water Protection Act; Loi sur la protection des eaux, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House. His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of the bill and I table the Lieutenant-Governor's message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the indulgence of members of the House. I must apologize for the slight delay. It had everything to do with the floodway expansion, another major initiative that this Government is undertaking in co-operation with the federal government. I am sure that members opposite would be very disappointed if I had not followed through in terms of that very important aspect.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to be very up front about what this bill is all about. I want to make a few

opening comments because I think it is very important to put on the record how important water is to this province. To say it dominates our landscape is an understatement. We steward about 20 percent of the world's fresh water in Canada. We steward 13 percent of Canada's renewable fresh water flow, right here in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Excuse me, I thank the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, but I am going to make a leap of faith and drink this. As the page brings me a glass of Manitoba water, we take for granted the fact that we have good quality water in this province. We take it for granted.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

We actually use a lot of it: 343 litres a day per person in Canada. We are actually higher than that in Manitoba. I want to make it very clear, we cannot take the quality or the quantity of water in this province for granted any longer. We must act now. In fact I am very proud that this Government is acting. In fact, The Water Protection Act is going to be the most comprehensive water quality and water protection act anywhere in Canada, a very important statement by this Government.

I want to give a little bit of the history here, as well. I am glad that the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) has such an interest in this very important subject, because, for 11 years, I want to indicate this was not very high on the previous government's agenda. I appreciate now that the Opposition House Leader feels this urge to come on over to this side, to share in that vision, that vision for water.

An Honourable Member: Water, water, water.

Mr. Ashton: Everywhere, but not a drop to drink.

An Honourable Member: He is out of order. It is "water."

Mr. Ashton: Coming from northern Manitoba, I appreciate the lessons on diction from the Opposition House Leader from Russell. Those of us from Thompson, we think our diction is just as good. I wonder how you can explain that in Hansard, as well, for those who will read this.

I want to put on the record that we, very early on, took a very lead role in this important issue. We

issued the Manitoba water strategy in April, 2003. We brought in safe drinking water legislation in 2002, which is now proclaimed. We now have the strongest legislative framework to protect drinking water anywhere in Canada, anywhere in Canada. We put in 12 drinking water offices. We have put in place a new process for inspection, for licensing facilities, for training of operators. We have made a huge difference. We are now building on that success. We are bringing together the elements of the strategy that was put in place.

I want to give you some idea of why this act is a leader across the country. We will be the only province that will put in place water-quality standards, objectives and guidelines in legislation, the only province in Canada. It is not unusual in other jurisdictions. No other Canadian province has that type of clear ability in legislation to set those kinds of objectives, standards and guidelines. It allows to identify water quality management zones. I can tell you, we will have the ability to protect sensitive product ecosystems to protect our drinking water sources, our other sources, through water quality management zones. I want to stress that this will apply to any activity that can impact our water quality, not just one or another particular sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this act promotes conservation and the protection of sensitive aquatic areas. You may notice in my opening comments, I referenced 343 litres a day. That is the consumption in Canada. In Europe, a similar developed environment in terms of the economy, we have half of the per capita consumption. In the developing world, by the way, a good supply of fresh water is about 20 litres a day. To put it in perspective, one flush of a standard toilet is 18 litres.

We think we can do better. In fact, we think we have to do better in many parts of this province, because when you withdraw water from the natural ecosystem and treat it like we do and then clean our cars and water our lawns with it, by the time that water then returns to the natural ecosystem, our ecosystems are under much greater stress. That is a very important aspect of this bill.

We put in place specific measures to deal with major drought situations. I want to put on the record that we are still in a drought situation in many parts of this province. I note earlier that one member of the Opposition seemed to feel that there was a great

situation out there in terms of moisture. That is not the case outside of a number of areas of the province, most notably around the city of Winnipeg.

* (15:00)

I say to members opposite, including the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), when you end up in a major drought situation, we currently have a very limited ability province-wide to deal with regional droughts. This would allow us to do the job that Manitobans would expect us to do in those kinds of circumstances.

I want to stress that this bill also includes specific reference to the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty that oversees the boundary water issues between Canada and the U.S. I think it is important, because when we are fighting now to protect Manitobans, protect our environment against the negative impacts of the Devils Lake outlet, if this kind of legislation was in place in North Dakota I think you would see many people taking the State of North Dakota to court, because, quite frankly, they are not following in terms of the basic principles of that treaty, which protects Canadians and Americans from polluted water being transferred from one side of the border to the other. I think that is very important to put on the record.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have made it very clear too that the consultation that is part of the strategy itself will continue. This act commits the Government and future governments to engaging in consultation with Manitobans on regulations that will be part of this act. I think that is very important.

Let me make it very clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are also establishing the Manitoba Water Council. This legislation will give us the ability through this council to have, I think, an ongoing input similar to what we have seen with the steering committee. It is part of the water strategy which has provided a lot of excellent input. That steering committee, by the way, has representation from across the province. It represents many, if not all, of the key stakeholders that are involved in terms of water planning.

We are going to establish a stewardship fund. This is a partnership fund that we plan on working very closely with other levels of government on, with NGOs, with the private sector. We want to make sure

we have the financial resources there to do the kind of research and the kind of creative community work that is going to make this strategy work.

I want to point to some of the very good projects that we have seen through the sustainable development initiative, for example, or the Climate Change Fund. I look to my colleague the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) who I am sure could outline many of the very worthy community-based projects that have put the issues of sustainable development and climate change first and foremost, not only on our agenda but on the community agenda. So that is a very important part of this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to stress again this is a very important act because it commits us to watershed based planning across the province. We have already made some very significant moves in this direction with the appointment of the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board. We have committed to an action plan to reduce nutrient levels to 1970 levels. We are going to extend that kind of a planning approach throughout the province.

I want to put on the record that very early on we are going to look at some of the other major lakes in our province, such as Lake Manitoba. We will be looking at other lakes where we have established advisory committees already in terms of fisheries and other issues, such as Lake Winnipegosis. We will certainly be looking at the Assiniboine River. I want to put that on the record as well.

I do not want to limit that. There is provision in this act for planning that will include all areas of this province. In fact I have already indicated we will be putting together a Split Lake advisory board. There are many issues that affect northern Manitoba that will be dealt with.

That planning process will most definitely consult and include conservation districts. I think they are a very important component of the future of planning in this province. They will include First Nations. They will include Northern Affairs communities. They will include municipalities throughout the province.

I want to note the AMM has been very vocal on the need for this kind of legislation. KAP has been very much a part of the steering committee and many of the discussions. First Nations have been part of

the discussions. We believe this is the approach because, quite frankly, if you look at the sources of the impact on water quality in this province, it is not one sector, not another sector. It is not municipalities. It is not any particular individual source. It is 1.1 million sources. That is how many Manitobans there are.

If you look at the case of nutrient overload on Lake Winnipeg, we are also dealing with our friends and neighbours in the United States. They are upward of 30 percent of the source of nutrients, or Alberta and Saskatchewan, through the Assiniboine River, impacting again in terms of that. That is why we want to take our vision to all of our friends and neighbours, recognizing how much of North America drains through our rivers and lakes. We are very much committed to that.

I want to put on the record just briefly that this act does not stand in isolation. This act is part of this Government's agenda to protect water in this province. I mentioned earlier some of the initiatives, and I just want to reference again the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board. I want to point out that when it came to The Drinking Water Safety Act, we not only acted by bringing in the legislation, we proclaimed all but one very small section of the bill. We brought in 12 new drinking water inspectors. That is very important.

We banned bulk removal from this province. We have strongly opposed the Devils Lake outlet. We have established a riparian tax credit. This legislation specifically references the importance of protecting riparian areas. We have established a tax credit already which is the first step toward achieving this goal. We brought in tighter regulations for septic tanks. Our regulations in terms of septic tanks went back to the 1930s. We have recognized that we have to use newer approaches in terms of septic tanks and septic fields. We have to look at the increased understanding of the impact that improper septic tanks and septic fields can have on the environment. We brought in those regulations. They are in place. We have strengthened the regulations for livestock operations. That is very important to note as well.

We have adopted the Clean Environment Commission's recommendations to improve the waste water treatment in the city of Winnipeg and the city of Brandon. I want to put on the record that, for 10 years, the CEC was supposed to look at the waste

water facilities of the city of Winnipeg. It took this Government, my predecessor, the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin), to refer that matter, as Minister of Conservation, to the CEC. What came out of the hearings, what this Government has adopted, is, instead of a 50-year plan to eliminate the joint sewer system in the city of Winnipeg which results in between 35 and 40 raw sewage spills a year into the Red River, we have now, thanks to the CEC hearings and the commitment of the Government, reduced that to 20 years. In fact, we are hoping, by working in partnership with the City of Winnipeg, to even reduce it beyond that. What is also important, under the CEC, we now have in place a nutrient removal requirement. The City of Winnipeg, over the next three years, is going to be removing nutrients, being part of the solution when it comes to the Red River and Lake Winnipeg. I commend them for those efforts.

I also want to note, with the City of Brandon, the Maple Leaf hearings, which looked at the second shift in terms of Maple Leaf, I want to put on the record that the proposal that came out of the CEC, the recommendation of the CEC which we again adopted in principle, will, and this is not an oxymoron, result in better quality waste water treatment than currently exists. I want to put on the record again that the previous government did not refer the original plant to the CEC. I believe, as was the case, sadly, in many other areas, it resulted in substandard requirements in terms of regulations that were put in place for that facility. We cannot do that any longer. We have acted.

I want to mention that we have improved flood protection. I will have much more opportunity to talk about this, but, following '97, the then-government, and our Government subsequently, recognized the need to improve the situation in terms of flood protection. Yes, we are expanding the floodway. I will have much more opportunity to talk about this in upcoming legislation, but that is an important part of our agenda. We are going to use the time-honoured tradition that we have followed in terms of hydro developments.

We have a long track record. You have to go back to the Roblin administration before Conservatives have any experience of building very much in this province, but we are actually going to do what Duff Roblin did in terms of the way we focus in on that.

* (15:10)

Imagine that. We are going to use the same model that Duff Roblin used in terms of hydro development. I say to members opposite, we will discuss this later in terms of the floodway, but we are going to deliver on it. I think it is interesting that an NDP government is continuing Duff Roblin's vision for Manitoba when it comes to the floodway. I do not know what happened to the current Conservative Party, but I have a great deal of respect for Duff Roblin. I just imagine what he thinks of some of the comments that members opposite make.

I want to put on the record that we are very, very proud of our agenda, but we have only just begun. We believe that one of the key challenges for this generation is not just to slow down any deterioration in terms of water quality. I want to make it very clear that we still have relatively good quality in our lakes and rivers, relatively good. We are not Lake Erie yet. We do not have a dying lake in Lake Winnipeg or other lakes across this province, but our lakes are under stress.

Members opposite know that if we do not deal with it—*[interjection]* The Agriculture critic will have lots of opportunity to get up on this bill and tell Manitobans if he supports acting on water quality protection in this province. I would suggest to the member, who seems to have selective hearing on issues, I will note that when I announced the Lake Winnipeg Action Plan we indicated that Lake Winnipeg was under stress and that we want to make sure it does not become a dying lake or a dead lake.

Members opposite may have not thought that was important enough in terms of a public agenda, but I want to tell you that I have had the opportunity to talk to Manitobans from across this province. As minister of this brand-new department, another major initiative of this Government, talking to Manitobans across this province, I want to say that everyone in this province that I have talked to shares the concern about protection of water quality. It does not matter if you are in northern Manitoba or rural Manitoba or in our urban areas, we all know how important this is to our lifestyle. It is part of our identity even. It is critical in terms of the growing of food. It is critical in terms of many economic activities.

Water, in and of itself, is an important aspect of our great diversity of ecosystems in this province. I

do not think you will find too many other jurisdictions in the world where you can go from prairie to arctic tundra, where you can have a seaport, where you can have the 10th largest freshwater lake, and you can have some of the most diverse ecosystems anywhere, our streams, our rivers and our lakes, each one of them unique in that sense.

That is our challenge because we want not only to slow down any impacts that we have seen in the last number of years in terms of water quality, we want to reverse it, and there are some encouraging signs.

I mentioned with the Maple Leaf hearings, using new technology, the proposal there that has been adopted by the CEC and by Government will reduce the impacts in terms of waste water. It will actually improve the quality of waste water. We have seen that. We have seen with new processes now in the city of Winnipeg in terms of waste that we are going to reduce the impact on Lake Winnipeg in terms of not only raw sewage but in terms of nutrients. We have seen through the septic field legislation that we can reduce the impact, in this case, of cottaging or residential development. There are many other examples of using better scientific knowledge, of using, in some cases, better technology, in some cases better planning that can deal with it. We will, I want to put on the record, work with Manitobans.

I want to finish with one basic comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is that I really do believe that we are the stewards of this great province in our lifetime in this province. We are stewards of this tremendous diversity that has been granted to us, demographically very diverse, and geographically. I do believe that we can, as Manitobans, by working together, ensure that we steward our water resources, our tremendous inheritance, and can leave it in better quality. I think Manitobans are up to that challenge.

That is our vision collectively as a province. It is our vision as a government and I urge all members of the Legislature to support this bill. I think it is one of the most important acts that I have seen introduced in the Manitoba Legislature, The Water Protection Act. I would hope that in something as fundamental and as important as this we can all support this act and get on with the job of preserving and protecting Manitoba's water.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for

Emerson (Mr. Penner), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 7—The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resume debate on concurrence and third reading on Bill 7, on the proposed motion of the Honourable Mr. Mackintosh, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

Are we agreed that it will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet?
[Agreed]

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): I would like to get up and say a few words in regard to Bill 7, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act, that was introduced by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh). In looking at the perspective of this bill, I think the overall perception is that the proceeds of crime and criminal activity should not be used in the expansion of crime or the proceeds used to pay for the crime. I think, in principle, it has the effect that people would accept this. If there are proceeds from crime that are being utilized, they should be forfeited to the Crown or they should be forwarded to the police so that they can be utilized in other manners. I believe this is the intent by the Minister of Justice to bring this report.

In looking at the bill itself, we have to look at the parameters that, after paying for expenses, are related to the forfeiture of sale of property. The balance of the sale would be paid to the victims' assistance fund to support victim services or crime prevention programs. In essence, those are laudable directives and initiatives to look forward to with this bill. The goal of The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act is to ensure that crime does not pay, and this is what the Minister of Justice mentioned when he introduced the bill. I think everybody would agree to that, that crime does not pay and that it is not to be utilized to further action against individuals or crimes against property.

* (15:20)

The minister goes on to say that if this bill is passed it will help keep criminals from financing future activities and reduce the return on their investment in the form of human misery in our communities. First, it would get at the roots of the problem by ensuring that organized crime does not pay.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Secondly, it would make it more difficult for gang members to hide their ill-gotten assets while applying for legal aid at the expense of the taxpayers. I think we have seen a fair amount of coverage in the paper a while ago in regard to the utilization of legal aid for defence in regard to gangs and gang members that have become increasingly more evident here in our province.

I should mention something that is becoming more and more prevalent in Winnipeg and in Manitoba is the increase in gang activity since this Government has taken over. It is something I do not think they are very proud of in some of these statistics that have come out in regard to the headlines we have seen in papers. It is something I do not think any of us are proud of when it talks about the murder capital of Canada, the car theft capital of Canada.

These are the areas I think the Department of Justice and the minister should be emphasizing more directly to try to get some sort of solution to it, because not only is it being noticed by the papers but also the people when you are meeting some of your constituents. I am sure most of us, when we are talking to some of our constituents, this has come up from time to time in some of our consultations and some of our conversations.

One of the things that possibly could come out of this bill is a challenge. It has been pointed out that the rights of the individuals may be put into a compromising position because of the passage of this bill. In fact, the former Attorney General of Manitoba, Mr. Roland Penner, argues that the bill flies in the face of the Charter, said the idea of being innocent and proven guilty is not reflected in the bill.

I am sure the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) has done his homework and his due diligence on this bill and is well aware of some of the innumerable and some of the peccadilloes that could be brought up by this bill. I am sure he would have to recognize that in bringing forth these. It is a

legitimate concern because it has not only been addressed by the former Attorney General but it has been in editorials in the local papers in some of their assessments of this bill.

They talk about the code, the Criminal Code of Canada. They talk specifically about section 462, and they state that property is forfeited to the state only if the owner has been found guilty of an offence in the court of law. This bill is directed toward the association of crime and criminal gangs, so there is an interpretive quality that has to be brought into the decision making of the judge when issuing an order or a request for the seizure of assets for forfeiture.

These are some of the things I think will come about through the passage of this bill and, as has been pointed out, it is just a matter for the first lawyer or the first indication that it would be utilized, that there possibly could be a challenge. Again, any type of challenge draws upon the revenues of courts and the revenues of government in defending this challenge.

So are we just looking at more monies being spent on the interpretation and the dragging out of something that, in essence, does have the overall perception of being a direction that, I think, most people would agree with? If you are involved with crime, you should not be able to benefit with the proceeds.

It would seem that the constitutional challenge for a lot of the bills that are brought forth, not only here in Manitoba, but throughout Canada, seems to be going through an awful lot of process of challenges because of the interpretation and the existence of what people's rights are, and how they are interpreted. Then, with each interpretation comes a decision. The decision is then brought forth through other jurisdictions, and that interpretation then has to be brought into consideration when there are decisions to be made. The complexity of law is like they say sometimes, it is like making sausage; you really do not want to see how it is going through, but it comes out that way.

The bill, in essence, is something that does have merit, but, at the same time, we bring in the cautionary notes of where the challenges may come about. As mentioned, the former Attorney General of Manitoba, who was a noted legislator when he sat here in this Chamber, is now involved with the law

here in Manitoba and continues to be, as a University of Manitoba law professor. His initial interpretation is that guilt by association is something we try to avoid at all costs in our system.

In my view, it offends the rule of law. His statement goes on to say that it is virtually impossible to enforce the law without violating the Charter. As much as the intent is noble in its introduction, Bill 7, are we just opening up another avenue of where there will be challenges, interpretations and delays, before there is an actual seeing of merit that the bill is going to be producing results, the intended results that it is supposed to?

The former Attorney General goes on to say: How are we going to prove the person whose property you now want to take is a member of a gang?

I think it is virtually impossible to define a gang in a term that does not offend the freedom of association, which is guaranteed by the Charter. I guess there is another realm of interpretation. It is that of who is a member of a gang and how is it distinguished that this person is a member of the gang. We recognize there is an identity of certain gangs. We are all familiar with the Hells Angels and their badges, if you want to call it, of association, but I am sure there are other so-called gangs that do not have a visible means of identification and they are possibly associated also with crime.

We see just recently here in Winnipeg—well, not only Winnipeg but throughout Manitoba, particularly, though, here in Winnipeg—where there has been a seizure of a fair amount of marijuana grow operations that are situated right in very, very affluent neighbourhoods throughout Winnipeg. There seems to be an association, if you read in the papers anyway, that this is an Asian gang that is operating these grow operations. Now, to the best of my knowledge, I do not know of any type of colour association, badge association, or identification that would tell me this person is with an Asian gang, because it is only because of what is mentioned in the newspaper. So because someone says that they are associated with a gang, how does that legitimize that phraseology?

I believe there will be some room for interpretation with any type of legislation. The minister has said that it has been vetted fairly extensively

through his department as to the legality of this piece of legislation, Bill 7. I can only say we would hope as it proceeds through the debate and it goes through the interpretation through our side of the House and possibly even some of the members from the other side who will speak on the bill that some of these things will be brought forth and mentioned to the minister so there is a recognition that it may not be just sort of a slam-dunk piece of legislation that he has brought forth.

* (15:30)

I think with any type of legislation there is always the process of interpretation. This is one of the pieces of legislation that possibly will need a fair amount of interpretation and understanding before it becomes law. We know because of the Manitoba system that it will be going through committee hearings here in the Legislature. I am sure there will be presentations made from interested citizens here in Manitoba as to how they would interpret this Bill 7.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it will be interesting to see whether there is a recognition by the minister, whether there will or will not be room for change or amendments to the legislation. Through the hearing process a lot of times there is perspective brought in by other areas that are not in consideration when the minister is making up the bill. There are areas that are not covered by legislators like ourselves who are debating the bill. There are professionals and interpreters of the law who will come forth and may have some very, very legitimate concerns and directions that possibly the minister or his staff have not considered. They may be addressed at that time at the committee hearing. So it does have that opportunity.

The bill is new. It is profound in its effect here in Canada. In fact, I believe it is one of the first of its kind in Canada. I would have to check on that to be definite, but I believe when it was introduced it was one of the first of some of the most stringent laws here in Canada.

It is a continuation of a lot of the things that were brought forth by the Gary Filmon government, where we brought in tougher and tougher laws in regard to law and order and some of the other areas that we were involved with. This Government has seen wise to continue on those courses of adapting a lot of the initiatives that were brought forth by the attorneys general that were under the prior Con-

servative government and the leadership of the former Premier, Premier Filmon. So I commend the Government for its direction in some of its law and order bills and the direction it is going.

The bill, as mentioned, opens up an awful lot of areas of interpretation, but with any type of legislation I guess that is part of getting a thorough cleansing or a thorough reckoning of definitions within the bill. So the bill itself is something we look forward to going further into various other debates with some of the other members in the Chamber here. There are other areas that people want to talk about.

As I say, there is a fair amount of discussion that will come about because of the bill. The idea this has brought forth I think has been prompted by our side of the House because of our concern for the rising crime statistics that are happening here in Manitoba, in Winnipeg. Being an urban MLA, I have seen this in my own constituency, to a degree. I have had conversations with a fair amount of people who are concerned about the safety and security in their communities.

I know the City of Winnipeg is doing a very good job with its police force and its areas of concentration of trying to combat crime. It does have the gang units. I noticed this afternoon in Question Period the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) announced some additional funding for the City of Winnipeg, in the sense of moving some monies that are collected through fines and directing it to the City of Winnipeg.

I believe he said to the City of Winnipeg police force, that was, I think, about \$1.3 million. I will have to wait for Hansard tomorrow to make the exact amount. I believe that was a good initiative.

I think those are some of the things that are worthy of note, if there is an avenue or revenue stream that the City is enjoying, new funding if you want to call it. I guess the photo radar and the red-light cameras do afford the Province some extra revenue. There is a certain amount of those fines that are paid by individuals who get caught going through red lights, or get caught for speeding, that does go into the provincial coffers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) is now saying that money that is

directed through fining, that is realized because of fines, that is generated through the provincial government, is being redirected to the police, I commend him for that. I think that is an excellent way to help the City of Winnipeg police force in its commitment to try to make Winnipeg a safer place.

I do not know whether any additional funding is going to any other areas in the City of Winnipeg for crime prevention or for any other type of events like that. I will watch and listen intently for the minister's press release on this particular announcement that he made in the House today.

If it is money that is out of the fines that are being generated, that is a wonderful way to utilize that fund and have it directed toward the proceeds to offset the criminal activity here in Winnipeg. Whether it is through additional police forcing or communications, or staffing, those are some of the areas that I think are well needed and recognized by a lot of people here in Winnipeg.

The bill will also, as mentioned, take into account the proceeds of crime that are being seized or forfeited.

I would ask the minister, or question the minister, if it is seized by a federal authority, by the RCMP working here in Winnipeg, whether that forfeiture would go to the provincial Crown or the federal government? My understanding is if the seizure is made by the RCMP then those proceeds go to the federal government and do not come to the Province. I may be wrong on that, but that is my interpretation, my understanding of it.

We hear a lot about the seizures at the Manitoba border of drugs that are coming through Ontario, through Falcon Lake through the weigh scale. Some of those numbers are fairly astounding when you look at millions of dollars that are being captured at the border, if you want to call it, or confiscated at the border by the RCMP. My understanding is that a lot of that money does not flow to the Province but goes to the feds.

I would think if that is the case then something should be done about it because the only reason they are stopping is because of the Manitoba government's weigh scales. They are the ones that really are alerting the police to the fact there could be contraband in those vehicles. If the Province is not get-

ting its share of the proceeds or the cash that is seized then I would think the Attorney General has some heavy-duty lobbying to do with the federal government.

I think some of the grow operations are also getting to be quite extensive. As I mentioned earlier, there are quite a few here in Winnipeg. In the rural areas, too, there are a fair amount that are happening in some of the outlying areas that the RCMP have raided and confiscated. Those are some of the things we will have to be very, very careful of.

* (15:40)

The other concern, too, is the fact that federally, I understand the federal government is looking at softening the marijuana laws for the possession of marijuana. What that is going to do is open up another area of concern, because the legislation the federal government is bringing forth is going to make it easier for people to be involved with small amounts of marijuana. Then it is the interpretation of the police who are going to be faced with additional work as to who and what is the amount that is going to be criminally indictable, I guess, you might want to call it.

The police work is going to be unending in a lot of these areas as to how far they can go in the interpretation, and, I guess, to a degree of frustration of trying to recognize where the legality of a lot of this comes about. As I mentioned, it revolves around the word of interpretation. When you have laws being made and you have lawyers and you have the Justice Department all revolving around the interpretation of what they feel is right, the one thing we have to ensure is that the individual rights of the person are protected because of our Constitution and the bill of rights. As much as there is the apparent recognition that the proceeds of crime should not be utilized for the sake of continuing a criminal activity, unfortunately we are in a society that does have a bill of rights that does protect the individuals.

As I mentioned before, the professor at the University of Manitoba, the former Attorney General, Roland Penner, has pointed this out quite dramatically in an article that was in the paper not that long ago when the bill was first brought forth or was first contemplated by the present Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh).

A lot of these things are of concern. They are brought forth by myself as areas that possibly should

be looked at when the minister is considering the final draft of the bill, when it goes before committee, when there is discussion being formed around his own caucus. His own caucus members bring forth these concerns. I am sure he would look at them.

We will continue to debate the bill in a sense of trying to bring these to the minister's attention. I am sure a lot of these things are something that he would be aware of anyway.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of the things I just wanted to bring forth in regard to the legislation of Bill 7, The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. I think, in overall perspective of the bill, it is a continuation along the lines of what we, as a government, when we were in government under Premier Filmon and the former attorneys general, that law and order and the protection of people here in Manitoba are of primary concern and that the introduction of legislation to protect individuals or to make sure there is a reckoning of the laws that are being brought forth are adhered to and that there is not a flaunting of individuals by hiding around the fact of interpretation in regard to the law.

This piece of legislation may be going down that road of interpretation, and that type of interpretation does cause delays. It does cause anxiety. It does cause delays in the sense of finalization of some court cases. It can delay the finalization of monies that were realized. It can delay the interpretations that people who are looking for restitution can come about, and we would be concerned that some of these things may come about. So, with those words, Mr. Speaker, I will sit down now. I believe there are some of my other colleagues who would like to speak on this bill.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Lakeside—

Mr. Speaker: Order. If there are no other speakers, this bill has already been agreed to stand?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: So, if there are no other speakers?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, when this matter is again before the House, this bill will remain standing in the

name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

Bill 8—The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act (One-Tier Assistance for Rural and Northern Manitoba)

Mr. Speaker: Now, we will move on. Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick) concurrence and third reading of Bill 8, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act (One-Tier Assistance for Rural and Northern Manitoba), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there agreement for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa? *[Agreed]*

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): It is my pleasure to stand and add some comments to the debate on the third reading on Bill 8, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to go back in history a little bit and indicate that I was the minister of Family Services when we moved to a one-tier income assistance program in the city of Winnipeg. It took several years and a lot of negotiation and good will on behalf of both levels of government to come to an understanding around the benefits of a one-tiered system in Winnipeg. At the time of the discussions and the negotiations, certainly we did speak to those outside of the city of Winnipeg in cities and rural municipalities around options to move to a one-tier system outside of the city.

At the time, Mr. Speaker, I believe it was still the UMM, not the AMM, when we were having those discussions that indicated, at that time, there was no desire on their part to move to a one-tier system. They felt that, as municipalities, they had closer links and closer ties to the issues and the people within their community and that they were best able to deliver the social assistance program to the employable caseload and to couples without children. Those are the two groups that are impacted or affected by the one-tiered employment and income assistance programs.

Mr. Speaker, we moved cautiously and with much care to implement the system in the city of Winnipeg, and certainly, up front, offered to amalgamate the staff from the City of Winnipeg that had delivered the service previously under their jurisdiction to move. Those individuals who had the desire to move over to the Province, we offered them jobs and the opportunity to be a part of the new system.

Some came over on a temporary basis and found that it was not something they wanted to do and had the option of returning to the employ of the City of Winnipeg, as was negotiated. I think it has worked well in Winnipeg. Certainly, the rationale or the reasoning behind moving to a one-tier system was to have some standards in place to ensure there were not two levels of bureaucracy dealing with the social assistance program and that there was some consistency, not only in the salaries for the employees but in the services and supports that were available to social allowance recipients.

Along with that change to the one-tier system came, certainly, a stronger focus on work expectations, that if people were single and considered or deemed employable there was some expectation placed upon them, at the time we amalgamated to one-tier in Winnipeg, that they would take jobs that were available.

At the time of the implementation of the one-tier system, there were many companies begging for people to work. There were job opportunities posted on billboards and in front of businesses indicating: Now hiring, we have opportunity for people for employment.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, we had significantly high cases of single employable welfare recipients, social assistance recipients, that needed to be addressed and looked at.

So, Mr. Speaker, work expectations were placed on individuals and we changed the whole focus of how we delivered our employment and income assistance programs. If there were job opportunities available, people were expected to take those jobs. We went into a focus of pre-intake interviews asking people to look for, and offering them a list of, job opportunities that were available. They were expected, if at all possible, to take those jobs before they were enrolled in the program.

* (15:50)

We saw significant decreases in the caseloads as a result of a very strong focus. Our approach to employment and income assistance, of course, was to make sure those who needed the support, single parents and the disabled, certainly were treated differently than the single employable caseload. I think our approach, and our philosophy as a party, would be providing a hand up to individuals, not a hand out. That was a departure from what the former administration—or the approach that the administration before our government took.

Mr. Speaker, I think it was successful. I think today, still, as a result of the strict implementation of work expectations, we see the Government reaping the benefits, and the social assistance caseloads are down considerably from the time when we first came into government. I am pleased and I am proud that we did move in this direction.

Mr. Speaker, I look today and just even today to Question Period and some of the questions we asked about hydro rates increasing by next April. A year from now Manitobans will be expected to pay an extra 7.5 percent on their hydro bills as a result of this Government's initiative. I look at how that may impact our social assistance caseloads. They are on a very limited amount of money, and they certainly have not seen 7.5% increases in their welfare rates, but they are going to be expected to pay out 7.5% more on their hydro bills as a result of decisions this Government has made to take money out of Hydro, over \$200 million that has been taken from Hydro. We will see the poorest members in our society suffer the most.

In many of the accommodations that are available for those on fixed incomes, Mr. Speaker, like social assistance recipients, the heat in their accommodations is electric heat. Not only are they going to be paying on their light bills, but they are going to be paying on their heating bills an additional 7.5 percent.

I want to indicate this is not the kind of thing that was taken into consideration, I am sure, by this Government when they so recklessly raided the coffers of Manitoba Hydro and in essence penalized Manitobans. Those who are the poorest will be the ones who will suffer the most under this policy by this Government.

I think the whole exercise in moving to a one-tier employment and income assistance program has

been positive in many respects in the city of Winnipeg. It is only a natural progression that it should move to rural Manitoba and to cities outside of the city of Winnipeg. I know the Government today has been listening to and consulting with Manitobans. I know AMM has been supportive of this initiative.

I will, as I get into my comments, certainly raise some of the issues. I am not sure there is universal 100% support for this direction. I think municipalities in rural Manitoba, the cities outside of the city of Winnipeg, are indicating they do not necessarily today have the expertise in order to deliver the programs. They would like to see a fairer process under a one-tier system.

I would hope the Government today has gone through the process of negotiation as we did when we moved in Winnipeg to the one-tier system and has finalized, so there is not any fear in the minds of municipalities that they are going to be gouged or going to be expected to pay more than what is common sense under revenue neutrality.

I am not sure this Government has done their homework. I am not sure municipalities and cities outside the city of Winnipeg have the same comfort level they should have that this Government does not have some sort of a hidden agenda and that when the negotiations are finalized they will find out they are paying more than what they thought they would be paying under a cost-neutral, one-tier system.

I just want to read into the record certainly some comments that have been made by municipalities and by cities that might lead us to want to watch very carefully how this legislation is implemented. I know the majority of municipalities, as has been articulated by AMM, are supportive. You know what? They have received mixed messages from this Government. They received mixed messages when letters went out to the employees who are presently working for municipalities telling them they would have to apply through a competitive process to get the new jobs that would be created at the Province to deliver the employment and income assistance program.

When the Government was questioned, I think they have backed down a little bit from that position. They have indicated they will make every effort now to try to accommodate employees who formerly worked for municipalities. There is the level of

distrust, Mr. Speaker, because they have received two different messages from this Government and they have done basically a flip-flop on the issue.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities just still are not quite sure whether they can trust this Government in this province to be fair to the employees who are presently there. That was one of the biggest issues when we moved to a one-tier system in the city of Winnipeg. We ironed out all of those issues before we implemented any legislation, and I fear that has not been done by this Government as they move forward.

I know employees in the City of Winnipeg, some of them did come over to work for the Province, but decided after the fact that it was not really what they wanted to do, and they had an opportunity to go back and to work for the City of Winnipeg.

I am not sure whether those arrangements have been negotiated and have been made in this situation. I think it is critical that people are treated humanely and that they have some understanding of what their future might hold. So I hope the Government will try to assure that the details are worked out before they proclaim and implement this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there really is no reason for two levels of government to deliver the same program. I mean, social assistance is something that really is, in many instances, a provincial responsibility. We were very disheartened when we were in government. We know that prior to, I believe it was 1992 or 1993, the federal government picked up a significant portion of the costs of social assistance to those who had moved off of reserve and into our cities. All of a sudden, with the stroke of a pen and an announcement, the federal government withdrew their financial support for First Nations people moving off of reserve into the cities. It became a total provincial responsibility to pick up those costs. There were significant costs to the Treasury of the Province of Manitoba as a result.

* (16:00)

We have never forgotten that but we also do know that the federal government over the years has continued to offload its costs and its support on social programs, education, health and social services. It certainly has become an increasing burden to the provincial Treasury to provide the supports

that had formerly been provided by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, some of the concerns that were raised, or have been raised—and I do want to indicate, too, that the majority of clients that do receive social assistance or employment and income assistance are those who reside within the city of Winnipeg. I know there are several municipalities, 185 municipalities, I believe, outside of the city of Winnipeg that deliver social assistance.

In some instances it is just a handful or less of individuals who are receiving municipal assistance in some municipalities. I guess the majority of those outside of the city of Winnipeg would be in Brandon, Thompson and Swan River, and I believe Portage la Prairie, too. Those are the areas that would have the biggest concern about what is going to be happening to the staff as we move to a one-tier system.

Mr. Speaker, some of the comments certainly have been extremely positive. I would venture to guess that AMM has done its homework. The resolution that was passed overwhelmingly at their convention does indicate that most municipalities are supportive. I guess we just want to ensure that, as the process unfolds, they are not disappointed, that they are not disappointed with this Government and their ability to negotiate a fair and reasonable process, so that in fact municipalities are indeed better off as a result and people are better served as a result.

Mr. Speaker, the whole premise of moving to a one-tier system is indeed to make sure that it is cost neutral. There are some communities out there, specifically the City of Thompson, that have shared information which indicates it is going to cost them more, not less, as a result of the changes. They are indicating at this point in time that they may be looking at an extra \$58,000 more than what they spent in the year 2002 to deliver these programs. Their concern is that they will just be sent that annual bill without really being involved in the process of determining how that money would be spent.

The mayor of the City of Thompson indicates there certainly have been benefits to the city in running its own social assistance program. They felt they, over the years, had been able to reduce costs by running the program and are not really sure, with the

Province taking over the system in Thompson, that it is going to run more efficiently.

Some in Thompson have some concern that the Province might have municipalities pay for the cost of social assistance for people who have moved off reserve. This is an issue that certainly they should be concerned about. I know the federal government off-loaded onto the provinces several years ago. I would hope the Province would not do the same and offload onto the municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, we did, about 10 years ago I guess it was, pick up the costs of social assistance recipients off reserve. They just want to be assured that the Province now is not going to offload that onto the municipalities, because we do know that this Government is in a cash crunch. They have spent much more, I think it is about a billion dollars more, since they came into office than the budget was some four years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that we are seeing any significant positive results or benefits to the citizens of Manitoba as a result. We do know also that this Government traditionally has difficulty managing its resources. It has a philosophy that, you know, it is not my money, I have deep pockets, and we are a government that can help everyone and be all things to all people.

Well, we know that you cannot run your household that way. Yet this Government seems to be very much focussed on spending more than it takes in, running deficits, and ultimately we always seem to be the option or the alternative when the Province is bankrupt. They turf out a New Democratic government and put in someone who will manage the affairs of the Province more fiscally than the NDP ever did.

People in Brandon who have been involved in the social services department have expressed concern about their employees. The Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) has, I believe, given her word that those employees who are presently working for the City of Brandon will have the option of taking the jobs that will be created in the Province. We will be watching very closely to make sure that those employees are looked after.

They also have some concerns about the clients who are receiving social assistance today and want to

be assured that, as they transfer individual cases from city social services to provincial social services, those people will not fall through the cracks and they will receive the kind of treatment they deserve when dealing with the bureaucracy. We will be watching very carefully and listening to those who will be moved to try to ensure that the transition is smooth and that they are treated with respect through the process.

There are several different communities that are concerned about the transition and the staffing issues. We are hoping that all will go smoothly. On the whole, I think most municipalities are looking forward to working in a co-operative way with the Province to make sure this whole transition process works smoothly. There are some though in smaller communities who have been delivering small numbers of services to a small number of people, who are a little concerned that people may have to travel to larger centres like Brandon or Thompson in order to receive the services or to fill out the papers. It might be somewhat of an inconvenience without the local knowledge in a community to deliver the supports and services. I am hoping that this whole process will work in a very positive way.

I think, all in all, a one-tier system should be and certainly can be a more effective process. It should be able to streamline the services that are available for social assistance recipients.

*(16:10)

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not talk a bit about some of the programs that we did implement and put in place to benefit and to better the lives and to try to move people off welfare into the workforce. The supports that we put in place for single parents through the Taking Charge! program, I know there were several individuals, single moms, who had an opportunity to become educated or trained in a certain field. There was nothing more moving than going to a graduation of a group of single parents who had taken the training and had their children there at their graduation services when they had finished their training program and were entering the workforce. The pride was very evident, and they were some of the most moving experiences that I had as a minister of Family Services.

I am glad to see that, in many instances, the Government has chosen to continue some of the

programming that was put in place like BabyFirst and EarlyStart to ensure that the mentorship, the support and the resources were in place for low income and single moms to ensure that their babies got off to a healthy start to life.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that the first three months of a child's life are the most critical in the developmental stage. I was just talking to a worker in the BabyFirst program, just as late as last week, who indicated there was nothing that was more rewarding than to see a family and work with and mentor a family over a period of one to two to three years and see the difference that it does make in a family's life and in a child's life when they get off to a healthy start to life.

So I am proud of some of the accomplishments. I am looking forward to seeing this bill pass. It is what the municipalities want. We will be watching very carefully to make sure this Government does implement the process with dignity for the clients and with respect for the staff that are involved.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I would like to add a few comments relative to the implementation, or the finalization, if you will, of the implementation of one-tier social assistance across the province.

I recall that, when this debate first began, particularly with the City of Winnipeg, one of the main criteria was efficient delivery of service, not that the City could not do it efficiently, but there was a differential in cost for a variety of reasons. Certainly, my colleague is far too modest when she says that it took some work and that she is pleased and proud to see that things are now moving along.

Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair

In fact, it was a very difficult negotiation, at least from the perspective of time, to get to where the one-tier system could be administered through the City of Winnipeg. I want to express a little bit of frustration. I see shock and horror on the faces of the members of the Government, but the fact is that a few years ago the municipalities of rural Manitoba were not interested in one-tier social assistance.

They made a very strong argument about why locally administered welfare, to use the bluntest possible terms, was more efficient, because they understood the situation, but it also had its drawbacks.

Those drawbacks were that perhaps there were people whose privacy was not properly protected, people who may not have received the assistance in a way or in a timely manner they might have felt they were entitled to.

At the same time, this was a balance that the municipalities were trying to achieve, and they had their very strong view. I, not too long ago, had a conversation with some of the senior executives of the municipal association. I expressed to them, much as I just did now, my concern about what had happened.

Their response was, well, people change. I suspect that some of the councillors changed as well. They changed their view more to the appropriateness of the delivery. In talking to some of the chief financial officers, or the operating officers, as they should be known, I guess, they expressed a concern that they were ill-equipped and not necessarily as well trained as some of them would have wanted to be to deliver a program such as this.

So it is with some, I was going to say with some interest, but it is more than with some interest, it is with considerable interest that I watched the process this Government brings this bill forward with. We saw the ethanol bill, where the Minister of Energy (Mr. Sale), you know, he was my best buddy there for a little while because this energy bill, the ethanol bill, required some careful attention. He was on an agenda that he wanted to get it pushed through as quickly as he could in order to access funds from Ottawa.

We felt there were ways he could have managed the legislative process better. He could have been on the ball back in the spring.

Well, I see a bit of a *laissez-faire* attitude toward this bill. It is moving forward. I have not personally, unless my House leader has, received any overtures from the Government about the urgency of getting this bill moved forward, but in fact there is some urgency in getting it done because we are going into a new fiscal year for the municipalities out there. It probably would be only fair and reasonable to have this settled and properly laid out from a legislative perspective, so they can get on with their life and the Province of Manitoba can get on with assuming the responsibilities that it now intends to assume.

In that context, I would have to say that my philosophy has moved somewhat, more from along

the same lines as the change in the philosophy of the association of municipalities, and that is that it would be appropriate to have professional delivery of the services, rather than leaving this on the shoulders of the COOs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is also interesting that, as the municipalities evolve, and some of them are putting more and more responsibility on the backs of their chief operating officer, they are recognizing that there are some areas of responsibility that can be delegated, that can be shed, if you will, in respect to bringing in professional people who are properly trained and who do this sort of work on an ongoing basis and provide this service in an appropriate manner to those who need it.

I ask the Government, I hope that they are now on a path to move this through officially so that the municipalities can get on with their lives. I assume that is why I am standing here speaking to it. I find it interesting that I have not had any overtures from anyone in Government, or of the urgency that might or might not be related to this. I think we are reaching a time when the time bands are tightening, and this legislation needs to be in place for the municipalities to get on with their lives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the dividing up of the ongoing responsibilities that the municipalities will have, I note there has been some divergence of opinion between some of the cities across rural Manitoba versus some of the smaller municipalities, on whether or not they believe this is an appropriate and a cost-effective direction to move.

* (16:20)

I am assuming the Government has negotiated appropriately in order to arrive at what is a, for example, Thompson, pretty significant cost that is going to be associated with their ongoing responsibilities. Same in Brandon, Portage to a lesser extent. So, in the absence of ongoing concerns from those municipalities about the direction the Government has moved on this, other than the concerns my colleague has already expressed, it appears the municipalities are willing to, if not fall in line, they are at least willing to co-operate and to see this process move forward.

I cannot give up this opportunity which I am pretty sure will be my only opportunity to speak on

this bill, particularly at this stage, to say that this has been, I think, about 10 years unfolding since this concept was first put in front of the City of Winnipeg; 10 years to move to where the objective of the Government at that time now being completed by a government of a different philosophy but still following through with the concept that it would be possible to have an efficient delivery system by moving to this model.

To that extent, we are trusting that the Government has negotiated in good faith, and that those municipalities who feel somewhat offended or perhaps have not had their concerns fully addressed, that they can continue to work with this Government.

The one thing that is puzzling about this legislation in the stage that it is at right now is to find out that this Government went along for so long in discussion with these municipalities, the larger cities in rural Manitoba, without getting into the debate about what was going to happen to the staff. That was the first and most important issue on the table with the City of Winnipeg, as I recall. They were very concerned about the departmental staff and where they might land, in terms of employment and future opportunities, as this moved through.

As I understand the discussions that went on with this Government when it was brought to their attention, the responsible people said: We had not thought about that.

I frankly cannot believe that they had not thought about it. If they had, it would be worse if I believed that they had thought about it and deliberately avoided talking about it. That would constitute some kind of a motive. I do not think we need to debate that at this juncture.

It is an interesting difference between the way the negotiations unfolded with the City of Winnipeg, as difficult and as long a path as that was, and the negotiations that have unfolded over the last year, in the main one year, with dozens of different entities in rural Manitoba, ultimately coming to the same conclusion, to be part of the province-wide system. I will leave my remarks there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The matter will be retained under the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

Bill 13—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resume debate on concurrence and third reading on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson) on Bill 13, The Public Schools Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

We need some leave to let the matter stand in the name of the honourable Member for Russell.
[Agreed]

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the privilege to get up and speak on Bill 13. I think every member in this House should view the opportunity to speak on legislation, especially important legislation like this, as a privilege. I know in the last election many citizens put their names forward to be able to represent their various communities. Alas, elections are such that, in the end, only 57 of us are given the privilege to represent their communities and put comments on the record.

I was one of those, for the second time, to be able to represent my community, the community of Springfield, which, as I am sure you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, comprises the R.M. of Springfield and the R.M. of East St. Paul, wonderful communities, and I know they appreciate it very much when their member gets up and deals with the issues at hand with important legislation that will affect, not just their lives but the lives of future generations.

I do wish to put a few comments on the record. Education has always been very near and dear to my heart. I had the opportunity to be in Dugald, Manitoba, in "I Love to Read" month and gave a couple of stories to the children about how important it is to read. In fact, I pointed out to them I knew of a young boy years ago who was raised in a household where the feeling was that a television was not the best thing for a young mind, that you were better off to read because you got a lot more out of it. This young boy, it was a country school where he attended, would take home stacks of books, particularly on weekends, and would read them and read amazing stories, history and mystery and all kinds of stories, and learned to love reading and what could be learned from books. He went on and used that to get himself through university and got a degree and later

on ran for public office. As I pointed out to students, yes, their MLA was that young boy who learned to love reading.

Education is important. It is important for everyone. I believe you judge a modern society, you judge a strong society on its ability to educate its young people. In fact, I had the opportunity to read a book just recently called *Caesar Against the Celts*, just a fascinating book about the whole history of Julius Caesar and his ability to wage campaigns, but one of the things about him is he was a very educated individual and appreciated education.

One of the things he did is he would put together teams of learned men and women and he would have them figure out how they could better themselves, how they could better take on the opponent. He would do things in campaigns that were absolutely shocking to the opposition. They would literally throw down their swords and their shields and would run from the battlefield because he just had such a way about him. That was because at that time he had the opportunity, because he was part of the elite, to have a good education.

Today, of course, things are different. When I was a school trustee I used to point out that a hundred and some years ago things were not the way they are today. Universal education was not a standard; it was not *modus operandi*. If you were lucky you got some education. Unfortunately, many did not and a lot of people ended up barely being able to sign their names.

I remember years ago when it used to be you would have a legal document and the person would come in and they did not even know how to sign their name. The name would be written for them. What they would have to do is they would have to just put an X beside their name, meaning that they agreed to the legal document. That was their signature.

*(16:30)

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, education is important. It is as important today as it was back then. In fact, it used to be that, I believe, it was up to Grade 6 and then up to Grade 9 was considered a good education. We have now moved way beyond that. Grade 12 is considered a minimum. Post-secondary education, whether it be Red River College, a trade school,

university, or whatever education you choose, one of the other colleges, it is important, not just for the individual, and primarily for the individual, because everything can be taken away from you. Your home can be taken away, your wealth can be taken away, lots of things can be taken away, but the education, what you have learned in those early years of development, that is something that cannot be taken away from you.

I felt very strongly about the whole education field. In 1995, I sat down with my wife, Tanya, and we talked about what we were going to do in the next years to come. Of course we were planning then to have a family. In fact, our first child was on its way.

So I said, you know, I really would like to run for school trustee. I would like to have an effect on change today for our children of the future, because, as we know, things that we deal with today are not necessarily immediate for today, they are things that take effect later on.

I did that. I took the opportunity and I spent six weeks. I started the first week in September. In fact, our first daughter was born on September 1, 1995. I keep pointing out to her she was nice enough to be born so that we could get her into our brochure. Our first brochure has this little four-day-old baby proudly sitting on our laps, and away I went. I went door to door speaking to parents, to citizens, individuals in the community—it was Ward 4 in the River East School Division—talking about things that were important to me, but more importantly hearing what people had to say about education.

If you ever want to have an education, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in itself, going door to door is certainly an education in its own right.

I learned from my community. I learned from parents. I learned from parents who had children in university, parents who had young children and grandparents. I learned also from individuals who did not have children at that time about how important they felt the education system was, not just their children, but also to society.

As I mentioned, not just is education important to the child, which it is, because it is something that cannot be taken away, but it is also very important for society. We have to ensure that the knowledge base and the things that have been learned, that we

continue to build on those things and move our society forward because that is the best way we ensure the kind of modern society that we have today. That is how we ensure the kind of greatness that we have been able to achieve over the years, that it is continued.

My respect, for instance, for the Jewish community is incredibly great, because it is a community that learned and respected education. I have met families where they have literally hundreds and hundreds of years of experience, which is passed on in the form of education and has made them very successful, very bright and movers and shakers in our communities. That is important. We have to make sure that we keep passing on what we know and what we learn.

In fact, I do not have the exact dates handy, but I believe it was, at one point in time, in the Chinese dynasties where the feeling was that everything that could possibly be learned, had been learned, and nothing more could possibly be learned. The feeling was that they had hit the wall and that was basically when the Chinese dynasty began to crumble and go backward. You can always learn, you can always improve, and that is what our public system and our post-secondary system has been able to do for us.

Of course, I ran in 1995 and was elected at that time, and got onto the school board of the River East School Division and had an opportunity to learn about how our divisions are run and the issues that affect our communities and affect our schools and our school divisions. I was able to get input from the public.

My first year I sat on the education and policy committee—which for me was just such a learning experience because exactly what this bill is dealing with, are some of the issues that we used to debate, used to talk about it, education and policy.

At that time I had the opportunity to sit with some of the just great, great individuals of our community: Helen Mayba who was the trustee. She is not there any longer. Wayne Ritcher, who is now chairman of River East School Division. Bob Fraser, who clearly taught me a lot. Vicki Lazaruk. I always have to think about Gail Scheer, who had just incredible heart and an incredible understanding of the special needs area. She was just an incredible asset, and, of course, she stepped down already. Brian Olynik and

myself and Peter Kotyk and John O'Grodnik, of course, from East St. Paul.

Together, we would spend long, long hours talking, not just about the budgetary issues, because special needs is an area that has had probably the strongest growth in the education system.

A lot of issues that come up with special needs, I think, we are starting to understand. At some point in time, we used to feel that a child was just misbehaving. You know, you just needed some discipline and that was how they would smarten up. What we have come to realize is that these individuals, these children, are, in fact, suffering from an ailment that just recently had been able to be identified.

With some kind of treatment, with a little help and encouragement, with a bit of professional support, we are able to move these children along in their educational career. So, certainly, my first year on education and policy and with my colleagues on the River East board of directors, we just had an incredible time to not just get presentations from the administration—and, of course, I might be little bit biased here, but the administration in the River East School Division was just second to none.

I loved dealing with our superintendent's department and, of course, the principals and the vice principals, the teachers and resource people. Just unbelievable, the standard and the quality in the River East School Division and, to this day, with great pride, I talk about my years as a school trustee in River East School Division.

We had the opportunity to bring forward a lot of community members, a lot of community groups, who would share with us the difficulties of their students, and then we were able to talk about the successes of the various programs. I think it is important that we talk not just about what the needs are, but that we also talk about what the successes are.

I had the opportunity to go into the various schools. Of course, Kildonan East Collegiate comes to mind. An incredible program, what they would do with some of the students, because if we start to take our traditional thinking when it comes to special needs, we do a disservice to the programming. One of the things that they would do in this particular program is, they would take students and they would take them in the morning and give them bus fare.

They would go to the bus stop, get on the bus, go downtown, do some grocery shopping, get back on the bus, come back to school, cook a meal, and the students then would go home.

What they found is that, by doing this on a regular basis, by teaching them, I think it was called independent living, teaching them how to handle elementary money transactions, how to open up a chequing and savings account, how the banks work, where a bank was, for instance, how you approached a teller, all of those things which we would just take for absolute granted that anybody and everybody would know were not the case for these students.

* (16:40)

By the time these students graduated, and of course they had their own graduation ceremonies and still do, they would get a Grade 12 certificate. Maybe it was not in the same way that we would know it as, perhaps not the same way as we would appreciate a Grade 12 certificate, but they would get their graduation certificate and very proudly.

I was at some graduation ceremonies where they would come up on stage beaming, just beaming, proud and pleased with themselves, as they should have been, and just ecstatic that they were getting their graduation certificate and they had learned something. They then got jobs. Often they get jobs, whether in law offices or they get jobs in various buildings, and they participate and they are given pride in themselves. They get a sense of accomplishment, and that is what our public education system was able to do for them. It is able to give them a sense of being a contributor to society.

In fact, we used to always talk about how important they were, how important what they were doing was to society. They actually get paid for these jobs, and they live on their own and they are taught how to live independently. Then, of course, once in a while, periodically, somebody checks up on them, whether it is a family member or a social worker. That is where the success end comes of what we are trying to do with our public education system.

In years gone by, these individuals would, if I could use the term, basically rot. They would not have any education. They would not be given any life skills, and either would be institutionalized or be marginalized on the fringes and become burdens,

basically. What we were able to do, and what other divisions have been able to do—and school divisions across this province, who should be commended for the kind of work that they have done with a lot of our special needs students, are to be commended.

I know that I was at teas and functions where students who were very physically challenged, who years ago would have been, perhaps, institutionalized or again marginalized, were now in the schools, and I can remember that I was at one function as a school trustee in one of the schools and how proudly this young lady, who did not have a lot of motor skills but had this beautiful wheelchair, somehow held on to this cup of tea and brought this cup of tea to me. It was just a really, really big deal for this student. It was a really big deal, that she was going to bring one of the school trustees a cup of tea, and just so proud of herself.

You know, I took the tea and had the opportunity to speak to her, and she communicated to me how happy she was with life, how happy she was that she was in school and how happy she was with the education she was getting. I asked her: How do you, for instance, read a book? How do you change a page? Well, she said, you know what, if I cannot quite do it, I just ask somebody and they just flip the page for me and I keep reading.

I sat and I looked at this student, and I thought, you know, not just are you learning but what a learning experience, what an opportunity for other students to understand and appreciate that we do not all have the same learning abilities, whether we have physical difficulties or otherwise. It was just such a great opportunity to experience something really beautiful. I know this young lady has moved on. I believe now she is in Senior 1 or Senior 2; she might even be in Senior 3, I do not know—just moving up. I suspect she will go on to post-secondary education, and I think she is going to be an incredible voice in our community, producing and being productive and being happy about where she is and having a sense of fulfilment and accomplishment.

That is where we have to go. I mean that, clearly, that is where we have to be going with our education system. I know of a lot of paras who are hired to give extra support for special needs. I know, in a lot of instances, where children came into our school system in River East School Division, diapered, insular, had no communication skills and,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, within a year they were able to teach these children such life skills.

I know that in the instance of this one young man he could already communicate verbally, and it was a communication problem, would communicate when he had certain bodily needs. He would communicate that, and they had him communicate in such a fashion that everybody understood what he was trying to say, just the dignity that was given to this young individual. He is doing incredibly well. I think that is very important, that we understand what it is that these students need and move on from there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Mexico, in Puerto Vallarta, there is a program called Children of the Dump. About five years ago, six years ago, a group went and somebody had pointed out to them that there were families, entire families, children that were opening up the garbage and were eating out of the garbage. It was just so repulsive that a lot of individuals got together and they built a school. I had the opportunity to go out and view the school. They feed the children. They have now convinced the Mexican government to put a fence around the dump, that nobody is allowed access except for those who are, of course, dumping.

I had the opportunity to see the homes that are still there. They are really working hard to improve the homes. I had an opportunity to go see the school, of course, nothing to what we are used to. I took my children along and what an opportunity to give a real lesson to our children that not everybody has the same opportunities we have.

When I come back and I come to this Chamber and I see the kind of legislation, the kind of thought-out legislation and the kinds of things we are trying to do, certainly, the years that I spent on the school board—I came back and I knew in my heart that every minute that I spent, those late nights that we spent debating issues and making sure that we got it absolutely right or as close to perfect as we could were well-spent moments, that it was appropriate for us to do that because many, and, I would say, probably most, children in the world do not have these opportunities we have.

It is so important that we do things for everybody in our community to bring up the standard. My former leader and Premier, Gary Filmon, used to say

that we do not want to give a handout, we want to give a hand up. I think that is what we want to do to our students, especially those who have difficulties in learning.

I mentioned earlier on that the para-professionals that we have throughout our school system do just amazing work, just incredible work, with special needs students. They can take a child who would, at one point in time, have been termed a problem child, and they can make such a difference out of these children, put them into a system.

It is just amazing. It is so heartwarming when you see the kind of programming that goes in. I give, first and foremost, the school trustees and the school boards a lot of credit for having had the vision to deal with the programming, and the superintendent's department.

I know in my case, I had the opportunity to work with George Wall and then Henry Kojima as superintendents, just outstanding leaders, just outstanding individuals, who understood what had to be done in education, who pushed for programming in special needs, who felt that, when there was a loophole or if there was an area that was not covered off enough, we would make sure that the appropriate resources be put in there even if it meant that we had to curtail other areas, but that we made sure we had our children properly educated and moved on.

*(16:50)

In fact, I am sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know about the Knowles school that was built, the new one that was built in the River East School Division. I was on the board at that time, when we built the new school for the Knowles Centre. Again, there is a different need. These are students that have flight risk, have behavioural problems. The school is basically a semi-lockdown facility. But the feeling is, and the feeling was, from our board and certainly from the Knowles school, that it was still important for those students to be given an education.

In fact, I, of course, am not allowed to divulge some of the instances or some of the students and their backgrounds, but they made it really clear to us that the longer these students stayed in an education environment, the less of a flight risk they became. As they got older and they got into education and they started to understand what the world was all about,

you know, in a lot of instances, these children came literally out of hellish environments, just horrible environments. They were put into this environment and given the ability to learn without having to fear for life or limb or physically and were fed properly, and it took awhile, but slowly they caught on that this was the way that they were going to turn their lives around. It was amazing.

Of course, I had the opportunity to have a tour through the facility. In fact, when I became chairman of the Education and Policy Committee in River East School Division, I convinced my colleagues that we would have one of our meetings right at the Knowles school, and that is what we did. We went right into the school and held a meeting, and it was just wonderful, and I got to know a lot of the board.

They explained to us how important it was that these students not fall through the education net and then just basically go into a free fall, that they be given a grounding, that they be given something that they can take with them, they be given tools that they can take with them into further life.

So, as I had the opportunity to travel around the school division, first as a trustee and then as a chair of one of the committees and then later as chair of the River East School Division, I came to appreciate what it was that we were doing and what was being done in education for students who really, through no fault of their own, were at risk for whatever reason, whether it was for health or because of circumstances in their individual homes. So I find that the education system has done a really good job. It has done a terrific job in ensuring that those at risk are taken care of.

In fact, I know from my years of being involved in retail how often we would have an outing of children in a very severe state of physical handicap in their wheelchairs come through the stores, and they used to do it on Monday mornings when they knew things would be really slow. They would always be very sensitive to that. They would bring the students through, and they would spend a lot of time in the store talking about different things and allowing them to see different things and give them a real human experience, an opportunity to get out and see the world. I always felt that that was just a wonderful thing. Of course, especially in the winter, Monday mornings were not exactly our biggest time

for doing retail. So we always appreciated the fact that they were bringing these students through.

So, clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we look forward to this bill going to committee. We look forward to hearing what the community has to say about it. I know there is a problem here with the divide between the Government wanting everything and not putting the proper money in it. We know this Government has starved the education system for cash in the worst way, so we certainly are going to be looking at what kind of supports the Government is going to give the education system to make sure that the good things that are being done and the good things that still need to be done are properly funded. So, on that note, I wish to allow someone else to have the opportunity to get up and put a few words on the record. I thank this House for this privilege and opportunity.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, just assuming that concludes debate today on Bill 13, would you call Bill 17 next under adjourned debates on second reading.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 17—The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming adjourned debate on second reading, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), Bill 17, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that it will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden? *[Agreed]*

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I would like to put a few comments on the record on Bill 17, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act.

This bill has been through first and second reading, has been to committee stage, and is back

now into the Legislature for third reading, which is the final step. Oh, I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

An Honourable Member: Second reading.

Mrs. Mitchelson: This bill is here for—I thought it had already been through the committee process. I was a little mixed up with this bill and another one. But it is here in the Legislature today for second reading before it goes to committee stage, where members of the public will have an opportunity to present before elected officials their support or their issues of concern around this legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does in fact strengthen an existing piece of legislation and expands the categories of people eligible to seek protection under the act to include persons in dating relationships and family members who have never lived together. It amends the evidentiary requirements for granting a protection order, allowing them in more situations. The person that has been impacted is no longer required to satisfy the justice of the peace that an order is required for the subject's immediate protection, as long as it is needed for their imminent protection.

* (17:00)

Protection orders, unless extended by a justice of the peace, expire automatically now after a maximum of three years, and mere compliance with a protection order is no longer enough to show that there is not a continuing need for protection. The court may make an order requiring the respondent to pay compensation to the subject of any monetary losses, including loss of income, legal fees, and expenses related to moving, counselling and security measures.

The court may also make an order requiring the respondent to obtain counselling or therapy. We look forward to seeing this bill move forward and to comments that might come from the public in Manitoba around this legislation. Certainly, we believe on this side of the House that legislation that does improve the circumstances surrounding domestic violence and stalking is welcome if, in fact, it puts the proper checks and balances in place to ensure that those issues do not continue to dominate in society. So we look forward, as always, to ensure that as things evolve, the proper protections continue to be enhanced. It looks, certainly, on the surface that this

legislation is something that does move us in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate, as we look at March 8 as International Women's Day, that we do discuss some of the issues around violence against women and talk about where we have been, where we have come from and where we are going. I think governments, regardless of political stripe, do want to ensure that members of our society who might be more vulnerable are protected from, certainly, the issues of domestic violence and stalking.

Mr. Speaker, I know that in our 11 years as government we have come a long way and, certainly, put a lot of new programs, a lot of new supports in place for women that had been victims of domestic violence. I am pleased to note that the campaign on domestic violence that was implemented when we were in government continues to run on an ongoing basis. I have seen the posters and the pamphlets and the ads that were developed back in the late 1990s. They are still applicable today. So we do know that even when governments change, if there has been a good idea and there has been something that has been implemented, we can often build upon those things rather than completely changing the direction that we have been going.

Mr. Speaker, I know through successive ministers of Family Services, ministers responsible for the Status of Women that we worked extremely hard to put in place new initiatives when we were in government.

We, at the time, in the late 1990s, Mr. Speaker, had funded agencies offering support services to women and their children, and were known across the country to have the best crisis shelter system in Canada. Second-stage housing, which had been put in place while we were government, recognized the needs for varying degrees of support after an initial crisis. We did implement a dedicated Family Violence Court, a Land Titles protected name registry, a family violence policy and procedures manual developed in consultation with the province's police services, a women's advocacy program to assist women who are going to court in cases of family violence, and an aggressive prosecutions policy on domestic violence. These are things that we were

extremely proud of, Mr. Speaker, and I think, to the benefit of many Manitoba families, some of the new initiatives were welcome and were well used.

In 1996, Mr. Speaker, the Women's Directorate, in partnership with CIBC and our police services, launched a province-wide safety campaign entitled "Keeping Safe at Work." This initiative targeted employees that were working alone, as well as individuals traveling alone to and from work. It was at that time and, I believe, still is a common sense approach for employers and employees to assess their workplace, to maximize safety, and to minimize crime.

We certainly also were proud of the fact that in Winnipeg we had the opportunity to put in place a Children's Access Agency, which provided safe, supervised visitation and exchange services for families caught up in the cycle of violence.

Mr. Speaker, we were also proud of the fact that, in the spring of 1999, the Victims First Cell Phone Program was expanded outside of Winnipeg. It provided those that were in extreme danger or at high risk of stalking or domestic violence with a phone that they could carry with them at all times to contact emergency services with a touch of a button if they felt that they were in jeopardy.

These are some of the things that we take pride in having introduced in the province. I know that the Government today continues to be extremely vigilant and continues to look for new ways to protect women and others that are in a situation of domestic violence or that have been stalked.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome changes that the Government would make to ensure that we continue to move forward. The issues around domestic violence never stand still. There is always more that can be done. It does not matter whether we are the first in the country or whether we look to other examples of where things have worked. If, in fact, there are new ideas, if through consultation and through experience government realizes that there are further steps and measures that need to be taken, I think it is important that we all work together to ensure that we continue to move forward.

So, although I am proud of a lot of the things that we implemented in our 11 years as government and the significant increase in funding to deal with

issues of domestic violence and stalking, that this Government continues to move in a positive direction, I welcome the new initiatives that are being undertaken. I hope that we will continue to work across party lines to ensure that we move forward in a positive direction and support those who are vulnerable within our society and help them to try, as much as possible, to adjust to a normal life and deal with some of the issues that have been devastating and will leave, I know, permanent marks on them.

Mr. Speaker, we know, in fact, that a lot of support, a lot of services, a lot of counselling needs to go in to making sure that women and children who have experienced—families where there has been domestic violence—we know that they will need ongoing support. They will need ongoing counselling. I hope that all of us would look to trying to ensure that, as new ideas come forward, we are there to support them both with words and with actions.

With those few comments, I look forward to representation from the public in Manitoba around this legislation. Let us hope that, as we move forward, new initiatives and new ideas and new support will come forward as we learn from the experiences that are taking place today.

Mr. Speaker: Any other member?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill, today, brought forward by our Attorney General as we, as a government, move forward on issues of concern around family violence and, certainly, violence in general.

This being International Women's Day, it is with somewhat mixed feelings that we discuss this issue. Because, in discussing it we have to acknowledge that it certainly does exist and that while we have come a long distance there is a further way to go. I believe that this bill will strongly help us move forward in those issues.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased, as minister, to report that between 1999 and 2000 and the '03-04 year that this Government has increased monies for shelters, resource centres, crisis lines and second-stage housing by a total of 57 percent. This total is \$9.9 million in the '03-04 year. So I thank my predecessors, the Honourable Tim Sale and Drew Caldwell, in the efforts that they have put forward.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would just like to remind all honourable members, when addressing another honourable member, it is ministers by their portfolios and other members by their constituencies. Just a reminder to all members of the House.

* (17:10)

Ms. Melnick: Okay, I stand corrected, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) and the honourable Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale).

Mr. Speaker, we have made a real commitment to improving services. Through improving services we have also worked with the service providers. This, perhaps, is in some contrast to the previous administration which barely kept pace with the rates of inflation and, I am sad to say, the federal Liberals, who have unloaded, systematically, responsibility for programs against family violence prevention.

On this day \$7 million is awarded for the whole country of Canada, which is quite a sad statement to make. The Department of Family Services and Housing provides funding to over 33 agencies throughout the whole province. We assist families affected by domestic violence. This does include 10 women's shelters, four residential second-staging housing programs, women's resource centres, urban support programs, as well as a number of specialized programs.

We have 24-hour crisis lines. Several women are able to use our services both within their home communities as well as communities beyond. We know that sometimes an issue of domestic violence is an issue of feeling shame by the victim, and needing to go beyond their own community. So we have made available, throughout the province, accessibility to women in many ways.

I would like to congratulate the Family Violence Prevention Program folks for the commitment they have shown through these years and through the developments that they have brought to life here.

Our women's shelters provide short-term emergency accommodations and supportive counselling to women and their children who are victims of family violence. This means that families can go to a safe place. They can be in a safe environment, and

they can be treated with the care and respect that they need to begin their long process of healing.

Our nine women's resource centres provide information and referral, individual counselling, outreach and support groups to women affected by domestic violence. As well, they have taken on the task of educational programs, volunteer training and community development activities.

Mr. Speaker, I have done volunteer work with various women's organizations. I can tell you that change in society comes from a dedicated group of people called volunteers who show up because they believe that things have to change. They get the training that they need to make sure that they will be providing the skills needed for the people who are coming in to use their services. They often show up week after week, month after month and year after year. I congratulate the volunteers in the various groups who have come forward to work with people who are victims of domestic violence.

Our four residential second-stage housing programs offer protective, affordable, long-term housing for women who are leaving abusive relationships but have extensive needs. We, in the Government, know that leaving an abusive situation is one thing; staying away from that situation is quite another. Women and families need support on an ongoing basis to ensure that they will have the courage and the strength, and, sometimes, just the basic needs of somewhere to go at the end of the day, or somewhere to feel safe during the night. That is what our second-stage housing programs do very well.

We have six urban support programs that provide individualized counselling through open and closed support groups, longer-term counselling services, and training to other service providers and public education. So, you can see, we have taken a multi-faceted approach to ending family violence.

Mr. Speaker, we also have the men's resource centre. This is one of three resource centres across the country of Canada that are dedicated to working with men who have often suffered family violence in their youth and who have the courage to step forward and say "no more." The real importance of the men's resource centre is that we are acknowledging publicly that not only do we deal with victims of family violence but we also work with people, sometimes

the perpetrators, who are saying "enough," we want to break the cycle.

Mr. Speaker, we do not want to keep dealing only with the victims. We want to end the victimization of people and maybe, one day, we will reach a point where there will not be more victims of family violence. So I applaud all the people who we have working throughout our province, working very hard on many levels against family violence.

We work very broadly with the community. We work with the RCMP, with the AFM, friendship centres and child welfare, all these relevant stakeholders in preventing family violence and in helping people come forward in situations of family violence to be treated with the respect they need on their long journey.

Mr. Speaker, we also actively participate in Domestic Violence Prevention Month, which is in November. This year, the Family Violence Prevention Program initiated the following activities: There was a large-scale mailout of brochures and posters which were developed during the previous public awareness campaign. They again were sent to the major stakeholders, the hospitals, RCMP, medical service units, public libraries and a number of other community service agencies.

Mr. Speaker, the transit shelter posters were used, which were very effective in helping people realize they may be the victim, but it was not their fault. These were sent out across Manitoba wherever there were public transportation shelters to be found. *Promises Aren't The Only Things That Get Broken* is a pamphlet that I see, as Minister of Family Services and Housing, as I go to various events in communities throughout our province. We often get requests needing more. So it is a very effective brochure for us to have.

I think one of the most effective items that we handed out this year was the button at the end of the month which talked about peace beginning at home. There is a very clear message in that we are all responsible for peace within our homes and peace within our communities, and certainly peace within our province.

It is my hope that this House will show clear support for this bill, because it is a clear and public statement that we, as a province, regardless of where

we sit on the sides of this House, that we, as a province, are committed to ending family violence, and we, as a province, are committed with moving forward and taking the steps that we will need to end that family violence. So I urge all members of the House to support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I rise today just to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 17, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act.

I believe that this legislation is important, and it recognizes the need to be ever-expanding the tools at our disposal to deal with domestic violence and stalking. This bill builds upon legislation introduced by the Filmon government, in May of 1998, that provided civil remedies to those dealing with the issues of domestic violence and stalking. The former PC government led the way across Canada in terms of addressing this terrible issue of family violence. We had an excellent record, including the introduction of zero tolerance when it comes to domestic violence, one we are proud of and one—we are pleased to support this legislation which builds on previous initiatives.

However, I would like to point out one concern with respect to these legislative changes. Unless the Doer government provides police and justice officials the necessary resources to properly administer, supervise and enforce the proposed amendments, their effectiveness could be diminished. I would encourage the Government to be mindful of this when making these changes.

* (17:20)

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to point out that it is unfortunate that the current administration, out of desperation for cash, chose a couple of years ago to introduce wide-open alcohol sales and consumption on Sundays. Given the frequent correlation between alcohol abuse and domestic violence, one could question whether this policy change had, in fact, worked against the government's goals of reducing the incidents of domestic violence.

As the minister has outlined, the bill builds upon the existing legislation by expanding the categories of people who can seek protection under the act, to include people in dating relationships as well as family members who have never lived together.

The legislation also makes changes with respect to the requirements for granting a protection order. It recognizes the fact that although a person may be complying with a protection order, it does not discount the fact that there can be an ongoing need for protection from an abuser. In other words, this legislation enables protection orders to be granted when domestic violence or stalking is ongoing, or if it occurred in the past and there is reasonable likelihood that this behaviour will resume. This legislation also provides courts with the ability to require someone who has committed domestic abuse, or who is a stalker, to obtain counselling or therapy.

Bill 17 also provides the courts with the power to order a respondent to pay compensation to a victim of abuse for monetary losses, such as loss of income, legal fees and expenses related to moving, counselling or security measures. This bill is useful in that it recognizes that Manitobans in certain circumstances may need protection orders against others, even though they are not married or cohabiting. Those who can obtain protection orders under the amendment will now include those who are in dating relationships and those who are family members such as brothers, sisters, grandparents, parents, adoptive parents and children.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank the current administration for the work undertaken in the area of domestic violence, following on the heels of a number of initiatives undertaken by the Filmon government. For example, in 1991, the Family Violence Court was established as part of the Filmon government's overall efforts to deal with domestic violence through a zero tolerance policy. The Family Violence Court was the first of its kind in North America and has proven to be an important tool in helping families dealing with domestic violence to navigate the legal system.

The Filmon government was also instrumental in the creation of a Family Violence Unit of prosecutors, a family dispute services program, a Women's Advocacy Program, and a Corrections Domestic Violence Unit. In 1997, the Filmon government unveiled the Victims First Cell Phone project, where cell phones were provided to victims of domestic violence in high risk situations. The phones are reprogrammed to dial only 911 by touching any button and pushing "send." This was also a one-of-its-kind program in Canada and it reflected the government's commitment to find innovative and

practical ways to deal with the crime of domestic violence. It was later duplicated in a number of other Canadian jurisdictions.

The Filmon government also provided support to shelters and agencies dedicated to helping parents and children affected by domestic violence. I think we can all agree that we must be more vigilant in tackling all forms of domestic violence, be it spousal abuse, child abuse, parent abuse, or elder abuse. Violence against anyone is simply intolerable, yet, right now, someone in Manitoba is being subjected to physical, sexual, psychological, or financial abuse.

Domestic abuse recognizes no boundaries. The abuse is perpetrated by and against the younger and older members of society alike. It affects members from all social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. Abusers pay no heed to their victims' perceived intellectual or physical capacity to defend themselves. The effects of domestic violence and stalking can be physically, emotionally, and economically devastating for victims. Ultimately, some will pay for this abuse with their lives.

Mr. Speaker, according to the report *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile* victimization data showed that 3 percent of Canadian women who were living in a spousal relationship in 1999 had been physically or sexually assaulted by a partner in the preceding year. Moreover, between 1974 and 2000, 117 women and 44 men were the victims of spousal homicide in Manitoba.

The statistics on domestic violence and stalking are deeply disturbing. In 2002, 101 248 women and children were admitted to 483 shelters across Canada. In Manitoba, the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters sees over 6000 women and children seeking assistance and responds to more than 20 000 crisis calls in an average year. In 2003 alone, the YWCA Westman Women's Shelter of Brandon assisted 665 women and their children who were affected by domestic violence.

In discussions with both crisis workers and victims of domestic violence, it is clear that there is a wide array of challenges caused by the family displacements resulting from family violence. For example, children who are forced to leave their home community as a result of domestic violence may find their school routine becomes disrupted. Children may be without access to education for days or even

weeks. There have been cases where children who left their communities and school behind could not attend school while they were in a shelter because they did not have a permanent address.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important that the ministers involved sit down to discuss ways to address serious challenges such as these so that the impact on children is minimized wherever possible. As policy makers, it is critical that we confront issues like domestic violence and stalking head-on through legislative enhancements that are tough on offenders and that recognize the varied nature of domestic violence.

It is also critical that, in government, we continue to support programs that assist victims of violence, as well as research into various forms of abuse. It is essential that we maintain contact with those who are on the front lines of dealing with domestic violence who can tell us first-hand which programs and services are working and where there is room for improvement.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will close my remarks on Bill 17, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act. I look forward to an engaging discussion at the committee stage.

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be standing up today to talk about Bill 17. As a social worker working in the community, I have had lots of experiences with domestic

violence, with victims, as well as with the offenders and their families.

I believe that Bill 17 adds to our safety net to protect our most vulnerable. By shortening the name of the act, it will help for understanding and public education. The broader definition, also defining familial abuse, will provide support for a number of individuals who have not had that. It increases the rights to victims by giving them more opportunities for accessible support. The three-year time limit for a protection order is extremely important. It means that danger is not short-term, that it is ongoing. The accessibility and the clarity will support service providers as well as community people.

The amendments provide an opportunity for safety and broaden the strength of all ready services that are provided. I am proud to be a part of this Government who is passing this amendment in support of society's most vulnerable. I am happy to speak on this amendment of Bill 17.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before this House, the honourable Member for Fort Garry will have 28 minutes remaining.

When this matter is again before the House, it will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 8, 2004

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