

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. 53A - 10 a.m., Thursday, June 10, 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.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
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.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon	Riel	N.D.P.
VACANT	Minto	
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.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
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.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
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.
VACANT	Turtle Mountain	
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 10, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

Division

PRAYERS

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

Introduction of Guests**Yeas**

Mr. Speaker: Before I recognize the honourable member, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Christ the King School 19 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Shirley Gendron. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan).

Aglugub, Allan, Altemeyer, Bjornson, Brick, Chomiak, Dewar, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurshou, Goertzen, Hawranik, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maguire, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Murray, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Penner, Reid, Reimer, Rocan, Robinson, Rondeau, Rowat, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Schuler, Selinger, Smith, Struthers, Taillieu, Wowchuk.

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

Nays**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

Gerrard, Lamoureux

House Business

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 44, Nays 2.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, first, in the House, would you please call the deferred vote on the private member's resolution on the gun registry.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Second, would you please call the private member's resolution on the famine. That is Resolution 6. Number three, would you please call Bill 211 on veterans' plates. Fourth, would you please call report stage on Bill 21.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 23(5), the Committee of Supply will meet in Room 255.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair in Room 255.

Then, Mr. Speaker, would you please call Committee of Supply for concurrence for this morning until 12:30 in Room 255. Thank you.

*(10:10)

Res. 6—Ukrainian Famine**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

Mr. Speaker: I will call private member's Resolution 6.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS**Res. 3—Gun Registry**

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach)

Mr. Speaker: Order. During last private members' hour there was a request for a recorded division that was deferred to this time in accordance with Rule 23(4). Therefore, call in the members.

WHEREAS an estimated seven million Ukrainians died of starvation in 1932-33 in a deliberately induced Ukrainian famine, organized and masterminded by the Soviet regime; and

We will be voting on the gun registry.

WHEREAS Ukrainians were sentenced to a horrifying slow death from starvation in an attempt to destroy aspirations of an independent Ukraine and to erase in the people all aspirations of freedom; and

WHEREAS this horror has inflicted a deep and lasting scar on the Ukrainian community here and throughout the world; and

WHEREAS the people of Manitoba wish to honour the memory of those who lost their lives; and

WHEREAS last year marked the 70th anniversary of this tragedy, and it is in the public interest to recognize the nature and consequences of the Ukrainian Famine/Genocide of 1932-33; and

WHEREAS in recognition of that anniversary the Minister of Labour, Immigration and Status of Women proclaimed the week of November 23 to 30, 2003, to be the week of the Great Famine/Genocide in Ukraine.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to join people throughout the world, and particularly Manitobans of Ukrainian heritage, in commemorating these tragic events, and

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to hereafter recognize the last Saturday of November as the Day of the Ukrainian Famine/Genocide of 1932-33.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Burrows, seconded by the honourable Member for Russell

WHEREAS an estimated seven million Ukrainians died of starvation—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that seven million Ukrainians died of starvation between 1932 and 1933 in a deliberately induced famine, now known in Ukrainian as the Holodomor. It is today considered one of the worst atrocities in the Soviet regime, but it is relatively unknown.

The 1986 study of the famine by British historian Robert Conquest entitled *Harvest of Sorrow* was perhaps the first time Western audiences received information about this tragic event. Conquest has said that since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, much evidence has emerged about the famine/genocide. Evidence has shown that many Ukrainians were sentenced to horrifying and slow deaths from starvation. This artificial famine was part of attempts to destroy the aspirations of an independent Ukraine and to stop aspirations of the people to freedom.

This famine took place in the northern Caucasus and the lower Volga River area in 1932-33, as well as the Ukraine, and was the result of Joseph Stalin's policy of forced collectivization. The heaviest losses occurred in Ukraine which had been the most productive agricultural area of the Soviet Union.

The policy of all collectivization, instituted by Stalin in 1929 to finance industrialization, had a disastrous effect on agricultural productivity. Nonetheless, in 1932, Stalin raised Ukraine's grain procurement quotas by 44 percent. This meant that there would not be enough grain to feed the peasants, since Soviet law required that no grain from a collective farm could be given to the members of the farm until the government's quota was met.

This horrifying event has deeply scarred Ukrainian communities here in Manitoba, across Canada and around the world.

Memorial commemorations of the 70th anniversary of the Holodomor took place last fall across the world. In Winnipeg, survivors of the Holodomor gathered at St. Mary the Protectress Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Winnipeg's North End for a symposium on the famine/genocide of 1932-33 to talk about the experiences and share their stories with the public.

There are still some survivors and witnesses left from the genocidal famine of 1932-33 with us today and they attended the symposium to share their experiences with the public.

As part of this symposium there was a large commemorative service in front of the famine monument at Winnipeg's City Hall. Lubomyr Luciuk, director of research for the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties union, was able to offer

seminars on the issue of the Famine/Genocide. The symposium also featured Sen. Raynell Andreychuk speaking about the Senate of Canada's recognition of the famine, and a presentation with Moe Levy, executive director of the Asper Foundation, who spoke about the plans for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights which will be built in Winnipeg.

This genocidal famine affected hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have their roots in Ukraine. Many families lost relatives and friends. In recognition of this anniversary in Manitoba, the provincial Minister of Labour, Immigration and Multiculturalism (Ms. Allan) proclaimed the week of November 23 to 30, 2003, to be the week of the great genocide famine in Ukraine.

Today I urge the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to join with the Ukrainian community in commemorating this tragic event.

Legislatures around the world, including the Senate of Canada and the Senate of Australia, have passed similar resolutions. In May of last year, the parliament of Ukraine, the Verhovna Rada, declared the 1932-33 famine in Ukraine an act of genocide. Last year the Ukrainian and international public marked the 70th anniversary of the Ukrainian national catastrophe, when food confiscation was used by the state as a weapon of mass destruction of its own population for political reasons.

Reports of the man-made famine leaked out to the rest of the world but were dismissed by the *New York Times'* Moscow correspondent, Walter Duranty. In the 1930s, he wrote that there was no famine in Ukraine and won a Pulitzer Prize for journalism. His reports have been discredited by historians for years who later called him an apologist for the USSR. A campaign has been operating for some time to have Duranty's award posthumously revoked. The Pulitzer organization acknowledged Duranty's stories were false but refused to strip him of his award.

We believe that it is in the public interest to recognize the Ukrainian Famine/Genocide, and many people wish to honour the memory of those people who lost their lives. Today we urge the government to recognize the last Saturday of November as the Day of the Ukrainian Famine/Genocide in 1932-33. The legislation before us would remove this tragedy from obscurity, and give survivors the hope that their horrible experience and the memory of their loved

ones who suffered through this tragic event has not been ignored.

By passing this resolution we honour their experience and survival. This resolution is necessary for not merely a symbolic gesture to Ukrainian Canadians. We must act upon the principles upon which this province holds dear, the principles of democracy, freedom, human rights and human dignity. Only by learning the hard lessons of the past can we hope to prevent recurrences of political genocides in the future.

* (10:20)

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today in support of the motion put forward by the member from Burrows and seconded by the member from Russell. I think it is a very important motion and I certainly rise today to put a few words on the record in strong support of his motion.

The dreadful famine that engulfed the Ukraine, the northern Caucasus and the lower Volga River area in 1932-33 was the result of Joseph Stalin's policy of forced collectivization. For the first time in the 20th century, the Ukraine declared its independence in 1917. It was then incorporated into the Soviet Union within two years when the Bolsheviks came to power. Revival of the Ukrainian national identity threatened Stalin's power, and he attempted to crush the Ukraine's spirit by committing mass genocide. Stalin imposed a man-made famine.

Ukraine had before been the most productive agricultural area in the Soviet Union. Stalin was determined to crush all traces of Ukrainian nationalism. In 1932, Stalin raised Ukraine's grain procurement quotas by 44 percent. This meant that there would not be enough grain to feed the peasants, since Soviet law required that no grain from a collective farm could be given to the residents of the farm until the government's quota was met.

Stalin's decision on the methods used to put it into practical effect condemned millions of peasants to death by starvation. Any man, woman or child caught taking any grain from a collective farm could be and often was executed or deported. Those who did not appear to be starving were often suspected of having a hidden supply of grain. Party officials with

the aid of regular troops and secret police units waged a cruel war against peasants who refused to give up their grain. The death toll has been estimated between six million and seven million, which was approximately 20 percent of the population. It has been thought that it has been estimated it could be, in fact, upwards of some 10 million.

I would like to close by also citing a very heart-wrenching letter that was written to K. Riabokin, a university professor at Kharkiv, by his niece Zina.

It says: "Please uncle, do take me to Kharkiv. We have neither bread nor anything else to eat. Dad is completely exhausted from hunger and is lying on the bench unable to get on his feet. Mother is blind from the hunger and cannot see in the least. So I have to guide her when she has to go outside. Please uncle, do take me to Kharkiv because I, too, will die from hunger. Please do take me. Please, I am still young and I want so much to live a while. Here, I will surely die, for everyone else is dying."

I think that, in history, we learn that there have been tremendous atrocities, and only can we, as a society, improve by recognizing that atrocity, dealing with it and ensuring that something of this nature never, ever happens again. Thank you very much.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I am very pleased to be able to stand today in support of this resolution that has been brought forward by the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and supported by all members of the Legislature.

When we think about what happened in Ukraine between 1932 and the starvation that began in 1932-33, and the number of people that were affected, the numbers of families that were affected, it is indeed a horrific event, a very sorrowful event to see. That, because of one individual's greed for power, there could be so many people's lives put at risk. I can tell you that for me, as a descendant of a Ukrainian family, this was a very significant event. I can tell you that my immediate relatives left Ukraine at the early part of the century, but we did have relatives in Ukraine who suffered because of this.

I had the opportunity to visit Ukraine a few years ago and have discussions with people who were first-hand touched by this, people who were raising food but had nothing to eat. When they described the

situation about having food, but having to steal food and risk your life to get a little bit of food for your family, it is just a story that has to be told over and over and over again. The stories that have been told both telling the truth of this event have to be recognized, and we also happen to recognize the fact that there are stories on the record that discredit and try to portray that there was not a famine in Ukraine and people did not suffer.

As we look at this, I think that when you look at the creation of an artificial famine, a famine was created because Ukraine wanted to be independent, and there were other people that wanted to stop this aspiration of people to have freedom, a freedom that we take for granted every day.

I think that this is a horrible event that has taken place in the world, and here we are 70 years later, and we still have survivors of this famine who can tell the story.

There are three survivors who are with us here in the gallery. They are Eugenia Kanchir, Oleksa Morhun and Anna Shewel who are here. I think I pronounced that name wrong, Mr. Speaker. But I want to recognize these people who are with us here today in the gallery marking this occasion, and people who continue to tell the story of this event. Because if we do not tell the story there is a possibility that this kind of thing can happen again.

By bringing this resolution forward, we remove the tragedy from the obscurity that it has had. It gives the survivors hope that something like this will never happen again. It gives them hope that people who suffered with them, people who died before them who faced a terrible death because of starvation, will be remembered. So I think that by passing this resolution we honour their experience, we honour their survival, and we honour the many people, somewhere in the range of 7 million people, who died because of this event.

I believe very much that this resolution is necessary, not merely as a symbolic gesture for Ukrainian Canadians, but through this, by passing this resolution, we stand up for our principles. We stand up for what we believe in, and that is human rights, human dignity and the democratic freedom that we all have here that sometimes we all take for granted. So I think that it is very important today that we, by passing this resolution, recognize the event

that happened and we will move forward recognizing the last Saturday of November as the Day of the Ukrainian Famine/Genocide of 1932-33.

With those few comments, I want to pay tribute to the survivors that are with us here in the gallery, to their families, and to the many people who lost their lives because of this senseless event that happened in 1932-33.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I would just like to add a few words to this resolution, and I want to thank the member from Burrows for bringing this resolution forward. It is an acknowledgment of an event that took place, unfortunately a dreadful event that took place in the world which was denied by many parts of the world for many years.

Today, although we, as legislators, speak to this resolution, I think the more eloquent people who could speak on this resolution are actually the people who are sitting in our gallery, because they are the survivors of the famine and could probably more eloquently describe how dreadful this was.

Throughout the world, we have seen these kinds of tragedies occur through the history of time. It occurred in the Holocaust. This was another very dreadful situation and, more recently, we have seen that same type of event happen in the Middle East in Iraq, where a dictator, a person who takes power unto himself, sees fit to destroy his own people for no reason at all, a senseless act. Therefore, it is up to us and the rest of the world to try to put together, through our legislatures, not only a recognition of this, but to commemorate this kind of event so that it would never happen again elsewhere in the world.

I think, with regard to this dreadful event, there are two significant issues. One, that the event happened, and, secondly, that it was denied by much of the world for a long time.

* (10:30)

Although those people who lived through it and who came to this country and to other parts of the world described the horror, there was a setting aside or turning of the head, if you like, at this event by those in the media, by governments who, for one reason or another, chose to ignore, chose not to acknowledge, this event.

What was the desire of those people who lived in Ukraine during those terrible years? Their only desire was freedom to be able to live in their own land, to carry on their own activities and to raise their families. When you visit Ukraine, it is one of the most beautiful countries in the world, yet it has been devastated throughout time because of aggressors.

Can you imagine living in a country that is the breadbasket of Europe, that could produce enough food to feed the entire European continent, and yet these people could not feed their own families? It is a tragedy that those of us who have never lived there cannot ever understand completely, but I think that everybody who has any family in that part of the world has been touched by it, because all of us whose ancestors came from that part of the world have lost someone in that tragedy.

It was not just that people died of famine, but people were actually shot because they perhaps were suspected of having more food than the rest of the population. What kind of fear? Can you imagine the kind of fear each and every one of these families lived through? There have been many books written by survivors about this event that describe the actual horror that they lived through.

Mr. Speaker, in commemorating this event and making sure that the world understands that we have accepted the truth about this event and that we acknowledge that it was a horrendous event and that it was on the same level, if you like, as the Holocaust, as other such huge tragedies that occurred not because of natural disaster, not because of some activity that happened that could not be controlled, but because of the greed for power, the greed to control, the desire to be able to obliterate those who wanted nothing more than freedom.

That is why democracies in this world like ours in this country and others are so aggressive, I believe, in making sure that we preserve as much freedom as we possibly can, not just for ourselves, but for people all around the world. That is the humanitarian nature of each and every one of us who understand, who value, who cherish freedom.

Today I want to pay tribute to the survivors that are here with us in the gallery this morning and to all other survivors across this province and across this country and wherever they may be in the world, because these are the people who actually survived a

horrendous event and who should, in fact, recognize that this was an event that we acknowledge happened, that we know cannot happen again and that these people should be given the same recognition, the same tribute as has been paid to others who suffered this kind of genocide.

With those few comments, I want to conclude by congratulating the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) for bringing this resolution forward. I would hope that all of us as legislators here today would join together in acknowledging that the last Saturday in November will be a day to commemorate those who gave their lives for a senseless cause, and that is someone's greed to control and to seize power.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I am honoured and humbled to have the opportunity to speak to this resolution. Like many in this Legislature, my father came as a young man from Ukraine in his teen years, and, fortunately, was in the western Ukraine, and that is a matter of degree in terms of fortunate. Consequently, there are some direct emotions and some direct personal matters regarding this that I feel. However, I think I just want to make several comments.

Firstly, I think, to those who survived, you survived to tell the story, and our job and our role is to pass that story on to our children and our children's children. If there is any comfort in what survivors went through and in the loss of millions of lives in the great tragedy, it is that that story is being told.

The second point I wanted to make is that I doubt very much that madman Stalin ever envisioned that, in legislatures across the ocean and around the world, people would have the last word, and would be able to say in free democracies and in free legislatures that what you did was insane, that we will remember and that we can say that and that we can pass it on. There is a great but tragic irony in all of that.

I just want to close by saying *Vichnaya Pamyat* [*Everlasting Memory*]. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Back in the 1920s, a young couple, my grandparents, Natalie and Albert Schuler, decided to seek their fortune and move to

the Volhynia, which is now the northern tip of the Ukraine. That is, in fact, where my father was born.

I can remember relatives telling us that that area reminded them a lot of the Prairies and it was referred to as the breadbasket of Europe. It is where copious amounts of food were produced; an abundance of food was produced for Europe. Maybe I disagree with the title of this, because this was not a famine. This was, in its purest form, genocide. To put it in even clearer terms, this was nothing other than mass murder. This was not like the potato famine, where potatoes rotted in the ground because of too much rain. This was not because of climate, that water stood in the fields and the grain rotted in the fields. This was because of Stalin and his Communist regime.

I want to put one little story on the record. It haunts me, and I can never forget it. It was from Professor Davis Daycock at the University of Manitoba. He told us how one time the Red Army went into a Ukrainian town, because that is what they did with guns. They went and they got the food. The people were so hungry, they were so starved, that with pitchforks and with hoes and with garden tools, shovels, they took on the armed soldiers and they won. They beat back the soldiers because they had nothing else to lose.

The next day, the Red Army sent in the artillery and they wiped out the entire town. That is what those poor people faced. They faced the choice of death, or death.

To the survivors, I would like to, on behalf of my generation and the ones that come—and I have talked a little bit about some of these stories to my little children. I think it is important that we pass this on from generation to generation. Please do not accept it as for granted that it is somehow a right that we live in all this wealth. Remember whence we came. To the survivors, thank you. Pass it on from generation to generation, and to those of you who do this, God bless you.

* (10:40)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): We, as Liberals, support this resolution strongly. We believe it is very important to have a particular time in the year to pay particular memory to a very awful and tragic event. Indeed, it is probably among the very

worst, if not the worst abuses of human rights of the last century. It had an impact on millions. Certainly, from the friends that I have in the Ukrainian community, the tragedies, the stories, the awful memories coming from these times in Ukraine in the 1930s are just beyond belief or beyond comprehension today, that these sorts of things could have happened.

It is very important that we take some time in the year to remember and to remind ourselves and to remind others in Manitoba that once upon a time such things as these did happen and that we have to be aware and on guard and vigilant that such things do not happen again. We have to be on guard and vigilant and aware that abuses of human rights can creep up on us, sometimes without warning, and in this case extend to horrible dimensions. We also have to be aware of the lesser abuses which still occur and be on guard and remember and prevent and work to eliminate those.

Clearly, the development not only of time in November to remember this event, but the important role that I understand the recognition of the famine and the genocide in Ukraine in the 1930s will play in the new Human Rights Museum will mean that in Manitoba we have particular ways of remembering and bringing to attention these awful facts and why they occurred and what we can do to make sure that they never, ever, ever happen again.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): I would like to put some comment on the record concerning the induced famine of 1932 and 1933 in Ukraine. This topic is very close to me. It has touched me and my family, because my parents came from Ukraine in 1929. I grew up hearing many stories about the famine and oppression in Ukraine. Although my parents left Ukraine just before this famine began, many of my relatives stayed behind and experienced this induced famine. Many did not survive, but the surprising thing is, some did. My family sent care packages to the relatives in Ukraine. This story is something I grew up with.

I have heard many stories as a child about this famine as well as the revolution and the many famines that followed the revolution. Several of my relatives did survive this famine and were able to leave the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and retell these stories to me and my family here in Canada personally.

In fact, my cousin who survived it came right here to Winnipeg. I had the pleasure of showing her this great Chamber and the freedoms we have here. These were tragic stories, and these stories should be kept alive so that they will never be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the new Human Rights Museum will retell this story as well as many other stories. We believe that it is in the public interest to recognize the Ukrainian Famine/Genocide. Many people wish to honour the memory of those many people who lost their lives.

The resolution is necessary not merely as a symbolic gesture to Ukrainian Canadians. We must act upon principles which this province holds dear, principles of democracy, freedom, human rights and human dignity. I must congratulate the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) for bringing this resolution forward. I thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Resolution 6, The Ukrainian Famine.

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

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if, in putting the question, it would be appropriate for us to rise in silence in showing our support for this motion.

Mr. Speaker: When I put the question, we will rise for a moment of silence. I will put the question.

The question before the House is Resolution 6, The Ukrainian Famine.

Please rise for a moment of silence in respect of all who were involved in that.

A moment of silence was observed

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

An Honourable Member: Unanimous.

Mr. Speaker: Unanimous? Unanimous.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**Bill 211—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Veterans' Licence Plates)**

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I move, seconded by the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), that Bill 211, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Veterans' Licence Plates), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Eichler: Indeed it is an honour to present Bill 211 for the consideration of the House. This bill would allow individuals who honourably served in the armed forces to obtain a special veteran licence plate within the province of Manitoba recognizing the freedom that we enjoy as Canadians and the efforts that our country has made to ensure the rights of the people of Canada and the other countries.

The proposed licence plate would be similar to that of the Manitoba licence plate, except it would have a distinctive poppy and the word "veteran." Any person who has served in the Canadian Armed Forces would be able to purchase a poppy plate.

We tend to forget the sacrifices that our armed forces have made. Most who have left their families to go behind the walls of war for long periods of time travelled halfway around the world and risked their lives for the people of Canada. This service deserves public recognition.

I take pride in reading some of the excerpts that have been put in the recent papers regarding Mr. Cliff Tessier, president of the Manitoba Northwest Ontario command of the Royal Canadian Legion, and said that it was way overdue, it was greatly a certain way of showing our veterans we appreciate them.

Another comment was put in recently as well. This is similar to those that are available in Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Our own Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) has gone on the record to say it is a small symbol to show our appreciation. We certainly acknowledge the minister's intent to help us move this bill forward.

We had hoped, along with the minister of highways and transportation, to be the first in

western Canada to bring this bill forward. However, our neighbours to the far west beat us. They brought in the veterans' poppy plate to commemorate the 60th anniversary on July 6 of the D-day invasion of Normandy during the Second World War. The Premier of B.C., Mr. Campbell, made it available for the veterans and those that protect the freedoms we all cherish available on June 6 to some 80 000 veterans within just the province of B.C.

* (10:50)

I have been talking to a number of Legions, a number of men and women throughout the province of Manitoba. They are just ecstatic this bill has been brought forward. It is a bill that is nominal in fee but high on the hearts of those people that gave their lives for us here in this House, and the other people of the province of Manitoba and the people of Canada. It just gives me chills up and down my spine when I think about our grandfathers and forefathers that went out, and similar to those we just talked about in the previous motion. If we just think back for a moment, the sacrifices these veterans have made, the men and women have made, to let us have the freedoms we enjoy here today. I would like to see this moved on to committee. I look forward to hearing what some of the other members have to say.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on Bill 211 regarding creation of a plate commemorating the Manitoba veterans. Discussion of this issue is especially timely, given the recent anniversary of D-day. I am sure many members of the House saw the media coverage of old film footage and photographs of the Allied assault on Juno Beach. They serve as strong reminders to us all of the great sacrifices made by the men and women of the Allied Forces. Creation of a veterans' licence plate will serve as appropriate recognition of those who have sacrificed to preserve the freedoms of this country. As a granddaughter and daughter of veterans, I am always pleased to have any opportunity to pay tribute to these people.

I thank the honourable member from Lakeside for highlighting this issue in a private members' bill. This bill, however, is flawed in that it is exclusive and it is not required. I can advise the new legislation is not required to authorize the creation and issuance of commemorative licence plates for Manitoba veterans because, as a result of lobbying by the

Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) and myself for over a year now, the department staff, in consultation with Legislative Counsel, reviewed The Highway Traffic Act and confirmed there was sufficient authority to allow the department to proceed with introduction of a unique plate for veterans. What is required are regulatory changes to prescribe the design features of the new plate and define eligibility criteria.

In terms of being exclusive, it is on the matter of eligibility this government did take a different, more inclusive approach than what Bill 211 proposes. The bill identifies that only soldiers as defined in The Soldiers' Taxation Relief Act are eligible for plates. This effectively limits issuance to veterans of the world wars and Korean War and gives no consideration to veterans of more recent wars or peacekeeping initiatives. We propose to make the plates available not only to world war and Korean vets but also to Canadian Armed Forces members and others such as RCMP officers who have been involved in peacekeeping efforts throughout the world.

As I said, the Minister of Healthy Living and I have been lobbying for a year and a half and have been engaged in many discussions with peacekeeping. There are two letters the Minister of Healthy Living has sent in this regard with a description of a potential licence plate, by the way. *[interjection]* Yes.

Also, in one of these discussions, Norm Vantassel, who is now Past President of the Peace Keepers, the General R.R. Crabbe Chapter of the Peace Keeping Association, had called when he read about the bill and was quite indignant. In fact, he wrote a letter to Mia Rabson indicating his displeasure with the exclusiveness of it

I would like to read this letter, Mr. Speaker. It is to Bonnie Korzeniowski, re: the veterans' licence plate. "We have discussed this with you and Jim Rondeau approximately two years ago, and it has now come to a full circle. The idea of a veterans'—"

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hate to interrupt the honourable member, but in the House, even when reading from a letter or newspaper, you address all honourable members by their titles, or members by

their constituencies. So I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Ms. Korzeniowski: Here, I did not realize, I thought I had to quote directly.

"—with you and the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) approximately two years ago, and it has now come to a full circle. The idea of a veterans' licence plate is a great idea, but with all due respect, to restrict it to the Second World War veteran is something I would question. The World War II veterans are in their 80s, and the Korean veterans are from 70 to 80—"

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Lakeside, on a point of order.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, could the honourable member table the letter.

An Honourable Member: Absolutely.

Mr. Speaker: If the honourable member is reading from a signed, private letter, she should have copies to table.

Ms. Korzeniowski: It is not signed, Mr. Speaker, because he just faxed it to me, or e-mailed it to me.

Mr. Speaker: If there is no signature on it, it is entirely up to the member if she wishes to table it.

Ms. Korzeniowski: I do not mind, absolutely.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member will be tabling the letter.

Ms. Korzeniowski: I cannot table it. I have a copy.

"If your intentions are to allow only those to use the licence plate, there will be very few of them in the not too distant future. The veterans of today are the peacekeepers. Many have already lost their lives since the signing of the United Nations Charter on October 24, 1945. To date, 163 have lost their lives on peacekeeping missions.

"My question to you is do these people that served on peacekeeping missions, some that have

lost their lives, others have been wounded by enemy and friendly fire, not qualify. They have served their country and are veterans according to the new terms of the Department of Veterans Affairs. We would like to see any honourably discharged veteran of a peacekeeping mission qualify for the veterans' licence plate. We would also suggest that it not be controlled or restricted to the Legion members. We have many veterans who have never belonged to a Legion or association, but are veterans of a war or peacekeeping mission. To have this licence plate restricted to only World War II—he is mistaken here—and not to Korea, and peacekeeping is an injustice to our veterans of today.

"In the service of peace, Norm Vantassel."

I will happily table this. As I said, Mr. Speaker, he did write a letter in a similar vein to Mia Rabson in response to her article in the *Free Press*, and you would be free to check with her as to the validity. The department is working collaboratively with Manitoba Public Insurance to develop the new licence plate as quickly as possible. As a matter of fact, it is the design that is the holdup, because there has been much discussion as to what kind of a design would be most appropriate to cover all veterans. It is anticipated that the plates will be available within the next few months.

In closing, I thank the honourable member for highlighting the need for the small, but significant tribute to our veterans, and for supporting us in our pursuits.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I want to rise to enter into this debate and support this bill, but my comments may be a little different than I originally planned to make. Unfortunately, the veterans that we wish to honour fought for the very freedom that we have to debate and to say without fear of repercussion what we might choose to say in this Chamber or across the land.

* (11:00)

Certainly, no one should feel that any disrespect is meant to any part of our armed forces or the returnees from anyone of the conflicts that our people have been involved in, and, frankly, we have invited the government to amend the bill. That would be simple, and it would show unanimity in this House.

In fact, I know General Crabbe personally. He went to the same school as I did and was raised in the same community as me. I certainly value and respect and honour him and the service that he has provided to this country. His thoughts are correct and most important. But I hope that we do not allow this debate to degenerate into, we did this, you did that, and we are somehow better at honouring our veterans than somebody else is. We just spent a considerable amount of time in this country honouring our D-day veterans, those who are left, and honouring that massive number of young Canadians who went on to foreign soil to turn back a tide of evil that had spread across Europe.

As I look at this bill and the fact that it is here today, I really have to put on the record that we need to, I think, as MLAs be prepared to stand up and provide the kind of recognition and support that is suggested here. It is long overdue by all of us. I take no glee, nor do I intend to point fingers at the government. This bill is not intended to point fingers at the government. The bill is intended to put the debate out here squarely where it belongs. Certainly, I want to just put a couple of thoughts on the record about what these veterans have faced.

Certainly, our peacekeepers, there have been some who have been lost in trying to bring peace to the conflicts that they have been involved in, more than a few. The young men who we honoured during the D-day remembrance, Juno Beach, you know, there are authors who talk about a carpet of dead. I mean, what horror had we sent these young men to face and what have we as a country done to honour and respect that commitment? I cannot speak entirely to the veracity of it, but I find it appalling that on D-day we still have people out there who are saying, you know, there are returnees who are still owed a considerable amount of pensionable funds.

The merchant marines in this country had to fight for decades to get some recognition that their lives were lost, that they were lost in the thousands. As we are reminded on D-day remembrance, I think it was something like seven out of ten boatloads of supplies which would have been manned by our merchant marines never made it across the Atlantic. Think about the number of people who were lost there as well. We collectively as a society owe our veterans and those who went to war recognition every opportunity that we can give it. This is one more opportunity.

I would rather that this was a unanimous motion in the House where an amendment could be made that would put this forward as a unanimous motion subject to agreement from all sides of the House, because this is not about disagreement of respect for those who served this country. It probably is only a disagreement about how we could best do it. I am sorry to see that we cannot have a unanimous vote to pass this.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Minister of Health Living, I want to make a correction. When I was making the ruling on the tabling of letters, I left the wrong impression because I was mistaken. A signed, private letter that a member is quoting from, if requested, has to be tabled, and if a member—

An Honourable Member: Or a private letter.

Mr. Speaker: —a private letter. A private letter that a member is quoting from has to be tabled if it is signed. If you are quoting from a private letter that is unsigned, if you want to use that information you have to be willing to put your signature on that letter to verify that the information you are bringing forward is the correct information, to your knowledge. So I just wanted to make that correction.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister responsible for Healthy Living): I am very pleased to put a few words on this very important issue. I would like to first commend George Apps. Mr. George Apps is the gentleman who, about two years ago, came to me with this wonderful idea about commemorating the service and the dedication of people who should be recognized in our province. Mr. Apps came to my office in my constituency a while ago and said that a number of groups should be recommended for commendation, for acknowledgement for their service.

I think it was interesting to note that at the time we talked about a number of groups that contributed historically to our democracy, contributed toward peacekeeping and contributed to the world insofar as peacekeeping and humanitarian issues across the globe. He was mentioning at the time the veterans of the Second World War, of the Korean War.

He mentioned the peacekeepers and it is interesting to note there have almost been 150 peacekeeping missions that the Canadian Forces

have been involved in. It is interesting also to note that Canada is one of the most requested nations as far as peacekeeping operations because Canadians have a great deal of understanding of other cultures, other languages. They are really a wonderful group and our Armed Forces have a reputation second to none as far as peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. So I must commend them because it is almost 150 and it is an amazing number of missions. You are talking about Afghanistan; you are talking Cyprus; you are talking of multiple missions that we have been involved in.

Also, the RCMP are a world-renowned police force and it is interesting to note that they go out, they are well respected in many countries and they teach people how to police, police fairly, with an even hand and justly. We have had many people in the RCMP go throughout the world to work with new police forces or re-training police forces to be fair and equitable. They have gone out in harm's way, again, to help with democracy, help with justice and help with other emerging nations.

Other groups that need to be recognized are the Merchant Marine and the current Armed Forces. When you start talking about the great flood in Manitoba, we had a number of Armed Forces people participate in that. In fact, we had a person who had a problem with his arm. He had his arm removed.

So I think what we have to do is work together, make sure that we recognize everyone. I would like to thank the current Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines (Mr. Smith) who started on this process about a year and a half ago and the current Minister of Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) who did some great work on designing this so that we could recognize the contributions of all the people who are very much deserving.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I would like to put a few words on record in regard to Bill 211, the private member's bill, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Veterans' Licence Plates), that would allow individuals who had honourably served in the Canadian Armed Forces to obtain special veteran licence plates in Manitoba. It has been pointed out, Mr. Speaker, that these would likely have the same plate as we have with the poppy on it and the word "veteran." That has been the recommendation.

I know that the government of the day here in Manitoba has been looking at this bill, and we know that they have supported this inclusion of these veterans in recognition. We do not have any problem on this side of the House expanding that. I guess, from my particular point of view, anyway, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) was purely looking at this from maybe a financial perspective as well, not wanting to force the government's hand and too much additional cost in regard to that. But we are certainly amenable to any amendment that we could put forward that they would accept in regard to recognizing all veterans in Manitoba, and, indeed, Canada, but, in this particular case, with our licence plate here in Manitoba.

* (11:10)

I note with interest, as well, that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) has indicated that they will move ahead with this. I would encourage them to do that and, you know, taking credit for being the first in Canada and it would be a first, I understand, in western Canada. Pardon me, not all of Canada, because there are provinces to the east of us that have already done this, already provided these plates in other provinces.

It is extremely fitting, I think, in a time when we have just honoured our D-day veterans, which had a great deal to do with the ending of the Second World War and the outcome of our democratic process, the rights that we have today. At this particular time of the year in June, we have a lot of young people that come in from schools across Manitoba and throughout the areas. It is very, very important that we honour our veterans that have fought in wars so that we can have the freedom to speak in this Chamber, as we are today, and for them to be free to move around our country and to witness the taking place of laws and rules being made for our society in this House.

So I encourage the government to pass this bill, as well, in regard to the recognition of our veterans. There are a number of things that come to mind as you begin to speak on a bill like this. Of course, one is that it could be amended. I had the opportunity yesterday, and I did not realize that I would be speaking on this bill so quickly in regard to this. But yesterday afternoon I had the opportunity of my colleagues looking after a bill that I had to deal with in the House, and I was able to take in the

Snowbirds' performance in the community of Virden where they are opening a new airport facility yesterday.

The field will be dedicated in the name of Mr. Bob Andrew, a long-time citizen of the community of Virden and businessman in that area. He has two sons, pardon me, three sons that were directly involved in the organization of that performance yesterday in Virden. One of them, you may say, is a veteran as well, because he flew many missions over Kosovo, as did many of the veterans that flew in the Snowbirds performance yesterday afternoon.

It is always a stirring performance for those who attended the performance here in Winnipeg of the Snowbirds on the weekend, but as they introduced those pilots as they flew over from time to time, it was an indication of the service that they had provided to our country. It very much reminds us of the peacekeeping missions that we have ongoing in many, many parts of the world today and those were all outlined last evening.

We have people serving from our services in peacekeeping missions in eight or nine countries at the present time, areas of the world. It is a very great honour to be able to remember those citizens. I know that Mr. Andrew, who has passed away last December, will be very much appreciative of the fact that they are dedicating the field in Virden in his name at a later date, to be called the Bob Andrew Field, it is my understanding. I know he was instrumental in helping to develop the airport and the runways, to get the airstrip in a position for servicing for medical facilities and needs in the medivac field in the western part of Manitoba.

I just want to say as well, Mr. Speaker, that we just passed a bill honouring the Ukrainian survivors of the slaughter, if you will. I know the member from Springfield used the term "genocide," and it was a terrible atrocity, based on the idea of starvation in '32-33 in the country of the Ukraine.

Of course, I think it is pretty well recognized that the name Maguire would be Irish and, on my side of the family, even on my mother's side, it was Scottish, but one never knows with the multiculturalism we have today in Canada as to how these things would indirectly impact you.

Well, I have made no secret in this House before, Mr. Speaker, that my son and my daughter

are adopted, and my daughter has a Ukrainian background. So I would just like to extend to all of those Ukrainian people on behalf of my daughter and my wife and me special respect as well for the people who passed away and were dedicated in the area of Ukraine.

I know that there are many members that have spoken on this that are directly of Ukrainian descent today in this House. It is a great tribute, I think, to the multiculturalism that we have in our nation, particularly here in Manitoba and particularly in many of the rural areas that we have in Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg, that we can carry on great tributes and that we can live intertwined in a democracy that allows everyone the opportunity to have that freedom of speech.

I just want to finish by saying that I would encourage the government to bring forward an amendment to this bill that has been brought forward by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler). We have many Legions in Manitoba and veterans who do want to move forward with this. I would encourage them to adopt this bill as we move toward a vote on it and allow all of our citizens to have the ability to honour the veterans.

I would also like to say that, as many others in this House, I also had two uncles who served in the Second World War. I think it is only a fitting tribute that I know their families have indicated to me that they feel that this would be a very fitting tribute to all of the veterans that served in those wars and to the peacekeepers that we have in Canada today.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, just before we began debate on Bill 211, the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) had a very good idea and shared it with this Chamber in the form of a resolution in recognizing the millions of Ukrainians that had lost their lives because of a barbaric starvation policy of the regime of the day.

What we found was that there was unanimous support. It is always encouraging when we see initiatives come from members of this Chamber and those initiatives are acknowledged and supported.

Well, the Member for Lakeside equally has come up with an idea. Obviously, he has given a great deal of thought toward the vets and the licence plates. I was told, and I think it was Dr. Gulzar Cheema, years back, that no one owns a good idea.

When someone brings something forward that is worthy of support, as Bill 211 is, we should get behind it. It is not a question of a race of who can do what for whomever to try to look good.

I look at Bill 211, and I think it speaks volumes. It is a one-page bill that speaks volumes, I would argue. We all acknowledge the value of our vets and the contributions that they have made to Canada. I think in a very positive gesture that is being made that is very real, I think that should be supported by all members of the Chamber. What we should prevent doing is taking away from what the essence of the bill is really trying to address.

You know, we want it to be all-inclusive. There is no doubt about that. That can be done through regulation. I respect what the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) was saying, and other government members, the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), are saying, but it still does not take away from acknowledging in legislation the importance of our vets.

* (11:20)

What is the cost of government for allowing this particular bill, the bill that has been introduced from the Member for Lakeside to actually be voted upon and passed? I do not see how people inside this Chamber should be offended by allowing this bill to be passed. I look at it in a very apolitical fashion. It is a good idea. I would suggest to you that the government and whatever else it might want to do to complement this issue would be welcome, and I would applaud them on some of the other comments that the members have put forward.

But, in listening to what the government has said, it still does not hurt for this Legislature, I do not see how it limits this Legislature or the government of the day from expanding upon it. I see this as a good piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and that is the essence of it. I think it should receive unanimous support of this Chamber. I do not need to expand upon what the vets, everyone knows the important role that the vets have played, and for that reason, would love and welcome actually having the privilege to vote in favour of this bill.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**DEBATE ON REPORT STAGE—AMENDMENT****Bill 21—The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act
(Various Acts Amended)**

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on report stage amendment, Bill 21, The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act (Various Acts Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I have done it, so I cannot speak to it, can I? I cannot speak to it anymore.

Mr. Speaker: Sorry, the amendment moved by the honourable Member for Russell, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale). What is the will of the House?

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable minister?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Any speakers?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister responsible for Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, speaking on the amendment, I was surprised that the amendment was acceptable as it would take money from schools and municipalities. As people might be aware, what happens is schools and municipalities arrive at their budget by taking the entire tax system and dividing it among the property owners. So, if they need a million dollars and there is \$10 million of assets in the area, then they just arrive at a .10 mill rate.

This mill rate then is used to calculate the actual tax bill for each organization that one has in the municipality. Then what happens is that the money that the school boards, the municipalities require are then arrived at by sending the bill to each taxpayer. By removing the Legions from taxation as far as municipal and education taxes retroactively to January, 1994, without any discussions with the municipalities or AMM, the assembly of Manitoba municipalities, would be very difficult because that would mean that we would be taking money out of the system, out of the education, out of the municipalities after the fact in a very tough year, in a

year where municipalities are suffering from BSE and are having some difficulties.

We have said that this would be a very tough decision. So what I have done is I have met with Clifford Tessier of the Royal Canadian Legion—he is the president—and Ron Smith, president of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Manitoba, on May 10. I explained the contents of Bill 21. The meeting was very positive. They understand that we will be exempting the Legions from educational tax, ESL and provincial education tax and education from January 1, 2005, onward.

I would also like to let the entire House know that we will be removing this ESL tax from that date, January 1, 2005. We will also be providing some financial assistance to Army and Navy Air Force veteran clubs and Legions to help them in this year. So what we are trying to do is very shortly we will be providing financial assistance to Legions and Army, Navy and Air Force clubs shortly to help them in this year for when the ban takes place. So we will be doing that shortly. We will be sending out letters with cheques to those to assist them.

The interesting part is the ban will not come in until October 1, so it did not make a lot of sense to start exempting them from taxes as of January 1. That is nine months early. What we will be doing is providing them assistance for when the ban comes into place and a little bit prior to that.

The only note that I would like to say is that we really do appreciate the historical contributions of Legions. That is why we are providing the financial assistance. We do respect the contributions and the historic value of these organizations.

I have written a letter to all Army, Navy and Air Force veteran clubs to apprise them of this. I have also written a letter to all municipalities saying that they can, if they so choose, exempt Legions from municipal taxation. I understand Dauphin has had this exemption for many years. Even though the Legions use municipal road services and fire and police services which cost the municipality, Dauphin has chosen to exempt them from municipal taxes. I have let each municipality know that they also have the ability to exempt the Legions from the municipal taxes, if they choose and when they choose.

In closing, I believe that the smoking ban is a wonderful bill. I believe that the amendment was trying to assist Legions financially in our implementation of the bill, in light of their historic role and importance in Canadian history and the promotion of democracy. So we are going to, as a government, provide assistance this fiscal year, and we will also be providing ongoing assistance to ensure the viability of Legions in the future by exempting them of provincial ESL and education taxes.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): We are speaking on the amendment to Bill 21, the non-smoking bill, and I am looking at the amendments in that area that have been made in regard to exempting Legions based on the amendment that says that they should be based on January 1 of '04 and, of course, the government has indicated that the amendment would come forward in 2005. I would certainly think that if we are going to provide with any kind of support, it should be effective January 1 of '04. I would certainly think that the Legions would be very appreciative of that kind of support and acknowledgement, rather than saying it would become effective January 1, 2005, when the tax bills are all made up prior to that, that they would very much miss the opportunity and be more taxed, if you will, in that specific area.

* (11:30)

Mr. Speaker, I am just going to say a few words in regard to this and say that I would support the January 1, 2004, date as opposed to January, 2005, that has been proposed. I think, very much so, we would need to have the process moved along so that we can begin to deal with this. I think one of the most important things, however, is that the bill, as it was written itself, Bill 21, provided some exemptions in the bill that the government really, I think, overstepped its bounds in regard to.

Mr. Speaker, this bill should have impacted and been to the benefit of all Manitobans. I do not believe that reserves and others should have been left out of it. First Nations reserves, I think, is a situation that is not going to be a healthy one for Manitoba in the long run and, let us face it, in my estimation, while there are those who believe that there may be some impacts of a financial nature when this bill comes in, I think it has been shown and proven in other jurisdictions that there may be a small blip in regard to the economy in some natures, but it

generally has been proven to be recovered. Certainly, to the benefit of the tax system, the recovery is much more to the benefit of society than the cost.

This is a health circumstance, Mr. Speaker, and it is clearly health from my perspective. The reason I seconded the bill in its initial stage when the Member for Carman brought it forward almost two years ago was purely because of the costs to the health care system and the costs to individual lives and families that smoking may have. We are certainly not banning individuals from smoking. They may be able to continue to smoke in their homes and outside, just not in public buildings.

I think the public is becoming much, much more accepting of that today than they have ever been before. We are finding a lot of community rinks and halls are making the decision on a municipal basis themselves that they simply are voluntarily eliminating smoking from those buildings, Mr. Speaker, and I find that to be very positive.

We hope that in the future that will help our health care system, not only from a financial basis and relieve the Minister of Finance's concerns a little bit, help him out, whoever that minister is going to be in the future, but also to the individual lives of the families involved that are smokers presently today. I know of many, many people who, as the price of cigarettes goes up and the government receives more tax from it, are actually slowing down and eliminating smoking from their own families or encouraging family members to partake in mechanisms and supports that will help them slow down or quit smoking, Mr. Speaker. I think that is a positive area.

I would also like to say that there are many organizations out there today that many Manitobans believe in and support, from Diabetes Association, to Heart and Stroke and cancer programs. There are many, many areas in society today for citizens who want to make, on a voluntary basis, donations toward or put forth their personal efforts and volunteer time to help these people out in regard to putting forth more information and clinics to point out the detrimental impacts that smoking may have on our society.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I will close my comments on this amendment and I would be most attentive to the debate that takes place on this amendment from the other members of the House.

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

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment to Bill 21, The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: I believe the Nays have it.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, on division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, will you please call concurrence and third reading of Bill 21.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 21—The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act (Various Acts Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Concurrence and third reading of Bill 21, The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act (Various Acts Amended).

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), that Bill 21, The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur la protection de la santé des non-fumeurs (modification de diverses

dispositions législatives), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth, seconded by the honourable Minister of Healthy Living, that Bill 21, The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act (Various Acts Amended), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I am certainly pleased to have the opportunity today to rise and put a few comments on the record in regard to the third reading of Bill 21, The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act. Mr. Speaker, as so many people have said that this has been quite a significant effort that has gone into the development of this particular bill and it has been so interesting to watch the process evolve and to see the weaving of the tapestry that has evolved as people in this province have rallied around, moving towards non-smoking in public places.

We have heard from many people throughout the province on this issue and I would like to commend the government for moving forward. I would like to commend the Minister of Healthy Living for following through on the government's commitment to take on this issue. It certainly has been a controversial issue. It is setting a standard in this country. We are breaking ground in this country. We are making history in this country in terms of moving towards no smoking in public places, Mr. Speaker. I think it has been a bold move on Manitoba's part and I do give the government credit for taking us in that direction.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there have been a lot of efforts going on at many different levels and I would like to indicate that a huge debt of gratitude must also go to the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), who basically steered this particular bill throughout its evolution in this province, right from the very beginning. He has taken this bill from the very beginning. He has spent years on it, and I do believe he has taken a lot of his own personal challenges with smoking and taken it into something that will evolve as a legacy in this province. With great fortitude and, I think, with great vision, passion and

commitment, he has steered this particular bill through some pretty rough waters. There has been a lot of negotiation and he deserves an awful lot of credit for what happened, I think, or what will happen eventually today in the passage of this very historic bill.

Many of us who are involved in health care realize the significance of this in terms of it being a very serious health issue. Certainly, in committee, Mr. Speaker, we heard from a number of people in the health profession particularly physicians who have commented about the importance of making something like this happen, of making smoking not something that is normal, so that we can move towards protecting the health of Manitobans. People like Joel Kettner, the Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Manitoba, said at committee, and I quote: "I think all Manitobans deserve the protection this bill offers including First Nations people on reserves. I appreciate that there are complex issues. I need to be clear that from a public health perspective, protection offered by this bill is important and I would prefer it to affect all Manitobans."

* (11:40)

I think in some of the comments that came from committee, it became evident that people felt that this was a significant health issue and a significant health bill that was put in place to protect people in this province. There was never any belief at the beginning that we would see this split apart, that it was only going to protect some people and not all people. If we have an issue with any part of this bill, this is certainly a significant part of that concern.

Mr. Speaker, it has raised serious enough concerns by us that we will endeavour to continue to work toward some resolution to this because the research that is out there shows we have some phenomenal challenges with smoking amongst Aboriginal peoples and on reserves. I think we have an obligation as legislators to try to move it so this bill protects all people.

Children do not have a voice often and it is our voices as legislators that can move forward to help protect children. I think that is incredibly important and I think we have a responsibility. I do not think jurisdictional issues should stop us from at least trying to do the right thing. I do not think what we

are seeing with this bill is a good enough effort from the government to try to do the right thing and to have the courage to take on this jurisdictional challenge. I think they have failed in that regard.

We certainly heard from other people in committee, you know, Doctor Harlos, the Medical Officer of Health for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, said, and I quote, "I think that you can extrapolate from my comments that all Manitobans, all Winnipeggers, from a health perspective, I think what we are striving for is in protecting the health of everyone with equality."

Doctor Duncan, the past president of the Manitoba Medical Association, said, and I quote, "We know from the standpoint of percentages there are more people smoking on reserves and they have a greater health burden than the average Manitoban that is off of reserve."

Margaret Bernherdt-Lowdon of the Heart and Stroke Foundation said, and I quote, "We would prefer to have legislation that protects all Manitobans."

Doctor Dhaliwal, the president and chief executive officer of CancerCare Manitoba said, and I quote, "If we do not turn the current trends, we will have a large number of Aboriginal people dying of cancer and heart disease and the combination of effects of the two, so we have an opportunity to try to eliminate the smoking culture. The Aboriginal people, I was a founding member of the Aboriginal cancer care committee in Ontario, want this. They want this."

Mr. Speaker, in committee we tried to pass an amendment. We were hoping the government would acknowledge our amendment and do the right thing and eliminate a clause that did not allow protection of Aboriginal people with this particular legislation. The government side soundly defeated our amendment. The amendment was put forward by the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), and I had the privilege of seconding it. Our amendment was soundly defeated.

That was very disappointing, Mr. Speaker. When we are talking about the kind of research that is out there that is pointing to the huge health and economic problems that are going to be coming down the road with some of the increased smoking, I

think it does cause some grave alarm. If a government is talking about really believing in protecting the health of all people, they should have done the right thing. They should have accepted our amendment and they did not.

It just begs the question of how can the Doer government deny all Manitobans that protection. They said they were concerned about jurisdictional issues, and yet in July of 2000, the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) in Estimates said, and I quote, "We want to throw away the rule book. We are attempting to forge forward on the Aboriginal issue by doing a number of things differently.

"We have been working quite closely with the federal government on a number of issues to put in place a different communications strategy, a strategy of talking with each other and not paying as much attention to whether this is your job and this is our job, this is not your job, this is our job. I am fully aware that proceeding on that kind of a basis opens us up on a number of difficulties in the future of constitutional grounds and jurisdictional issues."

Mr. Speaker, how, on the one hand, can they talk about throwing away the jurisdictional book and protecting the health of all Manitobans, and when they had the first big challenge in this area, they totally ignored it? I just think that really shows the government does not have the commitment. It had a lot of rhetoric, but it did not move forward on this issue.

However, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding that the government has refused to address the health of all Manitobans, the bill in itself is still something, I think, we need to move forward on.

I am the daughter of a father who smoked, and his death was largely attributable to smoking. Mr. Speaker, I saw what that did to him and I saw the effects of years of smoking on my dad. I think this is the right thing for us, for me as a daughter, for me as a nurse, for me as a legislator, I see this is the right direction to be moving. I do have some concerns about the effects on businesses and some of the concerns the Legions have raised in this issue. I do hope the minister will continue to strive to address those issues, that we do not just walk away from it once the bill is passed, that there is a very sincere effort put forward to try to address some of those concerns.

Mr. Speaker, this certainly is a historic moment. I do also, before I end my comments, want to commend the Manitoba Medical Association for their driving effort in this. I have to say that despite all my years in health care, I do not recall ever seeing the Medical Association or any other association so strongly take on an issue. It was really interesting to watch their perseverance, their passion for it, particularly Dr. Mark Taylor. I was very impressed with the commitment they made. Really, a great deal of credit for this has to rest with them for the initiative and effort they put into this and their commitment. They never wavered. It was impressive to watch the negotiations and to watch the compromise at all levels, I think is commendable. It does show what we can accomplish as legislators when we are moving forward in an effort. We will at least accomplish many positive things, not all that we wanted with this bill and not the protection of all, but we will, I think, achieve some pretty significant achievements with this bill being adopted.

With those few words, I would just like to end by saying it has been an interesting challenge and honour really to be part of something that is historic in this country. I look forward later in the day to this very, very special moment, this historic moment that we will see in this province.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on third reading of Bill 21, which is before us today.

I want to say that for the four and a half years I have been an elected representative for River Heights, one of the areas I have talked about and emphasized is the need for approaches which will reduce the level of smoking and which will protect non-smokers from the effects of second-hand smoke. I remember over the years doing quite a number of media and radio interviews emphasizing this as an important part of a health strategy for Manitoba. I am therefore pleased we have Bill 21 before us today and we have all-party support. This bill will soon be legislation passed by the Manitoba Legislature.

At the same time, I want to say we have some concerns with the bill in its final form. Those concerns we have expressed in our minority report from the committee which toured the province and in the speeches that I and the MLA for Inkster have made in this Chamber at various stages of the bill. In spite of those defects, we certainly support the bill and we will vote for it.

* (11:50)

I want to congratulate the efforts of the many who have worked hard to reduce the level of smoking in Manitoba and its effects on the health of Manitobans. I want to thank them also for their efforts to achieve protection for Manitobans from second-hand smoke. There are many, and it would be impossible to name them all, but people like Murray Gibson and Mark Taylor, as well as many, many others have played a significant role in this effort.

I would like to say a special thank you to all those who presented at the committee hearings. I was at 12 of the hearings and the MLA for Inkster was at one. We heard many, many presenters with a wide variety of different views although, clearly, the large majority were in support of this legislation, which, at that point, was not yet drafted, but of the trend and the direction that the legislation was going.

I hope the government in its implementation of the legislation will listen to a number of the comments and suggestions which were made at committee hearings or at various stages of discussion of this bill. I hope the government will show compassion to those whom this bill will adversely affect.

We have called on numerous occasions, Mr. Speaker, for the inclusion of Zyban and nicotine gum and nicotine patch on Pharmacare. Many others, presenters during the committee hearings, supported this view and recognized this would be an important measure along with the bill to help those who are smokers, who are addicted to smoking, but who want to stop smoking, but are having difficulty. I believe it is very important that we, in our efforts to improve health in Manitobans, do not forget those who are smokers, that we do not ostracize them or turn aside but, rather, show compassion and show we are ready to help them by putting Zyban, the nicotine gum and the nicotine patch on the Pharmacare program so that, in fact, there is support for this.

I want to mention the efforts here of Dr. Rick Ross, who was our candidate in Charleswood in the last provincial election, who has been a very strong advocate of this position. He has been a very forceful advocate for helping individuals to stop smoking. His personal experience with many individuals who are struggling to stop smoking has shown clearly these agents are effective, and that providing this sort

of support can be beneficial in helping people stop smoking. There was a large study done by the former dean of medicine, Dr. Nick Anthonisen, which supported the effectiveness of these agents in helping people to stop smoking, but also in decreasing the extent of lung damage and the extent of reduction of lung function in subsequent years. Clearly, the effectiveness of these agents is agreed to and the importance of their role and the need for these measures to help people is, I think, something that cannot be argued with. We hope the government will move in this direction.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We also listened to many business people who presented on this committee stage and at various stages of the legislation. We recognize the overwhelming evidence suggests that on a large scale, if we look, for example, at the whole province, we do not expect that there will be adverse economic effects here, and there may be benefits for a variety of reasons: increased productivity, increased health of people, and so on, and increased business in restaurants which cater to families and to non-smokers, and where people will come out and enjoy having a meal where, in the past, it has not always been as enjoyable when there was a smoking environment there.

What is also apparent from the many presenters is that there are some individual businesses who will suffer as a result of this legislation. The government, in implementing this legislation, needs to recognize this fact and needs to find some way of helping such businesses in a transition period from where we are now, before this legislation is passed and into effect, to afterward. We heard a variety of presenters with some options and hopefully the government will see fit to look at this issue and to see what can be done and then to implement some activities which can help those businesses where there will be significant adverse effects with a transition approach and, as the Manitoba Federation of Labour has indicated, that there will not just be businesses affected, but some workers who are affected, and that there may need to be a transitional help in certain selected instances, we would expect, where workers are affected or may be laid off as a result of this legislation.

We expect that the government, in implementing this legislation, will look at these matters and will

consider them and will make sure that such measures are in place. I will bring my remarks at this point to a conclusion. I want to say with these comments that we are supportive of this bill. We look forward to clean indoor environments throughout Manitoba, with the exception of the more than 60 First Nations communities who are not included in this legislation and hope that the government will work with the First Nations communities to help bring about cleaner indoor environments in those areas as well.

So, with those comments, I will now close and say that this legislation, in overall perspective, is clearly a very positive development for Manitoba, one that we have worked hard for and co-operatively with the other parties to achieve.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Acting Speaker, I have spoken to this bill on a number of occasions and at committee. I do want to say a few words on it in third reading just to reiterate what I think are the most important issues, and I think it is important that the work of the committee that I had the pleasure of sitting on is for the most part reflected in this bill in terms of eliminating second-hand tobacco smoke in enclosed areas in Manitoba. That is a good first step.

I do remain at odds with the minister, in particular with his refusal to accept amendments to take advice he received at committee with regard to the exemptions that he has put in, particularly for First Nations and reserve land. It is unfortunate that the minister who is responsible for this bill did not attend one of the sessions, not one of the sessions was he at where we had input from the public, but I would assure him that at not one of those sessions did any group come forward and request an exemption for First Nations, not one. In fact, just the opposite, and we had a very, very strong presentation from the Burntwood health region from an Aboriginal who indicated to us very, very serious issues that face Aboriginal communities with their addiction to smoking and the subsequent health problems, and the risk all of the members of those communities are put at with regard to environmental tobacco smoke and second-hand smoke, and exposure to smoking. This bill does not in any way address the issues that were brought forward to the committee that toured this province and brought forward repeatedly at virtually every stop we made.

* (12:00)

This is clearly a political decision the Doer government has decided to foist upon the people of Manitoba. It is a wrong-headed decision. This minister does not have the courage to stand up to the Premier, does not have the courage to stand up to those in his Cabinet who want to push forward their agenda of casinos on reserves, and that is unfortunate for the people of Manitoba. I would again just want to emphasize how disappointed I am this exemption will continue through on this legislation and this minister and this government will force that exemption on First Nations across Manitoba.

They talk about a jurisdictional issue. We have seen from legislation that is proposed and being passed in other provinces nobody else has that fear. It is just the Doer government that has that fear, so one must question, what is really the underlying cause of including that exemption in this piece of legislation?

Another not quite as dramatic but nevertheless serious concern with this legislation is the fact this minister once again has refused to respond, has refused to review the situation at Canad Inns Stadium. It was brought up at committee when we discussed this bill on a number of occasions. Canad Inns Stadium will be only one of two facilities in Canada that will allow smoking underneath the stands. That, while it may appear to some to be open area, is not. It is virtually enclosed on three sides. There are openings at the end. There are lots of young children, lots of other individuals, lots of people in Manitoba with asthma who will be forced to endure the unpleasantness of second-hand smoke as they go to the concessions or go to the washrooms underneath the stands at the Winnipeg Stadium, an easy thing for this government to have dealt with.

Once again, no courage was shown by the Minister for Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) in order to take on this issue. All it would take would be a quick meeting with the people who are now responsible for the stadium. It is in the process of being transferred from the Winnipeg Enterprises Corporation to the management of the Winnipeg Football Club. A short meeting, I am sure, would resolve it. This minister has refused to attend such a meeting and refused to be a part of that negotiation. For that, Mr. Acting Speaker, I remain very, very critical of him.

Having said that, it is an important first step. I am glad we are taking it in Manitoba. I appreciate the

hard work of the members of the committee, particularly the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan). I certainly appreciate all the input and all the support we had from all the groups who took the time to come out and attend our committee meetings. Certainly, all the presentations were well received. On that basis I just wanted to voice my concerns with this bill before it goes through third reading.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I would like to put a few words on the record with respect to this bill. I view this bill with mixed emotion because the government has attached to this bill a section which deals with something unrelated to smoking. It deals with the exemption of Legions to the education tax, something that the Legions have been after for a long time. It was in that context I moved an amendment to the bill to allow the exemption on education tax to begin flowing this year, and I think there is significance to that.

I will acknowledge something the minister has done in a minute, but I just want to explain, Mr. Acting Speaker, the motivation for moving the amendment. The motivation for that was that this year, on June 6, we celebrated the D-day commemoration of 60 years, and the war veterans who are still living today from that Second World War have been requesting of us as government to simply acknowledge that their numbers are dwindling and the Legions that they gather in as comrades are getting to the point where they cannot afford to even pay their taxes.

Mr. Acting Speaker, with the stroke of a pen, this government absolved the universities from paying tax, both municipal and education tax. This is a very small group in our province and an insignificant amount of money in relation to the budgets of the Province or the budgets of municipalities and it would not be at all a burden on the rest of the taxpayers in this province to share that exemption.

What we are talking about is shifting the taxes paid by veterans to the general population, Mr. Acting Speaker. What we are asking for is that instead of veterans paying the municipal taxes and the education tax that the rest of society in this province would pick up that burden on their behalf.

That is not an unworthy request, Mr. Acting Speaker, because all we are asking for is that we

recognize the value of these people who fought for the freedom of this country and because of them, we enjoy a democracy and we enjoy freedom, that this is a little contribution, recognition and a little respect that we can give our Legionnaires. So that was the motivation behind my moving the amendment.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the minister for recognizing the value of the Legionnaires because, in essence, he has indicated that, as minister and as a government, they will move to give a grant in lieu of the taxes, if you like, or an amount equivalent to that for a period of approximately 6 months to cover the period from when this bill comes into force to the end of the year. Although that is perhaps a paraphrasing of the intent of the minister, I think his intent is pure in terms of making sure that the right thing is done for the Legion members.

Mr. Speaker, you know, it seems to me strange, even as a government, we are afraid to absolve the Legions from paying the entire education tax for this year. I said, if it is a gesture of good will by government to do that to Legions, say, "Look, we understand the sacrifices you paid to protect our country. This is an exemption for the entire year." In that way, at least it gives a little bit of recognition and respect to those Legion members.

Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the main bill though, and that is the non-smoking bill, and I want to put a few comments on the record with respect to this bill, because it is sad that in a democracy like we have that we are starting to infringe upon the rights of people by having to move to smoke-free places. It is a trend that is, I think, catching fire across the land.

An Honourable Member: No pun intended.

Mr. Derkach: That is a pun. Mr. Speaker, it is a trend that we see happening across the land. Places where people gather, enclosed places, are being now declared smoke-free zones, if you like, because we are interested in protecting the health of people. We are not saying that people cannot smoke anymore, but, indeed, in enclosed places people cannot smoke.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Carman, who was sort of the originator, if you like, of this bill, took it upon himself because of the effects that smoking has

had on his life, perhaps, and on his friends and on people he has been associated with, has seen the importance of making sure that perhaps his children, his grandchildren and other residents of Manitoba are not exposed unnecessarily to the hazards of smoke.

Mr. Speaker, as we move through this process, there are some that are going to be impacted, some businesses perhaps are going to be impacted, but in general what we are trying to do is protect the general health of people. Today, people are much more conscious about their health and about the health of our society than they were a few years ago. You know, I would have to say that as a former Minister of Education, one of the things that I noticed as we travelled across this province to our schools is that we have a very healthy young population.

* (12:10)

I recall the days when I was in school a few decades ago, Mr. Speaker, and there were children in our schools who suffered from polio afflictions and perhaps had health problems that did not need to be, but because we were not as healthy as a society then as we are today, there were people who were impacted and they are still living today who have lived with those afflictions of the past.

Mr. Speaker, it is almost a joyful thing to go into our schools today and see a very healthy population of young children. We have been very, I think, adamant in making sure that we move in that direction, and this is another step in that direction.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few comments, I want to say that I will support this bill, of course, and I would just wish that the minister would have been a little more generous to the Legions in their support.

There is another aspect that I want to put on the record here. I will be aggressively pursuing the issue of removing the municipal taxes from Legions. I am going to encourage the government, this minister and ministers of the Crown to make sure that we give the respect to Legionnaires that they deserve and that we eliminate the municipal taxes on their premises so they can continue to enjoy, not only that comradeship, but indeed they have a place to gather and a place where they can perhaps together enjoy each other's comradeship, each other's company, and

continue to live out their lives in a respectful way in this province.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I would like to place a few words on the record of The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act, Bill 21. I am proud of this bill. I commend everyone in this House for supporting this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a personal note to the record. Four years ago I received a letter from a junior high student who wanted to ban smoking in public places. This student was Nicole Poklitar from Linden Street in the Rossmere constituency. I just want to point out that Nicole Poklitar was ahead of many people in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Nicole Poklitar for her concerns about public health, and I will be sending her a copy of this bill, a copy of Hansard and a copy of the all-party task force report on banning smoking in public places. Again, I commend this young student for her interest in this important matter.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, this morning, June 10, 2004, will be one of those days when many of us will have that opportunity to recall in some of our history as we look back on things that we have done, days where we can remember what we have done, where we were, what our environment was like.

A few of those things that I make reference to right now and I just had a few moments ago speaking with the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) when the government of the day brought forward a coat of arms for the province of Manitoba. In those days, Sir, I sat in your chair. I recall when that was done, the day, the pomp and ceremony, that the Province, indeed, had signified this would be their emblem to the people of the province of Manitoba. Let me go on the record, Sir, by saying, and I will repeat what I said back then, that I did not like it. I still do not like it. I never thought a beaver should be wearing a little hat and on that they did portray a little beaver wearing a hat. I took exception to that but I remember that day extremely well.

The other day that I remember extremely well, Mr. Speaker, as we sat here in this Chamber was the Meech Lake Accord. Now the Meech Lake Accord, for those of us who happened to be in this Chamber remember extremely well those who were here, those who were present, those who spoke, those individuals who were in the galleries and the environment that was all around this entire building. This morning, Sir, I sort of feel the same sort of shadow being cast by the Golden Boy. Again, he is casting a shadow over each and every one of us that I had this opportunity to participate in bringing forward this particular legislation.

To the new members who were elected June 3, just over a year ago now, pay attention to what has happened because as individual members, a majority of those individuals are sitting in the back benches today and are asking themselves, "What is my role, what is my function and what are my duties and responsibilities?" This particular little piece of legislation, as has been pointed out by several individuals, has come about over many, many years of debate. I will, in my remarks somewhere down the road, attempt to make reference to all of those individuals who participated somewhat. When I say somewhat to each and every one of the 57 of us who are assembled here today, you all had a role to play in this in one way or another.

I understand by the discussions that are happening, it is a unanimous vote we are having on this third reading of this bill, and I appreciate each and every one of the members of this Assembly, regardless of which side of the House we are on. What has brought us to this point is the fact that over several years, and I look now directly to the Government House Leader. He was here, I think, pretty well the entire time I have been trying to bring forward this particular legislation, his confidence and support, along with a couple of my House leaders. He had a role to play with them in attempting to keep on my behalf, on behalf of the people of the province, this particular piece of legislation, which actually bore fruit in a private member's bill.

This bill, and I have talked to countless individuals, received thousands of e-mails from individuals supportive and non-supportive. I have individuals calling this the rotten Rocan bill, mad that this bill is even presently before the House. Why would you even consider bringing such a particular idea forward? The idea that I bring forward, and it

galled me somewhat because, as a former truck driver, farmer and quite proud of the fact that I thought I would be macho smoking two or three packs of cigarettes a day—I smoked that for something like 33 years. CancerCare Manitoba says that of all lifetime smokers, 50 percent will die of disease due to smoking. I will be one of them, and I have hastened, I guess, my meeting with my maker because of the stupidity that I had for many years.

* (12:20)

God gave me a couple of gifts. As you get on with life, you find certain things that are very special.

I will be okay in a second. It is my grandchildren that I am trying to get through to here. They are so close to me. That is what I live for. I will not have that luxury for a long time, to visit with them, and it is for them that I undertook this challenge.

The Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), again, supports me, and she supported me on every step of the way because many days I would get down on myself and wonder why would I want to take on such a big fight. Why would I want to fight with Export 'A' and du Maurier and Rothmans and Pall Malls and every other cigarette company in the country? Why would I want to have every little hotel owner or restaurant barkeep mad at me? Why would I do this? I would discuss this situation with the member from Charleswood. I know she is not on the public record, but she herself has had this great pain go through her and she would just fire this stoker in me and get me going again. I appreciated her for that, because it was difficult. But every time I see my grandchildren I tell them, because they know and I use the words "evils of smoking" and how it has put me down and how I have suffered and how I have spent many hours in hospitals and how the prognosis is probably not all that good, and I am attempting today to spend as much time with them as I humanly possibly can.

To each and every one of the new members that are here, the young generation that has come forward, what we have undertaken to do was to assist you and the people that you represent to live a better quality of life, a longer life, because the stats are very clear on what smoking can do. Environmental tobacco smoke, second-hand smoke as you will have it, kills three times more Canadians than alcohol, AIDS, car accidents, suicides and murders. I have

seen deaths caused by alcohol. I have seen deaths caused by AIDS. I have seen many deaths caused by car accidents. I have seen suicides. It is not a nice thing to watch and see, but when I see myself and other individuals who were smoking and causing a lot of grief to people around us who are no better than I walking around with a gun.

My son today suffers with asthma for all the years that he tried to be with his dad in the truck, in the tractor or car, and I, like a fool, would sit there and smoke cigarettes, not knowing in those days what I was doing to him. I did not know. Maybe we wised up a little bit, and got accustomed to listening and reading some of this valuable information that was there before us and took it to task. The discussions that I had with our Minister of Health here in this Chamber—I recall many, many years ago, he shared with me. He says, "Denis, you have no idea how often we as ministers of Health of Canada get together. It is like a challenge," he says. "Who will be the one who will try to ban smoking first?" Well, to his credit, it is us in Manitoba. He was with me; he laid out the process for us with this all-party task force, in which several members from this Chamber participated.

The new young minister, the Minister of Healthy Living, came on board. He came on with so much enthusiasm and willingness to participate and to see this process to the end. To his credit, albeit I stand here before each and every one of you, but I have that feeling that I have failed. As I pointed out in committee, I believe if you walk and you talk and you breathe air in Manitoba that you should be protected by this legislation.

Well, that amendment did not pass. I accept the minister for his word, for it is not within our jurisdiction, but a commitment that I have already made to him, and I will make it quite public here today, I will do whatever is humanly possible to work with this government to lobby the federal government, the leaders of the First Nations, because you, these individuals have a right to this protection.

Now, I guess I have kind of got away from my notes here a little bit, so I am not going to spend an awful lot more time, because I see we are quickly running out of time.

I have made reference to each and every one of the members that are in here, a debt of gratitude to

each and every one of you on behalf of the people in the province: the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), who seconded my original private member's bill, a debt of gratitude; my dear, good friend the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) for always being there; the Premier (Mr. Doer), who finally came onside. I say finally, because in his mind, he did not figure that we should have that opportunity or we should not use our moral values and we had the luxury to make law that we should be pronouncing that on the people. The Premier finally came around. He came around because there was this great big ball that started to roll in the province.

Now remember, Mr. Speaker, when I told you at the outset there was nobody there. I even had my caucus colleagues, and I am being very up front with you, they were not supportive with me. But then after a while when I started looking behind and the ball was getting bigger and the crowd was growing, God help people like Export 'A', du Maurier, Pall Malls and whoever tried to step in our road, because they were going to get mowed over. The consensus was, of the general public, the silent majority said enough is enough. They felt that all of a sudden they had a government, they had ministers of the Crown who were supporting an idea, and they were convinced that this was going to happen. Well, on June 10, 2004, it happened.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 21, The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act (Various Acts Amended).

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

An Honourable Member: Unanimous.

Mr. Speaker: Unanimous.

* * *

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to table the request of ministers for concurrence. I guess I have to ask leave to table the request for ministers that we would like to see in concurrence. I would have to tell

the House that I have consulted with the Liberal Party as well as the government with regard to this.

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

Mr. Derkach: I understand that I would have to ask for leave to call the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), since he has been called twice now and this would be the third time. So I am asking the House for leave to be able to request the Minister of Health to come before committee, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to call the Minister of Health? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table this list which includes the minister of highways, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan), the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson).

Mr. Speaker: The request for ministers for concurrence has been tabled.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., we will recess and we will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

* (10:20)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Order, please. On June 1, 2004, the Official Opposition House Leader tabled the list of ministers of the Crown who may be called for questioning and debate on the concurrence motion. Currently, the Committee of Supply is focussed on the Minister of Family Services and Housing. The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I was asked for several pieces of information yesterday and I think I have got them all. So I will just kind of go through them as I have them arranged here.

First, there was a question about a particular employee of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. I

did check with the department, and I am unable to release information about him.

Secondly, there was a request that was outstanding that I was not aware was still outstanding on The Adoption Act. So I do have information here on that. The Member for Minnedosa asked about changes that had been made. The change that had been made was actually on—

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Chair, I was wondering if the minister would be able to share the regulations and rules with me. Table it, please.

Ms. Melnick: Yes, I have a bit of commentary to go with it, too, to give you some context. But I will be tabling documents.

There was a policy change. There were multiple applications going in for adoptions to the various divisions. There was a policy change made that, if a placement was actually ongoing, there would be a hold placed on the applications in the other divisions so that three or four children would not appear at the same time if people were getting adoptions. That was the policy change that was made.

We will be, as I had mentioned to the member, opening The Adoption Act, hopefully, later this fall. I have some outlines on that which I will table.

Mrs. Rowat: While the information is being tabled, I guess I have a question that the chances of three children being available for adoption to one parent all at once seems a bit extreme, especially with the lack of children available for adoption at this point. I think that actually, by putting in a policy where you are limiting families the opportunities to adopt either overseas or through Division 1 and 2, it is actually working against the best interests of the children, as well as the families who are wanting to adopt. I know that in discussions I have had with several parents as well as agencies that are affected, this policy actually works against the best interests of the children and the families. I think the opportunity to discuss this policy change and to give people the opportunity to share their views is encouraging. I think also the department should be working with the families to ensure every possibility is available for families to adopt.

Ms. Melnick: The next piece of information, there was discussion about funding in Family Services and

Housing, Child and Family Services funding. I do have what was in our budget this year. Child protection, there was an increase of 7.1 percent; Winnipeg Child and Family Services salaries and operating, 3.8 percent; service delivery remained constant and the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Child Welfare Initiative actually saw a decrease because what we had budgeted for was several people being seconded to the new authorities. That has not been happening as quickly as we had hoped so we have adjusted our funding for this year. I also have copies to table of that.

Mrs. Rowat: I would like to go back to the adoption issue for a moment and thank the minister for tabling this. We will go to this point second, but first we want to go back to the adoption policy please.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I note the minister indicated they are looking at opening up The Adoption Act in the fall. Can I ask the minister who is involved in the consultations around changes that might be contemplated by the minister?

Ms. Melnick: We certainly would be welcoming input from the community so if there are people who are wanting to make a presentation, voice their concerns, that would be fine, but if people are wanting to communicate before that happens I would be very open to hearing what people have to say.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I would like to know what the process is. Normally speaking, when there are significant changes, all the organizations that are involved in adoptive activity and other stakeholders in the community have an opportunity for some input. I would like to know what the process is now. If we are looking at changes to legislation, who is involved at this point and are people being fully consulted around some of the options the government might be looking at? I was wondering if the minister might be able to share with us today some of the thoughts around what the changes to The Adoption Act might be.

*(10:30)

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, I agree that input is very, very important. We will be meeting relatively soon to work out that process. We have not worked that out yet, but I will certainly be taking your comments under consideration for that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We will be watching for that. I would hope there is a significant process beforehand so that no one is caught off guard by amendments that are introduced. Could the minister indicate, just in sort of a broad sense, what direction they might be looking at taking with changes? Where does she believe the shortcomings are in the act that need to be addressed?

Ms. Melnick: I have not gone into that detail yet. We will be looking at it throughout the summer and working on a process that I hope will be quite similar to the one that you are outlining, where stakeholders would in fact be a part of the discussion. As I have said before, I hope people would not feel that they would have to wait. Certainly, if they were wanting to send in correspondence at this time, I would be very open to seeing what people have to say, their concerns, their considerations and any suggestions that they would have.

Mr. Chairperson: May I suggest third-person use again, instead of "you."

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the minister, I believe it was in November that I had a group come in and meet with the minister's staff. I believe the minister was there. I cannot remember for sure, but I do know that her deputy was there and staff from the adoption sector of her department.

During those discussions, there was no mention of the changes that were going to be made. I guess my question is, when the changes were being considered, at that point already, I thought it would probably have been in the best interests of her department to discuss them with CAFAC when they were in visiting and sharing their information on what their agency does. There was an excellent opportunity to ask for feedback and dialogue on the proposed changes.

So I guess my question would be if this minister has consulted with families or organizations prior to the changes that were implemented in late December and if any effort was made to see if there could be an inclusion of maybe CAFAC or Adoption Options or even some of the families that are involved in the process at this time.

Ms. Melnick: I did not attend that meeting. I know that I was unable to that day, but I am just

wondering, are you referring to changes to be made to the act?

Mrs. Rowat: I believe that there were some changes made to the policy regarding families adopting overseas. I thought that by having CAFAC there, who does a substantial amount of business with families and overseas adoptions, that that was an excellent opportunity for her department to consult and get feedback on where they see the policy changes going.

I think that was an unfortunate situation. I think the department actually should be reaching out to organizations like CAFAC, who are world-renowned in their work with adoption, international adoptions. I think this does not bode well with organizations such as that and families that are looking at this option when a meeting did take place and there was no heads-up or consultation at that time.

Ms. Melnick: The point is well taken. Perhaps as we determine our process it may be helpful for the member to be kept informed of the process, and certainly the groups such as you are naming and other groups that we have not mentioned today, including individuals who have concerns around this area, to be notified well in advance. I will certainly undertake to make that happen. Is there anything else on adoptions?

I am just wondering if there is any discussion on the Child and Family Services funding. I think people would have got the information now.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I just was looking at the information that the minister provided. I guess we see the AJI-Child Welfare Initiative, a reduction of 14 percent. If I heard the minister correctly, she is saying that things have not unrolled or unfolded, as far as devolution goes, as quickly as anticipated, or they will not be happening. I guess, if she could just give us the status on where devolution is at and why the reduction.

Ms. Melnick: We found this to be quite a wonderful process and a very interesting process and one where we might have set some optimistic time lines. Certainly, when working in partnership as we are with the people of the First Nations, discussions can take a bit longer. Checking back has taken a bit longer. The process is moving along quite well, but

we are not on the aggressive time line that we had hoped.

Last Thursday, I was very honoured to be at the opening of the Métis Child and Family Services Authority. That has opened now, and we are also working with our other partners through a process of secondments to the four authorities. That, of course, is something that is happening over time. What we found was we were able to look at the pace and look at the funding and be able to be more understanding that it may take a little longer to actually roll out and for the authorities to actually staff up and get going.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The minister indicated the announcement that was made last week. Is it the Métis Child and Family Services agency that is now open, and can she indicate to me how many individuals would have been seconded from her department to staff up the Métis agency?

Ms. Melnick: It is the authority. The Métis have been very positive. They have developed their own program. So a number of the people who have been through that program are actually working there now. I do not have the exact number of people who had been seconded from our department. I could get that for you, but it was actually very positive because a lot of the people who are now working at the Métis authority actually gained work experience within our department and so there is a very positive relationship that has been developed through there. Now they are very excited to be working in their own authority.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is great to hear that the authority is getting up and running. I know that the minister would not have detailed information at her fingertips, but if we could get some sort of sense of what is happening. This is the first authority to be up and running. Is there anticipation that any other authority will be up and running in this fiscal year?

Ms. Melnick: We have authorities that in fact are starting to get up and running. They are in the process of that and so that is going to take some time. The general authority certainly is up and running, northern and southern. I believe I tabled with you, yesterday, the members of the various authorities.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am wondering why, then, the dollars that are associated with the AJI-CWI initiative are reduced as significantly as they are.

* (10:40)

Ms. Melnick: Well, certainly, there were initial start-up costs. There was, for example, the development of an Intranet, CFS, which was made available to all authorities and agencies. There was a series of meetings that occurred, the travel that occurred, the general organization that occurred, and that is why what we are seeing here is actually a reduction in costs, not a reduction in funding.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is okay for now. I may come back to it a bit later. That is it.

Ms. Melnick: There was also a request given for the number of children in hotels on specific dates. We have information for you. This information is for May 2004 and up to our most current information, which is June 8. Certainly, the members will be interested in seeing this. It does speak to the importance of looking at children in hotel placements over a period of time, a 12-month period of time, to really get a sense of what the trends are, how that is developing. This will show quite clearly that at times numbers go up and then, at other times, they go down. So I will just table this for the members. I have a copy, so whatever you need.

There were also questions asked as to the policy in the perinatal unit around people being on vacation, people being ill, et cetera. So I will just read that. The perinatal unit does have a backup system. If a worker is away due to vacation or illness or is out of the office on calls or at training, for example, the worker assigned for the day would cover emergencies that arise on the unavailable worker's caseload.

The supervisor also is available to provide coverage, respond to requests for information, et cetera, when an assigned worker is not available. As the supervisor who provides regular supervision, she has up-to-date knowledge of all the active cases. The worker who provided the emergency caseload coverage would usually maintain the case until the assigned worker returns.

In some instances, the case would be assigned to another worker and that, of course, would be depending on the circumstances. In some instances when a worker is on vacation, another worker may be assigned to cover a specific case if it is known

that intervention would be required during the holiday period.

I could table those notes too.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): If I heard the minister right, and I am just reading through the policy that she has handed out, what it would indicate to me is that the only backup would be in the case of an emergency situation. Could the minister indicate, give us a better definition of who would define an emergency?

Ms. Melnick: The perinatal unit is staffed by professionals who work closely and it would be their determination.

Mr. Loewen: In the absence of an emergency situation brought to their attention, obviously, they would not know what was happening with every file, every day on this basis. In the absence of someone notifying them that there was an emergency, there would basically be nobody looking at that file on a regular basis if a worker was on vacation.

Ms. Melnick: I am sorry. I do not quite understand your question.

Mr. Loewen: The indications that the minister has given us indicates that if an emergency arose, presumably they would only be notified of an emergency if someone called or the police were called in or someone identified a specific emergency. I am just more curious to know what happens to just the everyday file that is in the system. It does not look to me from what is being provided here that there is sort of routine follow up done on any file for a worker who is on vacation. It would only be in an emergent situation. Is that accurate?

Ms. Melnick: Again, there is follow up on the files. The perinatal service unit does work closely together. I am sure if someone was going to be away, the individual would speak to whoever was covering to ensure whatever follow-up monitoring, et cetera, would be necessary on a particular file, the other individual was going to be maintaining while the first person was away, that they would have those sorts of discussions, those sorts of communications.

Mrs. Rowat: Regarding situations, I guess my concern is for the mothers who would be under the care of the workers. Would the mothers be told who

their new worker would be if a situation should arise? I guess my question is this: Since these are young moms who probably do not understand a lot about the system and want to ensure they have their worker in place, are they consulted and given information from the workers that they will be receiving a new worker and being kept informed as to who they would be reporting to?

Ms. Melnick: I could get that information for you, if you like.

Mr. Loewen: Just to give the minister some background, what I am trying to determine here is we have a situation where a baby was beaten to death. We understand from reports her mother removed her from what presumably the perinatal unit had determined was a safe situation on a Thursday, and yet no one seems to have known the child was removed from that presumably safe situation until after it was found out the child had been beaten to death. I am just wondering, and not specifics of that case, but obviously, that situation fell through the cracks.

How can the minister be sure the right type of follow-up is being done when people are on vacation? We have seen one indication where a child fell through the cracks. According to the information I have here, it could happen on a daily basis. What assurance can the minister give us that when a young mom removes her child from what has been determined as a safe situation, somebody at Child and Family Services is going to know about it and know about it quickly?

Ms. Melnick: I think there might be a couple of questions in there.

When you were asking about coverage of caseloads while someone is—*[interjection]* Pardon me? Oh, right, sorry. The Member for Fort Whyte was asking about coverage of cases when someone is away, and I have said I will get that information as to whether individuals are contacted that their permanent caseworker is on vacation or is ill.

The second question is that there is ongoing monitoring of cases on an individual basis. I really cannot speak to the specifics of this case, which I heard the member acknowledge is appropriate, but there is an ongoing monitoring system with all the cases.

*(10:50)

Mr. Loewen: I would ask the minister if she would expect the perinatal unit to have a system in place whereby if a young mom and a baby who were involved in receiving services from this program move that child from a safe location, what would her expectation be, in terms of timing, as to when somebody at Child and Family Services would step in and correct the situation. Is it one day? Is it five days? Is it six weeks? Is it wait until a tragedy happens? What is the process?

Ms. Melnick: My understanding is that cases are, indeed, monitored and that when there are concerns raised, they are acted upon.

Mr. Loewen: But, when the minister says "concerns raised," who is expected to raise the concerns? The baby?

Ms. Melnick: Concerns may be raised through a variety of ways. There could be discussion with the individual. There could be someone alerting the case worker. The case workers themselves may be concerned. There are a variety of ways to identify concerns and then action would be taken.

Mr. Loewen: Well, what I am looking for is assurance from the minister that action will be taken, because obviously the system fell apart. A young mother removed her 16-month-old baby from presumably what we can only assume Child and Family Services had determined was a safe location.

The grandmother is quoted in the media as saying that she did not want the child to leave, and yet apparently she did not understand that there were resources available to help her and help the young baby.

So what has changed? What is in place today that was not in place when that young baby was beaten to death? What is in place today that would assure this minister that if an infant was removed from a safe location that somebody would know about it within hours? What has changed?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I cannot speak to the specifics of this case. There are two investigations underway, and there is a review underway by the Chief Medical Examiner to determine if an inquest will be called, and we await those results.

Mr. Loewen: I am not asking for specifics of the case. I am asking the minister what steps have been taken to make sure that this type of tragedy does not happen again, that we do not have a situation where an infant is removed from what has been determined as a safe location, and nobody knows about it until the infant turns up dead.

Nobody who has concerns about it has any idea of who to call, or where to go for help, because that is what happened here. What I want is assurance that it will not happen again. Obviously, she had indicated yesterday that she did not meet with front-line workers. Maybe it is her deputy minister. She met with her assistant deputy minister. I do not know, but I think the people of Manitoba deserve an answer in terms of what safeguards are in place today that were not in place before this baby was savagely beaten.

Ms. Melnick: Again, I certainly cannot speak to the specifics of the case, so I cannot respond to the inferences. The perinatal service unit does offer a variety of services to all teen parents. Those services are continuing to be provided. There is one-on-one work going on with each individual and those services will continue to be provided. But, again, we must respect the process of the investigations underway and the review by the CME and we await those results.

Mr. Loewen: What has changed? What is going to prevent the next baby from dying? What has changed systemically? Who have you met with? What have they told you is going to change so that we do not end up with another dead baby?

Mr. Chairperson: Can we use the third person, please?

Ms. Melnick: I have met with many staff people. There is information coming up, but we are continuing to provide the services that we have provided. These are professionals who are working with individual cases. There are two investigations underway, Winnipeg Police Service and Winnipeg Child and Family. There is also the review currently underway by the Chief Medical Examiner, and I encourage members opposite to respect that process.

Mr. Loewen: Well, again, I am very disappointed in the minister's answers, because I think she has a responsibility to the people of Manitoba. She has a

responsibility to the infants of Manitoba to make sure that the necessary changes in process are made and made quickly. We have not got time to wait for reports. The report that we have been told Ms. Trigg is doing, you know, it seems strange to me that the minister would not want some independence in terms of the investigation, but that is her decision.

Has Ms. Trigg been advised to include in her report a study of the case workload that the case workers are handling?

Is that part of the investigation?

Ms. Melnick: Ms. Trigg is conducting an investigation. We are allowing her the time to conduct a thorough investigation. We are awaiting the response to that.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Another point that was raised yesterday, I know the member asked whether or not that report would be released. That report will not be able to be released. It is an internal report.

Mr. Loewen: I would also ask for the parameters of that investigation to be released. There is nothing confidential surely about what the parameters are of that investigation. Can we get hold of that as soon as possible?

Ms. Melnick: I will look into that for you.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I would appreciate receiving that information immediately. My concern is that you are running an internal investigation that is being run in an obviously very secretive fashion. It is being run by the individual who is in charge of, has responsibility of being directly in charge of Child and Family Services.

You know, the fear is that it may not be a thorough enough investigation and it may not be critical enough and open enough for staff to feel comfortable in giving their true and honest opinion. Does the minister not think that the children of Manitoba would be better served by an independent investigation?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, I think it is important to remember that there is a Winnipeg Police Service investigation ongoing as well and the CME review to

determine whether or not an inquest will be called. So I recognize the concerns. I just want to assure the member that I will be looking at the results of the investigations as they come in.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I want to make it perfectly clear to the minister. I hope she would on her own have an understanding of this. The police are investigating the tragic and terrible death of a baby whose life was lost because she fell through the cracks, the cracks at Child and Family Services. She was not given the service or the protection that was needed. The result is she is dead. The police are required by law to investigate that, the Chief Medical Examiner.

We are all saddened. It is a horrible, horrible situation. But it is our job as legislators to see that it does not happen again. So I am asking you different, specific questions, not on that issue, but on the issue of what the minister is doing in terms of an internal investigation.

You are unwilling to give us the parameters of the investigation. I am asking you are you satisfied that you can get to the bottom of this by having an internal, secretive investigation. Do you not think the children of Manitoba would be better served by having an independent investigation into the workings and the actions of her department to ensure the safety of infants into the future?

Ms. Melnick: I did not say I was unwilling to. There are legal concerns around the release of the investigation in Winnipeg Child and Family Services, but I do, again, point to the CME's review and to the Winnipeg Police Service's review. I know that we are all very saddened by this. It has been a tragic event. I feel that, in times such as these, it is very important to be cognizant of processes and respectful of the time lines of the individuals who are both reviewing and investigating at this time in order to allow them to carry on their investigations in a way that they need to so that there is thoroughness.

* (11:00)

Mr. Loewen: When will this review that Ms. Trigg is conducting be completed?

Ms. Melnick: We have not established a time line. Again, the thoroughness is very important here and we want to make sure that all the areas are being

covered and that the thoroughness that we all, I think, agree should be allowed to occur is happening.

Mr. Loewen: Well, can the minister assure us that that review will also look at changes in policy to ensure that situations as we have seen happen do not happen again?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I think we have to wait for the results. I will be watching very closely and we will be looking at what the results of the investigation are.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Loewen: The minister is unwilling or unable to answer the question of when she expects this report to be done. I would assume in a situation where she is directly responsible for Child and Family Services that she would, in her own mind at least, have some time line. Is she expecting three months, six months, nine months? What is satisfactory to her?

Ms. Melnick: Again, I am not unwilling. I am wanting to ensure that the thoroughness that needs to be a major component of this investigation is allowed to be.

Mr. Loewen: So a child has died. You have told the head of the organization—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Please say "the honourable minister."

Mr. Loewen: Sorry, Mr. Chairperson. So a child has died and the minister has told the executive director of the organization responsible for providing service to the child and to her mother that they should conduct an investigation. She has not given them any parameters. She has not given them a time frame. She is willing to sit back and just wait and basically say, "Do whatever you want, take as much time as you want, and get back to me one day with the answer. In the meantime, we will just sit back and hope that there is no other tragedy." Is that what she is telling us?

Ms. Melnick: Again, what I am saying is that I think we have to respect the process and acknowledge the need for thoroughness in these investigations. I am waiting for the reports to come through. We are following closely, and we will be reviewing the results.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I appreciate the minister respects the process. I wish she would have more respect for the baby who has died as a result of the failings of this department. Will she not go to her department and demand that they give her answers within a specified time frame on what changes are going to be made to ensure another tragedy like this does not happen?

Ms. Melnick: I can assure the member that I have respect for the child. I also have respect for the deep concern that he is expressing around the death of the child and that I know all Manitobans are feeling. I also have respect for a thorough process and it is that which we must be looking towards not only in investigation in Winnipeg Child and Family, also the Winnipeg Police Service and the CME review to determine if there will be an inquest.

Mr. Loewen: Well, again, the minister wants to mix the two issues. The police are professionals. They have a job to do. They understand their responsibilities. They will do it and report in due course, as will the Chief Medical Examiner. What I am concerned about is that the minister has made a decision that she will not conduct an independent review. She will conduct an internal review by the head of the agency and she will not give us any indication of what type of parameters she has given that individual in terms of what to look at. She will not give us any indication that policies have been changed as a result of this tragedy and she will not give us any indication of when she, as the minister who is responsible for that division, directly responsible for it, when she is expecting them to report back to her. How can we have any confidence that we know any more today or the system is providing any better service today than it was the day before this baby was removed from a safe location?

Ms. Melnick: I understand the member's concern but I think we do have to respect the thoroughness and we do have to respect the process. I understand your concern around this. We are all very concerned. We are all very saddened. But in times that are particularly difficult, such as these, we do have to respect that there is a process and we do have to respect that thorough investigations do take time. So I understand the considerations that the member is voicing. What I would ask is that he understand that the thoroughness is also very important, and that he understand that the thoroughness will take some time.

Mr. Loewen: This is a very, very sad situation. I am starting to become offended at the lack of action, at the lack of leadership that this minister is showing in this issue. That is an affront not only to the baby that has died, but to all Manitobans. I am simply asking for what parameters have been given to the individual who is conducting this internal review and when the minister expects answers. That has nothing to do with confidentiality. It has nothing to do with process. It has everything to do with the minister showing some leadership and going to that department and saying: I am responsible for that department. I need answers. I need to be assured that infants are safe in the province of Manitoba.

What kind of time frame is acceptable to the minister? Does she need a report in one month? Does she a report in two months? What would she tell the person conducting this review? You know, take all the time you want. Surely to goodness the minister understands the necessity of getting information back in a timely fashion. I am just asking what her expectations are. If it is three months, that is fine. I am not going to come back exactly three months from today and say, where is the report? We are looking, I think, for when we can see results from the work that the minister says is being undertaken. That is what the people of Manitoba deserve.

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, again, I understand your concerns. I understand what you are looking at in terms of –

Mr. Chairperson: Please use third person.

Ms. Melnick: Sorry, it is hard when you are looking at the person. Maybe I will look away then.

I understand the concerns the member is raising. I understand the sense of urgency that the member is expressing. I am asking that the member understand the sense of thoroughness that we have to give time to happen. We just have to understand that thoroughness does take time and that there are other investigations underway, and we will be looking for the results of those investigations as well.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we proceed, it might be too formalistic to insist on third person, but these are the product of usages and practices in the past and there must be some reasons for it, whether we know it or not. I suppose the reason for it is it will be –

Ms. Melnick: Identifying who is speaking.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes.

Ms. Melnick: It is identification.

Mr. Chairperson: Because we are talking here of offices occupied by people. People may change; the offices are there. Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate your reminding us that that is the approach, and you are correct. It is an emotional issue and sometimes we lose track of that. We are in close circumstances here, but you are right.

With regard to the review that is being undertaken by Ms. Trigg, can you tell us whether the review is going to look into the pressure put on front-line staff as a result of the high number of caseloads that they are carrying?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, when I talk about a thorough review, that would be one area that would be reviewed.

Mr. Loewen: Would the minister also be looking for recommendations from that review in terms of whether there is the appropriate staff complement to handle the number of cases, whether they need more staff? Is that something that will come out of this investigation?

Ms. Melnick: That would be another area that I believe absolutely should be included in a review.

* (11:10)

Mr. Loewen: I am not asking if it should be; I am asking if the minister will insist that it is.

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, that is an area that I would be hoping would be included in the review.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I just want to remind the minister that it was her government. I realize it was a previous minister and he is the architect of this disaster, but it was her government that decided to turn Child and Family Services from an independent agency into an arm of government that she is now directly responsible for, and she should not be hoping anything; she should be demanding.

Will she demand that the investigation being undertaken by the individual that is doing it look into the caseloads that are being carried by the front-line workers and provide a recommendation on whether in fact there is enough staff to cover the cases that her department has to deal with?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, those would be components of a thorough review, which is why I think that we have to be very careful with pressing time-wise so that we do allow those areas that the member has outlined to be thoroughly reviewed. I am sure that we can agree there are other areas that would have to be covered and that we have to allow the time for the thoroughness to occur.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I appreciate that it needs to be thorough, and I guess my frustration that is being demonstrated is because the minister will not give us any indication of what the parameters are for this investigation. So I do not know what she expects. She expects us to sit here and guess, and if we guess right, she is going to finally, after four questions say, "Well, yes, we are going to do that."

It is irresponsible. We are asking a simple question. What are the parameters of the investigation? It is unfair for this minister to make us sit here and beg and guess in terms of what work she is doing. It is a straightforward issue. There is an investigation being undertaken. The minister is directly responsible for that department. She should provide direction to the individual, whether it is direct or through her staff, through her chain of command that she likes to fall back on, I do not really care. What we need to know for the people of Manitoba is what are all the parameters involved in this investigation, this internal investigation that she claims is ongoing. Will she give us that information?

Ms. Melnick: When I talk about a thorough review, I am talking about the areas that we have mentioned. There will be other areas that will be included as well. We must also leave the investigators some room and some space to be including areas that they are concerned about, areas that they are wanting to include.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am finding this whole discussion very difficult. I had the same responsibilities that this minister has for seven years, and there were issues and there were baby deaths. I know it is something

that no minister wishes to happen and it is a very difficult issue for a minister to deal with.

So when the minister talks about being concerned, that concern has to turn into some concrete action, and ultimately when you are sworn as the minister of the Crown responsible for vulnerable children through Child and Family Services, the responsibility does rest on the minister's head. That is ultimately where the buck stops: at the minister's desk. You know, it is important that the minister show leadership and ask very direct questions and get answers. It is not good enough to sit back and say there is an investigation ongoing. I hope that something will be looked at. I mean, it is important that the minister satisfy herself that in fact the children that are the most vulnerable in our society, the children under her watch, are being protecting. She has to ask and demand answers to what went wrong in this situation, but, as well as that, has to be assured that what is happening in the care of children that are vulnerable in our community, what is happening in the rest of the system is working.

It should be very easy for the minister to say, "These are the things I expect answers to." Rather than hope that certain things are going to be looked at, I would expect that absolute direction was given to have answers come forward as quickly as possible. If there are systemic problems, we all understand that those are not fixed overnight and that, yes, we do want a review to be thorough, but can she assure us that she is demanding answers to what went wrong in this case?

What is happening now to make sure that other children do not find themselves in that circumstance and situation? It is not good enough to keep talking about process. It is not good enough to talk about being concerned. Concern has to lead to action. I want to know what action this minister has taken, what direction she has given. She should be outraged. I am hoping that she has asked those direct questions. Maybe she could just tell us what action she has taken, what direction she has given to staff. You know, it is different today than it was even when I was minister, because we had an arm's-length agency that had its own board and its own CEO. We now have staff of the Child and Family Services agency. It is no longer an agency; it is an arm of her department, under her direct responsibility.

It is important that she show the leadership, ask the questions and demand the answers. I would like to ask her today to give us some insight into what action she has taken, what she has demanded come back in a very timely fashion.

Ms. Melnick: Well, certainly my previous comments may have been misinterpreted. I am not sitting back and just allowing whatever to happen to happen, but we do have to respect the processes. As the former minister, I know that you understand that there are processes that should be respected. One is the Winnipeg Child and Family Services investigation. The other is the police. The third is the CME. I understand completely the member's concern. You are absolutely right. This is an incredibly saddening event to have happened. Certainly, as a minister, I am deeply saddened by it, but we still have to respect processes. I think that we also have to acknowledge that we have to expect that, for investigations to happen, there has to be a thoroughness on it.

We know that there are investigations undergoing. You are right when we talk about—
[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Do not use "you." The "Member for River East" is right.

Ms. Melnick: Sorry. I believe that the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) is correct when she is talking about Winnipeg Child and Family Services being in a different place now because it has been formally brought into the Department of Family Services and Housing. There is a direct responsibility which I take very seriously, and I think that the concerns that are being raised here are very valid concerns. I understand the sense of time lines, but we must also respect that the processes will need to be taking place.

Mr. Loewen: Once again, the minister is stonewalling. All we are asking for is for her to give us the parameters of this investigation and a time frame as to when it will be completed. I would hope that she would take some time to give some sober second thought to that request and come back with an answer.

It is not asking too much; it is not getting into any confidential information. We are just asking the minister what actions she is taking, what responsibility she has given to her staff in terms of

reporting back to her on the situations that they are looking into so she can be assured that we will not be faced with another tragedy like this. We will leave that up to her to get back to us. It is unfortunate that we have been forced again to sit here and waste time because of her refusal to answer straightforward questions.

* (11:20)

Mr. Chairman, we had a response from the former minister, now Minister of Energy and Technology (Mr. Sale), that from April 1 to June 20 of 2002, according to him, at that time there were less than a hundred days of care needed and that would translate into less than a hundred days of children in hotel rooms today. That is from a period from April to June of 2002. Today, with the numbers the minister has given us, we have over 1250 days of care in a period from May 21 to May 25. What has happened?

Ms. Melnick: I am not familiar with the document that you were referring to, the original document that the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) was originally referring to. I do not have a copy of that.

Mr. Loewen: I am referring to Hansard which is a document to everybody, and I will quote from it. Estimates, Hansard of August 7, 2002, Mr. Chair. This in answer directly out of Hansard to a question posed to the minister. The quote is, from Mr. Sale: "Just maybe if I may, Mr. Chair, provide the information on hotel and shelter use. From April 1 to June 20 of this year there were a total of 19 different children in hotels. At any given time there was one or none or two. Over that period from April 1 to June 20, 19 different children for a variety of periods of days, the total number of days, was, I believe, under a hundred days care, which is a fraction of what we have seen in the past."

How could we go to a situation in 2002, where we had a period covering virtually three months, of less than a hundred days of care, to now we have a situation where it was less than a full month and we have over 1250 days of care? What has gone wrong?

Ms. Melnick: The Member for Fort Whyte is referring to this handout. This is what I was speaking to previously with the document, the statistics that were given to the critic a few days ago where we talked about the different pattern and the need to

look at how the ebb and flow of children coming into care is, I think, the area that we are looking at now through May is showing that there can be spikes, so there can be highs and there can be lows. What we are looking at now is we see that we are going into a period of lows.

We know that some shelters have been closed. We have just opened a new sibling shelter a few months ago, and we will be opening another sibling shelter in the fall. The hotel usage is primarily for siblings, so we could say that perhaps there are sibling groups that are being accommodated in the shelters. Once we open up the second shelter, that will help to relieve it.

Also, we have put forward a request for a proposal for 50 new foster care beds for children under eight, which is an area that we are also hoping will show some relief in the hotel usage for children as they enter the shelter system.

Mr. Loewen: Well, according to Minister Sale, he had solved the problem. He had it down to one or two or none a day and then, unfortunately, he moved on, and we are led to believe the magical cure he had discovered all of a sudden disappeared. You know, the minister talks about an ebb and flow. All I see is an upstream fight. The lowest number is 33 and the highest number is 65 and every day in May it has basically continued to rise from a low of 33 on May 1 to a high of 65 on May 25. That is not an ebb and flow. That is a dramatic and untenable increase. What has happened between the time Minister Sale told the House there was one or none or two children housed in hotels to today when—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Minister Sale, we should say the Member for Fort Rouge, is no longer the Minister of Family Services and Housing.

Mr. Loewen: Well, thank you. I will correct that. I was just reading directly from Hansard where he is referred to as Mr. Sale but in any event the now Minister of Energy and Technology, you know, what has gone wrong? What has changed between April and June of 2002 where there are one and two and none, to today when there are 33, 51, 65, 66, 69? What circumstances have changed? How can the minister explain that?

Ms. Melnick: Again, as I have outlined, hotels are primarily used for sibling groups. We have a

breakdown of the children in hotels May 21 and May 22, which I think were the dates the member was asking about specifically yesterday. If we look at May 21, we see 16 children were brought in on that day. We had a total of 48 of those children were in fact from sibling groups. There were 12 groups of 2 siblings, so that is 24; 4 groups of 3 siblings equalling 12; 1 group of 4 siblings, so that is 4; 1 group of 6 siblings which is 6; and 1 mother and a baby, so that is 48 out of the 66.

If we look at the breakdown for May 22, there was a total of 69 children, 47 of which were in the following groups: 10 groups of 2 siblings, so that is 20; 5 groups of 3 siblings, which would make 15; 1 group of 4 siblings, which makes 4; 1 group of 6 siblings, which would make 6; and then a mother and a baby. The vast majority of the hotel usage is again sibling groups which we have agreed it is better to keep children together in the sibling group than disburse them throughout the shelter system.

Again I want to draw the member's attention to the opening of the one sibling shelter, the one shelter that will be dedicated to sibling groups, with another opening in the fall that we hope will show more relief for children in hotels because something we do agree on, regardless of our stripes around this table, is it is better to have children in a home setting than in a hotel. I also reiterate the current request for proposal that has been put out by the department calling for 15 new foster beds for children under the age of eight, which we are also hoping will show some relief in the hotel stays.

Mr. Loewen: Obviously, the policies that are being put in place by this government are disastrous for our children, to have 69 children housed in hotels. It is irrelevant whether they are sibling groups or— you know, we agree it is better to keep families together, but to have to rely on having 69 children housed in hotels points to serious and deep-rooted problems within the department and within the policies that are in place by this government.

When asked this question in the House, the minister refused to answer it, refused to give us those figures. The only thing she would do is stand up and say, "There is far less than there were in the 1990s."

Can she give us the figure she has from the 1990s that would indicate that there were far more

than 69 children housed in hotels in any one night? Can she give us those figures?

Ms. Melnick: Again, if we look at the averages. If we look at a couple of years, 1997-98, there was an average of 36 children housed in hotels per month. If we look at '96-97, there was an average of 46. If we look at '03-04, there was an average of 19. If we look at this year to date, there is an average of 27. If we take the number over those few years, we will see that there is, in fact, a difference in bringing children into the hotels.

* (11:30)

Mr. Loewen: Can the minister give us the average for May of this year?

Ms. Melnick: I do not have it calculated, but we could have a look at it.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I did a quick calculation here and it is at least 50 and probably higher.

Ms. Melnick: Again, I think we can all acknowledge that there are spikes in children being brought into care. We can acknowledge that on May 1 there were 33. We did hit a high of 69 on the 24th. We are seeing a general reduction now, which is why, again, it is very important to look at a longer period of time. I could also quote when Minister Sale was quoting that there were no children in. But I think if we are really looking at the trends in children in hotels, that we look at annual figures and averages per month.

Mr. Chairperson: What is good for the goose is good for the gander: Minister Sale there, Minister Sale here. It will be consistent if we say the Member for Fort Rouge.

Ms. Melnick: I stand corrected, then.

Mr. Loewen: Well, again, I am looking for specific information from the minister on what basis she could make the statement that when I was asking her for specific dates in May, her response was that she would not give me that information but there were far less children in care than there were in the 1990s.

Obviously, my math training would indicate that 50 is higher than 36. I am just wondering on what basis she would stand up in the House and make that

type of erroneous statement. What figures does she have that would indicate there were more people housed in hotels than the average of over 50 that we see for the month of May?

Ms. Melnick: Well, if we would like to do a comparison to 1997, in January there were 52, in February there were 52 and in March there were 81. So we could go month by month.

Again, if we look at an annual basis and we get an annual average. The figures have been provided to the member. I do not know if the critic provided you with the figures from last day, but certainly they do show that there are lower average numbers to date in the year showing than what we are seeing. We have to look over the average of a year, rather than a day-to-day, because we do have to acknowledge there are times when there are higher intakes than times when there are lower intakes.

Mr. Chairperson: Again, I heard the word "you" two times. The rules are designed to avoid confrontation. I just want to insist that we follow the rule if we can. If we cannot, what can we do?

Mr. Loewen: Would the minister agree with her leader that anything over 32 is scandalous?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, we are looking to lower that number, which is why we opened the one sibling shelter and we will be opening the second one in the fall. Again, I draw the member's attention to the RFP for the 50 foster care beds that we will be using for children who are eight years and under. So certainly, we are working toward lowering that number.

Mr. Loewen: The minister, in her file, certainly must have the information that the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) was quoting from. It is a relatively similar time from April 1 to June 20 of 2002.

Would she provide us with the same type of detail that she has provided us with today for the period from April 1 to June 20 of 2002, which would indicate that there was none or one or two children housed in hotels during that period?

Ms. Melnick: I do not have that information handy, but I will get it for the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) as soon as I can.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you. I appreciate it, and I will look forward to receiving that in the near future.

Again, the minister talks about increases in terms of foster care beds and RFPs are out, but the reality is we have a minister who is saying in 2002 that they had solved the problem. It was down to one or two, or none, and now we see the average is well over 50. What has happened?

It is the same time of year, April to June, that the Member for Fort Rouge is speaking from. Here we have from May 1 to June 8. What has happened over the course of two years? How have things slid this far back, that we now have gone from a situation where the minister claimed there was zero, one or two, and now we are in a situation where the average is over 50?

Ms. Melnick: Our policy certainly is to keep siblings together. When siblings come in, that is key use for the hotels. We have agreed that it is better to keep children from the same family together. Again, we have opened one shelter for siblings and we will be opening a second one in the fall. We will be looking to reduce the number of children in hotels. I think we all agree that a further reduction would be better for the children of Manitoba who are being brought into care.

Mr. Loewen: Can the minister indicate how much money was spent housing children in hotels in the month of May 2004?

Ms. Melnick: I do not have that information handy, but I would be happy to get it to the Member for Fort Whyte as soon as possible.

Mr. Loewen: Well, I would ask the minister if she would get that information to us this afternoon.

Ms. Melnick: I certainly will get it to the Member for Fort Whyte as soon as I can.

Mr. Loewen: It has been indicated to us in other information that we have looked at that the average cost per day is likely over \$300, or somewhere near \$300, which would indicate that we could be looking at a very, very substantive cost with regard to housing children in the province of Manitoba in hotels. A quick calculation on my part indicates that it could be anywhere between \$350,000 and \$450,000 a month, depending on that number.

We have heard over and over again that this government is feeling a financial pinch and they are looking to save money wherever they can. I am just curious what pressure is being put on front-line social workers to leave children in risky situations in an effort to put a cap or put a limit in terms of the cost of housing them in hotels.

How many children are being left at risk because of the already high cost of hotels to this government?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, children who are being brought into care is not capped. We never turn a child away who, it has been agreed, should be brought into care, but I want to go back to the original point that the member was making on cost. That is a very important point to acknowledge, which we do, which is again why we are looking toward the sibling shelters and the 50 foster beds, not only because we believe that children will be better placed in a home-like setting, and it is better for siblings to stay together, but also because as the member has pointed out there would be, perhaps, a cost saving. That is an area that, certainly, we are concerned about as well.

Mr. Loewen: Well, what I am looking for is absolute assurance from this minister that there is absolutely no pressure being put on front-line social work staff to leave children in dysfunctional families because the budget for paying for hotels is too high already. I want absolute assurance from this minister that no child is put at risk as a result of money pressures in her department.

* (11:40)

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, as I had said, the area of children in care is not capped, and we know that we are working with professional social workers in our department who are making decisions that they believe with their professional expertise are best for the children. There is certainly not a situation where pressure is being put on a social worker to leave a child in a situation that they feel is risky because of the cost of a hotel room.

Mr. Loewen: Will the minister give us some background information on her deputy minister, Debra Woodgate, both in her work experience and educational experience in terms of the social work field?

Ms. Melnick: Debra Woodgate was with the Treasury Board for several years. She had worked closely with the then-deputy minister on areas regarding the department. She is a chartered accountant with experience in financial management.

I will say that Ms. Woodgate is a very intelligent and capable woman who is also very compassionate and has learned very quickly the areas of the department, the issues in the department and is very compassionate around her concern for the children in care, for all the areas in our department. She works very closely with our senior management people who have very deep, deep roots in the department, in the area of social work, have very deep roots in the area of connection with the rest of the province and they work together very well for the care of the children and, in fact, for the care of all the people whom our department touches.

Mr. Loewen: With regard to the assistant deputy minister in charge of Child and Family Services, Peter Dubiński, can the minister give me some background information in terms of work history and educational experience of Mr. Dubiński?

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Dubiński has been a stalwart in the cause for children for many decades now. I know that he has worked very closely with many of the organizations that are providing services not only to children in care but children who are at risk, children who are in need of special services. He, again, has very deep roots within the department. I am not exactly sure what year he came in, but I know he has been a strong member in our department for many, many years. He is very well respected, both within the department and throughout the community as well. I have to say that I really value, as the minister, his experience and his ability to understand issues. I find that he is a very important part of our senior team.

Mr. Loewen: I am not in any way trying to belittle any individual in the department. I appreciate the minister in her kind words about her staff. I am sure she is confident in them, as we are, but she did not answer the question.

I am just looking for a little more information on his educational background. Has he a Master of Social Work, Bachelor of Social Work? What information can the minister give me on that, on the work he has provided to the department?

Ms. Melnick: I will have to get information specifically about Mr. Dubiensi's educational background. Mr. Dubiensi has worked for many years in the department, most recently has led on the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Child Welfare Initiative, and I really must credit him and the individual whom he has worked very closely with to actually make this experience a reality.

They have worked with deep, deep co-operation with the people of the First Nations, northern, southern, Métis and Innu and have shown patience, compassion, intelligence and continue to show those capabilities in making sure that we are working in true partnership with the northern authorities, southern, Métis and the general.

Again, I know that Mr. Dubiensi has a very strong background in community activism in working with many non-profit groups. He has an extremely positive reputation throughout the community, and, again, I value him deeply as a member of our senior team.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Chair, I would just remind the minister that we are here for facts. We have not got a whole lot of time. She knows that the session is coming to an end. So I just asked specifically for information on the educational background of Mr. Dubiensi. If she could get that to me, I would appreciate it.

I will go back to Hansard again on June 7. I asked her specifically how many children were housed in hotels on Friday, May 21; May 22; Friday, May 28; and Saturday, May 29. She refused to answer other than to say there were far fewer children being placed in hotels than were when members opposite were in office. She goes on to say, "I do not have the exact numbers here, but I can tell you the numbers are vastly, vastly reduced, and are based on keeping sibling groups together."

I am looking for information in terms of what numbers she was looking at that would allow her to stand up in the House and make the statement that numbers are vastly, vastly reduced, when, in fact, we finally get the numbers and we find out that May 21, there were 66; May 22, there were 69; May 28, there were 53; and May 29, there were 53 children housed in hotels. What numbers was she looking at that she felt comfortable getting up in the House and saying that the numbers are vastly, vastly reduced?

Ms. Melnick: Certainly, going back to your original point, I think I had committed to getting back to you on the educational background of Mr. Dubiensi, and I will certainly get that to you as soon as we can.

Again, I will draw the member's attention to the numbers that we had provided to the critic a couple of days ago. If we look at the monthly averages and we look at that for the year, we will see that there are differences of hundreds. Again, it is important to look at the trends. We can choose any given day that would be higher, that would be lower, but, again, looking at a trend of a 12-month period, is a better example of what kind of numbers we really are having with our children as they enter the shelter system. Again, we are looking at keeping siblings together. We will be opening our second sibling shelter in the fall and working toward reducing those numbers further.

Mr. Loewen: Again, the minister is dodging the question here. I would like her to provide this afternoon the numbers that she has for January, February, March, April for the number of children housed in hotels.

Ms. Melnick: I think I committed to that some moments ago when we were discussing it. Is that not what the Member for Fort Whyte requested a short time ago?

Mr. Loewen: I do just want to make it perfectly clear to the minister that we want those numbers, and we want them before the House reconvenes this afternoon.

We would also at the same time want her to fulfil her request to give us the numbers from, in a similar format, April 1 to June 20 of 2002, that Mr. Sale—I am sorry, I apologize, Mr. Chair—that the Member for Fort Rouge was referring to when he gave that answer in Estimates of August 7, 2002.

We want those numbers—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister.

Mr. Loewen: —and we want them by this afternoon before the House opens.

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry. The Member for Fort Whyte.

Mr. Loewen: No, I am finished. Thanks.

* (11:50)

Ms. Melnick: I believe that was your request of—I am sorry, I believe that was the member's request a while ago, and I believe that I did commit to getting the information to the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) as soon as possible.

Mr. Loewen: Well, Mr. Chairman, I do want a commitment from this minister that we are going to have those numbers prior to the reconvening of the House at 1:30 this afternoon. There are numbers that she obviously has, or her staff has, easy access to. The minister is fully aware that this is scheduled to be the last day of the House sitting. You know, maybe we will have to look seriously at the agreement that was agreed to, if the minister refuses to come up with this information, but I would like assurance that we are going to get that information before the House reconvenes at 1:30 p.m.

Ms. Melnick: Again, I will get those numbers to the Member for Fort Whyte as soon as possible.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Chair, I have a couple questions regarding the information that was provided from the minister on Hydra House. The question was are there any other dollars coming from any other departments to help with the ongoing operation of the Hydra House locations. The response that I received from the minister indicates that Manitoba Health, through Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, was funding two homes at Hydra House for individuals with dual diagnosis, mental health and mental disability.

An effort to co-ordinate services—and this is where I would like the minister to comment on: "In an effort to co-ordinate services for individuals living with a mental disability, the responsibility for these two homes was transferred to Family Services and Housing in 2004." Can she provide some input on that?

Ms. Melnick: I am just looking for my notes. If I could just take a minute to look at them?

How many locations? Oh, I see the middle point in the first, in No. 1. It was felt that Family Services and Housing would be able to provide services for these individuals in a more thorough way than Health was able to with our Services for Persons with Disabilities.

Mrs. Rowat: So I am just trying to get a sense of the responsibility. Was it transferred from Manitoba Health WRHA to the department? Was this an arm's-length of Health with WRHA, or is this—where did it come from directly or specifically?

Ms. Melnick: I am sorry, could you clarify your question?

Mrs. Rowat: I guess I am just trying to play it through in my mind here. So funding for the Hydra House came under the WRHA of Manitoba Health and then moved into?

Ms. Melnick: That is my understanding of the process.

Mrs. Rowat: So is the WRHA still providing the funding, even though it now falls under the Department of Family Services and Housing?

Ms. Melnick: My understanding is that it is Family Services and Housing, Services for Persons with Disabilities. If you would like, I could check into that.

Mr. Chairperson: If the Member for Minnedosa wants.

Ms. Melnick: If the Member for Minnedosa.

Mrs. Rowat: If you could also—[interjection]—through the Chair, provide for the committee the information on whether the entire funding is now going to be placed under the Department of Family Services through the sector of Persons with Disabilities or sort of a breakdown on the costing.

Ms. Melnick: Are you speaking specifically about these two—[interjection] Oh, I am sorry. Is the Member for Minnedosa speaking specifically of these two locations?

Mrs. Rowat: Actually, these two specifically and if there are others, so that we have a sense of what is being moved over from WRHA in regard to this issue or these issues.

Ms. Melnick: I will certainly get that information for you as soon as I can.

Mrs. Rowat: I just want to go back on one point. In the Children's Advocate report, it is my understanding that a shelter was closed during the process

of the report being done. Can the minister speak to that for me?

Ms. Melnick: Could you refer me to the page number?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable—

Ms. Melnick: Could the Member for Minnedosa refer to the page number?

Mrs. Rowat: It is just a general comment that was made when I was discussing the report with a staffperson, and they had indicated that they were a little concerned with a comment that was made that a shelter had been closed when I believe that this may not have been the case. I just wanted to know if this was just an oversight, or had staff, when they were sharing information with the Office of the Children's Advocate, was the shelter in the process of being closed, what shelter was it, and if that shelter has remained closed? I am wondering if she could comment to that.

Ms. Melnick: The shelters that were to be closed have been closed.

Mrs. Rowat: Would there be some information on the shelters that were closed and the time lines on the closures?

Ms. Melnick: I will have to get that information.

In regard to the member's last question about the two homes dealing with Hydra House, I have just received information that it was \$465,500 that was transferred to Family Services and Housing, and my understanding is that those were the only two.

Mrs. Rowat: Could I ask the minister if that was the total that was transferred over?

Ms. Melnick: That is my understanding with the information I have just been handed. I could check that.

Mrs. Rowat: If the minister could provide the total dollars allocated to Hydra House in a budget year?

Ms. Melnick: I was responding to the question previous. The Member for Minnedosa had asked a question, while you were out, about the two—*[interjection]* Okay, that is the two shelters.

Another question, the question that was asked by the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) yesterday, there were some concerns around a gag order which, I think, was the term that was being used. What we have, what I think the member would have been referring to, is actually the oath of allegiance and the conflict-of-interest guidelines that are within the Family and Services and Housing.

* (12:00)

It is a document that is provided across government for Manitoba government employees. It is the same document that has been employed since January of 1986. I believe that that is the document that the member was referring to yesterday. So I have copies to table.

I just had some comments for that. As we do for all new employees, the employees were provided with a copy of the government Conflict of Interest guidelines and the department's Section F Supplement to the Conflict of Interest Policy. I am speaking specifically about the Winnipeg Child and Family Services employees, who, I think, was the group in question.

They were asked to review the policy and advise whether they have a disclosure to make at that point. They also take an oath of office and allegiance which requires the signature of the employee. In general terms, the employee is pledging to honestly and faithfully fulfil their duties as an employee of the government service in Manitoba. We have provided copies of this. This was effective March 22, 2003, to all Winnipeg Child and Family Services employees as they became employees of the Department of Family Services and Housing. As a result, all employees were notified of this, and again we have provided you with copies of what the employees received.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Just on a matter of process, I guess. We are moving to the department of highways and—

An Honourable Member: Transportation and Government Services.

Mrs. Mitchelson: —Transportation and Government Services now with the option to call the Minister of Family Services back later this afternoon. I just wanted to confirm that.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee?
[Agreed]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Apologies, Mr. Chairperson. I did not know you were waiting for me. I thought maybe you had some introductory comments.

The Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) just asked if we had any more word on the procedure with Mr. Pruden's letters from the minister. I know the minister indicated to me the other day that he would be looking into the matter of those signs on the highways.

Mr. Chairperson: For clarity for the record, we are now doing the Committee of Supply for the Minister of Transportation and Government Services.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I know the question arose a couple of times in the previous questioning with regard to signage. I just wanted to clarify a couple of things with the member. You are not asking that, for example, the mosquito in Komarno and the beaver in Dauphin and all those other symbols of different communities around Manitoba that are on government land—I do not believe he is asking that somehow we remove all of that signage from all these communities around Manitoba that are on Crown land, is he?

An Honourable Member: We ask the questions, do we not?

Mr. Maguire: Yes. This seems to be a habit. Yesterday, I was asked to try and find out where I was going to get all the money to spend on highways, and I replied to the minister, sort of facetiously and not facetiously, that when I become the minister I will tell him where we are going to get the money, and he can have the chair here anytime. But, no, we are not asking for those signs to be removed.

The letter I think that the minister has refers to non-approved signs only. Of course, those approved signs are fine. I think Mr. Pruden's point was that there is just a vast proliferation of signs, in some cases as low as a hundred feet apart and that it is, he feels, an eyesore in some areas. I have seen places myself where there is a vast amount of signs, so many you could not read them all at once anyway if

you are going down the road even within the speed limit.

I also know of certain circumstances where signs have been removed in my own constituency and others in the neighbouring constituency of Minnedosa when the former Member for Minnedosa, Mr. Gilleshammer, was there. I know he and I worked with some people who just had inadvertently put some signs up in the ditch in the wrong place and they had to be removed. So I bring that to the minister's attention again. But, no, approved signs are certainly within the realm of where they should be. I think Mr. Pruden's letter, a gentleman from Lockport, indicates that most of them are in the non-approved variety.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, I appreciate that clarification. So the member is really just looking at removing Re/Max signs and all signs like that that belong to real estate companies and companies as such. He would like us to have those removed. I know that the proliferation of these signs, I believe, in fact is true, that you see more and more signs now than you did even five years ago certainly. But my understanding is that right now, I have been advised, the department is looking into this. They are looking into the use of these signs throughout the province. But my understanding is they are more of a concern, more closely related to the Capital Region, around Winnipeg. That is where you find most of these signs.

So I just want to say that the department has endeavoured to look into this concern. The Member for Arthur-Virden, I hope we can have a discussion about this at a different time, because this particular issue is an important one for safety and I think that is what he is getting at, I believe. Not that he has anything against Re/Max or any of the other companies that sell real estate or have the signs up, but the fact that he is concerned about safety, and safety is a primary concern for the department.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Just a couple of quick questions for the minister concerning these signs on government property in the ditches. I appreciate the fact that the minister is saying that they are looking into it, but essentially they have been looking into it almost four years now. There is a letter from the then-minister, at the time, of Highways, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). Certainly, in a letter that he sent to Wayne Pruden,

August 2 of 2000, it says in the letter, and I quote, "This policy should be in place in the next few months." And even at the bottom of the letter it states, in the Member for Thompson's (Mr. Ashton) handwriting, "Thank you, for raising these concerns. I totally agree. We have to deal with this."

Now, this letter is from August 2 of 2000. Clearly, the minister at the time was concerned about this issue, but there have been subsequent letters back to various ministers, including the current minister, to look into and deal with this issue, because clearly it has not been dealt with. So I appreciate the minister saying, "We will look into it," but they have been looking into it for four years. I guess I would ask the minister if he thinks that is acceptable.

Mr. Lemieux: First of all, let me just say it is a pleasure, once again, to be having a discussion with the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). We had a great chat in September, and the chat lasted day after day after day. But nevertheless, I always enjoy having a conversation with her and trying to answer her questions. I will try to do so now.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

What I have been advised from the department is that they felt that they wanted to not do something that would be of the spur of the moment. No, that is not the correct term I am looking for. They did not want to put in place a policy without consultation. They did not want to put a policy in, for example, that would be a template for the province. Yet, a lot of the concerns raised about the signage, at least I have been advised, is primarily around Winnipeg. The Capital Region is the area that is dealing with a lot of the signage, the new signage that we have seen.

This has been raised to me, as well, over the past few weeks. Certainly, one rural municipality I have met with, maybe two. Their concern again is safety, where right at intersections, busy, busy intersections, you have huge signs. There is no standard size. There are small signs, two-foot by three-foot signs. Some are huge billboard signs that are solar-panelled and they light up, and they are blocking any kind of view of the intersection.

* (12:10)

I understand, on an ongoing basis, that the department has already asked companies to move signage where they, indeed, believe it is a safety concern. So what we are looking at is some kind of a guideline for signage. No one, I believe, wants to restrict signage totally, but where can they be used and how should they be used to ensure that safety is paramount. I think that is what we are looking at and that does take time to do because you cannot use the blanket approach or the template approach to all of Manitoba. It is not a huge problem in one area of the province compared to another. It varies from area to area.

Mrs. Stefanson: I appreciate the minister's comments. I, too, am pleased to be back in concurrence with him once again and appreciate having a discussion, albeit in another government department now. I think when it comes to the signs, the signs Mr. Pruden is concerned with, are the signs that are illegally placed on government property.

I appreciate the minister is talking about guidelines for signage and so on. I mean it has been four years now. Certainly, the previous minister, the minister at the time, the Member for Thompson, had indicated that something would be done right away with this. Are we still waiting four years later for guidelines? When can we expect these guidelines to come out with respect to signs that are placed illegally on government property?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I do not have the letter in front of me so I have to beg your indulgence with regard to trying to recall in my memory, with regard to the letter. I know the minister of Thompson was very, very concerned about safety and continues to be concerned about safety, not only in his own constituency, but throughout the province.

I know the previous minister from Brandon West, safety was paramount when he was the minister. I know one of my main concerns with regard to this department is safety. I regret I cannot give the Member for Tuxedo a specific date with regard to when is this guideline, or when is this, I do not want to use the word policy, but certainly guideline, when is it going to come out and have the municipalities have an opportunity to see this and make comment on it?

When I think about the actual guideline itself, there have been discussions going on around the province between the different regions, I understand, and the R.M.s within the department. Those discussions are quite informal, but nevertheless they are trying to get a handle on how big this problem is and is it indeed growing or has it kind of stabilized to a point where there are not any more signs than there were, for example, a year ago, or where are they being placed. It is taking ongoing monitoring to make sure people get a good handle on what is going on.

I know when we are in concurrence or any other opportunity we have to speak, whether it is Estimates or not, we try to be as, not prudent but forthright as possible with regard to our answers, but on this particular situation, I have not had an update from the department as to where the department is with regard to this particular issue. I know any signs that are a safety issue and have been a safety issue, we have had them moved without question. The department has. In the meantime, the department has been looking at the legal aspects and are now prepared to move ahead with changes.

I cannot give you a specific date, but I know, as I mentioned, where there is a safety hazard, those signs are gone. The department goes out there immediately, checks it out and if, in their opinion, those signs are unsafe or provide a possible unsafe environment for traffic or pedestrians, those signs are moved.

We looked at the legal aspects and now we have determined that we have the legalities as to what can be done from the department's position, so we are prepared to move ahead now. I cannot give you an exact date when that is going to happen or when we are going to do it.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Acting Chairperson, as the mother of two young children, I am obviously concerned about safety on our highways, particularly, I think, when we are coming into one of our busy seasons with the lakes. These highways that this person, Wayne Pruden, is concerned with are highways that lead up to the Gimli area where a number of people will be travelling with their children and so on, so certainly, safety is an issue.

Having said that, really the issue here that we are concerned with beyond that is the fact that these

signs are placed illegally on government property, and it has taken almost four years now after the previous minister had indicated that this was an issue of high importance and that something definitely has to be done about this. He agreed with Mr. Pruden, but still nothing has been done. I appreciate the fact that the minister is somewhat new to the portfolio and is reviewing some of the cases that have not been taken care of by some of the previous ministers responsible for this area. I think it is incumbent upon the minister to ensure that there is something done and something expedited when it comes, especially when these signs are placed in areas that certainly will be much more of a high traffic area in the summer months.

I would just suggest to the minister, please look into this matter, as I know he is doing. Please, let us know as soon as possible what these guidelines are going to be. I understand that they are talking about guidelines and so on, but right now this is illegal.

These signs should be removed while the minister is trying to figure out and his department staff is trying to figure out what kind of guidelines they are going to set in place, whether or not they are going to change the law to allow these signs to be there. If that is what the government is going to choose to do, that is their prerogative as being members of the government, but right now it is illegal to have those signs in the ditches where they are.

I think certainly the minister can review the letters that he has received from Mr. Pruden and that the previous minister, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), has received in the past and indeed see that this is allowed to go forward and it is not legal.

So I would suggest to, and I guess I would ask, the minister if he would agree today to ensure that these signs are removed while he and his department and his colleagues and Cabinet and so on are deciding what they are going to do with respect to this law that is in place and the guidelines that are going to be set forth.

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the member for the suggestion, and I know that she is sincere about the safety aspects with regard to all children in Manitoba. But this is not the Pinochet government, and this is not the Stalin government. We are not going to send a bunch of people out there with brown

boots to knock and kick these signs down and get them out of the way.

This government is an inclusive, consultative, collaborative government that believes in working with people and municipalities to get something done for the betterment of the citizens of Manitoba, and we are going to do it.

* (12:20)

When I say policy, this may, indeed, take some regulatory changes. It could be regulations. That is what the staff are looking at right now. It has taken some time, granted. It is not always fast enough, but, I repeat, any place where there has been safety as an issue, we have good people in the department. When I say good people, I mean people that are conscientious and know their job and they are safety conscious. When they see there is a problem, those signs are removed forthwith, and the people are told to remove their signs. I am going under the premise that the department knows what they are doing, and I am going under the premise that they are using their best judgment right now until we can possibly look at a regulatory regime if that is necessary or look at a guideline or policy.

So I really appreciate the question, but I believe we are doing an excellent job in moving forward on this. It is a challenging issue, and that is why it is not an easy one to deal with. This was an issue in the 1990s as well. I did not see a lot of action happening in the 1990s with regard to sign removal, but it is increasing, and it is becoming more of a challenge. I give you that. We are moving on it.

Mrs. Stefanson: Certainly, you know, the minister is talking about the fact that he is going through this consultative process, and so on. This has been four years. I mean, how long does it take to consult people from the area? The previous minister has already stated that he agreed with Mr. Pruden that the signs should be removed. He wrote that in the bottom of his letter. He indicated that. I have already read that into the record.

He said that he would take care of this within the next few months. That was August 2 of 2000. It is now four years later and this matter has not been dealt with. I mean, I think it is incumbent upon the Minister of Transportation, minister of highways, to ensure that if—certainly right now it is illegal for

these signs to be there. I think it is the responsibility of this government to uphold the law in our province. Right now, that is not happening.

That is the law as it stands. I appreciate if the minister is going through a process now where they are trying to decide whether or not they are going to change that law, but the fact of the matter is the Member for Thompson, the previous minister responsible for this area, indicated very clearly in a letter back to Mr. Pruden that he would take care of this matter, that he dealt with it. He said, and I quote: "This policy should be in place in the next few months."

We have seen nothing, absolutely nothing. The minister can talk all he wants around the fact that they are consulting and all of this kind of stuff. It is four years later and nothing has been done. The law is still in place. Yet the minister is telling me that, you know, they are consulting people as to whether or not they should uphold a law that exists in Manitoba right now. Well, no, that is not right. That is a little bit backwards. It is the law and the law should be abided by in this province.

Again, I understand that the minister is going through his consultation process, and so on, but, you know what, this has taken four years. Nothing has been done. I would suggest to the minister that if he is refusing to uphold the law that he make changes to the law, then, if that is what they plan to do, to ensure that it is legal for these signs to be there. Is that what he is planning to do over the course of the next while?

Mr. Lemieux: We always follow the law. Wherever there is a safety hazard, the department has taken action.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I do want to raise two issues just briefly with the minister, following up on the honourable Member for Tuxedo's point about signage. I would like to see, if at all possible, a review of signage in and around the province.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I know that the Highway Traffic Board has authorization for signage to be placed, but then once the business goes out of existence, such as the Dakota Tipi bingo palace and the Dakota Tipi gas

bar, both of those entities have ceased to exist for a fair number of years, and actually their signage is still on the Trans-Canada Highway.

Being that the entities no longer exist, there are no resources there to remove the signs. Yet it is confusing for persons travelling looking for that 59.9 cents per litre gas that is prominently displayed on the Dakota Tipi gas bar signage. People are driving around Portage looking for this gas bar. It just is a cause for confusion, and this sign should be removed. If the minister would like to briefly comment, I just have another point after that.

Mr. Lemieux: I am sure the member from Portage la Prairie has contacted Dakota Tipi to change that sign of gas prices. Having said that, I will endeavour to find out who may be responsible but, again, you are talking about signage, I understand. If I understand this correctly, it is on private land, and it is a sign of a former building or a former establishment or business that now no longer exists or ceases to exist. Yet it is private land owned by that First Nations or a community. I will endeavour to check to find out if there are any laws or any regulations or anything pertaining to the fact that just because you go out of business that you cannot leave your sign there.

Mr. Faurichou: I appreciate the minister's response and his commitment to look into it. I think there are volunteer organizations that would go out as long as they had knowledge that they were removing the sign and were not going to be in trouble with any department.

An Honourable Member: On private land?

Mr. Faurichou: The land to which the signage is on, one in particular, is on public property and another is on a fence line between two parcels of property. Having said that, I know there should be some annual follow-up, if not annual, potentially every recurring three to five years, that the governing body, which is the Highway Traffic Board, reviews the existence of these signs. If the business does not exist anymore, then they should be removed. They are licensed by the department, so the department should effectively have some responsibility of making sure that they are still needed.

I do want to also draw the attention to the minister that under The Noxious Weeds Act, a Manitoba statute, the Minister of Transportation is

not exempt from that act. There are concerns in and about my constituency that there are noxious weeds growing in department roadway ditches. There is concern that the spread of these noxious weeds into cultivated fields adjacent to the ditch that the landowners would like to see a greater diligence on the part of the department to make certain that these weeds are controlled. I know that budgetary constraints of the department are there, but I sure would not want to see the minister charged under The Noxious Weed Act as being in contravention of a Manitoba statute.

Mr. Lemieux: Well, at this time of the year, Mr. Chairperson, where there are a lot of dandelions and weeds out, we all sometimes use language maybe we should not when we see these weeds. Some people, of course, who like to make dandelion wine feel that that is okay. I would never want to take that pleasure away from them by removing all those dandelions necessarily if they wish to make wine out of them. Having said that, I think we are all concerned about noxious weeds.

Indeed, the Department of Transportation does a lot with regard to taking care of Crown land.

* (12:30)

Just on another note, I can tell you that twice during the 1990s this issue came to the previous government with regard to signage, and twice they refused to do anything about it at all, twice. I was not going to raise this with the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), but she was certainly pushing the issue in wanting to get an answer when she says that it is taking a lot of time to address this. I know we have been in government now four years and a few months, but the previous government had 11 years and twice that this issue came up to them and they did not touch it. They refused to deal with it because it is a challenging issue. I just want to make sure that is clear and on the record.

With regard to weeds and bad weeds, this is an issue that indeed many municipalities have heard about. We are also working with municipalities to take a look at what can be done. I thank the member for the question. I thank him for the suggestion. I know that we want to make sure that we deal with this in a way that we are in co-operation with municipalities in a way that we are not duplicating what they are doing. We want to make sure that we

are all on the same page with where we are going in all of these issues, not only dealing with noxious weeds, but other issues.

Mr. Faurschou: I just want to take this opportunity to commend the Transportation Department staff, who went above and beyond in the recent snowstorm in Portage la Prairie to try and open the highways as

soon as possible. They worked extraordinary hours. The minister should be very proud of Bob McKay, the district manager, and all his staff. The dedication they showed to his department and to Manitobans was exemplary. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: The Committee of Supply will take a recess.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 10, 2004

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Proposed Resolutions

Res. 3–Gun Registry	3299
Res. 6–Ukrainian Famine	
Martindale	3299
Murray	3301
Wowchuk	3302
Derkach	3303
Chomiak	3304
Schuler	3304
Gerrard	3304
Schellenberg	3305
Sale	3305

Second Readings–Public Bills

Bill 211–The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Veterans' Licence Plates)	
Eichler	3306
Korzeniowski	3306
Cummings	3308
Rondeau	3309
Maguire	3309
Lamoureux	3311

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Debate on Report Stage–Amendment

Bill 21–The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act (Various Acts Amended)	
Rondeau	3312
Maguire	3313

Concurrence and Third Readings

Bill 21–The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act (Various Acts Amended)	
Driedger	3314
Gerrard	3316
Loewen	3318
Derkach	3319
Schellenberg	3320
Rocan	3320

Committee of Supply

Concurrence Motion	3323
--------------------	------