

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

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The Honourable George Hickes  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 5, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### PRAYER

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PETITIONS

#### Retired Teachers' Cost of Living Adjustment

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly. These are the reasons for this petition:

Since 1977, Manitoba teachers have made contributions to the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Pension Adjustment Account, PAA, to finance a Cost of Living Adjustment, COLA, to their base pension once they retire.

Despite this significant funding, 11,000 retired teachers and 15,000 active teachers currently find themselves facing the future with little hope of a meaningful COLA.

For 2007, a COLA of only 0.63 percent was paid to retired teachers.

The COLA paid in recent years has eroded the purchasing power of teachers' pension dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider adequate funding for the PAA on a long-term basis to ensure that the current retired teachers, as well as all future retirees, receive a fair COLA.

Signed by Diane Carter, Jeremy Carter, Dorothy Garrett and many, many, many other Manitobans.

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

#### Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The seven-kilometre stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway passing through Headingley is an

extremely busy stretch of road, averaging 18,000 vehicles daily.

This section of the Trans-Canada Highway is one of the few remaining stretches of undivided highway in Manitoba, and it has seen more than 100 accidents in the last two years, some of them fatal.

Manitoba's Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation told a Winnipeg radio station on October 16, 2007, that when it comes to highways' projects the provincial government has a flexible response program, and we have a couple of opportunities to advance these projects in our five-year plan.

In the interests of protecting motorist safety, it is critical that the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is completed as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider making the completion of the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley in 2008 an urgent provincial government priority.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider evaluating whether any other steps can be taken to improve motorist safety while the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is being completed.

This is signed by Adam Berman, Don Chev, Jamie McKim and many, many other Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

#### The Child and Family Services Act

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial government has a responsibility to protect children from exploitation.

Canada's laws recognize those less than 18 years of age as deserving of certain legal protection. Under law, children cannot drive until they are 16, and

cannot smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol until they are 18. Yet, the current age of consent under Canada's Criminal Code is 14 years of age.

Families, communities and law enforcement authorities recognize that young Canadians between the ages of 14 and 16 years of age are especially vulnerable due to this legal loophole. They are frustrated with the lack of tools available to protect them from exploitation by adult predators at least three years older whose intent is to sexually exploit these children.

Predators are increasingly using nefarious means such as drugs, alcohol, gifts and false promises to lure at-risk victims. In addition to sexual abuse, these victims are sometimes coerced and misled into criminal activity, drug use and gang recruitment.

The consequences of any type of exploitation are devastating. While any child may become a victim of exploitation, at-risk children are particularly vulnerable and targeted. Many of these children are in the care or have previously had contact with Child and Family Services.

While the age of protection is within federal jurisdiction, there are actions that can be taken by the provincial government to protect young people in care within the Department of Family Services and Housing. Section 52 of The Child and Family Services Act could be strengthened to better safeguard minors in care.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider amending and strengthening section 52 of The Child and Family Services Act to allow for the greater protection of children in care from exploitation.

To request the Premier to consider urging the federal government to raise the age of protection to a minimum of 16 years of age.

This petition signed by Tina Levesque, Trevor Desjarlais, Margaret Bushie and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Personal Care Homes—Virден**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virден):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial government has a responsibility to provide quality long-term care for qualifying Manitobans.

Personal care homes in the town of Virден currently have a significant number of empty beds that cannot be filled because of a critical nursing shortage in these facilities.

In 2006, a municipally formed retention committee was promised that the Virден nursing shortage would be resolved by the fall of 2006.

Virtually all personal care homes in southwestern Manitoba are full, yet as early as October 2007, the nursing shortage in Virден is so severe that more than one-quarter of the beds at the Westman Nursing Home are sitting empty.

Seniors, many of whom are war veterans, are therefore being transported to other communities for care. These communities are often a long distance from Virден and family members are forced to travel more than two hours round trip to visit their loved ones, creating significant financial and emotional hardship for these families.

Those seniors that have been moved out of Virден have not received assurance that they will be moved back to Virден when these beds become available.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider taking serious action to fill the nursing vacancies at personal care homes in the town of Virден and to consider reopening the beds that have been closed as the result of this nursing shortage.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider prioritizing the needs of those citizens that have been moved out of their community by committing to move those individuals back into Virден as soon as the beds become available.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by George Lansing, Anne Lansing, Lila Harrold and many others.

\* (13:40)

#### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report 2006-2007 for the Manitoba Textbook Bureau.

**Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2007 First Quarter Report for the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation.

#### Introduction of Guests

Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Anthony and Barbara Menswell from Trinidad, along with their children, Kenrick, Kavanah, Jayedon and Jerrick, who are the guests of the honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

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

Also in the public gallery from Kelvin High School we have 60 grade 9 students under the direction of Janus Bazan. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Manitoba Hydro Power Lines Consultations for East-Side Location

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, we know that after 40 years of planning with respect to the construction of major high-voltage transmission lines from northern Manitoba to southern Manitoba with power to be exported beyond the borders of Manitoba, 40 years of planning on two routes, one the Interlake route and one the east side—but that 40 years of work was jettisoned by the Premier just about a month ago when he dictated to Manitoba Hydro that they run their next major high-voltage transmission line down the west side of Lake Winnipegosis, adding 500 kilometres to the route, \$410 million to the capital cost, at least 40 megawatts in line loss, additional costs associated with other elements of the project, which at this stage are unknown because there's been a complete lack of planning and lack of foresight in terms of the west-side route dictated by the Premier and his Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has indicated time and again that he is concerned about opposition on the east side of the lake as a reason for overspending by \$410 million, sacrificing \$680 million in future power sales, leaving a legacy of debt and despair for future generations of Manitobans.

Well, Mr. Speaker, since indicating the great opposition on the east side, we've received submissions from parties who are impacted by the east-side development, including an open letter to the Minister of Culture (Mr. Robinson) in this Saturday's *Winnipeg Free Press*. That open letter indicates to the government that, and I quote from Dr. Sydney Garrioch—sorry, on behalf of the chiefs from the Island Lake communities: We have every indication that when a balanced approach and community consultation is used, the people living on the east side will choose the east side as the location for the transmission line.

In light of the fact that no meaningful consultation has taken place to date with respect to the specific project, the east-side power transmission line, will the Premier, today, agree to listen to the chiefs from the Island Lake communities, listen to the chief of Berens River and other communities on the east side, undertake a meaningful consultation about the true costs and benefits of an east-side line, save hundreds of millions of dollars in debt for future generations of Manitobans, and open up, for east-side residents, the possibility of meaningful dialogue and opportunities for hope and economic development on that side of our province?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I would point out, with the planning that took place some 40 years ago that the member opposite quoted, that the Hydro corporation did, in fact, build both lines down the Interlake site. They did not build it down the east side. They did not build it down the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Obviously, at that time, if the arguments were similar on reliability that would have happened, and, at the end of the day, Hydro chose not to build the line down the east side. They built it down the Interlake.

When the member opposite talks about the issue of energy efficiency, the proposed west-side line that is subject to full consultations under section 35 of the Constitution, subject to environmental assessments, it is not a given that any line would be licensed, Mr. Speaker. It's subject to licensing provisions and it will eventually require an environmental licence, but the savings relative to the status quo are about 75 megawatts per year in terms of the two different lines.

I would point out that when he talks about consultations, we had over 80 meetings in 2004, 2005. We then came back to the WNO chiefs, Mr. Speaker. There have also been Canadian

wilderness organizations, environmental groups in Manitoba, environmentalists in Manitoba talking about the boreal forests. So there have been meetings in the area, and there have been voices heard from all across Manitoba in terms of the undisturbed part of the boreal forest.

There was a considerable amount of consultations. The ultimate consultation was the member opposite preferred the east side. In the election, we said we wouldn't build it during the election campaign. That was the ultimate consultation, Mr. Speaker, that took place.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's comments about consultation on the east side will come as news to many hundreds of people on the east side who feel that they have never had a proposal put in front of them with respect to an east-side power line that would allow for them to analyze the costs and benefits of that proposal and engage in a meaningful dialogue about what benefits could flow to east-side communities.

The Premier has denied them that opportunity for consultation around a specific proposal. He has simply ploughed ahead with a decision to run down the west side of Manitoba, an option that has never been analyzed in 40 years to date. The reason it has never been analyzed is because nobody at Manitoba Hydro, nobody within the government of Manitoba, until this government, actually viewed it as a reasonably sane option to even begin the process of analysis, Mr. Speaker. So, yes, they looked at the Interlake route. Historically, they looked at the east-side route.

They've now built two lines through the Interlake for various reasons that were viewed as being important. They view the east side as a viable option and, certainly, that's the basis for the recommendation. Nobody in their right mind at Manitoba Hydro, or anywhere else, Mr. Speaker, recommended the detour that this government has forced them to embark on.

Last week, the Premier was invoking former Premier Ed Schreyer for his vision when it comes to Manitoba Hydro development. I want to just indicate, today, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Schreyer has now said on the record that he believes that the east-side power line is of merit and deserves genuine approval. In fact, Mr. Schreyer goes on to say that with respect to the issues of consultation that there's need, despite the best of intentions, for a mechanism to deal with protracted delays in local and regional

consultation, negotiation and related decision making.

In the end, there's no rational substitute for open, formal adjudication and court-awarded compensation based on formula that bears some relationship to reality and realistic professional, independent appraisal, Mr. Speaker.

Given former Premier Schreyer's support for the east-side lines, so that's support that can be added to the support from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, from the east-side communities, from taxpayers, Chambers of Commerce, Aboriginal groups, environmental groups, Mr. Speaker, and the premier that he was citing a lot last week as an example, Premier Schreyer, in light of his support for the east side and his recommendation for an arbitration process to deal with outstanding issues around consultation, compensation and benefit sharing, will the Premier take the advice of Mr. Schreyer and establish a civilized process for consulting and resolving disputes and resolving issues of compensation with east-side residents to ensure fairness for east-side people and savings for current and future generations of Manitoba Hydro ratepayers?

\* (13:50)

**Mr. Doer:** Well, Mr. Speaker, during the four and a half hours of cross-examination from the member opposite with the CEO of Manitoba Hydro, many of the same assertions that are being made by the member opposite today in Question Period, certainly, are not consistent with many of the statements made by the CEO of Manitoba Hydro at the committee, Mr. Brennan.

One, in terms of debt and, of course, that's the argument they used against Limestone and their surrogate allies used against Limestone. We built Limestone, Mr. Speaker, and that's the reason why we have the lowest rates in Canada and in North America. It's also the reason that the debt equity that was at 87 percent when the member opposite was chief of staff to the former premier is now going below 80 percent in terms of Hydro. In terms of debt, we need no lectures from members opposite.

I would point out that Limestone, the revenues from Limestone, that allows us to keep rates low, come from export sales—\$600 million to \$800 million comes from export sales. Mr. Brennan also said there's no question there would be greater opposition to a line on the east side. He said there is no question of that, in committee.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the capital cost is higher for a longer line. We have never disputed that. But we also recognize you're rolling the dice, and we would argue in a very, very gambling way, in a very risky way. I know the member opposite knows about reckless promises. You only look at the Jets and the marina he was going to build in Point Douglas—*[interjection]* We know the member opposite knows about reckless decision making. While we think ensuring—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** We think, in terms of ensuring that the ongoing revenues which will be \$5.5 billion in the next period of time before the line will even be completed, which is still subject to environmental assessment, we think \$5.5 billion in export sales, and not taking a risk with those sales with customers, is a very prudent economic decision to make.

I also would point out Mr. Brennan also contradicts in a statement the member opposite makes on debt because it is our plan to have Conawapa hooked up to that line. Of course, the member opposite says we can't do that. He doesn't recognize, Mr. Speaker, that he's wrong on that point, Conawapa hooked up to that point. Mr. Brennan himself says there will be, quote, lots of revenue to be made from the power sales.

I know members opposite have never sold a megawatt in their life. They're the party of mothballing hydro-electric development. They're the party that has never sold a megawatt, but when you sell megawatts, you better make sure you don't roll the dice on the future sales and future revenues. That's the biggest risk to hydro-electric development in Manitoba.

**Mr. McFadyen:** There are so many factual and historical errors in the Premier's response, Mr. Speaker, that it would take the better part of Question Period to deal with them.

The Premier, if he knows his history, will know that the largest power sale to the south occurred under the Filmon government in the 1990s, the Northern States Power deal. We know that it was under a Progressive Conservative government that the Nelson River was opened up. It was Progressive Conservatives that built Kelsey, that built Kettle. The first deal with the United States under a PC government, Long Spruce, bipole 2, the major transmission line to Minneapolis, the very first wind

turbine in Manitoba was built under the Lyon government in Churchill. It was Hydro bonds that were first developed under a PC government. Power Smart was started under a PC government. The northern flood agreements were signed and executed under a PC government, and, Mr. Speaker, to set the historical record straight, the majority of building of the Limestone project was done under a PC government. It was opened in 1992 by former Premier Filmon, \$1 billion under budget and ahead of schedule.

Mr. Speaker, his record in government: the major power line that was to be built to Nebraska for major U.S. power sales, cancelled under the Pawley government when he was premier. This is the party of incompetence. They can't get the deals done. They run around and they incur debt. He is yet to make a deal with Ontario to make power sales to Ontario.

So the question, as he's about to throw away over a billion dollars, as he's about to make every Manitoba family \$4,000 poorer because of his decision: Why won't he take the advice of his mentor, Premier Schreyer, and embark on a process of real consultation and real deal-making for east-side communities?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, clearly the Tritschler commission that was hired after the Schreyer government was changed had a recommendation that became the conventional wisdom of the Conservative Party to have more coal and more gas, and thank goodness. And, of course, after that happened, the Lyon government cancelled Limestone.

The party that negotiated the Northern States Power sale and built Limestone, began the building of Limestone and initiated the building of Limestone, negotiated all the agreements after the Tories had mothballed it was the NDP.

We further then went on to negotiate Conawapa which was cancelled and mothballed, again, by the Tories. Now the member opposite is correct on the Northern Flood Agreement. It was signed by Sterling Lyon and that is—*[interjection]* Yes, you have one fact on your side, and I think it's important for more people to clap on that agreement.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that is creating difficulty when we came into office, and I would say, is the urban myth that a road follows a transmission line. One of the areas that we had to clear up in public meetings when we went up north was the

suggestion that the transmission line, if it was built on the east side, would result in a golden highway paved all the way up the east side. Well, Hydro didn't propose that then and is not proposing it now. It's not proposing to build a highway on the east side.

In fact, Mr. Brennan says at committee that they would want to separate—in remote areas, they would want to separate a road from a transmission line. So members opposite have been promising false hope by promising a road that would be connected to a transmission line. That's why we've announced that we're going to build the Rice River road on the east side for economic development for First Nations, and that's why he should be shamed for saying he would change the money and move it into southwest Manitoba. We stand up for the north, and people in the north know that, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Crocus Investment Fund Release of Receiver's Report**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, obviously the Premier doesn't know how to handle hydro transmission nor does this government know how to handle the Crocus file either.

On October 26, Justice Deborah McCawley ruled that the receiver's report on the Crocus Investment Fund would be given to both plaintiffs and defendants in the Crocus suit. By this time the Minister of Finance should be aware of what's in that report.

I ask, to the Minister of Finance: Has he seen the copy of the report or at the very least has he been briefed on what is in that report?

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** The answers to the member's two questions are no and no. And, for further information, we will be instructing our counsel to support the release of the report when it comes back in front of the judge.

**Mr. Borotsik:** Mr. Speaker, I find that somewhat incredulous that, as a defendant in the Crocus suit, this government doesn't know what's in that report that's already been tabled, that's already available to the defendant, the government in this case.

As the Finance Minister said, he has not seen the report. He has in past sat on his hands when in fact we've been asked to make that report public. There are 37,000 Manitobans who deserve to know what's in that report. The minister said that he will look for the report being given to the public. However,

Mr. Speaker, will he instruct his counsel not to stand on their hands but in fact go there and firmly support that the report be made public?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to repeat what I said on the first question. No, to the first question; no, to the second question; and, yes, we will instruct our counsel to support releasing the report which I answered the first time, and the member had to ask again. The answer is no, no, and we will instruct the counsel to release the report. I've answered that three times now. I wonder if you have a follow-up question.

#### **Cottage Lot Draws Timetable**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal of confusion and uncertainty about the way the provincial government—about the way members opposite handled the development of cottage lots in light of the recent illegal Hollow Water blockade. Earlier this fall, the eastern area cottage lot draw was postponed indefinitely because of the blockades.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Conservation tell Manitobans who wish to participate in the eastern cottage lot draw if and when this draw is now going to take place?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):** Not only are members across confused, but they're envious about the success of our cottage lot program in this province. We said very clearly, Mr. Speaker, we would deliver on a thousand cottage lots, and we did it.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I appreciate all the advice of members opposite who came and lobbied to get these in their backyards because they know it's such a good deal for economic development. That was helpful.

Mr. Speaker, we did go ahead with the western half of the cottage lot draw, and it was very successful, a very high uptake on those cottage lot draws. Many Manitoba families were made very happy because they were able to get a hold of a cottage lot draw in beautiful Manitoba.

#### **Buyback from Government**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, only the Minister of Conservation would be able to stand up in this House and take credit for something that has been a complete and utter disaster in this province.



Recently the provincial government offered to buy back cottage lots from 28 people who owned property in two developments near Hollow Water First Nation.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Conservation tell this House if the government bought back any of these cottage lots and, if so, what did it cost?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):** It may be okay for that member across the way to leave a Manitoba family hanging when it comes to these cottage lots, but that's not the position of this government. We're not going to leave them hanging out to dry when they had, first, in good faith dealt with us in terms of obtaining a cottage lot. We have made a lot of Manitoba families very happy to participate in our cottage lot draw, and we're going to continue that. We're going to continue to make sure that Manitoba families have this option available to them, Mr. Speaker.

#### Guarantees from Government

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Conservation has left many more than one family hanging out there, hanging out to dry. This is unbelievable. The whole process is a complete disaster. The Conservation Minister said, if we put these lots up into another draw again, people can go in with their eyes wide open. Well, isn't that a novel concept? Shouldn't people have been allowed to go in with their eyes wide open before?

Mr. Speaker, what assurances does this minister have for Manitobans who enter into future cottage lot draws that this whole fiasco won't happen again?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation):** Well, I can tell the member opposite, it won't be happening on a beach at Point Douglas any time soon.

On the weekend, Mr. Speaker, to help the member who's obviously confused on this, the barricades at Hollow Water did come down this weekend. Despite all the bad advice given to me from members across the way, the barricades did come down, and we did meet with the chief from Hollow Water this morning. It was a good meeting, and we're finding a way to move forward to make sure that our cottage lot program can continue to be a success.

#### Intensive Care Nursing Shortage Government's Response

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, the ICU nursing shortage in Winnipeg has skyrocketed under the NDP government, and it's the highest it's been in years. Right now, we're 83 nurses short. The Minister of Health, last week, said that 25 nurses will graduate in January and another 50 will graduate nine months from now. That is a very long time for ICU areas to be so dangerously understaffed.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: Why did she allow this ICU nursing shortage to get so bad? Why didn't she address it sooner?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** As I said to the member last week and to all members in this House, certainly we know that we have to continue to work in building our complement of nurses in the ICU. That's exactly what we're doing in partnership with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. There is a class running now, as I said to the member opposite. There is a class that will begin after Christmas as well. We're going to be building that complement of nurses.

In the meantime, there are measures that are being taken to ensure that patients are getting the service when they need it. It's important to remember, of course, that patients are getting that service within the medically recommended time and, Mr. Speaker, if they're not, arrangements are made to ensure that they can go out of the province if need be, in sharp contrast to the cancer patients under their watch in the '90s.

#### Cancelled Cardiac Surgeries

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, in February, the president of the St. Boniface Hospital nurses union said that staff shortages in the cardiac ICU were putting heart patients at risk. Twice last week, the Minister of Health refused to say how many heart surgeries have been cancelled so far this year.

So I called the WRHA, and they also refused to say how many heart surgeries have been cancelled this year. It appears that there is a political agenda here to hide the truth.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: What is she hiding, and why will she not tell us how many cardiac surgeries have been cancelled this year?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** We know that the member opposite has anointed herself queen of the conspiracy theory, but what I can tell you is that if and when surgeries have to be bumped, patients are scheduled almost immediately. As a result of responding to the recommendations of the Koshal report, multiple bumping has been almost entirely eliminated.

Let me remind the member opposite, as she should well know, that in the event that a cardiac surgery, an elective cardiac surgery, needs to be bumped, that's because there's an emergency, a person that doesn't go on the wait list ever, and surgery is done within minutes or hours.

So, Mr. Speaker, it happens from time to time. We're working with St. Boniface Hospital and the intensive care nurses to ensure that it happens as minimally as possible.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, so why won't the minister answer the very straightforward question: How many heart surgeries have been cancelled?

Obviously, she has something to hide. The WRHA also refused to tell us. But one hour after they refused to tell us how many heart surgeries were cancelled, one hour later, they told a reporter.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us what political games are she and the WRHA playing to prevent this information from coming to us.

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that this is bordering on a little bit silly. We publish information on our Web site concerning wait times, concerning emergency rooms, information that members opposite never bothered to make public.

Furthermore, the particular member opposite has raised conspiracies before. We've heard her cry that the sky was falling, that the Grace emergency room was going to close, before the election and during the election. I have yet to hear her apologize to the people of west Winnipeg for that fearmongering.

But, in particular, Mr. Speaker, we're building our complement of ICU nurses. We're working to minimize any elective surgeries that are being bumped. CIHI reports that we have the best and lowest wait time in the country. We're continuing to work; we're not hiding anything.

\* (14:10)

### Spirited Energy Advertising Campaign Untendered Contracts

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** I had hoped to write my questions today with a \$12 Spirited Energy pen, but alas, more than a month has passed since I've ordered it and I still have not received it, so I guess my 50-cent Bic is going to have to do.

Mr. Speaker, it should be of no surprise that we learn that the NDP government was giving untendered, unreported contracts for work on the Spirited Energy campaign. I ask the Minister of Competitiveness: Was he intending to tell us about these contracts at some point? Or was it his intention to perhaps hope that the Auditor General wouldn't find them during her investigation?

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade):** Mr. Speaker, I urge the member to drive to St. James Street and pick up the merchandise for free if you so desire. I'd also recommend that the member also read the Auditor General's report. I think it says very clearly that all government processes were followed. They were followed in all the cases and all the selection—*[interjection]* was appropriate as per government policy.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Mr. Speaker, apparently, the merchandise is now free.

We are talking about \$268,900 in untendered, unreported contracts. The former minister and former MLA for Brandon West once stated there was a million dollars of private money in the Spirited Energy campaign. Unfortunately, he didn't offer much proof on that figure. Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know what happened to that minister.

I ask the current minister: Since the Auditor General did not examine any private money in the campaign, can he give us a true number? Can we please stay from considering Crown corporations as private donations?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry the member didn't understand my first answer that delivery charge is waived if you pick up items over on St. James Street. I hope the member takes the opportunity to do that.

I also hope that the member opposite takes the time to pick up and read the Auditor General's report. If he looks on page 19, and I quote from the Auditor General's report, "procurement for the image

campaign was consistent with government policies and procedures."

Thank you very much. That's the answer.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Mr. Speaker, being consistent with NDP government regulations or requirements is something suspect. The only spirits that this campaign are phantom, private donations and the liquor approved as campaign expenses.

I'd like to ask the minister: Since we know he hid Crown corporation donations as private money, since we know that they hid untendered contracts from taxpayers, since we know they hid and censored invoices, since we know they hid poor focus group results, what else is he hiding on the Spirited Energy campaign, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Rondeau:** Mr. Speaker, I think from the start you notice that we have a pile of invoices that we provided to all members. We have an Auditor General's report that went through the whole processes of all the process in the Spirited Energy campaign. We said all along that what we said publicly was true. The auditors found that we followed the lead of the private sector. The Auditor General was clear that appropriate government procurement was followed, and the Auditor General showed and demonstrated that proper processes were followed.

I wish the member would take the time, stop coming up with scenarios that are incorrect and start reading the Auditor General's report and look at the information that was provided.

#### **Hammer and Sickle Symbol Appropriateness for Book Cover**

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I had the honour over the weekend to attend a forum, along with the members for River Heights and Wolseley, on the genocide in Darfur. In the course of that discussion, had an opportunity to reflect on past atrocities, many of which committed in the previous century. Included among those, were the 1932 and '33 genocide in Ukraine carried out by Stalin, under the banner of the hammer and sickle, the Khmer Rouge massacre of 7.5 million people under the banner of the hammer and sickle, the massacres by Mao in China of 40 million people all carried out under the banner of the hammer and sickle.

Now, we've seen recently, a prominent member of the New Democratic Party and a former Cabinet

colleague of the Premier's (Mr. Doer) release a book of memoirs, and emblazoned on the front cover of that book is the hammer and sickle. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a symbol which has been banned in many eastern European countries, including Hungary, as a symbol of oppression and death throughout eastern Europe.

So I want to ask the Premier if he would like to take this opportunity to condemn his former Cabinet colleague for his use of this symbol of death and oppression on the front cover of the book that he is now selling throughout the province of Manitoba.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, sometimes it's downright disgusting the levels that members opposite will do to try to get a headline. They'll tell anybody, anything, anytime, anywhere to get headlines.

My father came from Ukraine. My father and his family suffered under that kind of regime. My father and his family were sworn in and worked for the NDP because they stood for the average person all their lives. He's proud of that party. My relatives spent time in Siberia under that nutcase, Stalin.

The member has no right to stand up in this House and play the 1940's game. The Conservatives did, the same ones who imprisoned Ukrainians who came here in 1918 and 1919 and called them aliens. To play that game in this Legislature, it's disgusting. He ought to remove himself from that question and from that line of questions, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McFadyen:** The hysteria of the Attorney General on this issue, Mr. Speaker, given that there are members on all sides of this House who have lost family members and predecessors in conflict, including my own family, fighting against fascism in the Second World War; the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) who will speak very eloquently to the issues, the horrors of the Stalin era, and so we will not apologize for the fact that this symbol of death and oppression, which is banned in Hungary today because of the horrors that are associated with the hammer and sickle, is a serious issue for all Manitobans.

I just want to ask the Premier, given that it's his former Cabinet colleague who is now selling a book with this symbol emblazoned on the front, Mr. Speaker, with funding from the Manitoba Arts Council—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. We all know exhibits are not allowed in the Chamber here. So I ask the honourable member to keep that down.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I regret the holding up of the book.

I want to be clear. In a free and democratic society like ours, it is appropriate from time to time for people to speak up on issues. We're not calling for the banning of a book. We're not calling for anything that would prohibit the former Attorney General from selling his book here in Manitoba. We're simply asking for a statement on the record from the Premier, with respect to a former Cabinet colleague who is using this symbol of death and oppression on the cover of his book, whether he's prepared to take steps today to distance himself from that decision, and will he condemn the use of that symbol on the cover of this book.

\* (14:20)

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General spoke for all of us in terms of the barbaric and despicable practices of the Soviet Union and Stalin and others, that he spoke about more eloquently than I could even begin to speak to, and certainly I would put my words with his.

I would also point out that the member is pointing out a person who fought against the Nazis and put his life on the line in the Second World War is one of the other individuals, and then today, Mr. Speaker, perhaps this House should be talking also about the issues dealing with freedom of speech, freedom of democracy, freedom of political association in Pakistan. I would very clearly state as Premier of the province that we are opposed to the martial law and rule that has been imposed in Pakistan, and we wish for the reinstatement of democratic institutions in that country.

#### **Knee Replacement Surgery Wait Times**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, today's WRHA wait time for knee replacement surgery is getting longer. It's now 30 weeks, which is much longer than the 15 to 22 weeks that it was in 2000 to 2002. This doesn't even include the wait to see a surgeon. As if that's not bad enough, wait times for other major surgical procedures, I understand, are much longer when it comes to elbow and shoulder

surgery, when it comes to discectomies, when it comes to major ankle surgery.

When will the Premier have a proper reporting time for major orthopedic surgeries which includes both the wait time to get the orthopedic surgeon appointment as well as the wait time to see the surgery. Surely it's time that Manitobans have this basic information, or is the Premier just trying to cover up the shortcomings of his own government?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to answer the question, that we can say that the median wait time for all orthopedic surgery for September in 2007 is 25 weeks. We know that that's a reduction of 40 percent in over two years. I believe the member opposite is also aware that when we came into government in 1999, the priority was to ensure that wait times for lifesaving, life-threatening surgeries were taken care of as quickly as possible. I'm very pleased today to report that, as a result of that CIHI report, our wait times for cancer and for cardiac therapies are No. 1 in the country.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day when the Minister of Health gets up in this Chamber and provides statistics which are blatantly wrong. The fact is that you have a wait time to see a surgeon. You have a wait time then to get the surgery. You have wait times for knee and hip surgery. The wait time on the WRHA Web site for knee surgery is 30 weeks, not even counting the time to see an orthopedic surgeon, and the wait times for a lot of major orthopedic surgeries are a lot longer than that. It's time that the minister started to find out what's really going on in health care in this province.

I ask the Premier: Why is he tolerating the intolerable? Why on earth is he accepting a Minister of Health who's going to provide to this House misleading information? Why is this Premier tolerating such nonsense? It's time that the Premier woke up.

**Ms. Oswald:** Mr. Speaker, again I can say to the member opposite that we've been reporting wait times for a number of years now. These numbers report median wait time. We also know that, in partnership with the federal government in signing a wait-time guarantee, we committed to do a project in ensuring that any waiting that occurs prior to the wait for surgery is as minimal as possible, and we're working very diligently with our wait-time task force.

I think the member opposite well knows in the circles that he keeps the No. 1 thing that we can do is centralize our wait list. I hope that he encourages those people to get on board with centralizing those wait lists so that all Manitobans don't have to wait so long.

### **Public Meeting Request for Attendance**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, over the weekend I had the opportunity to go into the provincial constituency of Concordia. Having had the opportunity to stand in front of the Premier's office, I must let him know his constituency office has an illegal sign in their window. I would hope that the Premier will address that particular issue, but that's not the reason for the question.

Mr. Speaker, the question is the Premier has been challenged to come to his own constituency to talk to his constituents. It's the principle of accountability. If any MLA inside this Chamber were to challenge me to come to my constituency, I would welcome the opportunity. I would promote it. I would encourage my constituents to come out and participate. Why? Because I'm not scared of any New Democrat challenging me inside Inkster.

Mr. Speaker, the question that I would pose to the Premier: What has he got to hide that he doesn't have the courage to come out to his own constituency and talk about a very important issue dealing with individuals in the Premier's office? What does he have to hide?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Inkster has a long record in this House of trying to get attention for particular issues, like whether he can sit at the front of the Legislature or the back of the Legislature and the type of hamburger he eats.

I am still waiting, Mr. Speaker, for the member to live up to his commitment that he made in this Chamber, that if Elections Manitoba found no wrongdoing with respect to the nomination in The Maples, he would resign his seat. He not only said that in the Legislature, he said that in the hallway. He knows that this whole façade is designed to take attention from the fact that he committed publicly, in this Chamber, that he would resign if the charges were not proven. The charges were not proven. He has not resigned. Everybody in Manitoba knows that.

**Mr. Speaker:** The time for Oral Questions has expired.

### **MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Russell, on a matter of privilege?

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Speaker, I needed to ponder for a few moments after the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) made his comments on the record, but let me say at the outset that I think not only was I insulted but many, many Manitobans were infuriated and insulted by the minister's comments.

So, Mr. Speaker, I understand that there are two conditions that I have to meet in order to establish that this is, first of all, the first opportunity that I have to rise on a matter of privilege, and, secondly, that it is a prima facie case which warrants this to become a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the first occasion to rise, as I indicated, I did need a few minutes to collect my thoughts, but if the member wishes to speak to this matter of privilege, he will have an opportunity and perhaps he should just listen for a few moments and then respond in accordance. So this is the first opportunity.

Secondly, in terms of the prima facie case: Mr. Speaker, I sat in this House when Roland Penner was not only the Minister of Education, but was responsible for constitutional law in this province. I was here when he did not deny the fact that he was a communist, yet he sat in the ranks of the members opposite. At the same time, when we have the Minister of Justice standing in his place today and talking about the atrocities that were committed by the Communists against his forefathers, and yet he sat on the front bench with a member who belonged to that party.

Mr. Speaker, as we go through life's journey, we encounter many circumstances. This year happens to be the 75th anniversary of the Ukraine genocide.

Mr. Speaker, the United Nations have declared this year, perhaps, as one where we will recognize as a world the genocide that occurred in 1932 and '33 in Ukraine when the Communist leader forced the starvation of between seven and 10 million Ukrainian farmers.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), in his remarks today, in his rant, talked about his family undergoing that kind of suffering during those years in Ukraine, and that it is why his family perhaps moved to this country, but he went on

then to state that the reason they became New Democrats was because of what Conservatives have done to Ukrainian people.

\* (14:30)

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am of Ukrainian descent. My family, and as is my colleague, the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), and others, and as the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), we, too, had forefathers who underwent that same kind of treatment, but we moved into this country. They came to this country seeking freedom, seeking freedom of expression, seeking freedom of opportunity, but one of the things they denounced was the sickle, my leader just referred, the hammer and sickle. Why did they denounce that? Because that was the symbol of death, the symbol of suffering that was forced upon millions and millions of people.

Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives, whether in this province or in this country, had nothing to do with the suffering that was imposed upon those people. *[interjection]* Yes, and I might add maybe what the member should do is take a look at what really has happened in history and look at the former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and the Bill of Rights under his leadership of this country.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. We're getting into debate here.

When members rise on a matter of privilege, it's two things: the earliest opportunity, and to stress to the Speaker that it is a prima facie case where a member's privilege has been impeded upon. But now we're getting into debate. We have to stick with the meaning of privilege, and I ask the honourable member to reference the prima facie case of his privilege.

**Mr. Derkach:** Yes, you're absolutely right, Mr. Speaker, and I acknowledge your caution. I do want to stick to why this is a prima facie case.

Mr. Speaker, when remarks are made in this House, like were made by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), that certainly casts an aspersion on the members who perhaps are of that same ethnic background, because not only is it on us as members, it impedes my ability to be able to stand up as a proud Manitoban and to do my job as a member of Ukrainian heritage who stands up proudly in this Legislature on behalf of Manitobans, on behalf of people of my ethnic background, to do my work as a legislator, simply because the member feels that the Conservative Party is somehow linked to some

subversive kind of activity when it comes to dealing with people who are of Ukrainian origin.

Mr. Speaker, not only is that a fallacy, but in terms of the kind of attitude that breeds in this province, it is unhealthy for this Legislature, it is unhealthy for the citizens of this province, and it is an insult to people who are of the same ethnic background as I happen to be.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are members in this House who have, from time to time, been the subject of perhaps some racist remarks, have been the subject of perhaps some unworthy remarks, and they have risen in their place and have garnered an apology from this House and from the members who have made those statements, and quite rightly so. In this instance, I feel very strongly, and so do others, that what the Minister of Justice has done has been to cross a line and to insult not only members who are of Ukrainian origin in this House or have some connection to that ethnic group, but also those of Ukrainian origin who happen to believe in the ideals of Progressive Conservatives. That's where the insult comes as well.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on about this, but then I would be getting into debate. I just want to make this as brief as possible, because this is not a very tasteful kind of matter of privilege to be standing on. Therefore—*[interjection]* Yes, it may be the Minister of Justice's motivation to try and thwart the kind of questions because, indeed, my leader has been putting some very hard questions to the government of the day who can't answer those questions. Yes, maybe it's a way to derail that kind of questioning, but let him not be confused because those continued hard questions will come from my leader and from members of this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me no pleasure or joy to do this, because I know the member opposite. I know him as a Justice minister, and I think today he, unfortunately, misspoke himself. I think he should reflect upon his comments and perhaps not apologize to me alone, but I think he needs to apologize to the Conservative Party that works in this country today in today's circumstances and apologize to those people of Ukrainian background who, today, have been insulted by this member.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat),

THAT this Matter be reviewed by Mr. Speaker and that the Minister of Justice be asked to apologize to

this House and to those who do not subscribe to his ideology and his choice of political philosophy.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, members opposite illustrated precisely the point that I made in the Chamber earlier. They attack individuals. They attach ideologies to individuals and then they slam them. They take an individual, the former Attorney General. They take his autobiography, and just like McCarthyism, just like the worst of the Republican Party in the United States, that's what they do. They attack individuals and they put labels on them and they denounce them. Is that freedom of speech?

I've heard it over and over and over again. I heard it earlier in Question Period. Ed Schreyer, who I worked for, they're spinning around Ed Schreyer's name somehow. They're spinning around Elijah Harper's name. They're spinning around everyone's name to get a political hit. In this Question Period alone, they talked about Ed Schreyer. They talked about Elijah Harper. They will say or do anything to get a headline.

Mr. Speaker, I resent, as a member of this Chamber and as a member of the Ukrainian community whose family came here, whose father was born there and lived under that kind of a rule where the government would tell you what to do—the member nods his head, nods his head, expecting to live under—tell you what to do—came here to have their freedom, and indeed they do, and indeed they are very fortunate. We are all very fortunate.

Then to have a leader of a political party, it's not even one of the backbenchers who asked the cheap question during Question Period; it's the leader of the political party, stand up and say, the former Attorney General is a communist and you're all communists, which is the old chestnut, the old red-baiting, the old scaring, the old Conservative Party tried for years and years and years.

Mr. Speaker, it's a historical fact that the sedition and the alien acts of 1918 and 1919 by the federal Conservative government de-franchised Ukrainians, put Ukrainians in work camps and Austro-Hungarians and all those called Galicians—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When a member rises on a matter of privilege, it's to convince the Speaker that there's a prima facie case, and at the earliest opportunity. If the Speaker decides there is a prima facie case, then we will go into debate of that issue, but right at this point it's to try and convince the

Speaker to recognize it as a matter of privilege so debate can happen. But right now, we're also, of the caution I gave to the Member for Russell, we're now also into debate here. This is not the time for debate. This is to convince the Speaker that either he has a prima facie case or he does not have a prima facie case.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Not only does the member not have a prima facie case of privilege, in fact, the member's motion was the last time he raised the privilege, which was only last week, of which to try to deflect attention away from his leader's faux pas. That kind of politics where you attack an individual and you try to take away their credibility by attacking one individual, that, I find disgusting in this Chamber. We're seeing too much of it from members opposite, of going after individuals and trying to paint them all with the same brush, and that's not appropriate. They do it inappropriately and inaccurately, and that's what gives rise to intolerance, and that's what gives rise with difficulty in our society.

\* (14:40)

Members know what history is. We have lived history. We're fortunate we can talk in this Chamber and speak our minds in this Chamber. But, when members start standing up and saying to members of a group that because someone has a particular sign on a book, all of you who belong to that group, or something like that, is the worst kind of red-baiting, Republican, low-level right-wing politics, and should not happen in this Chamber.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** In the minister's rant, he has put so many incorrect statements on the record, I feel the need just to correct the record so that you're able to make a ruling based on what is factual, as opposed to what is fictional, which is what has been contained in the minister's rant.

Mr. Speaker, we all have connection through our ancestors, in one way or another, to atrocities that have taken place in history. Every family, every individual in this House is connected in one way or another to an atrocity, or to a war, or to a genocide, or a civil war in which members of our respective families have suffered. That is not in debate.

The member tries to suggest that, by asking a question about a symbol on a book, I am in some way attempting to tar his entire party and his entire caucus with a set of beliefs. That is incorrect, Mr. Speaker. I have simply invited members opposite, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the minister, to criticize the use of a symbol that for millions of people in our country and in countries around the world is viewed as a symbol of death and oppression. I daresay that if a former member of this Legislature, a former member of Cabinet had recently released a book that had the swastika emblazoned on the front cover, that member would come in for criticism, and it would be a matter for debate within this Legislature.

Now, for millions of people, the hammer and sickle is a symbol that is on par with the swastika in terms of the association with genocides and with other atrocities that have taken place through history, including the genocide in Ukraine, in Cambodia and in China, Mr. Speaker, where tens of millions of people were massacred by regimes that used the hammer and sickle as their symbol.

In light of that, Mr. Speaker, all I did was invite the Premier to criticize the use of that symbol on the cover of a book. That's all that I did. I invited the Premier to voice criticism of the use of that symbol, to condemn the use of that symbol on the cover of a book, which book was financed by taxpayers' dollars through the Manitoba Arts Council.

So I ask the minister to restrain his comments to exactly the point that was raised. I would invite him to condemn the former Attorney General for his use of this symbol of death and oppression, Mr. Speaker. His refusal to do so to date may be interpreted by Manitobans in any way that they please, but it is a legitimate point for debate. It's a new book, funded by Manitoba taxpayers, with a symbol on it of death and oppression.

Mr. Speaker, to the matter of privilege, for the minister to get up and, through over-the-top rhetoric, attempt to intimidate members on this side, to try to back us off of asking legitimate questions about the use of taxpayer dollars, the use of a symbol that for millions is a symbol of death and oppression, I would submit is a breach of our privileges, and I therefore support the motion brought forward by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Before I recognize the honourable member, I want to remind all members once again, when you're rising on a matter of privilege, it's to point out to the Speaker at the

earliest opportunity and deal with a prima facie case, because we're right into the heart of the debate, and that's not at this stage yet. So I hope members will respect our rules.

To be fair, I will recognize one more member, to balance it off.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I find the fact that we're even dealing with a matter of privilege, given the context of this matter, to be very regretful. Quite frankly, the member should know and should read *Beauchesne*, which defines what a fundamental privilege is of the members of this House and reflecting fundamental privileges of our society, being the freedom of speech, citation 75: "The privilege of freedom of speech is both the least questioned and the most fundamental right of the Member of Parliament on the floor of the House and in committee."

What I find particularly regretful, Mr. Speaker, is that this all started with a question in a debate that really, I thought, had long died out in this House. I've sat in this House since the 1980s and I've heard the kind of McCarthyite tactics, and I note, by the way, that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) stated publicly that the government of the 1980s was communistic-inspired.

Mr. Speaker, I often believe that we have choices. We either can go back to the divisive debates of the past or we can move on. I find it particularly offensive, by the way, that the context of the question was either—and the debate, the comments brought in on the matter of privilege, that this was taxpayer-funded. Well, we live in a free society. The Arts Council should decide whom they fund, not the Leader of the Opposition. That is gone; that day is gone.

I say to members opposite, the context that a person who was an ex-communist sat in government—an ex-communist. Perhaps the members opposite should see what has swept eastern Europe where many ex-Communists have seen the light of a democratic society. That is progress, Mr. Speaker. That is progress.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you right now that the days of those kinds of debates, if they didn't die out in the 1940s, 1950s, are long gone. There is no such thing as guilt by association in this province. This kind of red-baiting has no place in this Manitoba Legislature. I would suggest,



Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach)—and I know he was called upon to tactically get his leader out of the position that he had dug himself into, but, you know, Mr. Speaker, if they want to continue to red-bait, they want the McCarthyite tactics, let them dwell on the past. Many of us see Manitoba as moving on. We are a province of tolerance and freedom of speech—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

I've allowed a lot of, quite a bit of leeway, but I think we're now into debating the issue and a matter of privilege is a very serious concern. To be fair, I've heard from two from each side, so I'm going to take this under advisement, and I'm going to consult the authorities and I'm going to read all the *Hansards* [interjection] Pardon me?

**An Honourable Member:** I'm getting up on my own matter.

**Mr. Speaker:** That's entirely up to you. You have your right. But, to be fair, I've heard from two from each side. I'm going to take this matter under advisement and I'll bring the ruling back to the House.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** On a matter of privilege.

**Mr. Speaker:** On a matter of privilege.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. I know there are certain conditions that have to be met. It has to be raised at the first opportunity and it has to affect a member's ability to perform their duties as a legislator in this House. I believe that I will make the case for both of those.

First of all, this was the first opportunity for myself to get up. Second of all, I am very troubled where the debate has gone in the previous matter of privilege, and thus I feel it's important to get up on another matter of privilege.

\* (14:50)

It has to do with comments that are made in this House. We all come to this House as honourable members. We all come, yes, representing a political party. We understand that. There are questions asked that we often don't like. There are questions asked that bother us somewhat. But to get up and somehow leave the impression that a political party or that members of this House were part of a political process that incarcerated individuals in our society,

namely the Ukrainians, is frankly despicable, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to make it very clear that my father, who was born in the Ukraine, that suffered under Stalin and the hammer and sickle, and our family, my father's youngest brother paid the ultimate price. He died as a young man fleeing the Stalin regime. Many in my community that I represent, from Cook's Creek and so on, are very troubled by what happened under the Stalin regime.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, I stand in this House, and I am supposed to represent all of those individuals, including myself, in this House. Yet we have the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) who somehow says that I am part of a political party that imprisoned individuals 60 years ago, which is not the case. It is not true.

That's why, on this matter of privilege, I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to look into this and come back. I think it would be becoming for the Attorney General to get up and say, you know, I withdraw these words. That is what we're asking you to look into, because I stand here representing a lot of Ukrainian-Canadians and—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I'm listening very, very carefully to the words put on the record by the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler). I recognized the honourable Member for Springfield on a separate matter of privilege, but it sounds very, very similar or a continuation of the one I just took under advisement.

If you're up on a matter of privilege, it has to be something totally separate than what I just took under advisement, because it sounds very similar to the one I have taken and it sounds like a continuation of that.

So, the honourable member, on your privilege, I hope it's something that deals—your privilege that you've deemed to be impeded upon is something different than what the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) rose on.

**Mr. Schuler:** Yes, thank you very much for those comments, Mr. Speaker.

It has to do with the Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) going on about this is a party of red-baiters. That's actually very unfortunate, and I will be making a motion very shortly, that you, Mr. Speaker, will look into this and look into those comments, because, again, we go out

and we represent communities and we're supposed to stand here and speak on their behalf in this Manitoba Legislative Assembly. We're supposed to speak on their behalf without fear or favour, yet there are comments on the record from the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs that we're red-baiters. My constituency happens to have a lot of Ukrainian-Canadians and a lot of individuals who grew up in the Ukraine who may not even be of Ukrainian background but were born there.

Thus, I am compelled and would like to make a motion, Mr. Speaker. I move

THAT this Matter be reviewed by Mr. Speaker and that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs be asked to apologize to this House and those who do not subscribe to his ideology and his choice of political philosophy.

That is seconded by the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** You know, I'm beyond amazed with the member opposite, obviously, in this case wishing the opportunity to make a statement in the House, then putting together a supposed matter of privilege that once again shows that the member does not understand the most fundamental aspect of being a member of the Legislature, that, as I mentioned, is outlined in terms of freedom of speech, Mr. Speaker.

I make no apologies for calling something what it is. When you have a leader of an opposition who has stated publicly that the government in the 1980s was communist-inspired, when you have the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) who got up today and, in the context of a book that is being published, not by the government but by an individual, a private citizen in this province, that happens to be funded by the Arts Council, and then tries to draw an extremely long bow, Mr. Speaker, and somehow, throw this at the government, because I believe the context was that the Premier (Mr. Doer) had sat with the person that's printing the book in Cabinet in the 1980s.

I don't know how many more elements of McCarthyism you need. You know, "have you now, or have you ever been . . ." Guilt by association. The only thing missing is the book burning, and I can tell you that if you take what the Leader of the Opposition said today, asking a question about a book, in a free society like Canada, Mr. Speaker, when he knows, and knew, that everyone in this House knows of the history and doesn't need any

lectures from him, whether it be in terms of the tyranny of Stalin or of Hitler.

I find it so ironic that this Sunday we're going to gather, and we're going to celebrate November 11. What did they fight for in the First World War, in the Second World War? For freedom of speech, for democracy, Mr. Speaker. Freedom of speech and democracy.

You know, Mr. Speaker, they can continue this all they want. I find it amazing, again, the ignorance of history. Indeed, Ukrainian Canadians were interned in the First World War, and it was, indeed, a Conservative government. That's what the member stated. In the Second World War, it was a Liberal government that interned Japanese Canadians. That was wrong and we've moved to the point of not only recognizing it but we've had national apologies.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we will not ever learn the lessons of history if we continue to repeat them, and let's understand there are two visions for this province. One is a division of fighting the old fights; the second is of peace and reconciliation. Let's not hear this nonsense ever again in this Chamber. We've been there. We've moved on from that. We should respect the right of all Manitobans to freedom of speech in this great democratic society we have and work for reconciliation, reconciliation because that is what this great, diverse province of Manitoba is all about.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I just want to add a few comments to the reason that this has become such a heated issue, I suppose, in the House. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that we've heard ranting on the other side of the House around an issue, trying to deflect away from the real issue.

The real issue was the question that was asked by my leader today, and that real question is, to the Minister of Justice, to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, do you support the symbol of the hammer and sickle? Do you support that symbol? Yes or no? It's very simple. Very often, we see, in this House, when the government doesn't like the tone of questioning or is embarrassed and doesn't have an answer, they tend to go off on a rant and a rampage, and the higher they raise their voices, Mr. Speaker, the more they believe they can deflect away from the real issue.

Mr. Speaker, the question was simple. The question was clear. I'm not going to go on a rant, and I am not going to talk about book burning because we know who burned the Canadian flag. It was

members opposite, I think, when the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs was sitting around the Cabinet, or the caucus table with one Al Mackling, when they burned the Canadian flag. So let's not go into burning. Let's not go into burning issues. *[interjection]*

American flag, I'm sorry.

\* (15:00)

Let me correct the record because when I do—*[interjection]* Thank you. Mr. Speaker, when I've made a mistake, I'm not afraid to stand up and admit that I've made a mistake. I would hope the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) will seriously look at the mistake that they have made today in trying to deflect away from the real issue. I'm hoping that all members on that side of the House and on this side of the House will clearly consider the question that was asked and stand up and be counted and indicate clearly, do you support the hammer and sickle symbol that stands for death and oppression. Very simple, very clear, answer the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the matter of privilege raised by the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), I'm going to take it under advisement and I'll come back to the House with a ruling.

We'll move on to Members' Statements.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Rossbrook House

**Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington):** I rise before the House today to recognize Rossbrook House's annual open house and the contribution this organization has made to its community over the past 31 years. Established in 1976 by Sister Geraldine MacNamara, Rossbrook House is a neighbourhood centre for children, youth and young adults. It offers a constant alternative to the destructive environment of the streets and operates with the mission that no child who does not want to be alone should ever have to be.

Recently Rossbrook House underwent major renovations to its facilities. Its basement was remodelled in order to brighten it up and a music room was added to the premises. For the first time in over 30 years the building now also enjoys a central air conditioning system. This year's open house formally unveiled these exciting developments in the

organization's life and highlighted the important programs that are offered to the community.

Rossbrook is open 365 days of the year, 24 hours a day, on weekends and on any school holidays. The organization provides recreation, education, training, employment and socialization opportunities as well as vocational and legal counselling. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, Rossbrook House strives to provide the youth who participate in this program with the opportunities they need to make their dreams come true.

On behalf of every member of this House, I congratulate the dedicated individuals who have put so much heart and hard work into Rossbrook House, especially its co-executive directors, Phil Chiapetta and Sister Maria Vigna. Through your commitment and enthusiasm you have truly made a difference to the youth who come through your doors every day and to the community you are such an integral part of. Thank you.

### Sharon Dueck

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize a selfless individual from the city of Winkler. Sharon Dueck is being honoured as a Winkler Citizen of the Year for 2007 by the Winkler Community Foundation.

Sharon is known for her dedication to the Special Olympics as head coach and founded the local club in 1986. The best testament of Sharon's humility is in her own words. When told she was being given this award, Sharon thought she wasn't deserving and said to our local editor, and I quote: "There's so many other people that do so many good things."

She wholeheartedly supports the Special Olympics' athletes and volunteers, but, Mr. Speaker, her modesty should not overshadow the significant contributions she has made personally. Sharon has devoted countless hours to the Special Olympics. She has shared so much with the athletes, parents and volunteers, helping them to reach their best and overcome challenges. She is known for her smile, kind words and enthusiasm.

Sharon's efforts have helped many athletes excel and that is Sharon's reward. Athletes such as Valerie Marshall of Winkler who travelled to the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Shanghai, China. This remarkable woman qualified for her place on the national team by winning two gold, one silver, and two bronze medals at the

2006 Special Olympics National Summer Games in Brandon.

Her coaches, including Sharon, were instrumental in helping Valerie reach this amazing goal at the age of 56. Mr. Speaker, Valerie received a silver medal in the 200-metre run and also achieved a personal best time. Her family, friends and the citizens of Winkler are proud of her.

On behalf of the constituents of Pembina and especially from the city of Winkler. I would sincerely like to thank and congratulate both Sharon Dueck and Valerie Marshall. Their achievements are inspiring and a credit to the Special Olympics. The lives of the athletes and everyone who knows them is enriched by their involvement in sports. Thank you.

#### **Andy Warhol: Larger Than Life Exhibit**

**Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, October 3, I had the pleasure of attending, along with the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell), the opening reception and grand preview of the "Warhol: Larger Than Life" exhibit at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Credited as one of the foremost major artistic innovators of the 20th century, Andy Warhol worked beyond painting and printmaking across a wide range of media and genres from filmmaking to sculpting.

The "Warhol: Larger Than Life" exhibit is an expansive project of over 150 paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, photographs and films spanning some four decades of production. Thinking about Warhol's prolific career, many of us might think of his Campbell's soup cans, his portrait of Marilyn Monroe, Mick Jagger, Mao, or his self-portraits. He also had, however, many Canadian connections, and his early exhibits and portraits of Canadian celebrities are highlighted in this project. The exhibition at the Winnipeg Art Gallery makes an in-depth exploration of Warhol's contact with this country, be it in terms of events, exhibits, celebrities or controversy.

On behalf of all members of this House, I would like to extend my appreciation to those individuals who worked so hard to bring this much-anticipated exhibit to Winnipeg. Thank you to the Winnipeg Art Gallery Board Chairman Gordon Gage, Director Pierre Arpin, and Curator Helen Delacretaz. Sincere thanks also go to the dedicated gallery staff, to the volunteer committee, and to the always essential sponsors whose contributions have helped bring this exciting event to Winnipeg.

Since its inception in 1912, the Winnipeg Art Gallery has always taken it upon itself to bring the most exciting international exhibits to Manitoba. The "Warhol: Larger Than Life" exhibit, exploring the career of one of the 20th century's most compelling artistic personalities, is no exception and should not be missed. I encourage all members to visit the Art Gallery and participate in the "Warhol: Larger Than Life" exhibit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **2007 Home Hardware Award for Souris**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa):** It is with great pleasure that I stand today to congratulate the Town of Souris as the recipient of the 2007 Home Hardware Award for Community Involvement. This award recognizes the community's extensive participation in the development of a wide variety of projects that improve the local quality of life. The dedication to civic participation helped the town receive an exceptional evaluation from Communities in Bloom judges against international competition.

The Town of Souris merits this prestigious recognition by establishing an exemplary standard in regard to community involvement, fostering an atmosphere of inclusiveness and for their dedication to overall community improvement. This outstanding community, with a population of less than 2,000, is able to maintain 39 community volunteer action groups in a variety of areas from education, beautification, to efforts to ensure the social inclusion of all members within the community.

It is impossible to overestimate the role of an inclusive civic sphere in establishing a positive and vibrant community social fabric. Through their efforts, the citizens of Souris have provided all Manitobans from communities of all sizes with the model to stronger civic involvement and ultimately stronger communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **National Seniors Safety Week**

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Mr. Speaker, our seniors and elders deserve to feel safe and well looked after in their golden years. This week is National Seniors Safety Week, and I'm pleased to rise in this House today to talk about some of the ways seniors can keep themselves safe.

For older persons, walking is one of the most important modes of transportation. It is also an excellent way to stay active and healthy. Mr. Speaker, according to Transport Canada, 37 percent of pedestrian injuries involve persons 65 years of age or older. I would like to offer some simple

reminders that will help mitigate the risks of an accident. Always wear comfortable, well-fitting walking shoes or boots, and as winter sets in, be sure to wear ice grips.

For those of us who are on the road in our vehicles, we need to be part of the solution. With winter conditions setting in, all drivers could do to slow down and be mindful of our neighbours who are walking and crossing the streets by foot. I grew up believing that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, which holds true to safe driving.

Falls are another safety concern and can have serious consequences for individuals and their families. Every year more than 5,000 Manitobans are hospitalized because of a fall. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that developed Focus on Falls Prevention, a program that provides vision screening and fall prevention education to more than 600 seniors in long-term care and in the community.

Mr. Speaker, there are many excellent programs that put seniors' health and safety first. One of my personal favourites is the Emergency Response Information Kit or ERIK. Once completed, the kit provides the necessary information for emergency personnel to respond quickly to individual situations. These programs provide peace of mind for those registered as well as family and friends.

I call on all my honourable colleagues to take this opportunity to learn as much as they can about what they can do to make our province a little safer for our seniors and elders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

\* (15:10)

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could call concurrence and third readings of Bills 5, 7, 9, 14 and 13. That's 5, 7, 9, 4 and 13. I got the teens mixed up.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been announced that we will be dealing with Concurrence and Third Readings, and we'll do Bills 5, 7, 9, 4 and then 13.

### CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

#### **Bill 5—The Public Accounts Committee Meeting Dates Act (Legislative Assembly Act Amended)**

**Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** I move, seconded by the Minister of

Justice (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 5, The Public Accounts Committee Meeting Dates Act (Legislative Assembly Act Amended), reported from the Standing Committee on Justice, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

#### ***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** I'm pleased to put a few brief comments on the record with respect to Bill 5. The minister is well aware, the government is well aware, that we won't support this bill. We will vote against it in third reading as we did in second reading and as we did in committee, Mr. Speaker. We don't even like the title of the bill, never mind the content. We have indicated that in committee.

There is a reason for that, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of deficiencies within this bill, not the least of which, of course, is codifying in legislation that the meeting dates of Public Accounts. Essentially, the bill suggests that there'll only be six meetings of Public Accounts throughout the year, being the middle of December, February, April, June, August and October of each year.

We have real concerns about that because when you look at our legislative timetable in relation to the dates that are suggested under the bill itself, they don't correspond. In other words, I can only see, as a minimum, or as a maximum, two dates that are suggested in the legislation that will actually have Public Accounts meet during our legislative session.

The first one being December 15. We always adjourn after the first week of December. So if we have a Public Accounts meeting on December 15, obviously, the Legislature will not be in session at that particular point. February 15, same issue. April 15, there's a possibility, Mr. Speaker, of having a Public Accounts meeting at the same time the Legislature sits on April 15.

But we've had instances where the Finance Minister may be waiting for the federal budget to be brought down in Parliament before he presents his budget. There is a possibility even of avoiding that particular date for Public Accounts coinciding with the legislative sitting, because, on occasion, the federal Minister of Finance brings down his budget beginning of April. It would certainly take a few weeks, sometimes up to a month for the Finance Minister of Manitoba to be able to co-ordinate his budget with the federal budget. So there's a possibility, even on April 15, of not being in session

while we do have a Public Accounts meeting scheduled.

June 15, most certainly we won't be in session, Mr. Speaker. We normally adjourn after the first full week of June. August 15, we're not in session, and that's another possible date under this legislation. October 15, there's a possibility of this Legislature being in session at the same time as a Public Accounts meeting held on October 15, but, as we know that the government may not even call the Legislature into session sometimes until after the second or third week of October, so that even that's a possibility that we won't be in session at the same time of a Public Accounts meeting.

So that's one of the deficiencies in the bill. It's a very short bill, but basically mandating Public Accounts meetings within six different time periods within the year. We on this side of the House believe that Public Accounts is an extremely important committee. It's an important committee in terms of transparency and accountability of the government. It's one of those committees that certainly six meetings is not enough during the year to determine what went wrong or what went right with a budget totalling \$8 billion a year, Mr. Speaker, \$8 billion of spending by this government and only six meetings a year to hold them accountable.

Secondly, Public Accounts does look at other committee reports, particularly those reports that are generated by the Auditor General. Those kinds of reports always create a lot of questions, and we need that opportunity as opposition, and I think government does too. They certainly should want to be held accountable. They should want to be transparent and, if they did want those kinds of things, if they were a government that was open and transparent, they would not oppose meetings of Public Accounts more than six times a year.

I went, Mr. Speaker, as you did, and the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) also, we all went to Saskatchewan just before this session started and we took a look at the legislative calendar in Saskatchewan. We talked to both opposition members and government members about how they run their Legislature. One of the sessions that we had a presentation about was Public Accounts and that's specifically what I requested to have when we went to Regina. At that time, we had both the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader talk about Public Accounts and how they view Public Accounts and how it operates and so on. What really

astounded me, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that Public Accounts in Saskatchewan meets during the legislative calendar twice per week. Not six times a year, but twice a week for about two hours at every meeting.

They also indicated that the Public Accounts Committee in Manitoba is essentially the laughing stock of the country. That really bothered me, Mr. Speaker. I just wish the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) were there at the meeting to hear it for themselves. We heard it first-hand and the Member for Minto can confirm that. He was there. He ought to be able to confirm it first-hand, again having selective memory perhaps.

But that happened in Saskatchewan. They told us that it does meet very often. There's a different focus to the Public Accounts Committee. It's a focus away from policy and into administration. I think that's a good thing. I know that the Minister of Justice, the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), has indicated that he is prepared to look at that kind of model, perhaps on a trial basis. I would commend him for that.

But what concerns me, Mr. Speaker, is the fact, in spite of all of that information being provided to this government, to the Government House Leader and to the Minister of Finance, that, in fact, because of our sessional order, on Thursday at 5 p.m., whether or not we want it as opposition or whether we oppose it or not, this bill, unless it's withdrawn prior to Thursday at 5 o'clock, it will come to a vote and it will become law if all government members support the minister. For that very reason, Mr. Speaker, I would propose a motion. The motion is as follows.

\* (15:20)

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach),

*THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "THAT" and substituting the following:*

BILL (No. 5)—The Public Accounts Committee Meeting Dates Act (Legislative Assembly Act Amended), reported from the Standing Committee on Justice, be not concurred in and read a Third Time, but that it be concurred in and read a Third Time this day six months hence.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** No? Okay.

This motion has been moved by the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik). It was seconded by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

*THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "THAT" and substituting the following:*

BILL (No. 5)—The Public Accounts Committee Meeting Dates Act (Legislative Assembly Act Amended), reported from the Standing Committee on Justice, be not concurred in and read a Third Time, but that it be concurred in and read a Third Time this day six months hence.

The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, to speak, and the amendment is in order.

**Mr. Hawranik:** I'd like to put a few brief comments on the record with regard to this motion, commonly known as a hoist motion under *Parliamentary Rules & Forms* of *Beauchesne*, just a few brief comments in the sense that—and I have put my comments on the record with respect to Bill 5 in terms of the debate under Bill 5, and I felt that it was necessary in order to propose this hoist motion here today, Mr. Speaker.

I would encourage the Minister of Justice, the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), and all members opposite to support this motion so that this bill doesn't become law and go under a vote for third reading by 5 o'clock on Thursday.

There is some urgency to this matter because, if we don't speak up now, I believe that Public Accounts Committee will be hampered and will be hamstrung in terms of its ability to look after the finances of this province and its ability to hold government to account, whether it's reports by the Auditor General or other reports that are required to be filed in this Legislature.

I think it's an extremely important motion. I would encourage all members opposite to support it. There are a number of issues we have with the bill, and I know that the Minister of Justice, the Government House Leader, has indicated to me that he would certainly consider withdrawing the bill itself on Thursday. I would encourage him to do that because if he doesn't, we have a real concern about Public Accounts here in this province.

Supporting this motion gives all parties, whether it's the NDP or Conservatives or the Liberal Party in this Legislature, an ability to rethink the Public Accounts Committee act in the sense that we certainly need more meetings more often than six times a year. When you have a budget of \$8 billion in this province and only get to account for it once every couple of months, I think that's a shame, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at other provinces in terms of what they are doing with public accounts committees, it pales in comparison to what is suggested under this legislation. The legislation itself, Mr. Speaker, it was proposed and presented by this government as a knee-jerk reaction to the concerns that the public had and the media had with respect to Public Accounts and the ability of Public Accounts to be able to work on behalf of all Manitobans to account for the money that is spent in this Legislature.

We had many concerns. Public Accounts was not working, and certainly, one of the things that wasn't working with Public Accounts is it wasn't meeting frequently enough. This is the response of the Government House Leader with respect to that particular issue. It's somewhat of a response. It obviously is a bit of a response to the fact that Public Accounts has not been meeting regularly, as it should, and this was his response in terms of trying to limit the number of dates Public Accounts would meet.

That is a real concern for us, particularly, when I travelled to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and you were there at the time as well. We travelled to Saskatchewan and found out that public accounts meets twice a week while they're in session. That's a far cry from what this bill proposes, six meetings a year, once every two months. When they're not in session, they would meet at least once a month, and I think that's the issue in terms of this bill itself, because what it does is it limits and allows the government to get away with only six meetings a year. That itself is the biggest issue with respect to this bill.

There are other issues, Mr. Speaker. Other public accounts committees are allowed to call witnesses. They also exclude the minister of finance and other ministers from giving evidence at public accounts, and, instead, public accounts is given the ability to call witnesses, whether it be the deputy minister, assistant deputy minister, or other people

that the opposition and the government feel should give testimony in front of the committee. Questions, of course, are of an administrative nature, not one of policy or politics.

\* (15:30)

We would support, Mr. Speaker, the revamping, the modernization, if you will, of Public Accounts in this province, and we would support Public Accounts being more like Saskatchewan and other provinces, in fact, more like the federal system. We would want more meetings, obviously, than six per year. We would certainly want the ability of the Public Accounts Committee, the chair and the vice-chair, give them the ability to call meetings and determine which witnesses are to be allowed to testify in front of Public Accounts, and even go so far, Mr. Speaker, as to allow witnesses to be compelled to give testimony to the Public Accounts Committee by way of a subpoena. Other committees do it. Other provinces do it. Some provinces go so far as compelling witnesses to testify under oath.

*Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

I'm not saying that we're going to require that at this point, but certainly there should be an ability of the committee to call witnesses that are pertinent to the report to give answers of an administrative nature, so that we can hold the Crown corporation or the committee or wherever the Auditor General has performed an audit, that we can hold them to account for the public money that was spent or misspent.

With those very few brief words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that others are willing and wanting to put their views on the record. I would hope that members of the government would support this hoist motion to at least give time to the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) to be able to reconsider this bill and perhaps withdraw it altogether. Thank you.

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise in support of this hoist motion introduced by my colleague the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that at this point in time it's important to support this motion. As we see this Bill 5, the way it is right now, I believe that members from all parties have an opportunity, hopefully, if members opposite support this hoist motion, that it will give us a little bit more time to develop a strategy that will allow us to come forward

with rules for the Public Accounts Committee that will make it, in fact, more accountable to the public. So I do support my colleague in his effort to try and achieve this.

Bill 5 was introduced on November 24, 2006, and it puts into legislation that the Public Accounts Committee will meet the third Wednesday of February, April, June, August, October and December of each year. Madam Deputy Speaker, I have great concerns with that because that means that this Public Accounts Committee only meets six times a year. I think to put something like that into legislation effectively ties the hands of the Public Accounts Committee and therefore, I don't believe, is doing what is in the best interest of the public of Manitoba, which I believe should have the opportunity to see first-hand more often, for us to come up to debate and to be able to have the opportunity to ask more questions of administrators at the Public Accounts Committee.

But, if we only have these committees six times a year, Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't believe we're able to do our jobs as legislators. To be restricted to only six days a year is not enough. So, for those reasons, I think it's important that we support this hoist motion to ensure that we have more time to work together as legislators to make any legislation that comes forward or any agreement that comes forward with respect to the Public Accounts Committee, that we make it more effective for the public.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, while we agree that the Public Accounts Committee should be meeting more regularly, we believe that this bill is, in fact, an opportunity lost. We could have done so much more with this opportunity to strengthen the Public Accounts Committee and make it truly an important part of government, which is what people elect us to do. While we agree that the committee should be meeting on a more regular basis, we don't believe that only six times a year is effective and allows us the opportunity to do our jobs.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, this bill was done as a rush job, we believe, and not enough work went into it. This very bill puts into legislation the fact that our system in Manitoba isn't working well. Six meetings is just not enough and now we are going to legislate an amount of meetings that is already too low.

Meeting dates is only one of the many problems with the Public Accounts Committee and Manitoba's



committee system is, in fact, an absolute joke when compared to other provinces, and this is widely recognized that we have one of the worst systems across Canada. We have a unique opportunity here with the introduction of this bill to validate the role of the Public Accounts Committee, but it is a shame that the NDP has chosen to only do the bare minimum by only ensuring six meetings occur without addressing more substantial ways to strengthen our Public Accounts Committee.

Manitoba's Public Accounts Committee is one of the weakest in the country, and we must look to the other provinces and in fact the federal government for ways that we can make the committee stronger and more effective to be able to hold this government truly accountable for their actions.

But it's not just about this government, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's about any government and it is incumbent upon us as legislatures to do everything in our power to ensure that we hold any government in this province accountable for their actions. But, if we have our hands tied when it comes to this process, how are we truly able to do our jobs in this Legislature in holding this government to account and in fact any government to account?

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, if we set aside just the number of meetings for now because there are so many other issues that I believe need to be either included in these negotiations or included to make the Public Accounts Committee more effective, I'd like to talk about the fact that the Public Accounts Committee should have greater power as well to call witnesses to support the investigations that the Public Accounts Committee undertakes. PAC also needs to have a budget of sufficient size to enable it to have the resources to be an effective way to examine the reports of the Auditor General. We must also take the opportunity to ensure that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) is not a member of the Public Accounts Committee.

The Public Accounts Committee is one of the ways that we can get to the bottom of issues like the Crocus scandal and the more than 25 outstanding reports that we currently have to ask questions about in this Public Accounts Committee. I don't understand how we'll ever be able to get caught up with all the questions that we have, with all the reports that are outstanding from various scandals of this government, Madam Deputy Speaker, if we're only given six chances in a year to be able to do that.

So, without strengthening the committee, there is no way that the Public Accounts Committee could conduct an effective investigation of issues like Crocus, like Hydra House, as well as the 25-some-odd and perhaps even more than that, Madam Deputy Speaker, other Auditor General reports that we need to ask questions of, of this government and of various administrators and of the Auditor General herself.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it was a strong Public Accounts system that helped uncover the federal sponsorship scandal, and there is no logical reason for not wanting to strengthen Public Accounts unless the government has something to hide. There is absolutely no excuse for this government not to strengthen the Public Accounts Committee. By introducing this bill, they are admitting shortcomings in PAC. It is only common sense that we use this opportunity to address all shortcomings of the committee. We are willing to abide by a new, more powerful PAC, and if the government has nothing to hide or fear, then they should be willing to do so as well. We had hoped that an all-party committee reform could take place instead of this bill, but it appears that the NDP are abandoning the good-faith negotiations that have taken place in favour of a unilateral, ineffective solution that is shown in this bill.

\*(15:40)

So, for those reasons, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it's incumbent upon us and all members of this Legislature to support this hoist motion. Let's take a step back, let's look at the Public Accounts Committee, let's look at the purpose of what it is to do, and that is to hold government to account. Restrictions that are put on the number of times that we can meet per year as a Public Accounts Committee, of which I am now a new member—*[interjection]* Oh, or maybe not—of which I'm just happy to support. But, certainly, I am deeply concerned about the way that this government is going about bringing about change with respect to the Public Accounts Committee.

So I hope that, with the words that I have put on the record, with the words that the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), and with the words that many others on this side of the House, I know, will be putting on the record, I hope that members opposite are listening and will agree to just take a step back from this legislation, to agree to have us negotiate as an all-party committee over the next six

months, or whatever that time is that is allowed for this hoist motion, and allow us a time to take advantage of this incredible opportunity that we have before us right now in making a Public Accounts Committee truly accountable to the people of Manitoba. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Deputy Speaker, with regard to this bill, it is a sad day and an embarrassment for the government to bring a bill forward with such token changes to the Public Accounts Committee when real change is needed. It is a major embarrassment for the government to bring forward legislation to set committee dates for six meetings. The government is admitting in this legislation that it's unable to work with the Official Opposition and other parties to be able to set committee meetings properly.

Certainly, we need far more than six meetings in Manitoba. Certainly, we should ensure that ministers are no longer members of the Public Accounts Committee. Certainly, there should be research support for the committee and better powers for the committee with respect to being able to not only ask questions but have calling witnesses and a variety of different sources.

When one looks at, for example, an important report like the Auditor General's report on regional health authorities—we have a review committee of regional health authorities at the moment that is looking at regional health authorities; it is due to report within the next few weeks. How sad is it, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we've only had a very short period in the Public Accounts Committee to review the RHA report? Certainly, what an odd report it is when the all chief executive officers from all the RHAs are saying that they can't get a consistent message from this government. No wonder health is in such desperate straits in Manitoba, and we're last in the country.

Madam Deputy Speaker, yes, it is time for major change. It is time to hoist this legislation; it is time to get something much better than this. The government should be embarrassed at even bringing this forward. Thank you.

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** I'm very pleased to put my words on the record with respect to not only Bill 5 but also the hoist motion that has been put forward by the Member for Lac du Bonnet. I thank him for that because it's quite evident that there's a necessity here to have some sober second thought. I don't like to put that with respect to the

senate, but certainly with the opportunity of sitting back and taking a close, hard look at the legislation that has been put forward to this House, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I believe that Bill 5—and to be, as the committee should be, totally non-partisan—I believe that this legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker, is, without question, wrong-headed. It's the wrong piece of legislation to try to fix a system that unfortunately is very broken at the present time. We have here an opportunity, we have an opportunity to fix the Public Accounts Committee. As we know it here in the Legislature of Manitoba, it could be the Public Accounts Committee is not what it's known in other jurisdictions across this country. We even went so far, Madam Deputy Speaker, to have a seminar with members of the Public Accounts Committee with an individual who came out of Ottawa and had an opportunity to look at all of the jurisdictions across the country. As it has happened on a number of other occasions, Manitoba came in dead last when it came to the functionality of the Public Accounts Committee.

What we found, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that not only is it dysfunctional, it doesn't work at all. What we have right now is a committee that meets on an ad hoc basis, the legislation suggesting six times a year. That in itself falls short of every other jurisdiction, every other provincial jurisdiction when their Public Accounts Committee meets. What it also has done is it has not allowed the Public Accounts Committee to really do the job that they should be mandated to do.

Now, I have the opportunity of coming from another House, and I've had the opportunity of looking at the working operations of the Public Accounts Committee at a federal level, and that committee, Madam Deputy Speaker, met, at the very least, two times a week; two times a week, not six times a year, but two times a week. Quite honestly, it met on occasions where they met more than two times a week, when, in fact, the workload was of a level where they had to get the job done. Now, six times a year is unheard of. You can't honestly accomplish what the committee has set out to try to accomplish in that length of time.

Also, at the Public Accounts Committee at the federal level and at other provincial levels, the Public Accounts Committee has—and I'll say this and I know that there probably will be some jeers—but the Public Accounts Committee is, in fact, Madam Deputy

Speaker, and should be non-partisan. It is chaired by a member of the opposition. It has full membership from both government and opposition, and it's there to make sure that the citizens of Manitoba are best served. The goal is to make sure that, when the Public Accounts Committee look at a specific report or a specific issue, they're there specifically to make sure that it's a working committee that's going to do the best it possibly can on behalf of the citizens of this province. How they do that is they meet more often than six times a year.

They have the ability, as was mentioned by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), they have the ability, the Public Accounts Committee has had or should have the ability to call witnesses, and those witnesses should be the people who are actually in charge of the operations of their department, not the minister. When you have a minister sitting in front of the Public Accounts Committee, you then politicize it. You now have policy as opposed to operation, and it's the operation that the PAC should, in fact, be dealing with. It's the operations of the department; it's the operations of the different budgets that are being controlled by bureaucrats. And when an Auditor General's report comes forward to deal with whatever department, it's the bureaucrats who manage that department who should be accountable to that Auditor General's report.

In the Auditor General's report it goes even further. What it does is it puts in recommendations as to how better to expend the resources of the Province of Manitoba, and those recommendations—for the most part, the Auditor General takes her job extremely seriously—and those recommendations are well thought out. They're recommendations that if they're put into place and implemented are to better operate the department. Now, when those recommendations come forward and the Public Accounts Committee look at those recommendations, they then should have the ability to send them back to the department and say, okay, recommendations 1 through 10, we want you to look at those recommendations and come back to us and tell us how, or if you can or cannot, tell us that as well, whether you can implement those recommendations within the department to make it a better operation.

\* (15:50)

When those departments have had a chance to look at the report and the recommendations, they

come back and there is follow-up. The Public Accounts Committee should have the ability—no, not only should have the ability, should be mandated to make sure that those recommendations are followed up, that the bureaucracy and that the department is better managed, better operated, and certainly better controlled for the betterment of the citizens of Manitoba.

We had the opportunity, as I said earlier, to have an individual from Ottawa come and talk to us about the other jurisdictions. He could not believe the ineffectiveness of the management of this Public Accounts Committee. As I said earlier, it's totally dysfunctional. It does not perform the duty as it was meant to do.

The reason why there's a hoist motion right now is because the legislation put forward is far from what's necessary to make the Public Accounts Committee work. I would, Madam Deputy Speaker, certainly suggest that that six-month time line would be better spent to look at the legislation and see how better it can be changed to make the Public Accounts Committee not only functional but, certainly, accountable. That is what the motion put forward by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) is trying to achieve.

To go forward with this piece of legislation is not to take the opportunity that is before us right now to change and make the Public Accounts Committee work. It should be non-partisan. It should be people sitting around the table trying to make sure that this government works better. That's all it is, and I'm sure that every member of the government side would agree with that. We're here to make sure it works better for the citizens of Manitoba.

So I would like to suggest that we can use PAC as a very useful tool in government. We can do it only with the proper legislation. The proper legislation has not been tabled and outlined before this House at this time under Bill 5, and we will not support Bill 5. That's a given. We will not support Bill 5, as the opposition. We will, in fact, support a hoist motion or, better yet, have the legislation withdrawn and consult with all parties to make sure that the next piece of legislation, if and when it comes forward, is done properly so we can have a PAC that we in Manitoba can all be proud of and make sure that it is not only functional but it's something that is going to be a check and balance, as it should be, for the operations of this government. Thank you very much.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), that debate be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Bill 7—The Insurance Amendment Act**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), that Bill 7, The Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances, 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.

*Motion presented.*

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

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** I just wanted to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 7. I know that this particular bill having gone through the committee process, the House is virtually prepared to see it passed, but I just wanted to quickly grab some speaking notes that I had in regard to it so we don't have to hold up the bill, Mr. Speaker, but rather see it pass.

In good part it deals with a lot of housekeeping measures, and the principle of that, obviously, we can support. Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there's the importance of the independence of our directors and the potential for conflicts of interest.

I know having had the discussion with my leader that there were some concerns that he had, and I know that the principle of the legislation is something which we do support. *[interjection]* Yes, I'm trying to reserve my voice for later on this evening just in case the Premier (Mr. Doer) does decide to show up or—you know.

The bill itself deals with classes of insurance, talks in terms of shareholders and agreements. It deals with a number of issues related to special insurance brokers and more. The discussions that I've had on it talk in part in regard to fines, the need to increase fines and other possible penalties that are there, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to think that the minister responsible for the legislation has done the necessary diligence to ensure that the industry it's going to impact will not be done in a negative way

but rather that those stakeholders and their interests have been protected along with the consumer.

As you know, we have a huge insurance industry and we've asked for that insurance industry to venture into an area of responsibility which is somewhat new. I thought it was interesting how the government was successful at getting—and I use the example of Autopac agencies—Autopac agencies to take on a new role, in addition to that of insurance, by providing driving licences and so forth. This is now something that is very unique, has changed over, and I was surprised, Mr. Speaker, to say the very least, in terms of why it happened as quickly as it did.

There was really very little opposition to it happening, but I think there were some concerns that we have. It's related to the insurance industry as a whole. With today's technology and the super computers that are there, the very real theft, or threat, I should say, of theft of personal information concerns a great deal of people. Mr. Speaker, that is something which I really do believe warrants more attention from this Legislature. I think that we have to be very careful with the types of information that is being gathered and how that information is ultimately used.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that when we take a look at the insurance industry, we need to recognize that there are many, many different components to it, and the amount of information that is going to in particular the brokers, the insurance brokers—and that's why I bring up the Autopac issue—continues to grow. So we have to ensure that we put in safety measures amongst other things to protect the integrity of information that government is, in essence, requesting, or the private sector is requesting. That's why there is a need for us to look at and make modifications. This bill deals with fines and so forth, the types of fines that would go out in certain situations where there have been violations. These are the types of things that we have to watch out for.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, that there are other speakers to this particular bill, so that would be it for my comments today. Thank you.

\* (16:00)

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** It is my pleasure to rise in regard to Bill 7 on third reading. I would like to say that The Insurance Amendment

Act is one that is definitely necessary yet is only going about halfway, perhaps not even that.

There has been a committee that has met regularly since 2001, and, unfortunately, when advised of this bill, it was that the membership of this committee had not even had a courtesy call from government that this bill was going to be introduced. I want to say to government House members, when you in fact engage professionals in preparation of legislation, it would be somewhat of a recognition of their importance in the preparation of the legislation with a courtesy call and to make those persons aware that their many hours of volunteer time have been rewarded with changes in legislation that will improve the industry.

Now, one comment, though, from persons in the insurance industry, upon review of the current legislation, was that this particular bill only addresses a rather minority amount of their suggested changes and that there is much more yet to do, as I think is much in keeping with this government's motto: We've come a long way, but there's much more yet to do. In this case, that motto is very, very appropriate, that the government has seen fit to introduce legislation that does not address all of the concerns.

I might just say, too, that the members that have served on the committee struck by government to review the insurance industry in Manitoba, were pleased to do so, but, once again, also expressed their dismay that the committee, which had been struck to review needed changes to the legislation, has not in fact met for almost two years.

So, when this legislation was introduced without any contact to committee members, it was very much of a surprise that the legislation was coming forward at this time. Also, a surprise that the meat of the suggested changes was not incorporated into the bill; rather, this was referred to by one industry member as strictly the appetizer. We'll have to get to the main meal very quickly because the insurance industry definitely needs an update with the legislation that governs their industry.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing the passage of this bill, and I hope that the government members listen to the remarks that I was able to bring forward during third reading debate. Thank you.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 7, The Insurance Amendment Act.

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

### **Bill 9—The Securities Amendment Act**

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), that Bill 9, The Securities Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

#### ***Motion presented.***

**Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie):** Once again, I do appreciate the opportunity to enter the third reading debate of Bill 9, The Securities Amendment Act. My comments, as in the debate regarding Bill 7, could, indeed, be fully repeated in Bill 9. It is an absolute necessity that we pay as much attention to our legal infrastructure as we do our physical infrastructure here in the province of Manitoba.

I will say that, Mr. Speaker, we are all very familiar with some of the physical infrastructuring in and around our province. The bridge near collapse in Portage la Prairie, they saw fit for the provincial trunk highway to be closed. I might just mention to the minister that I was quoting the highways department when I asked the question in Question Period the other day about the closure of the Trans-Canada Highway because the actual highways sign said, PTH 1 closed at Portage. Detour ahead. So, it was the highways department verbiage that I was using, and when the minister rose and said, the highway really isn't closed, I was just referring to the signage that the highways department put up.

But, having said that about the infrastructure, it is vital, if our province is going to keep up with our neighbouring provinces, as well as providing for businesses that want to incorporate and to offer prosperity and opportunity here in the province of Manitoba, we have to have the legal infrastructure to support that. I'm afraid to say that we do not at the present time.

Now, I know the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) who has the Consumer and Corporate Affairs portfolio within his responsibility recognizes

that The Securities Act needs to be amended, and I believe this is only the first piece of legislation to come forward that will indeed address the needed amendments to our Manitoba Securities Act. The necessity for the changes and the need to address this in a very hastened fashion is that the federal government is looking to bring Canada into the 21st century as it pertains to legal infrastructure dealing with companies and raising the needed capital in order to see Canadians employed in Canada with new and emerging enterprises that will see Canada's economic position in the world continue to grow and prosper.

Now, what has taken place is that Manitoba, again, has fallen behind other jurisdictions and, to the federal government, has stated that, unless provinces such as Manitoba are able to bring their securities legislation up to current-day standards as well as in harmonization with other provinces, the federal government will move ahead with a federal securities act that will effectively override every province's ability and opportunity to have their own securities commission.

So, indeed, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is very important. I encourage all members to support it and also to support subsequent legislation that will be introduced into this House that will see to the ultimate goal of a harmonized commission responsibilities right across Canada. The industry terminology is to effectively have a passport so that, if you are authorized and incorporated in one jurisdiction, then you do not have to reinitiate or duplicate that same process in another jurisdiction, another province in order to make the securities offering in that province.

\*(16:10)

In talking with the persons in the legal field that deal each and every day with securities, I will say that they said that it is important to see that the Manitoba Securities Commission does continue to operate because it is in our own best interest to have a commission that is familiar with Manitobans' needs and wishes. So, rather than having to send away applications to Ottawa or to Toronto, wherever the national commission would be located, perhaps they would have a branch office in Manitoba, but, effectively, you're dealing with persons who are far removed from Manitoba, and perhaps it might be wrong to say, but less aware of Manitobans' needs.

So I do encourage the government to continue to make provision within legislation that will see to a

harmonized system across Canada, and I look forward to further amendments in the not-too-distant future and encourage all persons to support Bill 9 with the passage of third reading today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Mr. Speaker, I had a number of things that I'd like to be able to say in regard to Bill 9.

I'd like to take this opportunity actually, to talk about an issue which has affected literally thousands, 33,000-plus Manitobans. An issue where government has been clearly demonstrated, in terms of dropping the ball and as a result, Mr. Speaker, literally millions of dollars have been lost. Allegations of neglect, and the government is now in court, and of course, I'm talking about the Crocus fiasco.

This bill deals with one of those agencies. One of those agencies which is now trying to come to grips, in terms of what actually had taken place. I'm not too sure if these amendments would have prevented from Crocus collapsing, but what I do know is that anything that we can do to add strength and give more credibility and make it more consistent for the Manitoba Securities Commission is a positive thing.

I want to use this opportunity to be able to—because, you know, there just hasn't been enough time in this session to be able to raise what I believe is a critically important issue, that being the Crocus Investment Fund.

Mr. Speaker, this government—and you know it's interesting, this evening, I have this public meeting over in the Premier's (Mr. Doer) constituency office and this is related to an issue regarding a nomination in The Maples. Well, in the election brochure, I made reference to two issues in which I would love to debate with the Premier on in a public forum. One of those issues I've been talking a lot about in the last number of days. The other issue that I made reference to during the last election was the whole Crocus fiasco; the government has been, very much so, silent on the issue.

When one poses a question to the government, the government does have options. The options that the government has chosen, in terms of answering those questions, have not been in the best interests of the Crocus shareholders. That's why we look at this bill and we say, you know, how will Bill 9 impact future funds? I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we get future venture capital funds being established in this

province, but I suspect, because of the neglect of this government, that it'll likely be a long time before we see that.

We have to be able to restore public confidence in a system that the government of the day, the New Democratic Party, has really messed up. They have destroyed public confidence in the venture capital market. So now we look at legislation like Bill 9 in hopes that Bill 9 will take it a little bit next step. It will give more confidence in the commission and allow for the commission to come up with more penalties and deal with these investors and fund managers and so forth, in a more appropriate transparent way so that those investors' interests are better served.

It would be interesting, Mr. Speaker, to what degree these amendments would have helped, if in fact these amendments would have been there at the time when Crocus really needed it. I'm not too sure. I don't know the answer. I don't know if these amendments would have made a difference, but what I do know is, to this very day, the government still refuses to answer questions in regard to the Crocus Investment Fund. Until we find the truth, until we have that public inquiry and Manitobans know, legislation of this nature is still not going to restore public confidence in the whole venture capital investments in the province of Manitoba.

That's why we take opportunities like today, debating the Manitoba Securities Commission and the power that we're giving this, that we point out to the government that there is really a need for the government to come clean on a very important issue. I made reference to the millions of dollars that have been lost and we know that the government could have prevented it.

It was interesting, when we posed the question to the Premier (Mr. Doer) so many times, were you aware of the investment problems, he would say, well, the Manitoba Securities Commission is now looking into it, or this group is now looking into it. That would be the best quality of an answer that we would get from the Premier. Quite often, Mr. Speaker, the Premier would be completely off base as to answering the question.

You've got to be careful, and I'll be careful now in terms of because the government didn't answer specific questions today, we ended up getting privileges raised, Mr. Speaker. I suggest to the government that the government needs to be more transparent. I appreciate that we have rules of the

Chamber that we attempt to follow. *Beauchesne* has that one rule where ministers should be somewhat relevant, but we give a lot of latitude because there is general agreement inside the House in terms of what it is or how relevant the Premier has to be.

Well, there's a reason why it's important that the Premier provide straightforward answers, at least as much as possible, but what I've witnessed, Mr. Speaker, over the last year is that we've heard anything but answers. When I look at the future of venture capital investment funds, I don't understand how the Premier feels that his answers are restoring confidence. If anything, it's been more of an evasion of answering questions, and, as a result, that confidence in these markets is not improving.

That means even by bringing in legislation of this very nature which is to try to bolster public confidence in the investment system isn't as effective as it could be because we look for leadership in this province in terms of being able to do the right thing. What message does the Premier and his government say other than that they know how to ensure that nothing gets out? They know how to put a cap on things and prevent information from getting out.

I know that, if I was an investor or a money manager of any sort, I wouldn't hesitate to point to the Premier (Mr. Doer) of our province or to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and say, well, this is all fine and dandy, you have legislation here that tries to put limitations on me as a money manager.

\* (16:20)

I suspect most money managers wouldn't have a problem with the legislation that is being proposed, but I think they would look at this and say, there's a bit of irony here or a bit of hypocrisy that is here. What's good for the goose, they say, is good for the gander. Well, Mr. Speaker, what about the Premier and the Minister of Finance, the minister of industry and trade showing some leadership and doing more than just bringing in legislation? Where is that sense of good will in trying to resolve this outstanding investments issue here?

If we had other investors and they had done what this government has done, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that we would see even possibly stronger legislation. We would probably see more of a stronger condemnation. I say that because when we see things of that nature happen in the private sector, Enron investments is a good example of that, where public figures will come out and condemn private fund

managers when there appears to be serious problems and people attempted to avoid responsibility, I suspect that you would find a number of New Democrats that would have been very critical.

Mr. Speaker, what would have been the role of the Premier (Mr. Doer) had he been still in opposition when this whole issue came out? I suspect what the Premier would have said if he was still in opposition is he would say Bill 9 is a positive thing. Having said Bill 9 is a positive thing, we believe that government should be having the public inquiry in regard to the Crocus Investment Fund.

Mr. Speaker, consistency is a problem. I and members of the Liberal Party support the principle of what it is Bill 9 is attempting to do. The issue of accountability, increased fines, areas that ensure that those investment dollars are better protected is a good thing and government should move toward doing that. But sometimes action speaks louder than words. Where this government has really failed, and it's failed in a number of areas, but you know, this is an area that has really had an impact.

You know, I think maybe in second reading, I'm not sure because it was a while ago, I thought I had spoken on Bill 9 and I probably would have addressed the Crocus even back then. People might wonder why it is—whether it was before the election, working with the Conservative Party to try to heighten the importance of this issue during the election—I included it in my campaign literature. After the election, I continue to talk about this issue. The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is because I think that we have to do what we can to protect the interests of those investors. It's because I am concerned about the interests of investors that I don't have a problem in supporting the principle of Bill 9, not at all.

I do have a problem with the government not doing what it should be doing in regard to Crocus. The simple reason for that is because I've talked to individuals that have invested tens of thousands of dollars into the Crocus Investment Fund that are looking for answers. If you talk to these investors, what you'll find is, yeah, they're happy that the Manitoba Securities Commission is now looking into it. I don't know to what degree they would be aware of this particular legislation. I suspect that it would make them happy that it has the potential to maybe prevent another Crocus from occurring in the future.

But for many of these investors the issue is very simple. They invested a great deal of money for

many different reasons. One of the primary reasons is because they believed that this was a government initiative; a government supported, promoted and wanted people to invest in the Crocus Fund. Many people bought into it because they honestly believed that not only would they get a decent return on their initial investment, but they would also be helping Manitobans as a whole by following the lead of the government by promoting and encouraging the investment of this fund. That's why for many of these investors, some of them spent tens of thousands of dollars of retirement money. Individuals believing in the government and having confidence in the government and now they don't have any access to that investment. They look to the government to receive an explanation.

I suspect if you stood in front of those investors as a whole—and there's 33,000 of them, Mr. Speaker—and you said, well, you know, the Premier (Mr. Doer) can now stand on a platform and he can say, well, I brought in Bill 9 back in November of 2007 and it empowered, gave more power to the Manitoba Securities Commission. Well, they might appreciate the fact that the Premier did that, but their concern is still going to be, what about what you and your government did or did not do when you knew about the Crocus Investment Fund, and the role that your government played in that.

If Bill 9 is about providing more confidence to the investors, what is this government doing to provide and promote or to encourage investment in venture capital funds? To the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), yes, Bill 9 will have a positive impact, but if you really want to have a positive impact on venture capital funds, and that's what I've been talking about in good part, Mr. Minister of Finance, what you should be doing is you should be dealing with the public inquiry and the need for a public inquiry in regards to that investment.

I never personally invested into the Crocus, and I suspect had I had the extra money and so forth I probably would have, Mr. Speaker. Having said that, I know that there are many members that have, and I look to the government to take it the next step—*[interjection]* I won't say that, no. I'm looking to the government to take the next step. If they believe that Bill 9—and the purpose of Bill 9 in good part is to show transparency, to give more strength to the Manitoba Securities Commission, to reinforce the need for public confidence or investors' confidence in the system—if they really believe that that is the purpose, as I believe in principle it is, but if they



believe that to be true, then I would suggest that the government needs to deal with the Crocus Investment Fund in a more transparent and fair way.

The need to come clean is still there and there are members inside the Chamber that are not going to let this issue disappear, and that's the reason why I want to speak on Bill 9 before its passage. Because I believe that I will continue to present petitions periodically reminding the government about the Crocus fund fiasco. I plan to speak on legislation like Bill 9 or maybe throne speeches or budgets depending on time allotments and things of this nature until the government does the right thing.

One of the things that I learned back in the 90's, and I learned it from people like Jay Cowan, people like the leader of the New Democratic Party, is that if you believe that you're right on an issue, continue to push on it. I have seen the results of pushing. It might take a month sometimes, maybe a day at times, but even if it takes two years, three years, Mr. Speaker, as much as I like to think that I am in a hurry to unveil the real truth, I can be a patient person and I will continue to push for the government. I know the Member for Gimli is really hung up on this resign stuff, because from his seat he heckles it a lot. Now I hear the Member from Brandon.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude my remarks. Members know about the public meeting this evening. Chances are, not only will the Premier (Mr. Doer) not show up, but I suspect that there's not one New Democratic MLA that will have the courage to attend that meeting. I hope I'm wrong.

\* (16:30)

Having said that, for the Minister of Education, the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), on I think it's November 20, I'm going to have another meeting inside Inkster. I would welcome the Minister of Education to come before a group of people and tell those people why it is that I should resign. If he doesn't have the courage to do that, Mr. Speaker, then I would suggest that the Member for Gimli, in the comfort of the Chamber where he has all of his colleagues that do not reflect reality, needs to check whether or not a member at times can be a jellyfish or a member could be a fish of a stronger nature. I'll let the Member for Gimli determine which one he is by looking at the November 20 meeting. I look forward to the Minister of Education—[interjection] Well, the Minister of Education says he will be busy.

You tell me the day, you tell me the time, Inkster, Gimli, it doesn't make any difference to me. Thank you.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 9, The Securities Amendment Act.

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

#### **Bill 4—The Real Property Amendment Act (Wind Turbines)**

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 4, The Real Property Amendment Act (Wind Turbines), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economical Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

**Motion presented.**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain):** It certainly is a pleasure to talk about this particular piece of legislation and really talk about wind energy in Manitoba. I think the important thing is today we can talk about energy and how it's going to play a role—I hope a positive role—in the future of Manitoba.

This is the second time around for this particular bill. It was introduced some time ago. Of course, it's gone through committee this time. In my view, it's probably just a housekeeping bill, and really it's something that should have been addressed some time ago, but I think because the wind energy farms, the wind energy technology, this whole sector is relatively new to Manitoba, that we're actually learning as we go along, learning as we go through the process.

So, hopefully, this particular bill, fairly minor in nature, will address some of those issues that Manitobans have brought forward as issues around the wind farms. I think it is a very important piece of legislation. Hopefully, this particular legislation, once it is passed, will provide the opportunity for the government and for Manitoba Hydro to make some announcements going forward.

In the case of the wind technology, the wind farms, we have had the one facility in St. Leon up

and running now for some time. We're certainly happy to see that particular wind farm—or wind parks as they're referred to in some cases—up and running.

But, unfortunately, the government of the day has been dragging their feet in terms of making announcements going forward. It's been pretty well two years now since the government has called for the expressions of interest to further developments. The provincial government keeps announcing that there will be 1,000 megawatts of wind power in Manitoba. We're not sure when that particular degree of wind energy will be accomplished. The Province has been a little reluctant in terms of announcing a time frame for those particular values coming forward.

We understand that the Province is looking, in the short term, for another 300 megawatts of electricity being generated by wind power in Manitoba. Again, it seems to be dragging its feet in terms of making announcements on the next phase of wind power generation in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about wind farms or any other energy in Manitoba, we certainly feel that the process involved in going out and seeking expressions of interest has to be a very open and transparent process. We know that there was, and I think it was close to 80 expressions brought forward to Manitoba Hydro, to the Province of Manitoba. Hopefully, the government will bring those forward in the very near future. But there has been concern that maybe the process hasn't been as transparent as we would hope. So we certainly would hope that the Province will undertake, in the future, a very open dialogue with Manitobans and make sure that the process engaged is open and transparent.

My colleagues on this side of the House, a number of us, had the opportunity, actually a week and a half ago, to tour the wind farm in St. Leon. Although I've driven by the operation a number of times, to really get in close and have a look at the particular structures up close is really quite overwhelming. They are a huge undertaking; each individual tower is a huge undertaking. There are, I believe, in the area of 67 towers there—

**An Honourable Member:** 63

**Mr. Cullen:** —63 towers, I'm corrected—in St. Leon. So it is a very impressive sight.

We were able to have a tour by the manager there, the manager from Vesta, which is the operating agency there for that wind farm. Kevin

Perrin is the manager of that particular facility, and Mr. Perrin was able to provide us a very detailed tour, provide us some of the history there in terms of how the installation was done on the various components there, where the various components were brought in from. Just the transportation of the components of the wind farm was quite an undertaking in itself, Mr. Speaker.

But Mr. Perrin, just to give you some example of the scope of the operation there, has 14 employees under his direction, so certainly from economic perspective it's very important to that local area. If you have, obviously, 14, 15 employees working in the area, it's going to be a positive economic impact on the area. We know that these wind farms certainly—and I look at it from the perspective of the individual landowner, who may have one or more of these wind towers on his particular property. He does get paid, and in this case it's semi-annually, a payment from the operating company, a fairly substantial operating grant, if you will, Mr. Speaker. This operating grant to use the property is fairly substantial, and, when we look at the economics of farming these days, it's certainly a very positive benefit to the farm operation.

So that's why, in this particular case, the companies that are looking at another expansion of this particular operation went to the community, went to the landowners, and said: Is anyone opposed to an expansion in this operation? Not one person came forward with any reluctance to expand at this particular site.

So, Mr. Speaker, it clearly points to me that this operation has been very successful. It's been very important to the area. It's been very important to the region from a financial perspective. So any of the questions that we've heard raised in the media over the last year or so in terms of wind farm development, all those questions have been addressed in the St. Leon situation. So it's very clear that any future development could be very positive for the area. The people in that region have certainly had a hands-on operations there for over a year now, and it's been very positive and very successful. So we look forward to certainly more wind towers and wind farms developing around Manitoba.

\* (16:40)

The other positive aspect is in terms of the local municipal assessment, which has been, again, very positive to the local municipalities involved there. Again, these particular towers are assessed as any

other building would be and, in fact, generate a lot of revenue for the local municipalities. So, clearly, there will be other municipalities throughout the province looking forward to having wind farms or wind parks located on their property. Obviously, it can be a very positive experience for the local communities.

For instance, I was just reading in a local publication where Sequoia—that's one of the companies that are one of the proponents for future developments in Manitoba; they have been able to find some additional financing through different companies. So, clearly, there's an interest from different companies, not just in Manitoba, but far outside of Manitoba to make an investment in wind energy. I think it's important that the government recognizes that there are people that want to do business in Manitoba. The next stage has to be the will of the government to allow those individuals and those companies to make the investment in Manitoba. That's why we on this side of the House are looking forward to the government coming through and making some announcements in this regard.

The other thing I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, you know, clearly, there's a tremendous opportunity for us in Manitoba in the energy side of things, and I think the wind-energy technology is just one example where we can generate electricity, which can be added on to the grid of Manitoba Hydro. I think if we look at the technology that's available to us, there are many other forms of energy out there where we could generate electricity at a local level. Certainly, we know there are people out there, there are individuals, there are companies out there that have that technology, and they have the willingness to put up these facilities. It's just a matter of this government allowing them the opportunity to tie into the Manitoba Hydro grid and actually sell electricity to Manitoba Hydro.

I think it's an opportunity that Manitobans are waiting for. It's an opportunity that Saskatchewan has just recently announced that they will allow individuals and companies to tie in to the grid in Saskatchewan and allow those companies to sell any excess energy in to that grid. So I think it's a tremendous opportunity for us here in Manitoba to look at alternative energy sources, have them tie in to the grid here in Manitoba, and allow Manitoba Hydro the opportunity to export that source of electricity to other markets, whether it be down south or to Ontario.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make sure that the government is aware that there should be tremendous opportunities for there, if they have the open mind and the foresight to actually look at something like this.

Certainly, again, this is strictly a housekeeping bill. We think it's fairly straightforward, and, essentially, separates the property rights from the landowner versus the rights of the owner of the individual turbines. So it's fairly straight, clear legislation. We hope we'll move forward.

Once this particular bill is passed we are waiting anxiously for further developments in terms of announcements from this government, and we look forward to that in the very near future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just put a few short words on the record.

I believe my critic must have been very well briefed on this bill because he went through all the components of the bill, and, in fact, talked about it breaking the mortgage from the landowner to the leaser or the people who build the wind farms, and that was the purpose of the bill. I look forward to working with the communities, with the developers in moving this forward, and I thank my critic for being very supportive of this initiative.

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

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

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

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 4, The Real Property Amendment Act (Wind Turbines).

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

### **Bill 13—The Organic Agricultural Products Act**

**Mr. Speaker:** Now we'll move on to Bill 13, The Organic Agricultural Products Act.

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 13, The Organic Agricultural Products Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and

Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** I'm kind of motivated to speak on this bill because I have some wide-ranging views, if you like, on organic farming. Some of those views are based on my experiences and some of them are based on wanting to live in a cleaner and better world.

Now, when you talk about chemicals and you talk about fertilizers, people's fears get up because they think that we, in some way, are polluting and poisoning the products that we produce for consumption, but, Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the world is there a healthier society than we have in Canada. Nowhere is the food quality better than it is in Canada, and nowhere is there a respect by other nations of the quality of food that we produce as we do here in this province. But the lack of respect comes right internally from our own people in our own jurisdiction in terms of the respect that people should have, but don't, for the producers of food in our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I say my experiences are varied with regard to organic farming, I have to say that in areas, if you're a producer in this province, you kind of take some pride in producing a quality product, a product that's free of noxious weeds that rob your crop of nutrients, and a product that you can take to the marketplace that you know is safe and is what the consumer wants. I don't know any producer in Canada or in Manitoba who doesn't take some pride in knowing that his product is not only the best in this province, the best in this country, but also is safe.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we never try to poison our plants or our animals in any way. If you look at how chemicals are applied in this province, and in this country for that matter, there are significant, I guess, restrictions, if you like, or protocols in place for the application of products on to our crops and in to our feeds for livestock. Now, if you look at the safety of our food and you look at what happened with BSE, you can't blame the producers for the problem. The problem has to go back to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency who had the responsibility for ensuring that the products that are fed to our animals are safe. I think, I'll say this in this legislature and I'll say it anywhere, because I believe that the responsibility for BSE should rest squarely on the shoulders on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency,

not on the shoulders of producers. It doesn't matter whether it was—we could talk about a safer product produced organically; I don't think that, in fact, is true. I think the safety comes from ensuring that the products that are applied to either plants or animals are, in fact, safe and are done in accordance with regulations that have been tested over time.

Now, this bill talks about a quality standard and that's a good thing. I think we should, in fact, if we're going to the marketplace with a product that's called organic then it should meet a standard. It should meet a test of some kind of a standard. So, in that regard, I congratulate the minister and her department for coming forward with a bill that does place some standards in terms of organic foods.

\* (16:50)

But, Mr. Speaker, the other part of it that I have real difficulty with is that the minister, I think, has gone over and beyond what was necessary. In the section that talks about how these products are going to be marketed and that the government and the minister can have some say and some restriction on how this product is marketed, that's where I really have a problem with the bill, because I believe that, if I produce a product organically and I meet the standard that the government has set, or that society has set for that matter, through regulation and through a bill, then I should be able to market that product with that standard to anyone who wants to buy it. I shouldn't be restricted or have the fear of government hover over me in terms of dictating how I can market that product. That bill comes back to the whole debate on marketing in this province and in this country.

Now I know that the minister and her party basically believe in single-desk marketing. They believe that it should be Big Brother who controls how the little guy markets his or her product. We saw that debate in the Legislature on the Wheat Board. The minister knows full well that the only reason the Wheat Board was ever brought into being was because the national government wanted to keep the product priced low during war years. The Wheat Board was not brought into being to support and to ensure that the farmer got the best buy for the buck. It was there to protect government from having to spend too much money on food during a war. Mr. Speaker, that entity continues to be the marketing agency for wheat products and wheat in this nation, and it is to the detriment of today's society and today's farmer because today's farmer is

wise enough to know how to extract the maximum out of the marketplace. We have intelligent farmers out there who can make choices, and, yes, the Wheat Board might be a vehicle to market your product, but it should remain as a vehicle of one of many, if you like, in terms of how we market our product.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I talk to this bill, when I speak to this bill, I have to raise a caution about the marketing section of this bill because I believe that that truly could be an impediment to the growth of the industry and indeed, I guess, to the availability of the products in the marketplace.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think science needs to go a lot further than it has in terms of how organic crops, especially, are produced in this province because, if you were to take a look at the variety of organic farms that we have out there today, there are fields that have been turned over to organic farming where the production has gone way down because of the noxious weeds in the crop, because of the competition of weeds in the crop. At the end of the day, the level of production of an acre of land is way, way down simply, because good management, good science, has not been applied in the way it should be in terms of the stewardship of the land for organic production.

There are, Mr. Speaker, and I have to concede to this, producers in this country, I don't know whether in Manitoba or not, but certainly I've seen some good stewards of organic production. Those have to be congratulated.

I have also witnessed where land has been laid fallow for three years and has been subject of erosion by wind, by water, and the fibre in that soil basically has been depleted. In my way of thinking, that is not good for the land; it is not good for the productivity of the land; and it certainly takes away from our production capacity in this province. I think that with the passage of this bill there has to be some extensive work done with producers on how to get away from leaving that land fallow for so long where it doesn't produce and creates, as a matter of fact, a problem in terms of yield because of the depletion of the fibre in the soil.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I think the minister, to her credit, is addressing a situation that is out there in front of her. Other jurisdictions have addressed it, and certainly she's looking at how perhaps we can get a standard, whether it's in egg production, beef production, any kind of meat production, and in crop production as well. That's a good thing.

I believe that there could be some exception to some, if you like, farm-gate sales. I know that, you know, we have always in this country and in this land lived by farmers being able to sell their product from their farm gate. That's been a good thing. People who, for example, want a quart of milk that comes right off the farm have been, I guess, now unable to purchase that right off the farm gate unless that's pasteurized, which has pluses and minuses to it. I remember, as a kid, drinking milk that came right from the cow, and none of us ever suffered any ill effects from it. As a matter of fact, we even, probably, were healthier as a result of that, but today we can't do that. The milk has to go through a pasteurization process. I think that, perhaps, sometimes we look at unnecessary regulation in that regard.

If a farm gate wants to sell organic eggs, for example, I see nothing wrong with a farmer being able to take his product directly to the market, wherever it might be. It might be the farmer's market. It might be a neighbour. It might be somebody in an urban area. I think that needs to be allowed. I'm hoping that the minister in her regulation, will not impose a penalty if that, in fact, is a desire of a producer. Now, yes, that product should somehow conform to a standard, but it shouldn't be onerous on that individual in terms of cost and in terms of trying to meet, you know, a level, as long as that standard is one of a level playing field in the industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess we have to await the regulations. I hope that the minister will be cognizant and will work with the industry, will work with those producers who want to, in fact, sell from their farm gate, will also listen to producers who, perhaps, are going to express that the government should not impose regulation when it comes to marketing, that people are given a choice as to where they want to market their product and where they can extract the most out of the marketplace.

I also think that regulations sometimes, although they are not so evident, are imposed in such a way that we don't know the negative part of a regulation until we have crossed the boundary and somebody comes in and throws a regulation in your face and you simply stand there and wonder where this regulation came from. So I think working with the industry is an important thing. Working with the opposition here, I invite the minister to be taking comments from the opposition to heart because I think all of us at the end of the day want the same thing. Our philosophy may vary.

What I'm saying to the minister up front, I don't agree with government being able to dictate how the marketing is done, but, on the other hand, let's put that aside and let's look at the good parts of the bill and see how we can make it really conducive to good stewardship of the land, good stewardship of our animals, so that we can extract as much as possible out of the marketplace and become a leader. I think that's the other thing. Manitoba has been known as a leader in many areas, whether it's livestock production or crop production.

Unfortunately, farmers do not get the respect and the recognition that they deserve in terms of feeding the world. I mean, when you go for dinner tonight, remember that everything you're eating at your dinner has been produced by a farmer, either he or elsewhere, but it's been produced by the farmer—

**An Honourable Member:** Or a fisher.

**Mr. Derkach:** —or a fisherman, yes, for that matter. It could be a fisher farmer, as well, but I say to the minister, let's give the dues to the people who are leading the industry. I just heard somebody in the Chamber say, what about our hunters? Well, they do a good service to us as well, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, we are just embarking on a hunting

season very shortly, probably in it to some extent, and that, certainly, provides a lot of opportunity to feed our families as well.

So we do live off the land, Mr. Speaker. We live off the land, whether it's from production, whether it's from hunting or fishing, and that is a very, very key part of our environment. So let's give the respect to those people who feed the world. Make sure that they have every opportunity to extract as much as they can from the marketplace.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will end my remarks because I understand the hour is 5 o'clock now, and I did want to take you right till 5. So, if it is 5 o'clock, that's the end of my input.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** No. When this matter is again before the House, the debate will remain open.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 5, 2007

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