

Fifth 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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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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.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
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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.
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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.
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HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
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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.
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WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 19, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 41—The Liquor Control Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): I move, seconded by the Attorney General (Mr. Swan), that Bill 41, The Liquor Control Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des alcools, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill is part of sweeping changes to the hospitality strategy in Manitoba with changes to The Liquor Control Act, including allowing for brew pubs to be established in Manitoba with certain rights, the establishment of boutique liquor stores in grocery stores and other locations, the allowance of bring-your-own-wine restaurants, the power to close licensed premises by police and liquor inspectors for a short period if there's a serious risk to the public safety, introducing new rules against underaged drinking, standardizing closing times and making it a core responsibility of the MLCC for social responsibility initiatives. Thank you.

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

PETITIONS

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure

and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by D. Saquet, J. Cockburn, N. Rainkie and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On December 11th, 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car that he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those accused in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

And to request that the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by P. Gaj, M. Upto, V. Nguyen and thousands of other concerned Manitobans.

PR 160 West and Highway 16

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition for the House.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The Department of Infrastructure and Transportation has developed a plan to close the intersection of PR 160 west of Highway 16 at Foxwarren. PR 160 would be redirected to the east to join Highway 16 at Market Street in Foxwarren, and a new frontage road would be constructed on the south side of Highway 16.

Area residents have a number of concerns about the proposed project, including safety issues due to increased traffic volumes in Foxwarren, encroachment on residential property, the loss of highly productive arable land, possible adverse impacts on the area waterways and inefficient public consultation—insufficient public consultation.

Community members have developed an alternative proposal they believe would address these concerns while at the same time meeting the department's safety objectives as it relates to the traffic flows in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider the merits of the alternative plan developed by community members, which includes a raised grade at PR 160, the removal of gravel—a gravel mound at the intersection of Highway 16 and 160 and the construction of an acceleration lane on the north side of Highway 16 west to PR 160.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider additional public consultations before proceeding with this project to ensure that all local concerns are heard and addressed before the work proceeds.

And this petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by G. Graham, T. Halwas and H. Halwas and many, many other Manitobans.

Bipole III—Cost to Manitoba Families

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been directed by the provincial government to construct its next high voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba.

This will cost each Manitoba family—this will cost each family of four in Manitoba \$11,748 more than an east-side route, which is also shorter and more reliable.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to build Bipole III transmission line on the shorter and more reliable east side of Lake Winnipeg in order to save each Manitoba family of four \$11,748.

And this petition is signed by R. Viallet, L. Viallet, D. Viallet and many, many more Manitobans.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee of Supply

Ms. Marilyn Brick (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted certain resolutions.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Saran), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* (13:40)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Last night, the inflows to the Portage Reservoir crested and have since begun to drop. The flows remain extremely high and there will be significant pressure on the Assiniboine dikes and the Portage Diversion channel for several weeks, but we are cautiously hopeful that the worst has passed.

As recently as yesterday, a new worrisome spot emerged on the Portage Diversion channel due to the pressure from the record flows. Around 100 Canadian Forces personnel were quickly deployed to shore up the section and construct a berm. While this site has now been brought under control, it was a sobering reminder of how quickly the situation can change when dealing with unprecedented water levels and the importance of being able to act quickly to handle such unexpected events in a controlled way. The controlled release at Hoop and Holler Bend is serving its purpose in taking pressure off the system and allowing us greater adaptability in safely managing the challenging and changing conditions.

The declining flows upstream of Portage are also good news on Lake Manitoba, as it will allow for a gradual reduction of inflows from the Portage Diversion. I want to assure those around the lake that outflows through the Fairford River will continue at maximum discharge throughout the summer and fall. However, even with maximum outflows, we know Lake Manitoba levels will remain extremely high, and residents, cottage owners and producers need assistance in protecting their properties. I am pleased to advise that as of this morning 100 Canadian Forces personnel are now assisting in the flood protection efforts around the lake. I can also advise that the mobile EMO command centre, 350,000 sandbags, two sandbag machines, Tiger tubes, Aqua Dams and a SERT trailer have now been deployed to the region, with more to come.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank some of the unsung heroes of this flood fight. Building up dikes around the province and handling the record Assiniboine flows has required the work of hundreds of pieces of heavy equipment, often for exhausting hours and in gruelling conditions. The construction industry has been a phenomenal partner in this flood fight, and on behalf of the Assembly I want to acknowledge their work alongside the Canadian Forces, provincial and municipal staff, volunteers and, of course, many of the affected homeowners and the many, many others on the front lines of this flood fight helping to protect Manitobans.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the latest update on the flood situation.

We will soon be heading into the Victoria Day long weekend, traditionally a time Manitobans use to

celebrate the arrival of spring with their family and friends. However, for those affected by flooding in different regions of the province, it would not be a normal holiday weekend. As reported in yesterday's afternoon flood bulletin, there were still 3,354 people evacuated, and life is far from normal for them.

A significant amount of flood mitigation work is still under way along Lake Manitoba due to the high lake levels and the threat posed by overland flooding. Local residents, area municipalities and others have been working diligently to protect these properties, and I'm pleased to hear the minister say the forces have now moved into those areas. Any assistance others can provide in this area over the weekend would be much welcomed.

Steps were taken yesterday to address water seeping through the west dike along the Portage Diversion channel. Mandatory evacuations were ordered for some homes in the area. We acknowledge the swift action taken by the provincial officials and military personnel to address this serious situation.

Livestock producers affected by flooding continue to make arrangements to relocate cattle. We thank those who are contacting organizations like the Manitoba Beef Producers and Manitoba Agriculture to offer up pasture land for these animals.

Those affected by flooding are interested to learn more about compensation related to this spring's flooding, and we look forward to receiving more information on this soon.

And I, too, want to thank the Canadian Forces, the volunteers, the contractors, everyone that's worked so tirelessly for some number of weeks now to keep this flood under control. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his timely update. I also want to thank the members of the Canadian Forces, the members of the construction industry, the many workers, the many volunteers, the many officials at all levels of government. They have done an extraordinary—made an extraordinary effort at this time of dire need in Manitoba.

Like the minister, I, too, hope that the worst is past from a provincial perspective, but I also recognize that for far too many Manitobans the worst is not yet past. There are too many who are still evacuated. There are too many whose businesses are still being threatened and will be for some time to come. And there are too many who face and live in places where the peak has yet to come, around Lake Manitoba, at Fairford, at Little Saskatchewan, at Lake St. Martin.

Lake St. Martin, I understand the peak may not come until July the 1st, and they have maybe the longest wait of all. And certainly we must remember those who are still waiting for the peak to come, as we think now of what has to be done and what needs to be done as we move forward. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us, we have Mr. Roger Pentel who is the grandfather of our legislative page Mathieu Catellier.

And also in the public gallery, we have with us, we have Horst and Ingrid Krueger from Berlin, Germany; and Henriette and James Schellenberg; and Marion Friesen; and Leonore and Art Peters who—from Winnipeg, who are the guests of the honourable member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun).

And also in the public gallery, we have Chris Glowach from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, who is the guest of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

And also in the public gallery, we have with us, we have a grade 5 class from Isaac Brock School, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan).

And also we have in the public gallery, we have members of the 38 Brigade; 408 Tactical Helicopter Squadron; HMCS Queen from Regina, Saskatchewan; and LWFA Headquarters in Edmonton; and 2 PPCLI from Manitoba. And these are the guests of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski), and this represents the army, navy, air force regular and reserve forces.

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

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Oral questions. Oops, the honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a point of order?

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Faurschou: Point of order. The information brought forward this afternoon by the honourable Minister responsible for Infrastructure and Emergency Measures in this province is not completely accurate insofar as the breach potential on the Assiniboine River diversion.

As the breach is at our family farm, currently there are more than a hundred military personnel and 10 military helicopters working feverishly, and for the statement to be made in this House that the weakness in the diversion dike has been addressed is inaccurate. It is ongoing and—but it is our hope that, indeed, the efforts by the military are successful this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: Point of order raised by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie, disputes over issues of facts are not the basis for points of orders. That's the—the honourable member does not have a point of order.

Let's continue on with oral questions. Do you—oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Assiniboine River Dike Reliability

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): And the member for Portage has raised a significant issue with respect to the integrity of the dikes along the Portage Diversion that we were concerned about, some of the comments that were being made by provincial officials about that particular issue of the stability of that dike immediately north of Highway 1 and south of the drop structure.

I wonder if the minister can just address whether or not it is, in fact, the case, as he says in his opening statement, that the matter has been brought under control.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, I want to stress that we identified this as one of the areas of concern. I—

we've had similar situations on the Assiniboine. The first step is to bring it under control. The second is to complete any of the final repairs that are required. We've made significant progress since yesterday when this was identified. I should explain to members of this House that this is an area that was not raised. This is an area that's over on top of a creek bed.

So we have been making significant efforts to, first, get it under control and then to do the necessary structural repairs, and I think there's just a confusion over wording here. It's not to say that work isn't ongoing, but yesterday we were looking at having potentially to even step down the operation of the Portage Diversion fairly significantly, which could have impacted on flood control elsewhere.

* (13:50)

Compensation Information for Residents

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, this statement could not have been more clear. The minister said in his statement the site has now been brought under control. That seems to be a matter of some debate.

We do acknowledge the incredible work being done by armed forces to deal with that issue. We have member of our—members of the Forces in the gallery today. We thank them for their service both abroad in protecting our country and for the incredible efforts they provide to us here at home and in their work.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to addressing the issues that have been raised about the integrity of the dike, we are now many days past the promise made by the Premier when he had his address last Friday to provide special compensation to the victims of this flood. They've mentioned it now 15 different times since that televised address took place almost a week ago, and yet those hundreds of homeowners, farmers and business people still await answers.

When can they expect to get those answers?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we did say that we would get the special compensation program announced and put forward late this week, early next week. That's still our timeline. We will be consistent with that. There's been a lot of work done to prepare for this. Of course, we've said we would take a look at the existing disaster financial assistance program and look at how we can improve that. We also said we'd follow through with the AgriRecovery program, which we put in place last

year for some producers in the province, and see how that could be strengthened. In addition, I've discussed this with the Prime Minister of Canada, given him a heads-up of what kinds of things we need to do. We have looked at the 1997 program, the JERI program, and seen what elements of that program make sense.

And we are moving diligently towards an announcement that will provide support to people as we continue to protect the integrity of the dikes, as we continue to protect homes, as we continue to protect businesses and public assets in such a way that we absolutely minimize the damage to families and homes, to people and property, in such a way that not only do we do the right thing by protecting people, but we also keep the cost down for the taxpayer.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the story is changing. Six days ago the Premier had a televised address to Manitobans. He looked into the camera and he said: That is why I have directed my staff to create a special compensation program above and beyond the disaster assistance and insurance already in place.

They have now confirmed that promise 15 times, and now what the Premier is saying is that he's turning around and trying to fob it off on the federal government.

He's the one, Mr. Speaker, who looked into the camera and made the promise. It was his government that got the forecast wrong. It's his government that has made decisions or failed to take action to protect this property.

When is he going to live up to his word and be clear with these hundreds of Manitobans about what they can expect by way of special compensation? They're tired of the dithering; they're tired of the equivocating. They want some direct answers from this Premier.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the government has moved with dispatch to protect families and homes, people and property. There are over 700 civil servants. There are countless municipal officials. There are hundreds of volunteers. Our public servants are now volunteering their time. The reserves are in Manitoba. The military's in Manitoba and we can thank them for the contribution they've made.

We've made it a priority to protect families and their homes, to protect people and their property, and we did say we would bring forward a compensation program. I can assure the member that we will

continue to follow through in that, as we've promised in the address. We've indicated that we will pull that together late this week, early next week, just like we did on mitigation.

We did not wait for a federal commitment on mitigation. We moved ahead to protect the Assiniboine dikes with an additional \$25-million investment which has been a big contributor to those not overflowing. When we saw those dikes were having problems and we realized that the weather conditions were very negative in Manitoba, we called in additional support.

They have done a tremendous job. We have minimized damage and when we get all of that managed and at the same time, we will move forward with the compensation program. But the priority is to protect people and property.

Brandon Flooding Compensation Information for Businesses

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the City of Brandon extended its mandatory evacuation until June the 4th. This evacuation has been in effect since May the 9th and has had a devastating effect on dozens of Brandon businesses and their employees.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) has promised to compensate this extraordinary event with a special compensation package. Will Brandon businesses, forced to shut down through no fault of their own, be included in that compensation package?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): First of all, I want to put on the record just how much we admire the spirit of the people of Brandon. I know I can't comment on the presence or absence of—well, I can't comment on absence of members, so it's nice to see the member of Brandon East here today in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, as I know he and many people in that community have been working 24-7.

We have identified—and I want to stress to the members opposite, I think if you want to see the best example you could ever see in any community, a community that met the challenge of a one-in-300-year flood—and as the Premier indicated, we will be there, not in terms of only the flood response as we were—and I want to again thank the armed forces for part of our response—we will be there as well in terms of the compensation response.

And as the Premier said, we are now within a matter of days of announcing something that will make a real difference to many people in the province in terms of the next step, which is recovery.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, the promise has been for a special compensation package, an extraordinary compensation package.

Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday night, the Brandon Chamber of Commerce hosted a meeting with the businesses affected by the mandatory evacuation. The business owners voiced their concerns over staff expenses, inventory loss and loss of income during these very trying times. They are desperate, yet heard nothing from their government representative about compensation.

This special compensation package is being developed right now. Has the minister responsible included these extraordinary costs in that package?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't speak for what the member for Brandon West was doing, but I do know that Brandon East was out there working with volunteers at protecting the community. And before we fully transition back to our adversarial partisan nature in this House, let's remember one thing: a one-in-300-year flood, an unprecedented response by the people of Brandon, the people of Manitoba.

And, Mr. Speaker, we will be there in the recovery stage for Brandon because this government cares about every part of this province, and we will be there for Brandon and many other areas of the province affected by the 2011 flood.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, photo ops by the member from Brandon East are not going to bring compensation to the businesses in the city of Brandon. That same member said he—that same member says he has to approach the government. It's that government that yet has not got any answers about compensation.

Mr. Speaker, it has been stated numerous times that this is an unprecedented one-in-300-year flood. This calls for an unprecedented one-in-300-year compensation package.

Mr. Speaker, a local independent greenhouse has been forced to leave during this busiest business season. An independent mechanic has been forced to leave his place of business, leaving his tools behind. An independent campground and RV park owner will not open this year. Dozens of other independent

businesses have shared that story and there've been no answers.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time to put that compensation package together. Has the minister done it? Will these people be covered?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): You know, Mr. Speaker, we have seen outstanding leadership by the mayor and council of Brandon and their emergency operations committee. They have done a fantastic job. And the member from Brandon East has been out there on the ground with the citizens, helping them every single day to cope with this.

And I can tell you, every time—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum, please.

Mr. Selinger: Every time we've been out to Brandon, the member of Brandon East and myself, we've made very significant investments in protecting Brandon.

We put \$800,000 into permanent dikes, something that should've been done years ago, not done. We invested in that along with the new mayor, who had the vision to move on that immediately. We fully supported that.

We moved the super sandbags into place on 18th Street when others were skeptical and said that it might be too much, and now we're three layers high on those sandbags on 18th Street and several layers deep.

We have taken all these extraordinary measures to protect the people of—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Instead of members shouting back and forth at each other, if you want a conversation, you can have a nice quiet one in either loge. You can take your choice, because the rest of us are here to hear the questions and the answers.

And we have guests in the gallery that came down here to be able to hear the questions and the answers, and I think we owe them that respect.

So let's have a little decorum in the House, please. Next question.

* (14:00)

Assiniboine River Mitigation Costs Compensation for Residents

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, we've been hearing about a special compensation package for those who have been affected by the deliberate breach of the Assiniboine dike—River dike. Many people in the initial inundation zone took extraordinary measures to protect themselves from the impending flood waters, which they may not see now, even though communication to them from this government was just horrendous.

Will this special compensation package compensate for those mitigation efforts even if there was to be no flood water? Will they be there then, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): The No. 1 priority there was obviously flood protection, and I want to put on the record how much we, again, appreciate everyone who was part of that and, in particular, the armed forces. They did an incredible job. And I think the sign of the true spirit of this province, again, was how, in that very challenging situation, within a matter of days, we were able to get full protection in place.

And, by the way, we mobilized resources from all over the province. We purchased additional resources. We did that. We didn't worry about the accounting side of it. We looked at the job that needed to be done. And I can assure the member—and we've stated this very clearly—there's going to be an announcement of a program both for that area—a special compensation program—and for many other Manitobans impacted by the flood.

Flood protection No. 1, floodfighting No. 1, but now we're also looking at flood recovery stage, and we will have protection for those communities.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, dikes consisting of valuable topsoil have been built across farmland. Measures have been taken along golf courses along the river to protect those businesses. Elderly people with medical needs voluntarily evacuated to Winnipeg for fear of being flood bound. There was such a horrendous lack of communication which caused fear and apprehension.

Will this special compensation package compensate these people for their efforts and their expenses even if there is no flood water? Will they be there then?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, there were very challenging circumstances there, and I would hope that the member would acknowledge the work that was done, not just by provincial staff but by the municipal staff, our partners in terms of Emergency Measures.

And, you know, we took the step, when people were saying they needed more communications, of making sure we got out there, door to door, personal contact. We also made sure, by the way, that they didn't have to scramble to find the kind of resources were—we mobilized across the province and put in place those flood protection.

And just as we were there in terms of the flood protection stage, we will be there in terms of the recovery stage. Many of the items the member's talking about would be covered anyway under disaster financial assistance, but we always indicated we will go beyond that for the impacted people in that area, and that will be part of our announcement which will be coming out in a matter of days.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not know why this minister has to yell at the people of Manitoba. They're simply asking these questions to be asked of him, and we certainly recognize all of the efforts that have been done to date by all of the municipal staff, the volunteers, the armed forces and the families of Manitoba.

And we have heard hundreds of thousands of sandbags being used in this flood-fight effort. Homes, properties and businesses have worked to protect their properties as best they can. Absence of proper communication has led to chaos in the RM of St. François Xavier, Mr. Speaker, with people fighting for sandbags. The municipality has had to pay for the trucking in of these bags and other additional expenses incurred by the volunteer personnel who have been working hard at this for over a month.

Yes, there is still a threat in the area, but I would like to ask this minister if this special compensation package will reimburse municipalities and the volunteer co-ordinators for their efforts. Will they be there then, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I appreciate the question from the member, and it goes right to the very purpose of what we've been doing in this flood.

We've been doing everything possible to minimize harm to families and homes, people and property. That has been the entire focus of our effort, and it has been very, very challenging. There was a time late last week when the dikes were within inches of being—breaching at the top, and everybody was pouring every ounce of energy they could put into that, including the military who came in and played an unprecedented and important role in dealing with this matter along people in the provincial public service that have been working non-stop.

I know of one individual—who I won't name today, but I will recognize later on—who has literally been on the job seven days a week since early March reinforcing and building dikes out there, working hand in hand with his own officials and with the military to do that. I visited with him yesterday along the dikes. He may get a few days off next week after working seven days a week.

Every effort has gone into this, and even on the controlled breach area, it was minimized to restrict damage as much as possible while protecting all the other Manitobans that were affected by this, and it has made a very important difference.

Flooding Water Control Structure Usage

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, with the flood continuing to cause problems and hardships across Manitoba, you would expect the Province to do their utmost work through effects and consequences of the flood. Part of this is allowing our dam structures to let out as much water as possible flow through those dams.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Water Stewardship assure Manitobans that this is the case?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I could read *Hansard* from yesterday, *Hansard* from the day before. I offered the member my copy yesterday. He said, I don't want it.

I'll just repeat again for the benefit of the people in Manitoba—perhaps not the member from Ste. Rose—we have been working for months now drawing down historic low levels in the Shellmouth. We have used the Fairford diversion. We have used the Winnipeg floodway. We have used the Portage Diversion. We have been preparing for this. We have been watching water levels rise.

I was very relieved to hear the crest had occurred last night at the Portage Diversion. We now know water will continue to rise in Lake Manitoba, and we will be dealing with those water levels as effectively as we can for the many months to come.

Lake Winnipeg Jenpeg Control Structure Usage

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, the minister did indeed drop off a copy of *Hansard* over here yesterday. I won't go so far as to take all the copies of *Hansard* over to her from questions that were asked to her where she sat firmly in her seat and would not get up.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is wrong. I would like to table the photos that show that the Jenpeg structure does not have all its gates open. This does not allow the maximum water flow to go through Jenpeg, which regulates the flow from our largest lake, Lake Winnipeg.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is question and answer time, and I didn't even hear the question, and I don't know if the minister had or not. *[interjection]* No, because—that's what I assumed because I know I didn't hear it. And if you're going to be asking questions, the minister has to hear the question and if the minister is answering to a member, the member has to be able to hear the answer so they can form their supplemental question, because a supplementary question should be formed from the answer to the initial question.

So to be fair to all members, I'll give the honourable member for Ste. Rose an opportunity to repeat his question, and, please, let's have the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Please repeat your question.

Mr. Briese: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was busy presenting the photograph to the Clerk.

Would the minister care to explain why they're not adding as much water as possible through the structure at Jenpeg?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, they complain when I don't answer; they complain when I answer; they're unable to form a question.

We have been working with Manitoba Hydro not only through this spring but through the flood of

2009, through the flood of 2010 and certainly for the months leading up to this flood.

Again, water control structures have been drawing the maximum amount of water that they can depending on weather, depending on ice induced.

Manitoba Hydro has assured us they are drawing at Jenpeg to the capacity that is appropriate during the seasons of the year.

They've told us that. We believe them, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to draw down through every water control structure that we can that will be effective for the people of Manitoba from the Saskatchewan border into Lake Winnipeg.

*(14:10)

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the *Hansard* from yesterday, May 18th, 2011, in which the Minister for Water Stewardship claims that Jenpeg is operating at maximum capacity. Yet we have a photo that clearly shows this not being the case. The Minister of Water Stewardship has deliberately misled this House and the people of Manitoba.

Will the minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Since I've been Speaker, I have accepted the word "mislead", but I've never accepted the word "deliberately mislead." So I ask the honourable member for Ste. Rose to withdraw the word "deliberate."

Mr. Briese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the word "deliberate."

The Minister of Water Stewardship has misled this House and the people of Manitoba.

Will the Minister for Water Stewardship apologize for her comments from yesterday? Will she revise her position?

Ms. Melnick: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member of this House who should apologize and just did is the member from Ste. Rose.

I am providing the House with the information that is accurate. We have been drawing down Shellmouth to record low levels. We have been operating Fairford to the capacity that it can with weather and wind conditions, and we are—and Hydro has assured us they're operating Jenpeg to the maximum that they can.

Everyone around this province is working very hard to make sure that we are lowering waters, that we are controlling flows, everyone except members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we are fighting the flood with the people of Manitoba. They are playing politics.

Family Services Department Budget for Parent Zone Website

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Manitoba is in debt and is running a significant deficit, Mr. Speaker, and families in that—Manitoba are hurting as a result of the flood and are looking for financial compensation, so it's incumbent upon government to examine every dollar that they spend to make sure that they get the best bang for the buck.

The Minister of Family Services is spending a quarter of a million dollars on a new website to provide parents with information that either already exists or could be put on existing government websites.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit that the quarter of a million dollars is nothing more than the government trying to look like it's doing something after 11 years? Instead, that money could be spent offering tangible programs and services to children and families.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it comes with the territory as the Minister of Family Services to, in fact, provide family services, and that's exactly what this website does. It's being put together as a—one of the most comprehensive, leading-edge websites that will provide help for parents. There will be a connection to thousands of sites, bringing it all together, but it will be Manitoba specific.

And I am very pleased that the budget that is before the House will accommodate the ability to launch this fiscal year manitobaparentzone.ca. It'll be a very welcome addition, Mr. Speaker, to any parent's tool chest to deal with all of the challenges of being a modern-day parent.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, it took me about five minutes to find out all of the information for parents on the website already by this government department, a variety of topics relating to parenting.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister feels that he's not providing enough information for parents, why can't

he just post additional information on the government's existing websites rather than charging Manitoba taxpayers a quarter of a million dollars for some feel-good advertising for this government?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the toughest jobs anywhere is being a parent. It's also one of the most important jobs, and parents should expect from government that there be a one-stop shop for information to help them deal with the everyday challenges that parents have, including—and I might add—a feature that's being built into manitobaparentzone.ca, an ask-the-expert ability where Manitoba experts will be available for Manitoba parents to answer questions that come to their attention.

But the challenges of becoming a parent, of having an infant and a toddler and, of course, the early years, middle years—and, believe me, I can talk personally—the challenges of the teen years, Mr. Speaker, the website is going to address all of those challenges, and we're going to make sure that like no other place in this country there is a one-stop shop because we care about families and they have to know that we're on the side of Manitoba parents.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But I thought that's what the Department of Healthy Living was supposed to do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if he's so attached—if he's attached to the name Parent Zone why doesn't he just rename the links and the website that already exist within government instead of spending a quarter of a million dollars more?

Mr. Speaker, parents are desperate and they're crying out for tangible support for their children that need real support and real services. Why doesn't the minister take the quarter of a million dollars that he's spending on this rebranding, like Spirited Energy, and put it into real services and real programs for children that need it?

Mr. Mackintosh: And, of course, the services, Mr. Speaker, whether they're the increased investments in child welfare, the historic new investments in child care, yes, we're delivering those, and it's also important, though, that while you provide services, you have to make them available. People have to know that they're there.

And, in fact, in Healthy Living—and this website has been—is being developed in consultation with

Healthy Living and several other departments. We're also very pleased to see, as one of the links on manitobaparentzone.ca and anticipated to be, of course, the parent—the help with discipline that Healthy Child has been working on, the Triple P parenting and the hotline, as well, that is being funded in the budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, yes, we are doing things according to the needs of modern-day families. People now actually are going to websites, and they don't want to be going all day to websites. They want to go to one with the necessary links. I'm very pleased that we're going to be able to introduce this, to be on the side of Manitoba parents.

Hip Replacement Surgery Wait Times

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): On April 28th I raised a question in the House regarding long wait times for hip replacement surgery in Brandon.

Mrs. Svestrup is waiting for urgent hip replacement surgery. Apparently, being classified urgent appears to mean nothing to the overburdened list of people who need hip replacement surgery.

It is now 60 weeks since Mrs. Svestrup's initial doctor's visit to discuss her urgent hip replacement surgery. After following up again with her doctor, she was told that it will still be at least six months for her urgent surgery.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health explain to Mrs. Svestrup why this NDP government continues to mislead Manitobans on how long wait-list times are for hip replacement surgeries?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): To begin, I will say to the member that, indeed, I would agree that no member in this House would consider that to be an acceptable time, and I will recommit to the member to work with this individual to ensure that there is a smooth path for her to get that surgery in a timely manner.

I can inform the House that wait-time information regarding a variety of services in the health-care system is posted on the website. We do know, of course, that the median wait time for hip and knee surgery in Manitoba is now 19 weeks, down from 44 weeks in 2005.

Members opposite seem a bit sensitive about that, and, you know, I respect that. We're putting data

on the website, Mr. Speaker. They didn't choose to do that during their time in office.

Mrs. Rowat: Well, Mr. Speaker, on May 4th, I provided the minister with the contact information to Mrs. Svestrup. Five days later, on May 9th, I received a letter from the minister that said, and I quote: We'll be in contact with Mrs. Svestrup in a timely fashion.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on May 10th, Mrs. Svestrup did receive a phone call, but not from the minister. She received a call from the Brandon Regional Health Authority, and I must say what the Brandon Regional Health Authority confirmed is what we already know. They said the list of hip surgery wait times is very long and there is only one doctor able to perform the surgery in Brandon and he is doing the best he can.

Well, Mr. Speaker, why did the Minister of Health have the BRHA do her dirty work and call Mrs. Svestrup to tell her something she already knew? Mrs. Svestrup is still waiting without a surgery date.

* (14:20)

Ms. Oswald: And, again, we asked the Brandon Regional Health Authority to work with this individual patient. It's an unacceptably long time. I'm not going to say anything different to that, and we want to work to ensure we can drive the time that she's been told down so that she can get the care that she needs.

We do know that times in Brandon right now are longer than we want them to be, which is why we are making investments in adding additional volumes and, indeed, adding a centralized intake so that if the wait time in Brandon is unacceptable to patients, patients will be able to move to another surgeon at Boundary Trails in Winnipeg, if necessary, to have quicker surgery.

That is our intent, and I do commit to the member to redouble our efforts to work with this patient to find her an alternate site if that is what she so chooses.

Mrs. Rowat: Last November, the Minister of Health said, and I quote: We won't—we don't want anybody's quality of life to be reduced as a result of a wait time. Mrs. Svestrup is waiting over 60 weeks at this point, Mr. Speaker, with a good another four to eight weeks to go before she'll be receiving any type of word

from this government, potentially. It could be even more.

Mr. Speaker, after doctoring in Brandon for over 60 weeks, Mrs. Svestrup is getting desperate for care. She said, and I quote: It's unbearable, and the quality of my life is worsening.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Does this not fly in direct contrast to her statement last November? Not a stellar record, is it.

Ms. Oswald: And I'll say again, for the third time, I believe that wait time to be unacceptably long, and we're going to work with that individual in Brandon to find an alternate path.

Certainly, I can say that there is never a day when we are not working to drive down wait times. We have seen some very good successes in diagnostics, in cardiac, in cancer and, indeed, in orthopedic surgery. What the member is saying is clearly that we need to be doing more work to drive those times down. Budget 2011 contains resources for us to increase volumes, centralize processes and use innovations to bring those times down further.

We have seen some success. This case that the member is raising would not be demonstrative of that, and I do commit to the member to, again, engage with Brandon and our other sites that do orthopedic surgery to try to assist this individual.

Brandon Flooding Permanent Dike Construction

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Even as we focus our efforts on helping those still being affected in a major way by the flood, it's also important to begin to have some answers about commitments not carried through.

In 2006, five years ago, the NDP promised in the same press release to build the new David Thompson bridges on 18th Street in Brandon and to build the dikes needed to provide one-in-100-year flood protection for the city of Brandon.

Mr. Speaker, the bridges were built, but the promised dikes were not. The NDP promised, as I said, to build the permanent dikes to provide protection to a one-in-100-year flood for Brandon, but the dikes were never built.

Mr. Speaker, is the Premier sorry that he broke his promise, causing record hardship for people in Brandon this year?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): In an earlier answer today, I indicated that we did make a \$800,000 contribution to the permanent dikes that were put in place this spring, before the spring flood event occurred. And those dikes are permanent dikes. Those dikes improved the protection in Brandon forever from what it used to be, a one-in-50-year situation to well into over a one-in-100-year situation now, particularly with the Aqua Dams that we've put in place and all the super sandbags.

But the dikes were built up before this spring flood event occurred, and it just, once again, underlines the value of the people in Brandon and the leadership they've had there and how effectively they've mobilized to meet that enormous one-in-300-year challenge they've had there.

We've been very pleased to partner with them on that, and we will continue to partner with on that, with them, to ensure that there is permanent protection going forward, including additional measures as required.

Mr. Gerrard: Had the NDP built the permanent dikes needed in Brandon when they promised in 2007 or 2008, they would have then been at a level, the one-in-100-year level, only 15 inches lower than the height of the flood waters this year.

The presence of permanent dikes at the one-in-100-year level would have meant the needed addition of only a few layers of regular sandbags, and businesses and homeowners within the dikes would not have had to evacuate this year.

Today, businesses in the affected area are losing a million dollars or more a day in revenue. The toll on Brandonites is large. Brandonites are reeling from their livelihoods being severely impacted by this NDP broken promise.

So I ask the Premier: Why did this government break their promise and fail to build these permanent dikes to the one-in-100-year level?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, we did make a very significant financial contribution to building permanent dikes in Brandon. Nobody anticipated an unprecedented one-in-300-year flood event.

The member should be very careful not to put himself in the position of the local officials who declared, on a precautionary basis, that it was a good idea to evacuate both businesses and homeowners in the flats, the Brandon Flats area. They did that to

protect them, to ensure that they were safe and then to be able to secure their homes.

This is an unprecedented event. I'm very glad those dikes were built in a timely fashion. I'm very glad we had the super sandbags, the Aqua Dams, the military come in to support the local officials. Everybody did everything possible to protect the people of Brandon, and so far, it has been very, very effective.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, indeed, five years ago, this government anticipated the need then to have a one-in-100-year permanent dike in Brandon. They promised they would do it, but they didn't fulfill their promise, and as a result, there is devastation in Brandon at the moment with many people out of work, with many businesses, 50 to 70 businesses, closed.

You know, fortunately, Brandonites are a strong, hardy people, but countless Brandonites have lost their paycheque because the NDP dikes weren't built. Does the NDP care? Mr. Speaker, countless homes—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member for River Heights is trying to put a question.

Mr. Gerrard: You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm offering the Premier an opportunity to apologize and explain and give an answer to a legitimate question.

So I ask the Premier: Will he now apologize and explain why those dikes weren't built?

Mr. Selinger: The member has not heard—perhaps not heard what I've said.

We spent very close to seven to eight hundred thousand dollars to support the local city's—the City of Brandon's initiative to build permanent dikes there that gave them one-in-100-year protection, double what they had before. We provided additional resources, in terms of people resources, to do the super sandbags, to provide the Aqua Dams and all the other technologies.

And I remember very clearly when we installed these resources to protect Brandon, there were those sceptics that said it was too much, it was overkill, it need not be done. We're now gone beyond the one-sixth—we've now gone beyond the six-foot level of super sandbags. We've built them up to 18 feet with the help of the military and the local folks.

It's crested now. The good news is the water's starting to go down. The precautionary evacuation is still on. That was done—a decision made by the local leadership—to ensure people were safe and secure. We support that decision. We support the local leadership of Brandon with capital for their dikes and extra measures as well, and we will continue to support them to make—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Brandon Flooding Update

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, for the better part of the last two weeks, I've been occupied in Brandon and throughout the Assiniboine Valley basin, fully occupied in the flood fight that's taking place in that part of the province.

Mr. Speaker, the current flood levels in western Manitoba, a one-in-300-year event, are truly 'unprecedented' in Manitoba history. I'm very pleased that the dikes that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) was referring to, erroneously, are holding back the one-in-300-year flood, not a one-in-100-year flood.

There's been a lot of work take place in Brandon since the days and weeks after Christmas, Mr. Speaker, to anticipate this unprecedented event.

I also want to thank, Mr. Speaker, my Premier, my whip and my caucus in supporting me, and in this regard ask the member for Thompson for an update.

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order. There's a rule in the House here that I've quoted many, many times about making reference to members' presence or absence, and that includes the person who has the floor, even pertaining to oneself. It pertains to all members of the House, presence or absence.

I just remind all honourable members that if you have the floor, that pertains to you, too, about mentioning your presence or your absence. So members have to be careful. This is just a caution. I'm just reminding all honourable members like I usually do.

The honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation has the floor.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, one thing I know about Brandon, when they talk about

Brandon first, the member for Brandon East puts Brandon first. And I—at a time when we're just beginning to see the crest of the historic one-in-300-year flood subsiding in Brandon, I know there'll be time for a discussion about post-mortems and what could be done differently and, you know, all that.

But I want to put on the record that the people of Brandon and this province dealt with a one-in-300-year flood with permanent dikes, with a build-up of temporary dikes. You want to see the spirit of Manitoba, you see it in Brandon, Manitoba. We're proud of the people of Brandon, proud of the member for Brandon East, proud of the city council and all the volunteers, and that's a model for the rest of Canada: Brandon, Manitoba. Manitoba first, Brandon first: that's how you deal with those kind of situations.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Canadian Armed Forces Flood Response

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I rise today to commend the outstanding efforts of our troops during this flood fight. This past weekend I had the privilege of witnessing first-hand the professional response and important work that our troops are doing in our province's flood-affected areas. The execution of delivering sandbags to sites by placement—of placement by crews of helicopters working in tandem with army, navy and ground crews was a sight to behold. Their efforts cannot be overstated.

I would like to thank Brigadier-General Paul Wynnyk, Commander Land Force Western Area/Joint Task Force West, and Lieutenant-General Devlin, Chief of the Land Staff, and all those who helped with making this experience happen.

On May 9th, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) requested military assistance from the Prime Minister to assist with urgent work required to raise the dikes along the Assiniboine River between Portage la Prairie and Headingley. Since then, over 1,500 military personnel have come to our province to assist with the flood fight. The Canadian Forces have been helping build up flood defences as well as helping those at risk protect their homes. As recent as this morning, there are a hundred Canadian Forces

personnel based in St. Laurent assisting with making sandbags on Lake Manitoba. Troops from Edmonton, Saskatchewan and Thunder Bay have joined soldiers from CFB Shilo in Manitoba in the name of Operation Lustre.

The military has a history of helping out in Manitoba's flood efforts. In 1950, the military undertook Operation Redramp. The Canadian Forces responded again during the Flood of the Century with Operation Assistance.

This is just one example of how our military protects Canadians each and every day. These men and women prove, time and time again, that they are always ready and able to provide help where it is needed most, no matter the task at hand. Whether in Afghanistan or fighting floods, they are—they always consider it their duty to protect all Canadians and, in this case, Manitobans. Not only do they adapt to difficult circumstances and immerse themselves in what they were called to do, but they even do it—do so in good spirits. It was such a pleasure to meet and talk with the groups and see them looking so proud and happy to be protecting us here in Manitoba. We know that they are always there for us, whether it is during a once-in-300-year flood event or another calamity.

They describe themselves as the muscles behind the sandbag, but we know that they are much more than that. I am both proud and grateful that our troops are here helping to prevent flood damage and to ensure the safety of all Manitobans.

Today, I would like to recognize the tremendous work that is being done by our soldiers, sailors and airmen and women. Thank you.

Jon Montgomery

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, today is another special day at the Manitoba Legislature. Jon Montgomery, Russell's gold medal winner in the 2010 Olympic Games, will be in the Legislative dining room to sign his book and, of course, to launch a book signing.

Jon's success has been heralded around the world and his dedication to his sport of skeleton racing is undeniable, as is his dedication to and commitment to young people around the globe and, more specifically, to the fair play initiative.

Jon is also committed to giving back to his community of Russell where he was born and lived until he graduated from grade 12.

Mr. Speaker, Jon is also committed to the quality of life and the initiatives that are undertaken by his community and others around the province.

Jon continues to compete at the highest level in skeleton racing as he works towards qualifying for the next Winter Olympics in three years.

All of us who know Jon are extremely proud of his achievements and, just as importantly, are proud of him because of his caring nature and his genuine and relaxed approach in dealing with other people.

Mr. Speaker, having known Jon for literally his entire life, I can say that this young, determined and goal-oriented individual is one of the finest people that I have ever met and, indeed, we are so proud of him here in Manitoba and in my community of Russell.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Maria Aragon

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, we have some very special guests in the Legislature today and they are grade 5 students at Isaac Brock School, including a young lady that we are all gaga over, and that's singing sensation Maria Aragon.

Maria found recent fame when her cover of Lady Gaga's "Born this Way" was discovered by the pop singer on YouTube. Since Lady Gaga tweeted to the world how she'd been moved by the young woman's version, more than 25 million people worldwide have watched Maria's video.

Maria's experienced a whirlwind of media and celebrity attention, starting from a limo ride with Ace Burpee to an interview on an Ellen DeGeneres show to a performance with Lady Gaga in front of thousands in Toronto.

I want to recognize her for the time and passion she invested in cultivating her skills. She showed incredible sincerity and sensitivity to an empowering song about the importance of loving oneself. She is a source of pride in our community as a symbol of homegrown talent.

Maria has conducted herself with poise in the spotlight, taking a remarkably mature approach to her new-found fame while remaining focused on her studies. Maria prides herself on being grounded in her family, her faith and her friends, and I want to acknowledge those close to her for the support they have provided.

Congratulations and enjoy the ride, Maria. I know that your talent and drive will continue to reward you in the future. I think I speak for all members of the House when I say: You're on the right track—we truly are lucky you were born this way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

National Life Jacket Day

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, nearly 200 people drown in boating-related accidents each year in Canada. In 88 per cent of these tragedies, the victim was not wearing a life jacket or was not using it properly. A Canadian Red Cross report found that the vast majority—a whopping 93 per cent—of boating-related fatalities occurred among men ages 15 to 54.

Using a life jacket properly is crucial to avoiding preventable boating deaths. This is why on May 19th, the Canadian Red Cross is recognizing National Lifejacket Day to spread awareness about the importance of practising safe boating, including wearing a life jacket.

Last week, Buckles, the life jacket mascot of the Red Cross, paid a visit to the Legislative Building to share the message of water safety. Buckles gave the following tips for choosing the right life jacket and water safety.

An ideal life jacket should be an appropriate size and fit comfortably. You should be able to move your arms freely as well as bend at the waist. A good life jacket keeps your head above the water and allows you to move freely. The Canadian Red Cross suggests choosing a brightly coloured life jacket that can be easily seen in the water.

For boaters, the Red Cross recommends to always check the weather and water conditions before heading out onto the water. Conditions can change in the blink of an eye, so be prepared with a plan of action in case you need to get to the shore quickly.

No one should ever consume alcohol before or during boating. Alcohol plays a part in nearly half of boating fatalities. Also, make sure everyone knows how to use and board the boat.

Everyone in the boat should be wearing a life jacket, even good swimmers. Life jackets are like seat belts; they should be worn at all times in a boat to protect you when you need it. If an accident does occur, there won't be time to put one on.

Throughout the months of May and June, the Red Cross is running a National Lifejacket Day contest. Anyone can enter to win one of 20 family life jackets sets and two grand prizes of inflatable life jackets by filling out a form on the Canadian Red Cross's website.

* (14:40)

National Lifejacket Day is important to spread awareness about the importance of boat-safe boating. As the weather heats up and we flock to one of Manitoba's thousands of lakes, remember to boat safely and always wear your life jacket.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CNIB Shades of Fun Day

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, Canadians from coast to coast will soon be donning their sunglasses, rain or shine, in support of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind's campaign called Shades of Fun day. It's an opportunity to raise awareness around vision loss and fundraise for CNIB services. Many of us have family members or friends who have been affected by vision loss. It's a condition that can turn lives upside down, but CNIB is a long-standing organization which helps people to reroute their lifestyle to achieve their goals.

On May 26th, Shades of Fun day, CNIB encourages everyone to choose a unique way to fundraise, whether that's with colleagues, friends or family. CNIB has tips, ideas and tool kits available on its website to help spark ideas. They also have classroom action kits for teachers looking to involve students with the issue. In Kirkfield Park, École Robert Browning is holding a fundraiser, and all the kids who bring a donation will get to wear their sunglasses for the day.

CNIB is holding a variety of other events to celebrate Vision Health Month. In early May, CNIB partnered with the Manitoba Association of Optometrists and screened roughly 500 people for glaucoma at St. Vital and Polo Park shopping centres. On Shades of Fun day, there will be activities and events at the CNIB building, and the Lieutenant-Governor, His Honour Philip Lee, will be giving an introductory speech. Various celebrities are also donating their personal sunglasses for a fundraising auction, including Justin Bieber, Sarah McLachlan, and composer David Foster.

Mr. Speaker, it's inspiring to see so many people across the city taking time to raise money for the

visually impaired and to have fun doing it. Every person who donates their time or money on May 26th is helping a neighbour in a tangible way.

So thank you to CNIB for organizing these events and for your legacy of work. Your services are invaluable and, and I'm sure your event will be a success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Ms. Howard: On House business. I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations will meet on May 24th, at 6 p.m., to consider the annual reports of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the fiscal years ending February 29th, 2008; February 28th, 2009; and February 28th, 2010.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations will meet on Tuesday, May 24th, 2011, at 6 p.m., to consider the annual reports of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation of the fiscal years ending February 29, 2008; and February 28, 2009; and February 28, 2010.

So that's just an announcement, and now we'll go to orders of the day and we will proceed as what was announced.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mr. Speaker: We will now proceed into Opposition Day motion that was previously announced.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I move, seconded by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen)

THAT the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Justice to immediately provide the Assembly with a complete list of warrants that were purged in 2009 and 2010, including the nature of the related offences.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Just to remind members that your speaking time for this is 10 minutes. Okay.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak and to put some words on the record regarding what I think is a very important issue for the safety of all Manitobans.

Many members of the Chamber, of course, will know that warrants are very important things that are issued against individuals who are either suspected of a crime or for somebody who has breached a court order that's been issued against them, and they're not given lightly. Those are—they are things that are issued when the public safety is at risk, and I know that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) in this House has tried to make light of warrants, has tried to suggest that some of these issues around warrants are minor. But I would say to the Minister of Justice to listen to the police.

And, in fact, it was the Winnipeg Police Association that first raised this issue and brought it to the public light. It was the president of the police association who made comments in a daily newspaper here in the city of Winnipeg who indicated that there were many warrants—he understood they were being deleted, simply erased from the record. We have often raised issues around warrants in this House, the number of warrants. We know that there are approximately 15,000 outstanding warrants in the city of Winnipeg, more if you include the province of Manitoba. And those are things that have been issued because the judges believe that, in fact, there is somebody who poses a risk, somebody who has not done what they said that they were going to do, or somebody who has been charged with a crime who should come in and be held accountable for that crime.

And so it was certainly the right thing for—to do for the Winnipeg Police Association to say, why is it that all of these warrants, we understand, are simply being deleted by the Minister of Justice, the member for Minto sitting at a—the computer and agreeing to allow these warrants to be deleted from the system?

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Now, we, Mr. Acting Speaker, have certainly put pressure on the government to bring down the number of outstanding warrants. And maybe there was something lost in communication; maybe I didn't speak loudly or clearly enough to the member for Minto. But what I meant—[interjection]—and I appreciate the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) raising the issue of the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) handing out Slurpees to high-risk car thieves. And maybe there'll be time in my 10 minutes to

address that. But the key thing that I want to focus on, is when we raise the issue of how many outstanding warrants there were in the province of Manitoba, in the city of Winnipeg, what we wanted the Attorney General to do, the NDP government, is to go after those individuals and reduce the number of warrants, not simply to delete the warrants.

Now, we know there's been some baby steps along the way that the government has announced. We may see a legislation regarding that at some point, and those are tepid steps, good steps, but tepid, Mr. Acting Speaker. But, certainly, the way you bring down the number of warrants isn't to simply delete them, because attached to every one of those warrants is not only an individual who's either committed a crime or ignored a court order but a victim. And I think that that's what the government is simply forgetting, that when the Minister of Justice, the member for Minto was deleting these warrants, what he was really doing is erasing from the record a particular crime where there was a victim attached to it.

Now, for certain warrants, of course, if somebody has passed away and they're related to that warrant, we understand why those would be taken from the system. But there was many active warrants, many individuals, we were told, who were still wanted by law enforcement officials, and the Minister of Justice made the determination, made the decision to delete them because he thought they were outstanding for too long or they were for a minor crime, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I would say, and I'm suggesting to the members opposite, that the individual victims who were attached to the warrants through the individual who committed the crime probably don't feel the same way. They would say, whether it was some sort of a property crime or other sort of crime, that that meant something to them; that while it may have been—may have been minor to the member for Minto, the Attorney General, may have been minor to the member for Kildonan, may have been minor to the member for Kirkfield or Southdale, that really, for them, for the victims, it meant something, because when you're a victim of crime it takes away more than just what was stolen from you. It takes away your sense of personal security. It takes away your feeling that you are safe in your own home or safe in your neighbourhood.

And that's really what the Attorney General did by deleting these warrants—if he said to these victims,

the crime that was committed against you really isn't that important. It's not something that we, as the government, an NDP soft-on-crime government, feel is important, and we're just simply going to eliminate it from the record.

Now, I asked the Attorney General in Estimates whether or not he actually spoke to any of the victims before having these warrants deleted, and he indicated that he didn't. He didn't bother to speak to any of the victims, to any of those who may have been impacted. He just made the unilateral decision to allow those warrants to be deleted.

And so what the police said—and, you know, these are the men and women who are on the front lines. These are the men and women who are, even this afternoon, Mr. Acting Speaker, are out there protecting us, both in the city of Winnipeg and representing other police in the province of Manitoba. They're out there doing the hard work of protecting our communities.

*(14:50)

And what the Winnipeg Police Association said is, you send a terrible message. By deleting these warrants, you send a message to criminals that if you continue to avoid us, if you're successful in avoiding us, that there might be a payoff at the end of the day by the NDP government, a reward for avoiding the law because we'll just delete those warrants. That's the message that's sent.

I spoke a little bit, Mr. Acting Speaker, about the message that's sent to the victims. The victims now believe that the crime that's committed against them doesn't mean anything. But the police are right by saying that the other message that's sent is those—is the message to criminals or those who might be considering committing crimes that, hey, if you just avoid us, if you just manage to evade—avoid our warrants, then we're going to get a payoff by the NDP government because the Attorney General might sit down in front of his computer, hit the delete button and eliminate the warrant against the individual. What kind of a message is that? And no wonder the police spoke out about it.

So what we're asking, and it's on behalf of the police because the Winnipeg Police Association said, well, we'd like to know exactly how many warrants were deleted and the kind of warrants that were deleted, the nature of the offences. The minister has spoke about sort of general—in generalities about the nature of the offences and he hasn't given any clear

indication about the number. I think he knows the number but he simply doesn't want to provide it. Won't even give a ballpark because I suspect, Mr. Acting Speaker, that it's a very, very disturbing and high number of warrants that have been deleted by this Attorney General, and his predecessor, from the system.

And so, Mr. Acting Speaker, we do this opposition motion this afternoon, not simply as an opposition bringing forward an Opposition Day motion. That is often—you know, that happens sometimes. You know, politics is played. It is politics, you know, and so there can be political issues that come to the floor of this House. But not today, and I'm glad the member for Elmwood (Mr. Blaikie) is on side. He said this is not political, and I'm glad he's in agreement with me. You know, he's a noble gentleman and sometimes we certainly do agree on issues and we agree on this one, that this is brought on behalf of the men and women who are out there protecting us. They've been asking the question: Why were these warrants deleted? How many were deleted? And can you give us the exact nature of the offences that were deleted?

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So I'm sure, you know, we actually had a momentous occasion last year when the government passed an Opposition Day motion. They then proceeded to ignore it, Mr. Speaker, so it was sort of a half victory, I would say; it wasn't a complete victory.

But maybe we'll have a complete victory today. They'll realize that this was brought forward on behalf of the police, the men and women who are protecting us even this afternoon. The Attorney General will have a change of heart. He'll stand up and defend those police officers and say, yes, we should actually release the information, the number of warrants and the nature of the offences.

And he'll not only be standing up for those police officers who want to know the information; he'll be ensuring that a clear message is sent in the justice system and that victims can have some confidence in the justice system overall.

And I hope they don't just simply decide, well, we'll pass the motion and we won't actually do anything that's in it. We will pass it and hope it goes away because then nobody will think about it anymore. But we won't actually provide the information that we committed to, like they did with

the other Opposition Day motion, you know, because we would certainly want to hold them to account on that and tell those men and women for putting their lives on the line how this government is responding to them.

So they have an opportunity today and they're going to get the vote, and we're going to be able to watch as they stand up in their places and vote, and they'll make a decision. They are either going to vote with the men and women who are protecting us today, those law enforcement officials both in Winnipeg and I would say, by extension, through Manitoba. They're either going to side with the police officers or they're going—and side with the victims who need to know that these crimes were taken seriously, or they're going to side with the criminals who would be happy to have their warrants deleted.

So we'll find out later this afternoon which side the members on. They'll either be on the side of law enforcement, the men and women protecting us, or they'll be on the side of those who are committing harm in our communities and creating victims. I look forward to their vote and telling Manitobans how they voted, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's a pleasure to speak to the Opposition Day motion. I'm so glad the member for Steinbach has decided to phrase his entire Opposition Day motion in terms of support for police because I will put some information on the record to explain a bit more to the member how warrants operate, how charges operate. But I'll be quite pleased to speak about support for the police, the support for the police that's shown year after year after year by New Democrats in government and opposed year after year after year by Conservatives who believe that cutting \$500 million out of the budget, cutting front-line services is more important than supporting police officers and protecting public safety in the province of Manitoba. So I'm quite happy to speak about the safety of Manitobans. I'm quite happy to speak about what we're doing and contrast what we're doing with the approach of the members opposite.

Now, first, of course, by way of explanation, of course, warrants do arise when an individual has charges and misses court. It can also arise if somebody is required to be a witness for court and doesn't attend. And where there are charges, of

course, the warrant is only as strong as the charge that created the situation in the first place.

Now, of course, Crown attorneys have a particular role in this case. I know the member from Steinbach time and time again—not so much in my tenure as minister, but certainly when the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was minister—demonstrated time and time again his misunderstanding of the role of Crown attorneys, his failure to understand the independence of Crown attorneys. I think, perhaps, I'm always an optimist. I think, perhaps, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), perhaps, a little further along in his professional development, understands a bit more about the independence, but we can talk about that. And as I said to the member—actually, on the record, I said in Estimates last year—I knew the member could actually, with the right direction and the right training, could actually be a very good Crown attorney. And, in fact, after October 4th, if that's something the member wants to pursue, I do know a number of people in the Crown's office, and I'll be quite happy to put in a good word because I know that he does have passion. He does have the ability and, with some direction and with some greater knowledge, he could be very, very effective.

Now, Crown attorneys have two obligations when it comes to carrying forward cases: No. 1 is they have to make sure that any case they carry forward is in the public interest; and, secondly, they have to be confident that there's a reasonable likelihood of successful prosecution of the case. And here, I think, every member of this House agrees that if there is a crime that's been committed, it is in the public interest that that doesn't disappear, that doesn't go away. I think we can all agree on that. The challenge, of course, is the Crown attorneys are also required, independent of anything that this Attorney General or any Attorney General says, they come to that conclusion independently. And they're required to make that judgment each and every day in the work that they do, the great work that they do for the people of Manitoba. And, put quite simply, Crown attorneys do have concerns the longer period of time that goes by. And, given the nature of the offence, there are many cases where, even though everyone can agree it's in the public interest to proceed, there isn't the reasonable likelihood of being successful if the case goes ahead.

And, of course, our independent Crown attorneys supervised the process, which began in 2009, for pre-1989 warrants only against those

individuals with non-violent offences and only with those individuals without any further dealings with the police, not even a speeding ticket, not even a burnt-out light from that period of time. In 2010 that process continued. We began to deal with cases from before 1999, again, for non-violent crimes and, as well, where individuals had no subsequent involvement.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that that move by prosecutors and by courts wasn't directed by my predecessor. It wasn't directed by myself. And, in fact, when we became aware early in February of this year that a more systematic process than we like was going on, that process was stopped. And we've made it clear that although police officers continue to have the ability to purge warrants, while Crown attorneys have the ability to stay charges when they don't believe there's a reasonable prospect of conviction, that should not be done on a systematic way in which it was done. And we acknowledge that. I've given clear direction within my department, and we will make changes.

So let's talk a little bit about support for police. *[interjection]* Well, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is chattering, and, I presume, at the end of today, he's going to apologize to law enforcement officials across Manitoba. Now, I know that the member for Steinbach and his leader would rather play politics than propose real solutions to crime, to deal with individuals posing the greatest risk in our communities.

Now, I've already announced that we're creating a warrant enforcement unit. We're working with police to figure out the best way for this to occur to provide the best support, to make sure there's more support shoulder to shoulder with our police officers, to make sure that individuals who have outstanding warrants are brought to justice. We believe that there's more that needs to be done, but, at the same time, we need to look at the Conservatives' record in supporting police.

As of today, there are 255 more police officers across the province than there were in 1999. And what do every single one of those 255 officers have in common? Well, the funding to provide their position was voted against by the members opposite. *[interjection]*

* (15:00)

And now the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) wants to talk about the Hells Angels, the

Hells Angels who rolled into town when the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) was working as the chief of staff for Gary Filmon, rolled into town and they set up their clubhouse on Scotia Street, and the government of the day did absolutely nothing to deal with it.

Well, we dealt with it. We did it by strengthening The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, of course, when we announced what we were doing, said, this will never make a difference. This won't make any difference in dealing with organized crime.

Well, I can let the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) and members on the other side know that the Hells Angels clubhouse on Scotia Street is now padlocked. We've an interim order to seize that property and we are very hopeful that we are soon going to get an order permanently forfeiting that property to the Province of Manitoba. We'll be using it for crime prevention; we'll be using it to support police services across Manitoba; we'll be using it to enhance public safety.

So the member for Springfield is just wrong. The Leader of the Opposition was just plain wrong yet again, and we don't have to apologize for the support that we give to police in this province.

Now, of course, the member for Steinbach who practises opposition by Google, of course, brought in a bill and he thought, well, this will help us deal with warrants. And he googled a bill and photocopied a bill from British Columbia, but he either didn't know or didn't care to ask the questions about how that bill was actually operating in British Columbia. And he either didn't know or didn't care that the system in British Columbia relies upon the person with outstanding warrants coming in front of their welfare worker and telling the truth.

You know, I had grade 5 students from a school in my area in the gallery today. I don't expect the members opposite to be smarter than a fifth grader, but maybe they could be as smart as a fifth grader to understand that sometimes bad guys lie, and I'm sorry the member for Steinbach doesn't understand that. I'm sorry the members opposite don't understand it. We'll be dealing with things appropriately in meaningful ways and not trying to score cheap political points.

And I'm also glad that the member for Steinbach mentioned last year's motion regarding probation breaches. First, we do take things that come forward

very seriously. In that case, we did believe there was a question that needed to be answered and after—even before the motion was heard—I referred the question off to Manitoba Corrections, the Manitoba Prosecution Service, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Winnipeg Police Service.

And we asked about the idea put forward by the member for Steinbach to provide quarterly reports on the number of charges laid by probation officers and here's what this panel comprised of corrections, prosecutions and our police services had to say: The committee would also like to note that they believe that providing quarterly reports on the number of charges laid by probation officers for non-compliance with a court order would not provide information to the public that would be an accurate reflection of public safety. The committee has come to this conclusion for the following reasons—and went through and set out four very clear reasons.

Of course, the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) was chirping from her seat: Who wrote the report? The report was written by Manitoba Corrections, Manitoba Prosecution Service, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Winnipeg Police Service. So, indeed, we do listen to law enforcement; we've always listened to law enforcement and we're certainly listening to law enforcement in this case.

In terms of warrants in Manitoba, we know there are things that we need to continue doing. As I've indicated, we're quite prepared to keep putting resources in to assist our police to make sure those individuals who have posed the greatest risk to public safety are the ones who are getting attention.

You know, the oldest warrant that was eventually wiped out was from 1969. There's a warrant—someone didn't appear in court because of a noise bylaw. You know, I think that our police officers, I think our Crown attorneys, I think our court system have much more important things to deal with than to try and to effectively waste time for charges dating from 30, 40 years ago where it is clear that public safety is not an issue.

We agree entirely that if individuals have warrants on our streets, they need to be dealt with. Those individuals who pose a threat to our communities need to be taken in. That's why we add police—I don't know why the members vote against it. The members wanted to cut \$500 million out of the budget. That would have affected front-line services across Manitoba, including police officers in every corner of this province.

So we'll do what's right; they can do whatever they think will give them a political hit. We're providing public safety to the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Ten minutes wasted, Mr. Speaker, by the Attorney General who didn't even address the issue of whether he's going to support the motion brought by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

The motion is a fair and reasonable motion. It is calling on the government to do something that is perfectly within the power of a government to do. He—the member for Steinbach has not asked the Attorney General to single-handedly bring about world peace or to undertake anything that would be well beyond the power of the minister. He's asked him very simply to provide the Assembly with a list of warrants that were purged, including the nature of the related offences. It's a very, very modest request, a sensible and balanced request, and in the 10-minute series of potshots taken by the Attorney General, nowhere did he address his comments to the very reasonable motion brought today by the member for Steinbach.

Mr. Speaker, the government's decision to purge warrants is part of what we have seen as a pattern with this government. They make a promise; they fail to keep the promise. Instead of owning up to that, they then go around and change definitions; they change descriptions; they spin; they delete; and they avoid accountability for their failure to keep their promises.

This is the government that said they would end hallway medicine. When they failed to do that, instead of owning up to it, they simply redefined hallways and said, Mr. Speaker, oh, those are no longer hallways; those numbers that are up on the wall show that these aren't hallways any longer. Rather than actually keeping the promise, they play with words and definitions.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that also said they would balance the budget. Instead of balancing the budget, they ran deficits, but they reclassified expenditures into being something other than expenditures. They refer to them now as capital expenditures, which don't count anymore within their budgeting. And now they claim that the budget is balanced. They fail to keep their promise. Instead of owning up to it, apologizing and being accountable, they change their definitions; they change their

accounting policies; they change the legislation to redefine what a balanced budget is, and then they claim to Manitobans that—they try to claim, in any event, not very convincingly, that they are keeping their promises.

They also promise, Mr. Speaker, to create safer communities. When they fail to do that and the number of outstanding warrants builds up, rather than following through on those warrants, they delete them, which gets rid of the warrant but, as Mike Sutherland said, doesn't get rid of the problem. Mr. Sutherland quite rightly said out of frustration, and I quote: You can just go across the country, rotate through the entire nation, by the time you get back to the first one, your warrants have been deleted. Is that really what we were saying to the public in the justice system?

Mr. Speaker, Mike Sutherland was right to raise that concern and to ask that very good question about what took place here under the watch of this Attorney General (Mr. Swan), and that is why the Attorney General has an opportunity to rectify this wrong-headed decision by supporting the resolution and the motion brought forward by the member for Steinbach. The Attorney General has provided all kinds of excuses and reasons why he doesn't want to just provide that level of disclosure that has been requested by the member for Steinbach. He makes specific reference to one of the warrants, which was deleted. He says a warrant that was deleted relating to 1969—now, the fact that he knows what that warrant related to suggests that he is in possession of the information that is being requested by the Legislature today. So, if the Minister of Justice knows those details, why not share them with the people of Manitoba and with this Chamber so that people can arrive at their own judgments as to whether or not it was appropriate to delete those warrants? If he's open with the public and he ends his policy of secrecy and potshots at the opposition that asks questions, he may find that the public will have an opportunity to analyze those warrants, and they may very well come to the minister's conclusion. They may very well say: The Minister of Justice is right. These are inconsequential matters; they're matters that have been disposed of. They really aren't relevant to the issue of public safety today. Then they can get on with things and not be concerned about the decision to delete the warrants.

* (15:10)

On the other hand, they may find that there were warrants deleted that continue to be relevant to the issue of public safety and warrants in connection with people who should be apprehended in connection with whatever proceedings it is that the warrant is relevant to, whether it be as a witness, as the minister says, as somebody who may be accused, or somebody who may have, for some other reason, information that's relevant to the courts and the justice system.

Why wouldn't the minister, in order to satisfy the public now that he's doing his job, want to provide that level of information so that a proper discussion can take place as to whether this was an appropriate issue? But the minister says instead, trust me, Mr. Speaker. That is, in effect, his message to the people of Manitoba, trust me. I've got all the information, but I'm not going to share it with you because you are—you know you're just regular folks. You're just voters. You're just Manitobans. You're not smart enough.

He probably thinks that the people of Manitoba aren't smart enough to be able to deal with that information. And rather than denigrating—getting up and denigrating the experience and intelligence of members of this House I think the Attorney General could satisfy everybody on the issue of this decision if he were to simply side with the opposition on this very reasonable motion. It is a motion that is something that's actionable and something within the power of the minister to move forward on.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of a lack of disclosure and a lack of interest in transparency is one that's troubling and we know that after 11 and a half years as a party that thinks they're entitled to take money from taxpayers, as a party that thinks that they don't have to share information to the public about their decisions and their policies, it is a government that when people ask questions they reply with personal shots and insults rather than earnestly attempting to attempt to be responsive to the concerns and the issues that people have raised.

And we've seen that repeatedly, that lack of transparency, that lack of respect for the people who they are here to govern, Mr. Speaker. And it appears to be a function on the part of this government, of a sense of entitlement. They rode in here on the mandate that was given to Gary Doer. Mr. Doer has left and yet they carry on as though they have the sense of entitlement that government somehow—that they are—they're divinely entrusted with power.

They're entitled to their vote-tax money. They're entitled to withhold information. They are entitled just to carry on as though they have some superior claim to power and superior claim to information than the people who they govern.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that sense can be dispelled to what—some small extent today by members opposite standing up and supporting this very fair and reasonable and balanced proposal put forward by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). They have a long history of initially opposing ideas brought forward by the member for Steinbach and then when they realize that their position is untenable or unpopular they flip-flop and they come over and they support the member for Steinbach, and then they turn around and insult him.

But the—Mr. Speaker, in any event we would say that we don't disagree with everything the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) says. We agree with his support for the east-side bipole line and we will look forward to supporting him if and when he's prepared to support this very sensible resolution brought by the member for Steinbach.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): You know there's very good—I'd really appreciate the opportunity to respond to this motion. Having heard the comments of both the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and the member for Steinbach, one could see why it's very important that we have something called a division of powers and discretionary authority. It's allocated in our parliamentary system. Heaven help us, heaven help us if the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Steinbach unilaterally, in their own little reality and non-reality world, were to rule, because they've acted as judge, executioner and 'accusator' over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker.

It's been incredible. Mr. Speaker. There's been cases that the member for Steinbach has brought to this House, had he used his judgment to raise them as, heaven forbid, as Attorney General, they would have been tossed from court, and there would have been no remedy available to individuals. So thank heavens for the way that we have a separation of powers so that that discretionary authority and that law-making authority, and the bill to do that, is separated from the thrust and back-and-forth politics of this Legislature.

There is a role for politics, Mr. Speaker. I suggest that subjecting, and I've said this before in the House, right-wing governments is the members

opposite. They're no longer Progressive Conservatives; now a right-wing party, a rump of what had once been the proud Conservative Party of Manitoba. Their—when their sanctuary, when their only issue that they go to time and time again is crime, it tells you not only that there'd be a rift of ideas, but it's a sort of last—it's the last defence of the ill-advised, or the last defence of individuals who don't have creative thoughts. They run on crime.

And, on this specific issue, Mr. Speaker, the kind of—I listened very closely to the arguments of the member for Steinbach. I mean, the member for Steinbach was almost delusional, almost delusional in the image that he portrayed about an attorney general. Now, he's talking about attorney generals like his—the individual who I have respect for, who he worked for, the Honourable Vic Toews, you know, who doesn't sit beside—behind a computer and delete warrants or add warrants, doesn't have that kind of power. I mean, he's—he—by using those kind of arguments, he underpins his own argument of providing integrity, of providing balance in reviewing cases of this kind.

It's really—you know, Mr. Speaker, when the member for Minto provided the member for Steinbach with information in Estimates, I was—two years ago, and all of a sudden the member for Steinbach became fascinated with Slurpees. And, you know, you could—he couldn't—in fact, it happened today, he couldn't raise an issue, he couldn't raise a serious issue with respect to crime without talking about Slurpees. That is almost the worst form, and the worst forum, to deal with, with matters of significance, like warrants, that affect the safety and lives of individuals. And, instead, the count of Slurpees or the image that he portrays of attorney generals sitting there with a computer and wiping out warrants is so antithesis to the legal processes and the legal arguments that are provided when you deal with warrants.

Perhaps some experience in the system, perhaps some discussion with Manitobans, perhaps some day-to-day work by members opposite would get them off of their only-crime approach. Perhaps they would adopt some of the ideas that have been put forward by the Justice Minister, such as a squad of individuals to deal with outstanding warrants. Perhaps sitting down with the police and talking to them on a face-to-face basis. I know he talked about the president of the Manitoba Police Association. I've had lots of occasion to talk to the members of the Winnipeg Police Association and to—and, you know,

Mr. Speaker, they are very thankful—they are thankful—that we put action before political words as members opposite portray, that we actually provided for the salaries of 200-plus officers.

But we didn't go out and brag about crime and brag about being the crime party, I would say. But, instead, we did things like provide services, provide Crown attorneys. And members opposite indicated—and that's why we have a parliamentary system, they had an opportunity to support the police; they voted against it. They had an opportunity to support Crown attorneys; they voted against it.

Mr. Speaker, it's not in words that members opposite are being challenged, are being recognized. It's by what you do. It's by your actions you take. And I've said many time, the actions of members opposite—the best indicator of their future action is the indication of their past activities. And voting against budgets that provide for police and services is surely an indication of where they would go, recklessly, recklessly promising to cut half a billion dollars out of one budget. Recklessly promising to do that, cut half a billion dollars out of one budget, would seriously damage the security services, would seriously see police being laid off. We know that. Crown attorneys being laid off, that's what's at stake with the reckless rhetoric of members opposite.

* (15:20)

Mr. Speaker, if members opposite took the issue seriously, we could have a debate about the nature of warrants, the nature of judicial discretion, the nature of Crown attorney discretion, the issues that should and could be discussed. The very issue about who makes the laws.

Members opposite frequently talk about their crime-and-order agenda when, in fact, they don't have legislative authority over crime and order, Mr. Speaker. The Criminal Code is made by the federal government, and on our many journeys to Ottawa where we've been met with support by the present Attorney General, the former Attorney General of Canada, I haven't seen the members of the opposition there. I haven't seen them there. We've gone there. We've had some changes made.

We continue to have changes made, but I return back to my earlier point. At a time when we're facing significant challenges in terms of floods, at a time when we're facing significant challenges in terms of the economy, at a time when there's issues that we should be discussing like dealing with our police

services, dealing with public security, dealing with safety, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite recklessly throw out the fact that they want account—they want to reveal all the warrants, et cetera. In fact, I'm not even sure if legally that could be done, but even if that can be done, legally providing to members opposite who, somehow, through their distorted view of reality, pretend to represent not only the Manitobans but pretend to represent—and I've heard police officers who are very concerned about some of the attitudes expressed by members opposite, who pretend to represent police services, who pretend to be the voice of the police.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think any of us should pretend we're the voices of the police, and that's part of the problem with members opposite, playing the role that they're not only elected to do but don't have the ability to do. And I go back to several times the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has raised issues that, if they were to be brought to this Legislature and brought out in this Legislature, the very fact there's judicial—of the separation of powers and the judicial discretion, would mean that those cases would have been tossed from court with no ability—the members talk about victims. Victim services have been dealt with extraordinarily from members on this side of the House, and every single instance, not even in one instance, in 11 years, have members opposite supported the measures.

So, Mr. Speaker, a lean, mean Tory government of 11 years that cut and slashed, had snitch lines, doesn't believe, as the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) says, doesn't believe in the Internet. We're even going back now further. They don't even believe in the Internet, and that group of individuals, that lean, mean Tory-cutting machine wants to come back into office with their measures of cutting half a billion dollars out of budget, with their attacks on individuals, with their incomprehension of how the judicial system actually works, with their shooting from the hip, Slurpee ideas of the judicial system—I think if they want to run on that kind of a platform, we'll be happy to put our record up against theirs. And we'll be very happy to go to the public and talk about the tangible benefits that have occurred in Manitoba versus the mean, lean, Tory, Slurpee-drinking, police-cutting, nurse-firing machine that we saw in the 1990s, and that would be the best indicator of future behaviour.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of—to stand by our record, and I'll stand by our record with terms of public safety and the investments we put in

versus how the members would cut from those investments any time, any place, anywhere. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): And, once again, it has to be said: that is a very hard act to follow. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has pretzelized himself as much as he could to try to come up with adjectives about how he believes the opposition is wrong, and you can see he's starting to run out of words. He just keeps using the same tired old phrases over and over. It's a desperate attempt. You can just see it in his face, and you can see how tired they've become, because many of the things are not factually correct.

In fact, I would like to put on the record a fact, and that has to do when the Hells Angels moved into Manitoba. And I believe it's important to quote from a source. Any of us who went to university and got a degree know that it's always best to cite an authority. And this book, written by Julian Sher and William Marsden, called *The Road to Hell: How the Biker Gangs are Conquering Canada*—and I would actually give you the page, Mr. Speaker, page 380. And it's part of a chronology of key events, and it goes accordingly: July 21st, 2000—I'll repeat that again—July 21st, 2000, Hells Angels absorbs Manitoba's Los Bravos as a local gang becomes a prospect chapter. Again, Hells Angels absorbs Manitoba's Los Bravos as a local gang becomes a prospect chapter. There it is. That's when the Hells Angels moved in. And, since then, we have had a lazy, soft-on-crime government, a terribly soft-on-crime government.

And, you know, I've pointed to this House over the years that if we would have had a government and ministers who actually believe that the way to approach crime is to be proactive, to not just slaughter millions of trees and create press releases and have all kinds of press conferences, as one of the former ministers used to do—he would have more press conferences and more releases. If they counted for crime fighting, it would be a miracle. But they don't. It comes down to action.

And I pointed out to this House, they should have followed somebody like Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who had the broken-window concept. And the last time we brought up that example, one of the members opposite said, oh, but, you know, this is serious crime that we're talking about, not trivial stuff. Oh, so that—what they were doing is getting rid of warrants on individuals with serious crime.

You know, every time New Democrats get up and put words on the record, they dig themselves in even deeper, because, I pointed out to the House, whether it's a small crime, or a medium crime, or a big crime, we must take crime serious, and that's what Mayor Rudy Giuliani did. He said that it didn't matter about the crime. In fact, if you clean up the small stuff, it exposes the big stuff. And what it did, then, is allowed law enforcement officials to focus on the big crime because it exposed them. It showed them for what they were. And I suggested to them that they actually look at the Rudy Giuliani approach to dealing with crime.

Instead, what happened, we had the member from Minto, the minister, who went and, in the darkness of night, went into his office and hit the delete button—purge, purge, purge. And you wonder if he even kept a record of it. I mean, we've asked over and over again, and he's not giving us any kind of numbers from 2009-2010. And all that we want is the nature of the related offences. We're not asking for the details of who it was, or where the crime was committed, but the nature of it, what kind of crimes they were, what kind of offences these were. But he can't seem to be forthcoming. Like, I hope somewhere they kept a record of them because the minister seems to have, in the darkness of night, hit the delete button over and over again and deleted all kinds of them. We'd like to know how many.

And, you know what? I do believe that is something that the public has a right to know. They don't have a right to know about individual cases; they don't have a right to know about addresses or private information, but a global number of when, how many there were, what kind of warrants these were, what kind of cases it involved.

And, instead, we have the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) who's been referred to often as the Slurpee king, who came up with a concept. What you would do is you would mollycoddle criminals by giving them Slurpees and baseball tickets. And that is just the approach this government has had—is deny the fact that the Hells Angels came in under their watch. And then, when they catch some criminals, offer them a Slurpee to get off of their bad path, or maybe some baseball tickets. In fact, it was during *Oprah* that they were advertising law and order advertisements and, again, highly ineffective. And we've seen this government do this.

* (15:30)

I mean, we heard the former member—we heard the current member from Kildonan talking about the Internet today and the fact that, you know, somehow, \$250,000 to put on the Internet stuff that's already on the Internet is good money management. You know, perhaps that \$250,000 could have been used for other means like protecting families, protecting children in their homes by better law enforcement. But, instead, what this minister has done, contrary to everything that we know that works across North America, is that you go after small crime.

And I've said to this House before, and I know members opposite and here on this side of the Legislature will have had individuals in their family or perhaps them—themselves, where crime affected them. And I relayed to this House last time that in—the first home I bought was in Elmwood, and one evening one individual or a group of individuals broke through the door and robbed the house. It was very shocking, and the police were there very quickly. I was very impressed. Had all the doors replaced with solid doors and metal wrap-arounds, and went—insurance company was very good—and bought all new cameras, TV, VCR, bought everything new, and, sure enough, two weeks later, they broke in a second time. What they were really looking for was all the new items, and they stole everything a second time. And these crimes do happen. And the police were there very quickly again, and fingerprinted and all the rest of it. And it was a crime spree going on.

Now, if I or anybody else who's gone through that experience—and it's a really tough experience. You do take it personal. It hurts you. It affects you. You're uneasy in your own home for days and days afterwards because, you know, before you go to bed, you look under the bed, make sure nobody's there. It just leaves you with a real sense of unease.

But members opposite would consider that to be trivial. They consider that to be of no consequence, and I'm wondering if those are the kinds of crimes that the Minister of Justice just simply sat in his office and deleted the warrants on. Did he just hit the button over and over again? Delete. Delete. Delete. Delete. Delete. Because, you know what? I would be offended, as would any Manitoban, knowing that there were warrants that were deleted which the crime impacted them. And to sort of say, well, you know, maybe it was just all small crimes. Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? Everything that we know about the way we should be crime-fighting is we

have to take all crimes serious. It's got to be dealt with.

And I don't think the public would very much appreciate the comments that were made by members opposite saying, well, why would we waste police officers' time only dealing with small crime, and it was one of the NDP backbenchers that got up and made that comment. That's actually shameful, because crime is crime, and it—you know, a purse being stolen by a senior walking to a grocery store, you know what, that will impact her just as much as my home being broken into.

There are very serious crimes that take place and we know that, and those also have to be prosecuted. But to have the minister sit in his office in the cover of darkness and be deleting—deleting—all these warrants, and then feeling that he has no accountability, that he doesn't offer an explanation to anyone, that he doesn't feel he has to come to the Legislature and at least produce some of the numbers of what was deleted, what kind of crimes of the warrants that were deleted. He owes some explanation, and if he doesn't feel he owes it to this Legislature, then he should go out in the public and he should tell the public what he did and what the numbers are and what kind of crimes, which the warrants covered, were deleted. He owes it to the public. He owes it to the men and women who actually put all of us here.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't mind offering a few remarks just based on my experience with Tory approaches to crime-fighting, because I had some real eye-opening experiences, not just in opposition, but when I became attorney general here back in 1999, that I thought I would share with the House, just to put into context what we see as a consistent pattern of how Conservatives deal with crime.

They do talk about it, and that is the one consistent pattern. They talk about it, but when they actually have their hands on the levers, when they have the buttons in front of them, when they have the budgets available, when they have the authority to make change, I can tell you by the following examples what they actually do for the well-being of the people of this province.

So, around 1992-93, this province saw a very regrettable shift in far too many neighbourhoods.

What had happened in those years was rapid expansion of street gangs and auto theft, and I don't think those are mutually exclusive. Day after day in this House, as we were asking the members of the government of the day to do something, I remember the reaction of one of the front bench ministers after a question about criminal street gangs. He yelled across the way, ooh, scary criminal street gangs, ooh, scary—making fun of what had become a terror to too many families, particularly in the city of Winnipeg. And that—I trust it's not on the *Hansard*, but maybe it is—but that epitomized the reaction and the approach by members of the day when it came to street gangs.

Then, of course, as the 1999 election was looming, they decided that maybe they should mention the challenge of gangs somewhere, because it had never been mentioned through the whole course of the '90s in a budget speech or a Throne speech, to my recollection. But, by 1999, it found its way, eventually, into the official record of this House that was an area of supposed concern by members on this side. So what did they do? In a very high profile way, they launched the street gang hotline—oh, the hotline. They should have called it the cold line because that's exactly what it was. And, indeed, I thought, let's just give this hotline a call, and I called it. And, in fact—well, here's a good story. This is a good story for this House—you got to hear this one.

So what happened was, we found out that there was nobody on the other end of the line; nobody there and nobody ever called back. So I was working up a question in the House. We know how members like to, you know—actually, we did research in those days, you know. So I was working up a question in the House to ask why the government had this cold line and why they were telling people that this was the answer to street gangs when nobody answered the phone. Nobody answered the phone for up to five months at a time. Now, every five months, I guess, they go and they say, hello, you know. We're still here. Call again in five months.

So the Minister of Justice at the time thought, oh, am I ever going to make the questioner look silly. He said, oh, he always—the member certainly knows about the hotline. He's been calling it and he called at different times of the day. Well, that was strange, because it was supposed to be a confidential hotline. So the story kept going and going and the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) is—because that really was an interesting story. That's the one in the *Yes Minister* book for Vic Toews, but, anyway. So—

but, then, anyway, that was one of the things they did there on gangs. That was a real doozy.

I want to talk about auto theft because it was also a very, very serious issue, and the government of the day, I recall, one thing they did was they did implement some licence suspension for auto thieves, and that was fine. That's what they did, and I think that's all they did except for this, and this is a little known—this is a secret, but I'll let it out of the bag. When I was sworn into office and I told the staff we've got to go full bore on fighting auto theft, they said, well, would you like to use the signs? I said, what signs? Oh, in the bowels of the wordsworth building in a little, dark room there, there's a big pile of signs that warns Manitobans to take care of your vehicle from auto theft, lock your vehicle and, you know, watch out for auto theft. And I said, what are they doing there? Oh, the government didn't want to put them up because, you know, you don't want to give a bad feeling to people. You know, they wouldn't want to face up to the reality that maybe auto theft could be prevented. So all these signs were sitting over there getting all dusty.

* (15:40)

Now, I can tell you that we did put signs out there with the investments of auto theft—or MPI, and we got on with the job that we had to do. In 2004, we launched the initiative to make sure that most of the at-risk vehicles in Winnipeg were immobilized by—as I recall—I think it was 2010. We had—it was a—and, as well, to balance that, because I know members opposite—I think the member for Steinbach was critical saying, oh, you're blaming victims. Well, no, we also had a very get-tough approach looking at the high-risk offenders because we discovered that the population of auto thieves were actually relatively small. We just had to drill down, find out who they were and then put in place a number of interventions depending on their risk.

I wanted to talk, too, about the—what members opposite do around victims. And you hear it—I came across this old release, and maybe we—can I talk about this? You know, they, oh, the concern about victims—the concern about victims—that we often hear a voice. When they actually had their hands on the levers, when they had the little buttons right there at their fingertips, what did they do? They cut, eliminated or slashed 14—14—victims benefits. They took benefits from the families of those who were harmed by criminals in this province. That was the

actual record. It was a cost saving. I guess they thought that was way more important.

So every time they get up on these crime—they stump on crime, I keep thinking of what they did on street gangs—or didn't do. I'm sorry. I correct the record, please. What they didn't do on auto theft. What they did to victims. And I just picked three areas, but I, yes, I am, for one, have become very, very skeptical of what Conservatives do around crime other than just talk about it. I think that Manitobans are on to that. They certainly were on to that by the time the Filmon government had moved out of here.

And, you know, if there's ever one thing that—I could tell you another little story, but I often think, too, when I hear concerns about child predators on the other side, I keep thinking, why, then, would the Conservatives have purposely located and built a pedophile centre, a reporting centre, at the base of one of the most popular children's parks in Winnipeg? Now, I just could never figure that out. We moved that so goldarn quickly when we discovered that. And so, you know, that's the kind of record that they left. They turned a blind eye to street gangs. They turned a blind eye to organized crime. The Hells Angels, the Zig Zag Crew, the Warriors, the Indian Posse, all came in under their watch. They were just whistling past the graveyard.

We've been taking serious action. We're going to continue to take serious action. Manitobans deserve no less. They certainly don't deserve the lame talk from members opposite.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): And I would like to put some words on the record with regard to purged warrants, private member's resolution that has been put—or, Opposition Day motion that's been put forward by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar)—Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). I'm sorry.

I guess I was really concerned, Mr. Speaker, with—for the comments that were made by the former Minister of Justice. He's talking about a consistent way that members of this House deal with crime. I am appalled that he can say that when I have seen, first-hand—first-hand—the experiences of victims and how poorly this government has handled those situations.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, that just in the past year, I have had to have the unfortunate experience of working through a domestic violence situation with a very close friend of mine, and we had to go through

unbelievable—unbelievable—risks and tasks. And I believe that this minister, to say that we do not care about crime and we don't care about families, I think, is an atrocious thing to say, and the comments coming from the government side of this House speak volumes, to the families that I've had to talk to and the family that I had to personally deal with over the past year.

And, Mr. Speaker, we all have had situations in our families where we've had to deal with the justice system in some way or another, and I believe that victims are who we should be defending in this House, not the criminals. And I believe that by deleting warrants this government speaks—this position and this action speaks volumes of this government and its consistent way, this government's consistent way, of how they deal with crime.

We see a government that has lost touch with the victims in this province. We are seeing from the message that this government has portrayed in purging warrants, has shown that they don't care about victims who have put forward their lives, their families' safety, to put forward their concerns and actually pressing charges against individuals that they are frightened of, Mr. Speaker.

So, when we've asked the government over and over again, were these purged documents a threat to Manitobans, were these purged documents going to cause any further hurt to families, this government ignored the ask.

We've had the Winnipeg Police Association indicate that they are concerned that this government deleted warrants without thinking about the victims, Mr. Speaker. And what about the police that have helped in situations like this. I've had to sit with a friend who had to get her picture taken with blood all over her, with teeth missing. She's had to tell her children that I have been victimized by your father.

So I think I'm appalled that this government would stand here and make light of a situation such as this. Warrants are important and they're there for a reason, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that, when this government talks as they have talked today about the insignificance of this action, I think they should think about the families who have been affected because I believe that this is just an atrocious action by this government, and I think that they deserve to—Manitobans deserve answers from this government.

This action has taken away the sense of personal security from individuals, whether these warrants

were little or of no value—as this government says, something from the 1960s—that doesn't make the crime any less relevant, Mr. Speaker. Crimes happened in the '70s and '80s, and we've had to deal with those, families have had to deal with those as victims.

Sometimes people can't come forward for years after a crime has occurred because they've taken the time to think about what has happened. They have to deal with the issue—with—internally and they have to deal with it with their family, and they have to deal with it within their community, Mr. Speaker.

So for them to say a warrant that came forward in the '60s is of zero value, of no significance, is atrocious. You take away their sense of security. You take away their sense of value. When somebody comes forward and has to put forward their thoughts and their concerns of being a victim and the circumstances surrounding that, that's so hard to do. And I believe that when people have done that they deserve justice. Purging warrants does not provide justice. It provides an out. It provides an out for this government who has for too long taken this without any seriousness.

We know that Victim Services and other organizations out there working with victims are overworked. We know that they cover areas that are significant. For example, in Brandon, the workers—there's two workers that cover not only the city of Brandon but they go all the way to Carberry. They go to the U.S. border. They go all the way to Saskatchewan, St-Lazare, and they go all the way up to Riding Mountain, Mr. Speaker. So they can't do their jobs in the best way that they'd like to do. They're doing the best they can, but they cannot do outreach. They cannot provide the extra supports that victims of crime require.

* (15:50)

So, instead of purging—[interjection]—if the minister—or the Justice Minister here is chirping, Mr. Speaker, I think he could learn something from this. He is not in touch with Manitobans. He is not in touch with victims. He doesn't get it that there are people out there that demand justice, and this government is failing them. This government has done nothing to promote their interest and well-being of Manitoba victims. They promote it, the purging of warrants, so, in a sense, they're supporting the criminals.

Manitoba has a very high rate of domestic violence in Manitoba. Brandon has just done a great job of—the YWCA has done a great job of making people walk in the shoes of other individuals. And that why—what does it mean? It talks about providing the opportunity for others who may not be in a domestic violence situation or have not had the challenges and the difficulties in being involved in a domestic violence situation to take—to step back and see exactly what it's like to walk in somebody else's shoes, Mr. Speaker.

And I believe that when we have a province that has such a high incidence rate of domestic violence, we should be taking things seriously. What does this say? What does this say to a person who has been beaten? What does this say to a family who's had their child molested? The minister says these warrants were of little value. How do we know for sure? Mr. Speaker, how can we know for sure?

We have people in all parts of this province who are victims. We have, in communities as small as Souris, we've had home invasions. We've had people in the north and communities like Thompson and smaller communities who, daily, hear of knifings and stabbings, et cetera. What does this purged warrant stand—do for victims? It does a lot for the criminals.

So I really am appalled by this government in its inability to understand the significance of doing something like this. They may feel it is of little significance, but I challenge the minister, I challenge this government to actually look in the face of people who have been victims of crime and say that they are doing this in the best interests of them because, Mr. Speaker, this action speaks volumes. And I believe this government should be held to account, and I believe they're out of touch, and I believe that they have a lot to be account—be held accountable to, and the victims of Manitoba deserve better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'm pleased to be able to stand today and speak to the motion brought forward by the member from Steinbach. And, you know, listening to some of the comments from the NDP this afternoon has been a little bit disturbing in some ways because what we've been hearing from them is exactly what I predicted a while back and that we're going to start, as we're getting closer to an election, hear more issues related to being a fear-and-smear campaign rather than being about facts. And when I listened to, you know, some of the members this afternoon putting their

comments on the record, all the things I believed were going to happen are exactly happening that way.

Mr. Speaker, the Winnipeg Police Association were the ones that came forward to reveal that Justice officials had deleted arrest warrants. Interesting that the government wasn't the one to bring forward the information, and I don't think the police association probably did it that easily. I'm sure that they did it in good conscience to try to bring some accountability and transparency into the system. And that's what happens out there. When you see a government that's failing to act—and we see it in health care; I see it in health care all the time—you start to get more and more people on the front lines coming forward, trying to force some accountability in the system when your government officials aren't the ones that are doing it and when government officials should be the ones that are doing it if they truly want to make a difference and change things.

So, you know, the question became very apparent. How many warrants were deleted? The Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) wouldn't say. Why is it that every Cabinet minister in this government tends to live under a cloud of secrecy and cover-up? We've seen this with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) over and over and over again for the last number of years. And Brian Sinclair was the perfect example of where we did not see any accountability or transparency and a cover-up of information. And it was horrendous, and now we're seeing another minister, and one sure doesn't expect that to happen from a Justice Minister, however, Mr. Speaker. We don't expect a Justice Minister to be the one that would be behaving in this manner.

And it's not a hard question to answer, and why he's not answering it is a little bit unnerving. How many warrants were deleted? He doesn't have to put names on it. He's not breaching any, you know, privacy issues here. There's nothing confidential about it. How many warrants were deleted? Or what are they hiding behind the fact that they don't want to bring it forward? Were there warrants deleted that might have been about sexual assaults, rapes? Were those some of the ones that were deleted? Were there domestic violence warrants deleted? Were there child abuse warrants deleted? What type of warrants were deleted? And why won't they tell us? And are they not telling us because there are a high number in these types of areas that the public would find unpalatable? Is that why this government doesn't

want to come forward and be upfront with Manitobans in terms of what this information represents? Are there hundreds? Are there thousands? Why the minister is silent on this just makes us think that he's hiding something, and if there was nothing to hide certainly the government would be much more forthcoming, and they're not.

We've seen a lot of desperation coming forward from this government and, again, this is certainly a really good example of more desperation from this government.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Driedger: And some of the NDP members are saying, well, tired too. Well, they're right. They know. They are tired and desperate.

And, Mr. Speaker, if they're too tired to deal with an issue like that what kind of message is that sending to the criminals out there? They know then that they're going to have an easy ride, a soft ride here in Manitoba. What kind of message do our criminals get? If you wait long enough your warrant will get purged and it's no big deal. So, you know, government likes to talk the talk of we're tough on crime. But like somebody over there said earlier, well, look at actions, and we are looking at actions because their actions are certainly speaking very loudly. They're not prepared to be accountable. They're not being upfront with the public about information I think the public actually has a right to know. And it sends a horrible message out there and it sends a horrible message to victims, and those are the ones that we should all be very, very concerned about.

You know, when you look, for instance, at sexual assaults, most women that are sexually assaulted or raped don't come forward now. They will not come to the police. They will not speak up. I know of five date rapes. None of those people came forward to the police because they were afraid and they didn't want to make their issue known publicly. How many more are going to not do that because of the reinforcement of that kind of a message that is being put out to this government? If they really want to encourage women that have been raped or sexually assaulted come forward—we believe you, we will treat you respectfully with dignity, you're a victim, you know, you're not at fault—come forward and we will do what is needed to help you. But, instead, that's not the message that this government is willing to put forward. Instead, now they have basically indicated that a number of warrants out

there don't matter anymore. Victims don't matter anymore, and yet they want us—as they stand here and talk they want us to believe that they really care.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly not an action that we're seeing where this government really cares. And, you know, the more I listen to some of the comments this afternoon this whole issue of cover up and secrecy by the NDP government is just growing and growing in every department. And, you know, it starts right with the Premier's chair with a lack of accountability of his ministers, and if ministers aren't held accountable by the Premier, then your whole system starts to go off the rails, and I think that's what we've seen here.

We've got a Health Minister that has actually led the pack in terms of a lack of accountability. And now we see right on the eve of an election, after 12 years of doing nothing about transparency and accountability, she brings forward a piece of legislation that is going to be about accountability and transparency. Well, really, Mr. Speaker, you know, on the eve of an election who's going to believe this government now when their track record over the last 12 years has really been in the opposite direction? But, when you see a government getting tired and desperate, you start to see desperate acts, and you start to see desperate rhetoric, and we're seeing it here all the time by this government, and the rhetoric is really getting ramped up.

* (16:00)

You know, as I said earlier, we knew it was going to be a fear-and-smear campaign. Anybody could understand that because this government has never, ever stood up for the accountability and transparency that is needed in Manitoba, and we're seeing this again now. We've seen minister after minister not take accountability. We've seen ministers manipulate information and we're seeing this Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) doing the same again now with this information.

And, Mr. Speaker, this doesn't bode well for Manitobans. I think Manitobans deserve far better than this. And it's very disappointing to see the Minister of Justice not carry through with a simple request, on behalf of the citizens of Manitoba, to just tell us how many warrants did he purge, and stand up and be a good minister, be a good steward, be a good steward of his department. And, in fact, we're not seeing it. We're not seeing it from a lot of ministers, and you have to wonder what else is happening in his department that shows that he's not a good steward.

This is just an example. This is how they choose to behave. But what else is going on? Why does the minister cover up this kind of information? Because, indeed, this is about secrecy. This is about a cover up, and if there was nothing to worry about, then this minister should come forward and bring forward this information. Instead, he's burying it like other ministers have done, burying reports, burying information, and this minister is doing the same. We expect more in this province from a Minister of Justice, and I think this minister has a responsibility to the people of Manitoba to do a better job in his department, and this is one good example, one place where he can start, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): And I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion put forward by the member from Steinbach, and the motion says that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Justice to immediately provide the Assembly with a complete list of warrants that were purged in 2009 and 2010, including the nature of the related offences. And I think that's a very reasonable question, approach to take. It's very valid, fair. We just want to know, what's the list? What offences were these?

If there is, as the member from Charleswood was saying, if there is such an unwillingness on the part of this government to just tell Manitobans what these were and what—how many of them were purged and what were the offences, then, clearly—and clearly, Mr. Speaker, they have to know this information. They have to know this information, but, clearly, they do know the information, refusing to give this information to the public and to Manitobans.

So that is the major question. If you have the knowledge, you don't want it to be shared, then the question is, why not? And when you ask the question, why not, it's very, very clear, because it must be so damning to them, it must be so bad that they fear the public's reaction when this would be brought forward. And that is the only reason that we can think of that—why they would not want this information to be made public, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to support this because this is something that supports the rights of victims, Mr. Speaker, and not the rights—there are no rights, for criminals. If you're a criminal, you forfeit your rights, but, obviously, under the NDP government, they are supporting the rights of the criminal. They're supporting the rights of the criminal and ignoring the impact of the victims.

And, of course, the 'attorney' general is sitting there chirping from his seat again and, you know, he should have been listening to what the member from Minnedosa was saying. He should have heard the impact of what her words were. She had been dealing with families, domestic violence situations, and he doesn't really get it, Mr. Speaker. He wasn't really paying attention to what she was saying, because I guess he doesn't really care about the impact that this is having on families.

What the message he is sending to people, Mr. Speaker, is that these crimes aren't important. He pushed the delete button. He erased any evidence of these charges. Save the criminals. But what happens to the victim? The victims still have been victimized by these people. He didn't ask, didn't go to the victims and say, do you mind if we just erase and push the delete button on the people that offended you? No, he didn't. He didn't speak to the victims at all because he doesn't have any feeling for what the victims are going through.

And, you know, as the member from Charleswood rightly pointed out, many people don't report acts of criminal violence against them until afterwards, Mr. Speaker, and it could be years later. And then their warrants would have been purged already. This is certainly—certainly makes people that have been the victim of crime feel like it's—what's the point of recording a crime when the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) in the province of Manitoba just goes, well, we don't really need this warrant, we'll just delete that one. That doesn't send the right message to the people in Manitoba that you can commit a crime here and don't worry about it, we'll just press the delete button and you get off scot-free. What kind of a message does that send to people?

I don't know if anybody in this Chamber has been the victim of a home invasion or someone breaking into your home and stealing things from your home. Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when someone breaks into your home and steals things from you, even if it's not very much, then you feel violated that someone has actually been in your home and done something to your personal property and your personal home. Now, if I am the victim of that, I certainly don't want to find out that the Minister of Justice has pushed the delete button on the person who did that to me or to my family. That—I feel that that is just dead wrong. I just—I can't understand that at all. And, you know, the police association as well is very alarmed at this as well.

Mr. Speaker, under this NDP government, I guess, the police and the police service have said this as well, it's just a terrible message to send to the public that you can do the crime and you can get away with it and don't worry, you can just walk away and nothing will be done. What does this say? It tells the criminals here they can come here and do whatever they want and with—it's going to be condoned by this government.

Why won't they tell us the number of warrants that were purged and what the offences were? How do we know—how do we know? Now certainly he might say, well, there may be some that were minor offences and that—you know, but let's, let us hear what they were. And maybe some of these people after many years, maybe they've passed away. Well, just let us know. That's fine. But what about all the other thousands of warrants that we won't—we don't know what it was. Was it domestic violence, Mr. Speaker? Was it child abuse? Was it a crime against a person? What was it? Was it a murder? How do we know?

Well, the Minister of Justice says, no, it wasn't to that. I asked him, I said, is it—was it a crime of murder? He said no. So he obviously knows what they are. He knows what these purged warrants are warrants for, Mr. Speaker. He obviously knows because he just said no to one of the questions I said. So why won't he tell the public how many purged warrants there are, and why won't he tell us what these warrants are for? Why does he continue to support the criminals in this province which have flourished—which have flourished—under this NDP government? Why does he continue to allow this to happen instead of supporting victims and families of victims?

* (16:10)

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that, as we heard from the member from Springfield, that in 2000, the Hells Angels took over the province of Manitoba under the NDP watch. And I can tell you that just a couple of years after that, they moved into my community just because they felt that Manitoba was open for the Hells Angels' business. And that's just wrong because criminals in this province know that they can get away with doing anything and the top guy in this province, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), is just going to put—press the delete button, press delete, press delete, press delete. That's what he's doing.

Why does he do this? Why does he not support the victims? Mr. Speaker, there's victims out there of crime that probably don't even know that the Minister of Justice has pushed the delete button on their perpetrator. That is shameful. It's wrong. This is a tired, desperate government and should be gone. And certainly the victims of all these crimes should have—they should have had the decency to go and talk to the victims and see what they would think about this, but they didn't care about the victims. They don't care about the victims. They only care about themselves.

They need to come clean with these number of warrants and what the offences are, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly hope that they are going to vote for this motion so that Manitobans can actually see the number of purged warrants and what those warrants were for. And I hope that they start supporting victims instead of criminals in this province. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do want to put a few things on the record in regards to the motion brought forward by the member from Steinbach and seconded by our leader. I have heard from many, many of my constituents about how they feel this government is soft on crime. And whenever we listen to the public and what has happened in the past, and I can tell you from living in rural Manitoba, whenever they're tough on crime in the city, they move out to the Capital Region, which encompasses a large portion of my riding.

And I can tell you, being victimized by a number of these thugs and then to be released, catch and release program, or just to have their charges dropped, is unfortunate because I cannot imagine how I would feel if somebody did that to my family and just had a minister say, we're going to release him. We're going to delete him, without any accountability, without any accountability whatsoever, I find wrong. And I know the general public feels it's wrong and, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Justice won't say how many of those people were released or deleted from the file.

It's very unfortunate that the general public don't have that information that was at the Justice Minister's fingertips. Whenever we have an opportunity to right a wrong, and this government decides because of a little button on a computer, they

can delete that, just delete, and away they go. They're set free once again.

Well, I can tell you, when I grew up there was a clear message that if you had made a wrong, you had to suffer the consequences, and that is what's wrong with our society today. When you get a minister like this that's soft on crime that just says, oh, it's okay. We're going to let you go. We'll delete that but we're not going to tell many people how many that we let go. We're not going to tell you what those charges were. And whenever you have that message, sent out to the government—from the government to the ratepayers, they're going to say, who's accountable? Is it the criminals? Is it the people that are wrong? Why are we being victimized through no fault of our own, through no fault of our families, being victimized by this government?

What they're simply saying is, it's okay. We're going to give you a release by deleting those criminals' records, and that's so unfortunate. That's the message that's been sent out by this government and, in fact, Mr. Speaker, statistics in Canada say that only 30 per cent of the victims of crime, especially property crime, actually report their crimes to police. Victims are going to be even less likely to report these crimes if they feel they won't pursue or warrants that [*inaudible*] to be deleted. Well, what kind of message is that going to send out?

I mean, does people start taking justice into their own hands? I would hope not—I would hope not. That's the last thing we need to do is to have a vigilante out there, a vigilante group to say, oh, I'm going to look after this because the current government is soft on crime. That is a message we certainly don't want to make sure that gets out into the public. It's unfortunate that whenever a crime occurs that there's not consequences for those actions. And we have to make very sure, Mr. Speaker, that we don't allow that to happen.

So the motion today that was brought forward by the member of Steinbach is certainly in line with what needs to happen with this government to make accountability. And, of course, we talk about the police association and what a slap on the face of those hard-working individuals that work each and every day to protect our families, protect our children and to make sure that they do justice—that they do justice for those victims. And then what has happened? The Justice Minister comes along and says, ah, we can fix that—delete.

We don't know how many they deleted. I don't know if the minister even knows how many he deleted.

The unfortunate part is is a message that I come back to that is not acceptable for the general public, and that is, if you do a crime, you have to serve the time. And it's time this government come accountable and make sure that every person in this province is protected for those crimes that is brought against them.

So the other thing that I want to just put on the record on—in regards to criminals in Manitoba, should know if they are going to do a crime, not to do the time. It is now, under this NDP government, long—wait long enough and your offence will be erased. As Mike Sutherland, president of the Winnipeg Police Association, said, and I quote: This, the message is this: how low, long—lay low long enough and your troubles will go away. End of quote

Well, that's unfortunate. Whenever we have people like this that say, oh well, I'm just going to keep my nose clean. I'm going to make sure that I don't do anything else for a little bit of a time, and then, after a while, the Justice Department will make sure that those charges go away. That's unfortunate.

And, Mr. Speaker, the number of warrants that were purged, again, we're not sure of the numbers, but it could be anywhere from 5,000, 15,000. Who carried out this purge and who made the final decision? Decision—that is very simple, because the message is loud and clear that it came from this government. It came from this minister. And, obviously, if they don't feel that these victims that, who have, who, they're responsible to and to be accountable to each and every day, is their responsibility to make sure that justice, in fact, is carried out.

So, with that, I'd like to leave it at that. And I know that, when it comes to the vote, our side is going to be very sure that this motion we brought forward by the member from Steinbach and seconded by our leader of our party, would have the support of our party. And I encourage the members of the opposite side to do the right thing and support this motion.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the motion brought forward by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Official Opposition House Leader): I'd like to request a recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

* (16:30)

Order. The question before the House is the motion moved by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Division

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

Yeas

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Taillieu.

Nays

Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blaikie, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Oswald, Reid, Rondeau, Saran, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe.

Mr. Deputy Clerk (Rick Yarish): Yeas 17, Nays 28.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you'd

canvass the House to see if there's a will to call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is there a will to call it 5 o'clock?
[Agreed]

Okay, the hour now being—*[interjection]* Order.
The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. on Tuesday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 19, 2011

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