

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

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Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 204—The Personal Health Information
Amendment Act**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 204, The Personal Health Information Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements médicaux personnels, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill 204. In this legislative session, Manitoba Liberals are presenting a number of bills dealing with health-care issues. Our goal in presenting these bills is to protect medicare for future generations. It is a sad but true fact that we have to protect every day our health-care system from the machinations of the NDP government and the mismanagement that's going on. But it is nevertheless true, and that's one of the reasons why we have this legislation being put forward today.

The aim of this legislation is to ensure that those who are in hospital or in a personal care home will have access to information on their medical records within 24 hours instead of the current 30 days. I want to recognize right away that this bill has come about in part as the result of the efforts of Mimi Raglan and others. Mimi Raglan and her mother sought to get access to her mother's medical records when she was in hospital. Sadly, her mother passed away 18 days after she was admitted to hospital.

The 30-day benchmark was not good enough. It did no good at all for Mimi Raglan's mother, and it is not good enough for anyone else in Manitoba either. It is time to change the system; it is time to make sure that there is quick access to medical records. We put this bill forward in a way that is feasible for

hospitals to follow and ensures that we change to a more open culture in terms of sharing medical information and sharing what is on the medical record with the patient and with the family.

I would like to recognize the fact that Mimi Raglan is in the gallery today as is her husband, Blake Taylor, and as is Leslie Worthington, who has been a very strong advocate for improved health care in Manitoba.

It is important that we recognize what has happened, that we learn from the mistakes, and that we improve going forward. Here is an instance where we clearly can learn from what was a major mistake in the case of Mimi Raglan's mother, and we can learn, going forward, by making the changes in the process so that there is a much more open system than there has been in the past. It is important that patients and their families are real participants in care.

Patients and families now have access to all sorts of health information, not only in books but on the Internet, from friends, from a wide variety of sources, and it is important that the patient, for their own well-being, that the patient is well informed, that the family is well informed. The uncertainties created by being poorly informed are significant, and those uncertainties and anxieties only serve to make the hospital stay worse, to hinder the healing process and to cause problems in health care. It is time that we change.

Just recently, I was in visiting a friend who was in hospital. Exactly this sort of situation was happening, that she and her family were not getting good information, were not sure what was happening. It was creating a lot of unnecessary anxiety, unease. It was causing mental anguish, unnecessarily so, and worsening the whole healing process. If we want healing to occur well and optimally, then we need to ensure that patients and families have access to information about what is going on, and it needs to be done in an open way.

With this legislation, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that hospitals and personal care homes will make sure that when somebody is admitted to hospital they outline the process and make sure that records are

readily available. This is about making a change in the culture from the way the health-care system has worked too often in the past, being protective, covering up information, rather than being open with information and sharing information.

*(10:10)

On countless occasions, I have experienced instances where patients and their families, because they have been informed, have helped with the care, have improved the care, and have been wonderful participants in aiding the process of healing. That is what we need to achieve, and that is why we need this bill. That is why we need to make the changes that we Liberals are bringing in today. This bill will provide for a consistent policy all over Manitoba. It is good that some hospitals, some institutions are moving in this direction now, and I say to those who are, good for you; that's what needs to be done. But what we need is a consistent policy all over Manitoba. We don't need one policy for the Grace Hospital and another policy for the soon-to-be-built hospital in Cross Lake which the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) is going to be advocating for. We want to have one policy all over Manitoba.

What we need is to change and what we need is the improvement in the system, and that is why my colleague, the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and I have brought forward this bill at Second Reading. That is why we have been bringing forward several bills on health care: The Apology Act, the act to bring accountability to health care. These are all measures which are needed. My colleague from Inkster has introduced the bill to have better recognition and awareness of FASD prevention measures. All of these bills aimed at improving our health-care system and protecting medicare for future generations.

Sadly, last week the NDP blocked and adjourned bill after bill after bill. They are the blocking and adjournment party. This is a sad testament to what has happened to the NDP in this Legislature last week. We are looking forward to some change in attitude and some movement, and we hope that the NDP MLAs will stand up and discuss and debate this legislation today.

This bill was first introduced on June 14. That's three and a half months ago. The NDP MLAs have had three and a half months now to study this legislation, to look into it, to consult, to do whatever they want, so I'm sure they're going to be ready today to speak to this legislation, and I hope to support it

because it's an important step forward. We're going to find out very shortly whether the NDP have done their homework.

An Honourable Member: The rumour is they will do it.

Mr. Gerrard: Good. Well, that's excellent that they're going to—*[interjection]* No, but at least we've got a step forward.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important bill. I would hope it will have support from MLAs on all sides of the Chamber, and let us hope that we can move it forward today, pass it so it will go to committee. Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, I want to do my best to meet the expectations of the Member for River Heights, having done my homework on the legislation that he's proposed.

I want to speak a little bit, and I think the member has noted that there have been several improvements and steps forward in the culture of health care when it comes to admitting patient errors and trying to develop a culture that learns from its mistakes instead of hides its mistakes. I think one of the things that is most promising in that regard has been the formation of the Manitoba patient safety institute under the able leadership of Dr. Paul Thomas.

I'm sure all members have seen the bus ads that encourage patients to be very informed about their health care, to ask questions of their providers. I think this has been a tremendous step forward. Certainly advocating for patients to be more engaged in their care, for their families to ask questions and know that they have a right to get information is something that I have advocated in the past, so I'm very pleased to see a public campaign on that issue.

I have some concerns about this piece of legislation. I believe the current system allows for patients to receive their health records—requires that they get that information as soon as possible, but it has to be within 30 days. So certainly 30 days is not the expectation that it will always take that long, but it is the outer limit that hospitals and institutions are allowed to take in order to provide that information. I think that allowing that allocation that says they should get it as soon as possible, but at least within 30 days, does allow for the practicality of health-care records and health-care information. Certainly the boondoggle that was SmartHealth put back many years the development of better information

technology in health care that would allow for electronic record keeping. But having worked in the health-care system, I do know that often you will get requests for records that can be as old as five or seven years old, and in that situation it is just often not practical to expect that we are going to divert resources from the front lines of health care to go in search for a record that may be five or seven years old. People have a right to that information, and I think we have allowed that they should get it in a timely manner and certainly as soon as possible.

I think that the culture of health care is changing, as I have said, and there have been many, many good workshops and information put forward by the regional health authorities that I have taken part in that stress very much the responsibility of health-care providers and health-care administrators to get good and timely information to family members and to get clear and plain information to family members that's easily understandable.

The need for this was completely driven home to me. One of the meetings that stands out in my memory that I was privileged to attend when I worked in this building with the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), we went to a meeting with the parents of babies who, tragically, had died in the cardiac surgery crisis that had taken place. We met with those parents, and it was so clear to me then that we needed to take steps to change the system, to open up the system so that it would be able to talk about when tragic mistakes are made, that it would be able to inform families as soon as possible and honestly about when those mistakes occur. It was important for those families, I think, for their own grieving process, but it's also important for all of us that the health-care system can learn from its mistakes and that we don't continue to encourage a culture which hides those mistakes and blames each other.

Mr. Speaker, I think to that end this government did bring in some legislative changes that make some requirements and make it easier for health-care providers to report on mistakes that are made on occurrences and critical occurrences within the system, and those I think were critically needed changes. It is very important I think that all of us continue to try to send a message to the health-care system that, when there are errors, we are not going to jump on top of the people who make those mistakes, blame them and make it even more difficult for the system to admit its errors and to learn from them. I think it is important for all of us to

encourage that culture, that growing culture of openness within the health-care system.

Because often I think the reality is that something will happen, and we know that the health-care system is made up of people often doing the best job that they can and that there are errors that happen. I think sometimes those happen, the nature of this building is to politicize those errors, to pile on top of a tragic mistake, and then the result of that is that we make the system, we make doctors and nurses even more afraid to come forward when there are errors. And we are not doing patients any favours in doing that, and we are certainly not improving the health-care system which I think is our job, all of us, to do our best to improve that system for patients.

So I think we have made tremendous steps in making the system safer and encouraging that safety. I think there is a way to go yet, and I don't think any of us on this side of the House are closed to the idea that we can do a better job, that we can help the health-care system do a better job of getting information that is timely and accurate and in plain language to patients. I think we are committed to that, but I would be concerned if we put such a restrictive time line on the system that they had to take resources away from the front lines in order to meet that.

So I would encourage that we work with the people who have to do this work to come up with changes that we can make that are going to work for patients and work for health-care workers but are also going to achieve our ends and I am sure everybody's ends in this Chamber, which is to provide a better health-care system that provides timely information that is able to admit its mistakes and learn from them.

With those few words, I am happy to hear what my fellow members have to say on this bill.

* (10:20)

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to debate Bill 204 in regard to the health care that we in this province are afforded.

The honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) admitted that the government has a long way to go. Yet, when electioneering out on this past spring, it was laid out that this government had moved so far on the issue of health care and that we were so privileged to live in Manitoba and that we should be fortunate and to once again vote for the

New Democratic Party because of the health care that we enjoy in this province. Well, Mr. Speaker, the truth could not be further away.

The public was indeed hoodwinked on the issue of health care because one only needs to participate in the health-care system, unfortunately, with a family member or personally. This summer, I had that opportunity. Perhaps the honourable members on the government side of the House might just want to relax for a moment and I'll tell them of the personal experience that, for two months during this summer, we were engaged in the health-care system here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the health-care system that we have here enjoys the health-care professionals that are dedicated to making loved ones and those afflicted by illness comfortable and attending to their needs and hoping upon hope that they will recover and again enjoy a normal, healthy life. However, sadly, these health-care personnel within our hospitals are so overworked and demanded upon that I indeed want to say that I am sorry, to those who work day in, day out, that we as elected officials have not been able to improve our health-care system even though the New Democratic Party would lead us to believe that it has been improved.

The situation of which I speak is that the passing of my father-in-law this summer allowed for us to spend an inordinate number of days and weeks at the health-care facility in St. Boniface, primarily in the cardiac care unit.

The personnel within that cardiac care unit I cannot speak more highly of. However, time and time again, the health-care personnel that we saw looking after my father-in-law were double-shift, overtime and constantly, constantly asked to do more in a shortened period of time.

The facilities at the St. Boniface Hospital, in the cardiac care unit, I will say technologically are second to none, and fortunately this government finally came around to taking the advice of the former Filmon government and that was to merge the cardiac care specialists all into one facility. It was this NDP government that said that that move was folly and for years maintained cardiac care units in both the Health Sciences Centre and the St. Boniface Hospital. Finally, after years of trying to maintain two programs at two different facilities, the New Democratic Party finally adopted the Conservative idea of merging the two cardiac care units into one in the St. Boniface Hospital. I applaud the New

Democratic Party for finally recognizing that they had made a mistake, that a Conservative government really did have a better idea, and I credit them for finally coming around to recognizing that.

In the cardiac care unit, they are so limited because the intensive care, the post-operative area of the cardiac care unit, has 24 state-of-the-art beds to care for those that have come out of surgery and to provide that much-needed intensive care. But through the entire time that we were there, and it was weeks, Mr. Speaker, we observed that always, always more than half of those intensive care beds were unmanned. Perhaps I will say there was no personnel attending to those beds. Because there was no personnel, the operating rooms were curtailed in their activities because there was no postoperative care personnel available.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, when my father-in-law passed away it was on a weekend, and there was personnel in the cardiac care unit, and from bed to bed to bed all of those personnel that I spoke with at that time were double-shifted. They were working on their 15th hour, their 16th hour and expected to care for patients that needed minute-to-minute attention.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sad, sad reflection of our current health-care system here in Manitoba. The bottom line, and I hope all government members are listening, is that there were only six beds in that state-of-the-art cardiac care unit that were able to be staffed, and the staff that was manning those beds were all on double-shift. You kind of wonder why we've gotten to where we are today. Why is it that we are demanding of our health-care personnel such extraordinary dedication? Something is failing in our system and the fault is not those who are spending 15, 16 and more hours in a given day attending to those that we care and love.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) proposing this bill because the nurses are not able to talk to family members. Only the doctors are allowed to share the information about the state of the condition of their loved ones. I will say that our family's blessed with doctors and highly skilled nurses within our family, and we could have interpreted, had we been able to see some of the observations in the records. Fortunately, though, we were privy to visit within the intensive care unit, and we were able to observe and make our own assessment of our father-in-law's and father's and grandfather's condition. But it would have been much, much, much better, the

anxiety that was brought on because we could not have that constant communication and sharing of records and progress or regress.

So I applaud the Member for River Heights for entering in the Legislature here today Bill 204 and for asking us to consider the ability that we make available to family members. I could go on because there is another situation within our long-term care facility in Portage la Prairie where a doctor attended to his mother and was startled to see her condition and the change in medication. He's a medical doctor and could very well have interpreted better than perhaps a physician that only saw the patient in a brief few moments. If he'd had been able to find out what specifically the medication was which had been administered to his mother, perhaps he would have been able to share some of his own expertise and assist, because that medication was extraordinarily detrimental to his mother and, unfortunately, she, too, has passed on.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand today and discuss even for a short few minutes the state of our health care which sooner or later all of us, all of us, will have to rely upon, and it's incumbent upon all of us to do our very level best to make certain that we have the health-care facilities and the health care within our province that is second to none. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I am rising today to speak on Bill 204 and I'd like to be able to say that this bill really should be redundant at this point if we had and were able to have unlimited amounts of money in the system to be able to develop a system of electronic health records. That system is, in fact, Mr. Speaker, being rolled out in different parts of North America.

* (10:30)

As a matter of fact, we were at the Midwest legislators' conference this year and last year, and I did participate in one of the sessions where we were talking about electronic health records. In fact, in a lot of hospitals in the United States right now, it's an absolute necessity that they develop these records as quickly as possible because they are being sued for their errors.

The Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) did speak in recent months to the issue of medical errors, and I do recall him mentioning some large number of medical errors that have been identified that happen every year in which patients die in this

country and in other countries. So it just makes sense that we have to have an electronic health record system in all the hospitals as soon as we can have that developed, and for a number of reasons. Doctors' writing is not always the best. So there is a transcription problem there. As soon as we can have a system where records are readable by anyone who looks at them, we should be able to have a much better system. Even with an electronic records system, you're still going to have the odd mistake being made, but at least I think we can cut down the number of errors dramatically and substantially with this system.

Now, I want to tell you that in the province of Alberta, at least four or five years ago, they developed a system called SuperNet. What the plan was there was to run dark fibre right across the province, a very expensive prospect that we have not done here in Manitoba. We should be doing a lot more, working a lot quicker towards that goal. But what their plan was there with SuperNet was to connect all of the hospitals in the province, and not only connect all the hospitals but connect all the doctors' offices. If you were to have a system like that in Manitoba, if you had tests, say, in the Thompson hospital, and you would take these tests, and you were outside of Thompson and you were in Winnipeg and you had to go to the hospital on an emergency basis, no matter what hospital you went to in the city, they would be able to access all your tests that they took in Thompson. They'd be able to access your records and not have to retake all the tests. You know, you could die while they're taking the tests because sometimes you are in that critical situation.

This is the system that they were developing there. But as the Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) has pointed out, there's a large learning curve here and there's a lot of resistance on the part of the doctors and the doctors' offices and the hospital employees and the hospitals to move to new systems. In the IT business it's called the silo effect. I have been advocating for a number of years now that the federal government should take the responsibility of funding an IT program for hospitals.

We've had situations here where we have departments in our Manitoba government competing against one another. We have industry, trade and tourism funding a software company developing a receivables program that they sold to, I think, Misericordia Hospital. We were at the plant, the offices where they developed the program, and I

asked the question: What are you going to do with this program that the government is helping you develop? And he said, well, we're just going to sell it to all the hospitals.

But from a taxpayers' point of view, that means the taxpayer has the privilege of paying for this software program over and over and over again while the software company just makes money on this. So what we should be doing is developing a hospital IT program on a national basis paid for by the federal government, and it should be licensed right across the country to all the hospitals across Canada. So, if you happen to be in Newfoundland, you know, big hospitals operating with the same IT program that they have in Manitoba. If you have tests that you take in Manitoba, and you happen to be in Newfoundland, those can be accessed because you're dealing with the same system.

This is not happening here in Manitoba. The hospitals all wanted to do their own thing, right? So we were hoping that we could get them to have a consistent IT structure, and I think that that has been worked on a little bit through the regional health authorities. One of the whole ideas behind the regional health authorities was to integrate the system a lot more, to have consistent IT, shared purchasing programs. This is all part of the big picture. But what we're fighting here is an issue of cost, enormous costs, and reluctance on the part of the participants in the system to go along with a central system.

Now, this system is being rolled out at St. Boniface Hospital and has been in the process of being rolled out now for, I think, the better part of a year. I'm sure there's going to be a learning curve here. There's going to be a lot of bugs in the system that have to be worked out but we are on track. That's why I say that this bill should, in fact, be a redundant bill because we shouldn't be talking about whether the records should be available in 24 hours or weeks and whatnot. In 10 or 20 years time, we should have instant access.

I did a tour of the Brandon Hospital last year and looked at their new systems they have there; they have great imaging systems and, in fact, they work just fine, but if they have to send the imaging system to a clinic outside the Brandon area, they still have to take the film and they have to put it on a bus and send it out to the system. Now, if we had a SuperNet idea here, where we had dark-fibre connections to all the hospitals, well then you wouldn't have that

problem because the hospital in the rural community, 30, 40 miles away from Brandon, could access the film right away without having to wait for the bus to show up. That's what's happening right now. So you cannot cure all the ills in one day. At least we are making an effort, at the present time, and technology, I could say the technology is there.

Let's look back a few years when the Tories were blowing all this money on the SmartHealth. I mean, we did make a big issue about this and we did grill them a lot and rightly so, but the fact of the matter was that they were trying to set up an electronic health-care system. It was just a little too early.

We see the Ontario government, as far back as Bob Rae, were setting up a smart card system in Ontario and it was a great idea, but the technology just wasn't there at the time. What they were trying to do was they were trying to track how many Americans were coming—and you know they do—across the Windsor border and the border at Fort Frances, Ontario. They had a couple of test areas and they were gauging how many people were coming up to Canada for operations because, in fact, in Ontario there were, say, 10 million people in the province and there were 11 million OHIP cards. So they had more cards than they had people in the province of Ontario. So people were coming up and they were trying to track that system. Well, after a couple of years testing of that system, it didn't pan out.

So then we go further ahead to Mike Harris's government. He announced a big smart card program, and it was going to run in conjunction with the bank card smart cards that they were phasing in over the last few years. The next thing I heard about that was that thing, they had a big office rented and spending huge amounts of money and after a couple of years that died, too, because once again, it was just a very prohibitive cost for the time, but now we are advanced another five years down the road and there is critical mass here.

When you have hospitals in the United States having the electronic health-care records, then you see the costs start to drop as more and more hospitals get on-line with this system. So, you know, there may have been some benefits to waiting but as the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) pointed out, how many thousands of people have died in the process? He's had some first-hand experience with people dying because of medical errors. A lot of

people in the constituencies talk to you about this, and they are convinced in their own mind that their family member went to the hospital and didn't come out of there, and they think there is some good reason why, that it had involved an error. It's all kind of covered up and there's a certain amount of grey arguments to be made here and nothing ever comes of it.

So we know there's a problem there; we want to solve the problem. The electronic health record is going to help, is going to drive us a long way along the road to solving the problem. It's still not going to solve the whole problem because you're still going to have input errors no matter what system you operate. So I don't want to suggest to you that the death medical error rate is going to drop. It's not—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (10:40)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, as the seconder of the motion, it's a pleasure for me to be able to once again speak on what I believe is a progressive piece of legislation that could have a very positive impact in the province of Manitoba in an area in which the New Democratic Party likes to stake ownership, Mr. Speaker. But I think the more time this government is in a position of power, they have to surrender any sort of monopoly they might have once had in regard to health care, or a perceived monopoly of health care, because what we're seeing, once again, is a government that doesn't recognize a good idea, no matter how it is brought forward.

This is a piece of legislation that, once again, could in fact quite easily pass this Chamber. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that there are individuals that would welcome the opportunity to be able to comment on this legislation if it was allowed to go to committee, and I challenge the government.

It's encouraging in one sense. Last time I spoke on private members' hour, the government wasn't even prepared to speak on private members' bills. Today, we are getting members speak on private members' bills. I do acknowledge that from the government perspective—even though, I must say, I believe the Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) got it wrong when she uses an example, well, you know, we could have someone that would request information from years back, and it's going to consume so much time, and we're more concerned about delivering health care. In the clause in the legislation, it states that, 24 hours after receiving it, if

the request is limited to immediately available information.

An Honourable Member: Availability.

Mr. Lamoureux: Available. You know, Mr. Speaker, the former Minister of Family Services heard the demands for her resignation so often that she just revels in the thought that she now gets to sit in her place and ask someone to resign. Like the minister, I'm not going to resign. Sorry to break the news. I think that was a dream that the Premier (Mr. Doer) had. I think he needs to abandon that dream. After all, I have yet to even see a piece of paper that clears it. But, anyway, I digress.

The point is, the type of information that we're looking for that is immediately available—that would be at the nursing station. So, in a very real way, what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker, is that if you're in a position in which you're in a hospital facility and you're being treated, there's a chart that's kept on what's being done, administered, and your overall treatment in that facility, and you, as a patient, would have a right to be able to see that chart. See, today, you don't have that right. You would put in the request and they would have 30 days to obligate it, and most often, they would just provide it to you. But you are not guaranteed that right. If you say, well, what are you writing on my chart to an individual that's putting something down on your chart, they do not have any legal obligation to provide it to you in a timely fashion, and that's really what we're saying.

The Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) says that that's not true. Is the Member for Fort Rouge trying to say that if someone requests it, that they are obligated to provide it within the 24 hours? Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that they could take 30 days before they can actually provide that information. So, what we're suggesting, and what this private members' bill is suggesting, is that the rights of the patients should be enabled so that they can receive timely information. What's wrong with that? I don't quite understand the logic behind the government to not support a piece of legislation that would be consumer-friendly to our health-care clients. We all want to know what's happening when it's family or friends or whomever it might be that's at a bedside, and they should be able to have a sense in terms of what it is that the health-care administration is putting down on paper. This is really what this bill enables, is a timely access to that information.

That's something in which I truly believe that the vast majority, vast majority, somewhere maybe as high as 90 percent-plus of health-care professionals, that would recognize that there's nothing wrong with providing information in a more timely fashion. In fact, my understanding is that quite often, if a patient requires or requests to see what's being written or what's put down on their charts, it's provided to them virtually immediately. That happens most of the time when someone puts in a request.

It's not earth-breaking legislation. It's not going to, you know, change the world, but it will have an impact. We want that impact because at times the legislation may be of value to a family member or to a client that's in our hospital facilities. That's why the legislation is before us. Who can question if the records are on a nursing station, why would you deny a patient the opportunity to be able to see the information that's being written about them in that 24 hour which would be a timely fashion, Mr. Speaker? It's not going to create a bureaucratic empire to share that information.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the government would be well advised to look at the bill. I get this sense that they haven't really looked at the bill. I get that sense from, in particular the Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) when she spoke on the private member's bill seemed to not necessarily understand what it is that was being requested to provide. I don't know to what degree the Minister of Health has taken a look at this bill. Hopefully, if this bill does not make it to the committee stage, we'll hear directly from the Minister of Health as to why it is that she believes that this bill should die on the Order Paper or why the government's not going to proceed.

You know, it was encouraging the other day when the Leader of the Liberal Party brought in legislation that would deal with phosphorus. Then, later in Question Period, I'd posed the question to the Premier (Mr. Doer) why is the Premier not debating the bill. Then he indicated that it was his intention now—and this is the first I heard, Mr. Speaker—that he would bring in their own legislation or they will somehow ensure that the essence of our bill, plus maybe even more, was going to be brought in through his government. So we, through our bill, the government recognized the idea and moved forward on it, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]*

Well, I would be interested in hearing from the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) as to what it is that

she feels about this bill. You know, we shouldn't as an opposition have to bring forward a bill and then question the government in terms of what its intentions are during Question Period. What should happen is the appropriate minister or individual should be standing up and clearly indicating what it is that the government's position is on the bill.

So, in this particular case, Mr. Speaker, I think that there is an obligation on the Minister of Health or through the Minister of Health, one of the New Democratic members of their caucus to stand up and say, here's what we think about this bill. If that means that they don't support it, period, well then, say you don't support it, Mr. Speaker. Go further than that. At least allow them the bill to come to a vote where it's actually defeated. So then, members of the opposition can say that the government voted against this legislation instead of taking the weasel way out and just adjourn debate or say nothing on the private member's bill, because the public does have a right to know in terms of what it is the government is thinking about in regard to a private member's bill.

I see my time has expired, Mr. Speaker. I trust and hope that this bill in fact will pass. Thank you.

* (10:50)

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to put a few words on this act. It was interesting to hear the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) speak on this because I think what we are talking about is the same there where we want to make sure that people do get access to their health records, people do get access to health records on people, their loved ones, as soon as possible.

I think what we want to do is give the member a little bit of a history on what we've done in this regard. When we listened and we went to the communities, myself and the Member for Fort Garry (Ms. Irvin-Ross), did some public debate and hearings about the FIPPA and about The Personal Health Information Act a number of years ago. What we did here was often there is a lot of information out there. People do get timely information, but we also did hear that there were some issues. When we heard there were issues, it was interesting because people often had an interpretation of the act that was not quite accurate.

There were some issues that were brought to our attention. So we actually heard from the health-care

providers and from the administration that there were some misunderstandings about what the act said. The act basically says that people do have access to their health-care information as soon as possible. The limit that the information has to be provided is—the maximum is 30 days, but we often say that they want to get it as soon as possible. They want to have access to their information and we want to make that real.

So what we did was we started to work with the RHAs and we found that by creating workshops with RHA personnel we told them that the people were supposed to get the information as soon as possible and also get the explanation. So it wasn't just good enough to get the information in the files, it was important to get some understandings of what the files contained and the information and how to translate it, how to put the information in English because the information was not always the way it should be presented.

So the RHAs conducted Personal Health Information Act workshops with staff to find out the information that was there, how to get it to the people, and how to get it out to the public, to the people that needed to have the information, so that the public had rights, the government had obligation, the health institutions had an obligation to provide the information, a timely information.

The other thing that was interesting to note about The Personal Health Information Act that was important was that we found that the loved ones often needed to have information and we started to say, how can we get loved ones to make sure that they had the access to the information. We talked to a bunch of seniors groups and different organizations to say, all right, your mother or father or your spouse might have right to information but they might be not able to understand the information. They might be not healthy enough to be able to act upon it. So we needed to make sure that this information on your loved ones having your access to the information was out there.

So we actually got the Seniors Directorate to put this information on their Web site to make sure that health directives were there, right to your loved ones' access to health information was out there. In fact, it was interesting because, even in my own case, my mother now has me as a person who can get access to her health information in case there's a health emergency. It was just a simple form. It's now

provided by people and actually the Seniors Directorate has it as information.

The public legal information has a pamphlet that they've sent out to seniors groups on information that seniors should know about and it actually talks about this as an issue. It's actually talking about health directives. So it's not just the right of the person for their information. It's the right of their loved ones to get information and to take appropriate legal action prior to needing it. So we've done a number of initiatives with the seniors to make sure that their loved ones can get information in a timely way.

The other thing that you have to look at, is the whole, as people get older, how to do the transition from them controlling their own health information to their loved ones controlling their health information and so this becomes another aspect because you don't want people to have inappropriate information. You don't want them to have information that they're not entitled to, but you also want loved ones to be able to step in when they need to. So I think the key would be to engage seniors organizations, engage society as a whole, to let them know what the issues are. Because if you have the signed forms, if you have it done early, then it's much, much easier because, again, in society you also have as government, you have to be able to make sure that people don't get inappropriate information or information that might not be directed at them. So, there is a balance between right to information and the obligation of government to make sure that the information isn't provided to everyone. So that balance becomes important. Trying to get the Seniors Directorate and other organizations involved in this issue is important because then, in my case, when my mom says, yes, I want my son to have access, to have control in case she becomes indisposed, that becomes important. So we sign that piece of paper, and we want to get that out into the public because it is important.

The other thing that we need to do, when we're looking at the information, is bringing government up to the future. I know that the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) talked about the electronic health record. I know that we've done some work with St. Boniface to create an electronic health record. I know that we're trying to work on it, but the trouble often is we're a small jurisdiction. We contain about 3.7 percent of the Canadian population, and this whole idea of tying doctors' offices, who are independent contractors, and some clinics and hospitals and the records and all the labs together is a

huge challenge, because not only do you have to have the systems and the management and operating systems talk together, you have to have all the different compatible systems. You have to have the transmission system that's compatible and secure. You have to have a system that works in multiple computer languages. And so it's not an easy fix, and just trying to get all the hospitals and clinics and all this to have compatible financial systems is already hard.

So, when we're talking about electronic records, which would be nice, which would be very, very effective, we have to have something that the Thompson RHA can talk to the Winnipeg RHA. We have to have different doctors' offices to be able to talk, different labs to be able to put them all in. I have to agree with the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) because it's something that technology is expensive, and in a jurisdiction like Manitoba it would almost be impossible to set up the software and hardware system to do it currently, that people could have an access to their instant file, that you're not photocopying, you're not using paper. You're using a paperless system. The system in Manitoba is we're trying to set up a system that is paperless, that is easily accessible from multiple areas, but it is a challenge.

I urge the federal government to get more and more involved in this because it's something that we don't have the financial capacity to do instantly, and we do have to look at where we're going to go in the future. I think we need to look at a federal and provincial partnership to move forward, and I think what we have to do is look at ways to engage the whole public in this issue to make sure that everyone has access to their information they need for themselves and their loved ones.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to put very few words on the record in terms of Bill 204. The minister spoke about not having the resources to deal with this particular issue in Manitoba. I think Manitobans should be well aware of the very considerable transfer payments that the province is receiving from the federal government, and a lot of those transfer payments are to deal directly with health-care issues. So, throwing out the excuse that the Province does not have the financial resources to do something in terms of providing information to people and to staff, in my view, is ludicrous.

Mr. Speaker, probably a third of the provincial revenue comes from the federal government, so it certainly appears to us on our side of the House, if resources are allocated effectively by this provincial government, there would be a reasonable health information system set up here in Manitoba. The previous Progressive Conservative government had a go at this particular—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member (Mr. Cullen) will have eight minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTION

Res. 3—Kyoto Support

Mr. Speaker: The time being 11 a.m., we will now move on to Resolutions, and we'll deal with the Resolution brought forward by the honourable Member for Wolseley.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I move, seconded by the Member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady),

WHEREAS climate change is the political, economic, and social issue of our era; and

WHEREAS since 1999, the Manitoba government has undertaken various program initiatives with other levels of government and business in rural and urban communities that protect water and natural areas, reduce waste, prevent pollution, and grow a sustainable economy. This collaborative approach ensures programs concerning climate change are strategically designed and effectively implemented; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba public is concerned about climate change and a climate change action plan. This concern was established by the 2002 Manitoba Climate Change Task Force consultations and a 2006 survey that revealed 84 percent of Manitobans are concerned about climate change; and

WHEREAS the 2002 task force consultations also revealed that Manitobans see positive opportunities in climate change, both economically and environmentally. Some opportunities that the public has identified include clean, renewable energy, ethanol fuel, and energy efficiency in homes and businesses, and new opportunities in transportation and agriculture, all of which have the potential to result in health benefits for Manitobans; and

WHEREAS in 2002, the Manitoba government responded to these public concerns over climate change and took a leadership role in calling on the federal government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the only international agreement that provides a clear path to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This leadership role has since been recognized nationally and internationally; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba government's response program, Kyoto and Beyond, is the province's main strategy on climate change. This program will allow the province to meet and even exceed the targets under the Kyoto Accord; and

WHEREAS Kyoto and Beyond reduces greenhouse gas emissions in a number of ways. This includes geothermal heat pumps, 10 percent ethanol blends, conversion of coal to natural gas at the Selkirk generating station, the introduction of models of wind, solar, and hydrogen power, and the promotion of sustainable agricultural ecosystems. Other successful provincial initiatives include Manitoba Hydro's Power Smart programs, bio-fuel productions, and greening downtown Winnipeg. Also, Manitoba was the first province to join the federal government's One-Tonne Challenge, and hybrid buses built right here in Winnipeg are currently running on the streets of cities like Seattle and Vancouver; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's Green and Growing document, which expanded on the Kyoto and Beyond initiative, was created to further Manitoba's goal of protecting the environment and growing the economy simultaneously. Green and Growing is composed of seven strategic priorities designed to achieve sustainability across our province. The first priority is concerned with energy and climate. The second priority is protection of water. The third is the protection of our natural areas, and the fourth is the reduction of waste and prevention of pollution. The fifth priority is working with the private sector to build a sustainable economy. The sixth is fostering a green and healthy society, and the seventh is ensuring the government runs its internal operations in a green and sustainable way; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba government has also worked together with the federal government on a climate change action. In 2004, Canada and Manitoba signed a memorandum of understanding for co-operation in addressing climate change dedicated to developing renewable energy opportunities such as the wind farm at St. Leon, Manitoba,

and the construction of the ethanol plant in Minnedosa; and

WHEREAS in July 2005, the Manitoba government issued its first ever sustainability report that measured the province's overall well-being in terms of environment, economy, health, and social development. This accountability measure will continue Manitoba's tradition of promoting both a healthy environment and a sustainable economy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue to support its climate change action plan and consider developing its leadership position; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to continue to encourage and work with the federal government in addressing the serious problems posed by climate change through the Kyoto Protocol.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), seconded by the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady),

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Altemeyer: It is with no small amount of pride that I stand up today to speak to some of the enormous accomplishments of our government on this incredibly important issue. At the same time I have to tell you that during the recent provincial election, my constituents were very clear in their enormous disappointment and dissatisfaction with the opposition parties on this crucial issue.

Mr. Speaker, this is a long-standing trend in this Chamber. I remember when I was, not all that many years ago, a special assistant to then-Energy Minister, Honourable Tim Sale, and Manitoba was the lone voice in the political wilderness on Kyoto. It was us and the Prime Minister's office who were the only ones in the country forcefully speaking to the science, to the need for our country to join this century and start addressing this enormous environmental challenge that faces our entire planet. Thank goodness we were successful despite the efforts of the other political parties in this Chamber. Their only focus was the assumption that jobs would be negatively affected, the assumption that there would

be no economic or social benefits coming out of addressing the Kyoto Accord.

I remember even being at a high school debate; it wasn't even in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, although I was happy to attend. Both of the opposition parties were really quite embarrassing. The Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) went and made the statement that there's no way Manitoba should be addressing the Kyoto Accord if there's any negative impact on jobs. Who does he think is going to build a wind turbine? Does it just magically show up overnight after you send in some cereal box tops to the company and then they'll come over and plunk in the ground for you? These are very intensive operations that require a lot of very skilled labour, skilled labour we are proud to have here in Manitoba and which we want to see more of.

Not to be outdone on the looking-silly file, the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), leader of the third almost-party in our Chamber, made the statement that our government was opposed to wind power in Manitoba. I mean, he obviously did not get out of the Perimeter Highway during the election, before the election or since the election. He hasn't been to St. Leon. I've been there several times with my family and in an official capacity. We have one of the largest wind farms in Canada now operational, and our mandate which we have issued is going to be 10 times that over the next coming years.

So I was very pleased to see that the students at Grant Park High School knew way more about these issues than either of the representatives from the other political parties, because their comments were greeted with the derision and the sarcastic laughter that they quite honestly deserved. We have, in fact, never, ever heard from the official opposition, do they even support or believe in the science of Kyoto, the science of climate change. They're the jump-to-the-pump party when the debate was going on, and they still are. We can see that in today's editorial by the Leader of the Official Opposition, trying to argue against the logic and the need for an additional power line from the north to the south in our province going on the west side of the lakes.

Now, I'll have a little bit more to say about that later on, but I do want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, to everyone here that these political parties are claiming to be current, claiming to be the representatives of their constituents, and yet if they go and knock on the doors in their constituencies, I would guarantee

you the majority of them want to see climate change addressed, and they are darned proud of the work that our province has done to establish itself not just as the national leader but as the international leader on this issue.

* (11:10)

There are so many specific pieces that we have brought to the forefront, and unlike some parties at the federal or provincial level who may have had the press conference or made the grandiose pledges like, for instance, the former federal government which did pass Kyoto and then did nothing about it, or the current federal government which we have had very direct words with on this issue. We do not agree with their approach on how to address climate change. We do not think it is sufficient for the need that is so obviously there. All we have heard is the resistance and the pseudoscience endorsed by none other than the outgoing President of the United States. It's quite clear where these political parties are coming from, and Manitobans have every right to be very disappointed in their positions.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Even during the provincial election, for goodness' sake, which we just held here in Manitoba on Earth Day, what did the Conservative Party in Manitoba have to say about the environment? They didn't have anything to say about the environment. There wasn't a single news release that went out from their political party during the election on Earth Day describing anything the least bit environmental.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do want to spend a little bit of time, in closing off, addressing the issue of the power line that has been proposed by Manitoba Hydro. I wonder if the members opposite know what UNESCO stands for, because based on the so-called arguments they've brought forward, we'd be well within our rights to wonder. UNESCO stands for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Now, let's look at the Leader of the Opposition's (Mr. McFadyen) position on this, all right? He's going to ignore the First Nations on the east side who have said, in no uncertain terms, they do not want a power line going through their traditional territories. He's going to ignore that and plough it through there anyway, if he was Premier. Thank goodness that is not going to happen. He has, also, completely ignored the emergence of the rights of First Nations

communities and peoples in Canadian law. Last time I heard, the Leader of the Official Opposition is a lawyer by training but somehow he has missed the fact that there is a duty to consult under the Constitution.

He has missed the fact that our government is working with First Nations communities and all Aboriginal people on a government-to-government basis. The patriarchal relationship—a decision is made and then rammed down people's throats—just doesn't happen any more, nor should it, and, in this instance, he could try and say that he wants to have a power line go down the east side all he wants, it's not going to happen if there are local communities on that side who decide to challenge it in the courts. So, if you want to talk about inefficiency, building dams at a cost of over a billion dollars, and then not having any transmission capacity to send the power down south, that's the leadership and the level of logic that we're seeing from the Leader of the Opposition. It is poorly educated; it is non-scientific; and it is certainly ignorant of the cultural considerations that need to be considered.

Imagine if the people in Conservative ridings were suddenly informed by—

An Honourable Member: There's not that many left.

Mr. Altemeyer: —and there aren't very many of them. It's true. They are not quite endangered species status yet, maybe threatened, but not endangered yet—

An Honourable Member: Especially in the city.

Mr. Altemeyer: —especially in Winnipeg. Imagine if in their communities Hydro suddenly showed up and said, we're going to put a transmission line right through your backyard, and you don't have any say in it. Well, of course, people are going to be upset, never mind the fact that rather than having lived there for, you know, their family, maybe 100 years. On the east side, we're talking about families and communities that have lived there for thousands of years. That's where their ancestors reside; that's where their traditional, spiritual places are.

To ignore all of the feedback that has been gathered to not go there, and to not discuss, and to make decisions on a unilateral basis is just really unacceptable, never mind not being able to see the forest for the trees. The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) can't see the forest or the trees. He can't see the logic and can't see the

justice in what should happen. He can't see even the law and the implications of his ideas.

So, to wrap up, Madam Deputy Speaker, our citizens in Manitoba have absolutely every reason to be proud of what our government has managed to achieve in climate change reductions in a very short period of time, and the exciting news is that the best is still yet to come with the enormous opportunities coming to our province due to all the hard work that we're doing with our partners. We work on a government-to-government basis in partnership. We don't respond to the whims of an editorial board here and there. We think that science and cultural respect and appropriate relationships are the way that Manitobans want to be governed and that's what we're here to deliver.

I strongly encourage the opposition members to join this century, pass this resolution and we can all work together to address what is probably the biggest environmental potential calamity facing our planet in our lifetime. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): It is going to be a pleasure to respond to some of the information that the Member for Wolseley put on the record this morning. Obviously there's a lot of spin involved in what he's saying this morning and a lot of it is quite frankly wrong. So hopefully over the next few minutes I'll have an opportunity to put some facts on the record so that Manitobans do receive some factual information about what our party stands for, and the sad record of the current NDP government.

First of all, Madam Deputy Speaker, we, as this side of the House, we're interested in obtaining results. We like to see results happen. We're not interested in just talking about things. We actually want to see things happen, and in this province we've seen very little development in terms of the whole bio-energy field in Manitoba.

For instance, Madam Deputy Speaker, I look at ethanol, ethanol production in Manitoba. We have one plant in Manitoba. It was just recently expanded, and no thanks to this particular government. It was more of a federal government that was able to come to the table and assist them in that endeavour. We have a number of companies that have come to Manitoba and talked about energy production in one form or another, whether it be ethanol, whether it be biodiesel or whether it be energy production from biomass, but unfortunately we do not see one more facility being developed or has developed in the province of Manitoba. So where are the results?

Again, this particular government is talking about it but nothing is happening. So that's why we're interested to see some results.

Just as one offside here, the Province, the NDP brought forward a biofuel bill a few years ago which was basically rushed through the House. That particular bill talked about ethanol production in Manitoba, and, as I said, there has not been one more plant built in Manitoba. So that bill has basically sat on the shelf and collected dust. Now the Province is going to come in and they're probably going to introduce an amendment to that particular bill so that biodiesel can be developed here in Manitoba. Well we certainly hope so, Madam Deputy Speaker, because every other jurisdiction in Canada and across the United States are building ethanol and biodiesel plants. Again, Manitobans are being left in the dust.

The Progressive Conservatives under Gary Filmon, back in the 1990s talked a lot about sustainable development and that's really what we want to see move forward. There is a way for industry to develop at the same time as protecting the environment, and that's really what principle that we still stand for on this particular side of the House.

The Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) went on at length about wind farms. We did finally get a wind farm built here in Manitoba. It did take a considerable amount of time. Also I do recognize that wind energy production is probably the fastest-growing form of energy production around the world. What the current government has done is has put out an additional request for proposal and expressions of interest for ongoing development of wind farms in Manitoba. But unfortunately that whole initiative seems to be sitting on the shelf right now. Again, the NDP talk about another 900 megawatts of electricity being generated from wind farms but we don't see any action on behalf of this current government.

*(11:20)

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we on this side of the House are looking forward to future development in terms of the wind farm. We do believe there's other technology out there that should be looked at very seriously. You know, we had the whole idea of hydrogen, different types of batteries that can store energy. So there is a lot of opportunity for us if we are willing to take some initiative—some other jurisdictions have—take some initiative and look at other forms of energy. So we are awaiting some

announcement from Manitoba Hydro in conjunction with this government on some other areas where wind energy will be moving forward.

In terms of greenhouse gases, in particular, Madam Deputy Speaker, I refer to an Environment Canada report here where it actually talks about the 2005 emissions data, and it actually provides I guess you could call it a point-source greenhouse gas emissions. It actually shows all across Canada, and right up there, probably in the top 20 or so, we have a couple of places in Manitoba. The highest one in Manitoba in terms of greenhouse gas emission—

Point of Order

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Minto, on a point of order?

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Yes, a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is a resolution on the Kyoto Protocol. I've been listening carefully to the Member for Turtle Mountain's (Mr. Cullen) comments. He's now more than half through his allotted time. He hasn't even mentioned the Kyoto Protocol.

I think this Legislature would like to know, does he and his party, do they support our efforts to have the government work on the Kyoto Protocol or not? I would ask him to be relevant to the matter that we are debating in the Legislature today, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, on the same point of order?

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Yes, on the same point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Member for Minto will have his allotment time to speak to the resolution. If he has something to say on his own member's resolution, he can do so at that time.

The Member for Turtle Mountain was just getting into very diligent points in regard to the future of the province of Manitoba, indeed all of Canada, and the issues of environment that are so important to the survival of everyone. I think if he'd just pay attention a little bit longer, he'd learn a little bit of factual information from the Member for Turtle Mountain.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I'm certain the Member for Turtle Mountain was just getting around to mentioning the Kyoto Accord.

* * *

Mr. Cullen: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Obviously everything I've talked about here so far relates directly to the Kyoto Accord. The Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) was talking about these points, and I think it's very important that we on this side of the House clarify the erroneous comments that were put on the record this morning.

In fact, I'm just talking about greenhouse gas emissions directly as it relates to Manitoba, so if I may continue here. If we look at the top 20 greenhouse gas emissions across Canada, Manitoba has a couple of points that are in the top 20. One is the Brady Road Landfill. We know what the Brady Road Landfill is. Now, if a government is really proactive in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, they would be looking at that and saying, well, there must be a tremendous amount of greenhouse gas being emitted there. Maybe there's an opportunity for us to capture that greenhouse gas and turn it into energy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, other jurisdictions have embraced this type of technology. Obviously, this government is not too concerned about greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba.

It's just a little further down the road, we have the Brandon generating station which is operated by Manitoba Hydro, and that particular facility, as we know, burns coal. That particular facility has been retrofitted at one point in time or an adjustment made to it to burn, I believe, natural gas, but that particular facility was never converted over to natural gas. So at this point in time it burns coal. So another facility in Manitoba making the top 20 in terms of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's pretty clear that this particular government is not too concerned about greenhouse gas emissions. Again, they talk about Kyoto but they're not really out there walking the walk.

The other point the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) alluded to as well, and he did incorrectly put some statements on the record this morning. Just to clarify, I will point out the position that our leader had in the paper, in the *Free Press* this morning. He clearly states: We agree a new line is required to improve reliability and provide greater opportunities to export clean energy. However, the decision to run down the west side rather than the much shorter east side comes at an astronomical cost to Manitobans.

That, of course, is just part of the entire statement that was made by our leader today, and I just want to talk just briefly about that particular west-side decision because, first of all, Madam

Deputy Speaker, we're looking at an extra 500 kilometres of line that would have to be cut through Manitoba. So in essence, what we're going to do, this government is going to do, is go and chop down another 500 kilometres of trees to build this extra 500 kilometres of line.

It's pretty clear that there's a bit of a disconnect in terms of what they're talking about in terms of Kyoto and what they're actually practising in reality. Obviously, we know that extra debt that's going to be associated with that extra cost, that \$500 million cost, will be passed on to Manitobans, another legacy that this NDP government will leave behind.

And we talk about the pristine, or so-called pristine, wilderness on the east side. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we know there are already existing roads on the east side of Lake Manitoba, so that part of the UNESCO site debate doesn't really weigh in. There's still, we believe, lots of opportunity for sustainable development on the east side of Lake Winnipeg in conjunction with a UNESCO heritage site, so there's lots of opportunities.

The other thing that the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) did talk about, too, was the Power Smart program. Certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker, we applaud Hydro and their Power Smart program. They've saved somewhere in the neighbourhood of I believe it's around 480 megawatts of power over the last, I think it's been about 17 years since that program's been around.

But, unfortunately, what this proposal going down the east side of the province will do, will wipe out about a hundred megawatts of electricity. That's the amount of electricity, at least that amount will be lost because of the extra line that we're using in Manitoba. So to put that in perspective, Madam Deputy Speaker, Manitobans are being asked to conserve energy and this government is wasting that energy in one fell swoop.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): It is an honour to speak to this resolution because, well, for a number of reasons, not only the work that this government has been doing—despite perceptions of members opposite—but also because in many respects, it marks a 20th anniversary of working alongside the member who put this motion forward in the trenches of the environmental movement. So we have 20 years of experience on this subject, and

we were talking about it long before. So it was an honour, first of all, for him to first become a member of this House and start the groundwork.

It's now wonderful to join him alongside in this fight because this province has been leading the way, and Kyoto is something that really is, I mean, it's literally a no-brainer. No one should have any doubts that we need to follow the Kyoto Protocol because one of the things, again, something that I learned alongside in the anthropology classes at the U of M with Mr. Altemeyer—for the Member for Wolseley—was the idea that indigenous cultures have always embraced the idea of holistic living, the idea of living in tune with the environment. That's not very easy to do in the 21st century, and what the Kyoto Protocol does is it gives us that format, that formula, that we can follow to blend both the needs of the 21st century with sustainable growth and development, sustainable environmental protection, sustainable social justice, sustainable economic development.

If we do truly want this province and this country and this planet to grow and prosper both economically and ecologically, we have no choice but to follow the Kyoto Protocol, the Kyoto Accord. So, as a result, it behooves us as members of this Legislature to do nothing less than back this resolution, to be the leaders; the leaders that not only this province needs but this country and this planet need.

We have been recognized by the likes of David Suzuki for our work. I think that is no small compliment, and I do believe that this is the kind of thing that we need to do. As someone born and raised in Kirkfield Park and knocking doors there, I can tell you, back 20 years ago, I was given odd looks for being an environmentalist. It was very reassuring to knock doors there this spring and see how many people were on board with the kinds of programs that we're running and with the idea that the Kyoto Accord is what is needed.

*(11:30)

I believe, as a representative of my own neighbourhood, I can do nothing less than to back this resolution and to see that we continue to be leaders within this province, within this country, and within a larger, responsible global community. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it's time that we put some facts on the record here as my colleague, the

Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), has put the facts on the record. Unfortunately, under this government, they've had eight long years to do something with respect to the issues of greenhouse gases and the environment and bettering the environment in our province, but the facts speak louder than their empty rhetoric. The facts are that this government has essentially done very little, if not nothing, to improve the environment and the quality of life here for Manitobans when it comes to our environment.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while the challenge of addressing issues such as climate change and greenhouse gas emissions may seem immense in scope, it is possible for a proactive government to make positive changes for the betterment of the environment through a commitment to a change in our actions and the will to follow through with the change.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will remind members opposite that it was a Progressive Conservative government that introduced The Ozone Depleting Substances Act in 1990 in response to the threat to the ozone layer. Now, some 17 years later, we have seen a substantial reduction in the emission of CFCs. Industry has adjusted and the risk of further ozone depletion has decreased.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Party is committed to reducing greenhouse gases both through the continued commitment to the development and use of clean, renewable energy sources such as wind and hydro-electricity as well as new and innovative approaches such as rebates and other incentives for the purchase of cleaner, hybrid vehicles, as just one example.

The NDP, for all of their talk, actually have a pretty disappointing record on the environment. In 2004, greenhouse gas emissions were 11 percent above 1990 levels despite, Madam Deputy Speaker, the NDP claims that they were tackling the issue. If that is their way of tackling the issue, they obviously do not have their priorities straight.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in December 2006, it was reported that Manitoba greenhouse gas emissions jumped not 5 percent, not 10 percent, not even 15 percent, but 20 percent between 2004 and 2005. This gave Manitoba the dubious title of having the highest percentage increase in greenhouse gases in our country. In fact, while Manitoba had a 20 percent spike in greenhouse gas emissions, Canada, overall, saw a decrease in greenhouse gas

emissions. This shows that Manitoba is out of line with the rest of the country and the blame for that must rest on the feet of the current NDP government.

What was the Energy Minister's response, Madam Deputy Speaker? Did he call for immediate action to address this increase? No. His response was that, and I quote: "You have to take it into perspective."

Madam Deputy Speaker, he went on. He explained the increase away using the fact that Manitoba has a lower amount of overall emissions than the rest of the provinces. It's all relative. We're one of the smaller provinces in Canada. Certainly, when you do take things relatively, we see that this NDP government has an abysmal record when it comes to dealing with the issue of greenhouse gas emissions in our province.

The NDP has been so bereft in ideas with respect to the environment that one of their major recent announcements, a rebate for hybrid vehicles, was, in fact, taken directly from comments made at the Progressive Conservative annual general meeting. So they're stealing our ideas when it comes to the environment and putting them forward as their own. It's unfortunate but telling, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the NDP have no ideas of their own with respect to how to deal with greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. It is also unsettling to know that the government has so little to offer Manitobans on the environmental file at such a critical time.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when we look at other jurisdictions, while having a much higher starting point to work from, even Alberta, on an economy based on oil, managed to see a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions from 2004 to 2005. Out of 11 reporting provinces and territories, only four, including Manitoba, showed an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Yet they say they're doing something positive for greenhouse gas emissions in our province.

The percentage of change of greenhouse gas emissions from 2004 to 2005: Saskatchewan, 2 percent; Nova Scotia, 2 percent; Ontario, 1 percent; Alberta, zero percent; Northwest Territories, negative 2 percent; P.E.I., negative 3 percent; Newfoundland, negative 3 percent; New Brunswick, negative 3 percent; B.C., negative 4 percent; Québec, negative 5 percent; and where was Manitoba, Madam Deputy Speaker? Not 5 percent, not 10 percent, not even 15 percent or 18 percent, not 19 percent, but 20 percent. Again, actions speak

louder than words and results speak louder than anything.

So I'll say in conclusion I think we're probably getting there, Madam Deputy Speaker, that while we're in favour of promoting and ensuring we are doing everything we can to create a cleaner environment for our children in our province, it is regrettable that I'm going to have to be opposed to this because this resolution implies that the NDP government is already doing something with respect to greenhouse gases in our province. The facts speak louder than their empty rhetoric. They aren't doing anything. We've already proven that between my colleague, the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) and myself, we've already given the facts on the record, again speak louder than their empty rhetoric when it comes to this very important issue with bettering the environment in our province.

So I would suggest that the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) listen more closely to his constituents and urge this provincial government not just to urge other levels of government to take action, because that's essentially what this—THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to continue to encourage the federal government, blah, blah, blah.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, this government has the ability to do something themselves if they have the will to do it themselves. I suggest that, rather than blaming other levels of government and bringing forward resolutions that call on their own government to encourage other levels of government, that they do something themselves.

As the old adage says: Actions speak louder than words and actual results speak louder than anything. Regrettably, this NDP government has neglected to yield any real positive results, and that is unfortunate for all citizens in our province, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Swan: It's a pleasure to get up and speak to this excellent resolution brought forward by my neighbour geographically, the MLA for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer), who is very passionate and very knowledgeable about this issue.

It's disappointing, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the second straight Tuesday, there's been what I think is a very fair and a very non-partisan resolution that's been brought forward for consideration from government backbenchers. Last week, of course, the

alleged law-and-order party talked out a resolution calling on the federal government to improve the Youth Criminal Justice Act. This week, of course, we have a very strong resolution calling on this government to continue moving forward and calling on this government to continue working with the federal government, and it appears from the comments of the environment critic that this is going to happen again.

* (11:40)

As a New Democrat, I do believe in the capacity of people to learn, the capacity of people to change. It's unfortunate it appears the Conservatives aren't in that category. I thought, really, with the appointment of a new critic, they would at least try to spray-paint some green over the rust that permeates that caucus, but I guess that's not the case. I know the new critic; she's got a lot of new files on her plate. I know she's been studying the animal flash cards the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) gave her and maybe she hasn't got up to speed. But I am hopeful. I am hopeful the members of the Conservative Party will get with the progressive world and recognize climate change is a problem and recognize that the Kyoto Protocol is good for the environment and it's good for Manitoba.

I recognize when you only represent a narrow constituency in the province of Manitoba it's easy to miss that, but if you govern for the entire province of Manitoba as New Democrats do, you know that the Kyoto Protocol is good for the environment; it's good for business; it's good for our citizens.

There are few places in the world with as much to gain from the steps which will be taken to follow the Kyoto Protocol as Manitoba. Of course, through geography, we have rivers flowing through northern Manitoba that can provide clean hydro-electric power. As we know, the wind blows and we are developing wind energy in the province of Manitoba, something the members chattering opposite could not do in their 11 years in government. Of course, the sun shines on Manitoba and we know the technology is lowering the cost of solar panels and solar technology which is going to be a very important part of this province moving forward, and, of course, we have a great deal of land in Manitoba. I'm very pleased, frankly, that biofuels are pushing the value of agricultural products up. I think that's a good thing. I'm surprised that the rural members in Manitoba don't see that as a positive thing for their

constituents. I'm glad the New Democrats certainly do.

I was glad this morning to hear my friend, the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), talk about the Midwest legislators' conference. It is a tremendous conference. I know that you try and attend whenever possible and it's interesting to hear what different states and different provinces have to say about issues. Last year in Chicago, I was quite interested to attend a session called Powering the Plains which was presented by an American institute, the Great Plains Institute. Right in the front of their presentation, the very first slide on the PowerPoint, was a picture of a hydrogen bus made right here in Winnipeg in front of the Winnipeg International Airport. The 11 states and the other provinces at this conference actually were quite interested to hear about the great developments taking place in Manitoba in terms of the development of hydrogen buses, the new technology in dispensing ethanol and hydrogen, with companies like Kraus Global which are world leaders doing their thing right here in Manitoba. It was with a great deal of pride that these experts from the United States talked about the great things going on in Manitoba.

But it's not just the Midwest legislators' conference that acknowledges Manitoba's work. Certainly the new environment critic missed some of the accomplishments over the past few years, but, again, I appreciate she is still getting up to speed, learning the difference between a wolf and a bear. There's a lot to learn over there.

For example, Madam Deputy Speaker—and I will repeat this because I know the members opposite didn't get the memo—*BusinessWeek* magazine, not a traditional supporter of the New Democratic Party as far as I know, recognized the Province of Manitoba as the top jurisdiction in the world for combating climate change.

The David Suzuki Foundation, I'm sure we'll make a David Suzuki flash card so the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) recognizes who he is, because on this side of the House we certainly respect what he has to say, and he recognized Manitoba as having the second strongest climate change strategy in all of Canada.

The Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance commended the Province for leading the country in energy efficiency.

Of course, we did hear from one of the opposition members about the Power Smart program. Well, indeed, in 1999, we were missing the playoffs. Manitoba's Power Smart program was ranked ninth out of 10. Well, I'm very glad to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, after eight years, our Power Smart program is the strongest in the entire country, something all Manitobans can be proud of.

So here we have the rust party over on the other side of the House, which I fear is simply going to talk out another excellent resolution. On this side we have the true green party, the New Democratic Party, which understands that you can have development which can be sustainable, that can provide jobs which can provide development and yet provide for a cleaner economy for today and tomorrow.

So I'm hoping that the members of the Conservative Party will admit, because they haven't yet, they barely mentioned the word, will admit they don't accept the Kyoto Protocol. They may as well just tell people they don't accept that there is climate change. Clearly they don't accept there's anything that humans can do about it.

We don't accept that on this side of the House. That's why I'm asking them to put aside their partisan differences, vote for a resolution that's very positive, and let's keep working on making this the green leader, not only in Canada, but in the world. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I would like to put a few words on the record on this resolution. We, as Manitoba Liberals support the Kyoto Protocol, and we support a Manitoba plan which will bring Manitoba into alignment with the Kyoto Protocol, reducing Manitoba greenhouse gas production to six percent below 1990 by 2010. Unfortunately we haven't seen that plan yet, but we support this resolution because it's going in the right direction and we hope that there'll be a vote on this resolution so that we are able to vote in support of it.

However, the reality is, and we've got to be clear about this, that after eight years of the NDP government we are actually still waiting for the NDP to bring forward a plan which would show the particular targets, which would show what is going to be achieved by what industries and would lay out the plan for Manitoba to get to the Kyoto Protocol and actually achieve the Kyoto Protocol targets.

Some of the initial planning looked as if it was based on the assumption that we'd be able to trade

credits, that we might have power lines constructed already by 2010 so that we could provide power to other jurisdictions and trade those for credits. Well it seems highly unlikely that that's going to be the case, and therefore you need a plan which lays out the specific target to be achieved for each industry: for transportation, for example; for the areas of heating, home heating, industrial use and industrial and commercial heating; agriculture, a plan both in terms of methane production which comes from agriculture and in terms of the nitrous oxide which comes from agriculture. In none of these cases have we got clear targets.

There may be some programs, particularly in the case of transportation and housing, and the members opposite of the NDP caucus have talked a little bit about this. But the reality is that there has not been yet presented to Manitobans a plan so that we'd be able to have a clear plan to go in reducing and achieving the targets that we need to achieve.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Now, the Premier (Mr. Doer), after seven and a half years of delay indicated in the last election that he was going to bring in such targets, but we are still waiting and we hope and we thought maybe that in this resolution we'd have some targets. Maybe the Premier is waiting until later today to announce the targets and give us the plan, but so far we haven't had it, and we eagerly await whenever it arrives.

One of the things that we do note is that right now we are some 11 percent above the greenhouse gas production of 1990, instead of heading even down, so that we are continuing to increase greenhouse gas production at a time when we should be reducing it. One of the major reasons for this is that there's not a plan in place. Clearly a plan should include the ability to attract and grow some new industry, so the plan should have an area for new industry.

* (11:50)

You know, the provincial Liberal leader, my colleague from Alberta, was here last week talking about some opportunities in bitumen processing, for example. There are possibilities here and we need to allow for the inclusion on the growth of new industries. That is why it is so important to have a plan because you don't have a plan now and that plan doesn't include new industries, all of a sudden we're going to have the NDP standing up and say, well, we couldn't possibly have a new industry because it

would bring us over the Kyoto target. That would not be the way that we should plan. We should plan so that there is that margin, and we've got room for new industrial growth.

But it clearly means plans in terms of how we reduce, not only transportation, housing, reduction of greenhouse gas heating production. Make homes and commercial buildings more efficient.

Also one of the big issues in Manitoba has been the increased greenhouse gases in agriculture. This was pointed out in the last report, and because the government has not ever produced a plan of where they want to go in terms of reducing methane and nitrous oxide production, we don't know exactly where they intend to go and how they are going to achieve the reductions. This, in spite of the fact that it would appear that the reductions in nitrous oxide may be a win-win for farmers and for the environment and may be one of the easiest areas to actually achieve some very sizable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions for the province.

So the NDP have been missing in action in this file. It's too bad, but we would love to have a real plan with real targets to support. We await that plan. In the meanwhile, we are still strong supporters of the Kyoto Accord. If we had a Liberal government, we'd have that plan in there, and we'd be on the way to achieving it. But with an NDP government, there's no plan, and we just wait for that plan whenever it comes and it hasn't come yet. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to speak to this resolution today. I'd really like to note at the beginning that the Member for River Heights, he's talking about how the Province is not moving on the file. You know, he's a member of a party that passed the Kyoto Accord and did absolutely nothing to bring it into effect. So, he really shouldn't be making too big a production about this issue.

But I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), she obviously is having trouble walking and chewing gum at the same time on this file, because the fact of the matter is that we can do things in Manitoba, we are doing things in Manitoba. But we have to encourage the federal government to move this file along because the federal government has the authority over the national agenda which will affect the other provinces.

You know, it's one thing for us in Manitoba to do our share, which we are doing and more, on this

file, but if the other provinces are not doing their part, then where are we at the end of the day? So, we have to do our part, which we are doing, and we have to encourage the federal government to do its part and enforce these rules on all the provinces of this country. So, it's absolutely necessary that we do this.

Now, I want to mention, some of the speakers have talked about wind power, and in Alberta back in the 1990s when the Filmon government was ruling Manitoba, in Alberta we had wind farms being developed at that time. As a matter of fact, I had the pleasure of going out to Pincher Creek two or three years ago and looking at the wind farms out there, and they have—it's almost like a wind farm museum there. You can see the little turbines from the early 1990s right up to the big one-megawatt turbines we see today out in St. Leon.

What was the Filmon government doing while the Alberta government was encouraging this development out in Pincher Creek? They were asleep at the switch. They did absolutely nothing.

In Saskatchewan, we had Gull Lake development. We had 100 megawatts developed in Saskatchewan. So, you had probably, I'm guessing now, maybe 400 megawatts in Alberta. We had 100 megawatts in Saskatchewan with another 100 on the way before Manitoba even got the shovel in the ground, before we even starting looking at this issue. So, what we've managed to do, just since we've been in government, is we've got a hundred megawatt wind farm developed in St. Leon to the benefit of the local economy, and the Conservative MLA was very effusive in his support. I was there at the opening and he had his arm around the minister for the entire time and, you know, taking as much credit as possible. And what do they do? They got rid of the guy. And we have another two or three hundred megawatts of wind power on the way and potentially a lot more than that in the future.

Now, you know, we didn't see any initiatives on the part of the Conservatives. Now, you know I would like to see Manitoba Hydro develop these wind farms; I don't really like the idea of seeing them developed through private means. I think that's not really the right way to go with it. Nevertheless, these things are being developed with Manitoba Hydro's assistance and if we can get more developments under way as a result of allowing the private sector to be participating in the process, then you know I'm prepared to live with that.

But that's not what happened under the Tory 11 years of government. There was no indication or inclination on their part to do anything about the wind farm issues.

Now, let's take a look at the geothermal industry. I mean, we have a new Manitoba Hydro building being built downtown. For the entire 11 years that they were in government absolutely nothing happened downtown. Downtown was becoming a barren wasteland, boarded up, and it's this government that is turning, literally turning around the downtown area. So we are building a new Hydro building downtown and we are having geothermal as being part of that. As a matter of fact, Manitoba has between 25 and 30 percent of all geothermal installations in Canada, and I'm told by the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) that that represents about 5,000 installations in Canada.

So a little province like Manitoba with just over a million people out of a country of 30 million is the leader in geothermal, and nobody had ever heard of it when the Conservatives were in power. So don't go and criticize the government for not doing things. We are moving along doing things as fast as possible. We have the hydrogen buses, as the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) mentioned at the legislators' conference, Midwest legislators' conference; he was talking about how the hydrogen bus is being touted and talked about by legislators in the United States. This kind of development is something that we are encouraging here in Manitoba and, Mr. Speaker, I sense that my time is drawing short so I would like now to defer to the next speaker.

Mr. Maguire: It is my privilege to put some words of wisdom on the record in regard to this bill as well, Mr. Speaker, for this resolution. This government has a number of areas that they could be much more forthright in regard to this kind of environmental sustainability in the province of Manitoba. I want to just point out that they have put forth now a proposal in Manitoba that would wipe out all the wind energy that we've got. They talk about how great it is to have a hundred megawatts of wind power in this province. The proposed west line, DC line that would come down the west side of Lake Winnipegosis would wipe out, effectively wipe out all of the hundred megawatts of electricity and line losses that's being built by proponents in wind energy today in Manitoba. That's sustainable development.

The first action, when I was environment critic back in 1999, one of the first actions of this government was to wipe out the round table on sustainable development under the new minister at that time, the Member from the Pas.

Mr. Speaker, also this government, if they really wanted to create more energy development in the province of Manitoba they could provide an opportunity for Hydro to come forward with—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) will have eight minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

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