

Fourth Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

Vol. LXVII No. 53B - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, June 25, 2015

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 25, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 42—The Independent Officers of the Assembly
Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended)**

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 42, The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur la nomination des hauts fonctionnaires de l'Assemblée (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: In the best tradition of parliamentarians, Mr. Speaker, I—we've come to agreement on a number of issues related to how to function in this Chamber, and part of it is a bill that will put in place a specific procedure to follow when independent officers resign.

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

Bill 43—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): I also move, seconded by the member for Steinbach, that Bill 43, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to be able to amend this act, together with the member for Steinbach and the leader of the Liberal Party, who supports it. It will allow flexibility for the commissioner to deal with issues related to various factors that may concern people that are MLAs during the course of a legislative session.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

**Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and
Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety**

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles that have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for the safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by H. Fieldsted, S. Vines, J. Schiveder and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

**Beausejour District Hospital—
Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability**

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for the petition:

(1) The Beausejour District Hospital is a 30-bed, acute-care facility that serves the communities of Beausejour and Brokenhead.

(2) The hospital and the primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in the northeast region of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

(3) During the 2011 election, the provincial government promised to provide every Manitoban with access to a family doctor by 2015.

(4) This promise is far from being realized, and Manitobans are witnessing many emergency rooms limiting services or closing temporarily, with the majority of these reductions taking place in rural Manitoba.

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to ensure that the Beausejour District Hospital and primary-care centre have a primary-care physician available on weekends and holidays to better provide area residents with this essential service.

This petition is signed by R. Fehr, K. Fitkowski, L. Wityshyn and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

**Province-Wide Long-Term Care–
Review Need and Increase Spaces**

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) There are currently 125 licensed personal-care homes, PCHs, across Manitoba, consisting of less than 10,000 beds.

(2) All trends point to an increasingly aging population who will require additional personal-care-home facilities.

(3) By some estimates, Manitoba will require an increase of more than 5,100 personal-care-home beds by 2036.

(4) The number of Manitobans with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia-related illness who will require personal-care-home services are steadily increasing and are threatening to double within the current generation.

(5) The last personal-care-home review in many areas, including the Swan River Valley area currently under the administration of Prairie Mountain regional health authority, was conducted in 2008.

(6) Average occupancy rates for personal-care homes across the province are exceeding 97 per cent and with some regions, such as the Swan River Valley, witnessing 100 per cent occupancy rates.

(7) These high occupancy rates are creating the conditions where many individuals requiring long-term care are being displaced far away from their families and home community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to consider immediately enacting a province-wide review of the long-term-care needs of residents in Manitoba.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recognize the stresses placed onto the health-care system by the current and continuous aging population and consider increasing the availability of long-term-care spaces, PCH beds, in communities across the province.

And this petition is signed by H. Carmichael, B. Chasscoek, C. Martin and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: No further petitions?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Social
and Economic Development
Fourth Report**

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development–

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on June 24, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 5)** – The Police Services Amendment Act (First Nation Safety Officers) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services de police (agents de sécurité des Premières nations)
- **Bill (No. 14)** – The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Home Improvement Contracts) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur (contrats d'améliorations domiciliaires)
- **Bill (No. 18)** – The Certified Occupations Act / Loi sur les professions reconnues
- **Bill (No. 26)** – The Adult Abuse Registry Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le registre des mauvais traitements infligés aux adultes
- **Bill (No. 206)** – The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Employer Advisers) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail (conseillers des employeurs)

Committee Membership

- Hon. Mr. ALLUM
- Mr. BRIESE
- Hon. Mr. CHIEF
- Ms. HOWARD
- Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS
- Mr. JHA (Chairperson)
- Hon. Mr. LEMIEUX
- Mr. SCHULER
- Ms. STEFANSON
- Mr. SWAN
- Mr. WISHART

Your Committee elected Mr. SWAN as the Vice-Chairperson

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 18)** – The Certified Occupations Act / Loi sur les professions reconnues:

Terry Shaw, Manitoba Trucking Association

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 206)** – The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Employer Advisers) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail (conseillers des employeurs):

Elliot Sims, Canadian Federation of Independent Business

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 5)** – The Police Services Amendment Act (First Nation Safety Officers) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services de police (agents de sécurité des Premières nations)

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 14)** – The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Home Improvement Contracts) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur (contrats d'améliorations domiciliaires)

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 18)** – The Certified Occupations Act / Loi sur les professions reconnues

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 26)** – The Adult Abuse Registry Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le registre des mauvais traitements infligés aux adultes

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 206)** – The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Employer Advisers) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail (conseillers des employeurs)

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Jha: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member from Concordia, that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Any further committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Multiculturalism Day

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my statement, I'd like to provide the requisite copies to the Legislature.

* (13:40)

As Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy, I rise today to recognize June 27th as Multiculturalism Day. This is an opportunity for all Manitobans to celebrate the rich diversity of our province and to reaffirm our commitment to equality and mutual understanding. Manitoba is fortunate to be home to such a spectacular array of ethnocultural groups, and today we reflect on their many contributions to making Manitoba such a great place to live, work and raise our families.

Multiculturalism has long been at the heart of Manitoban society. For thousands of years, this was a vibrant meeting place for indigenous peoples from across the continent, and as European settlers arrived, we founded a province rooted in the shared values of our francophone, English, Metis and First Nations heritage.

Diversity remains a fundamental characteristic of our identity. We are a welcoming and supportive home for people from around the world. There are currently more than 250 ethnocultural groups working in our communities. They represent 150 countries and 148 languages. We are also home to 63 First Nations who speak seven additional languages. Today, we continue to embrace both our indigenous heritage and the many immigrants and refugees who arrive each year.

As an immigrant myself who has felt truly at home in this province, multiculturalism is very close to my heart. It means that individually and as a group we are able to keep our treasured traditions. We are free to celebrate not only the heritage of our family and community but the backgrounds and beliefs of our neighbours as well.

As the Minister of Multiculturalism, it is my privilege to co-host, along with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, two citizenship ceremonies every year. I'm very excited to be hosting one of them tomorrow right here in our beautiful Legislative Building. Each year, approximately 4,500 immigrants are sworn in as Canadian citizens in Manitoba. It is always an honour to be part of the final steps in

these individuals' journeys to become Canadians. It is a significant decision that they have made, and it is a culmination of a great deal of effort and dedication.

Many of these new Manitobans go on to participate in our various ethnocultural organizations, thereby ensuring that our understanding of the culture, food and dress of our neighbours continues to grow. An example of this is seen every year at Folklorama. This is a perfect spotlight on the vibrancy of our cultural diversity and reminds us that the strength of our province is found in the spirit and energy of our people. We are so proud that Folklorama, the world's largest and longest running multicultural festival, calls Manitoba home.

This Saturday, there are many events being held to celebrate Multiculturalism Day. I would encourage everyone to come out to join the fun and explore something new.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the individuals and organizations who have hosted multicultural celebrations this year. Your valuable contributions to our province do not go unnoticed, and they are very much appreciated. Multiculturalism recognizes that our communities are enriched by our diversity.

This Multiculturalism Day, let us rededicate ourselves to the principles of respect, equality and understanding of our cultural diversity. Here in Manitoba, we work hard to build relationships and connections among communities, and we work hard to eliminate barriers of racism and prejudice. Let us reaffirm our commitment to promoting the peaceful coexistence of all people in Manitoba. Let us continue to work together to build a welcoming community for all.

Thank you.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I'm also here to stand here today to give some words about multicultural day on June 27th, which is this Saturday. We should be so proud in Manitoba that we have such multicultural groups here, almost over 250 groups from 150 different countries representing 148 languages.

I'm so proud today to stand here to say that many of us in this—on this side of the House and on their side of the House are all from—immigrants at one point and also indigenous people too. And again, that's what makes this province so great to be in, is the multicultural aspects of this province and the opportunity to blend within—in this province to work

together and to accomplish very much this province can come to do—to be considered for.

Again, I've really enjoyed going to Folklorama over the—last year, and I'm looking forward for this year because there is so much potential that we have in our province with the attracting many different people from all over the world to come here to actually be tourists to this province but also to be ambassadors elsewhere to other parts of the world.

I want to thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Any further ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon Mariette Mulaire, president and CEO of the World Trade Centre Winnipeg, who is the guest of the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Jha).

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Safety of Children in Care Hotel Accommodations

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, stories of children in the care of Child and Family Services being led into the sex trade have surfaced yet again. The recent exposé from APTN drives home the problem of children being brought into Winnipeg hotels from remote areas and placed right next door to drugs, prostitution and gangs without adequate supervision.

Will the minister admit today that the practice of bringing children in the care of Child and Family Services, children that the government have deemed in need of protection, into Winnipeg and placing them in hotels has caused some children to end up in the sex trade?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): What I will tell all members of this House is the safety of children is the paramount concern for the child-welfare system. We're working with the indigenous authorities and agencies to deliver services to their children and to their families and their communities.

Our priority is to develop prevention programs, but we know when a child is in crisis they need our support and our services. That's why we've improved

our diagnostic services for young adults, why we've implemented a youth mental health strategy and why we continue to work on the prevention of poverty across this province.

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope we can all agree the children in hotels are hardly a suitable place.

Last week we tabled a freedom of information request that we received from Family Services showing over 100 complaints about Complete Care, one of the agencies responsible for supervision of kids in the hotels. This should have been a warning to Child and Family Services about this practice so that they could discontinue this practice before a crisis occurred.

Why only after crisis incidents did the minister finally act? Why weren't the warnings heeded?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We have taken action with the authorities and with the agencies as our partners. We are going to continue to take that action, and we have eliminated the use of hotels across this province with the support of the agencies and the authorities. We're going to continue to do that.

And, well, how are we going to do that? Mr. Speaker, we're going to develop more resources. More EPR beds are being developed; we have 90 more beds. We are working to develop more supports across the province. We've hired 80 more staff that are being well trained to provide the necessary supports.

We're going to continue to make those investments, but we're not stopping there. We're going to continue to invest in prevention by hiring more Families First workers to be on the ground in the communities to provide that important support for parents in the communities.

We're going to continue to work. We're going to—we know we have much more work to do, but we are prepared to do it. We're the party that will do it. We will not threaten to privatize and we—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that children are still in hotels in rural Manitoba.

Anyone lured into the maze of addictions, gangs and the sex trade has an uphill battle to get their lives back together. When children under the age of 18

come to the care of CFS, they age out, and they are often turned out on the street with little or no support.

* (13:50)

How many young lines—lives has CFS ruined by bringing the children under their care into high-risk environments like hotels, and why weren't the warning signs heeded?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We know when a family reaches out and asks for support, we need to be available to them, and that's what we're doing. We're continuing to provide them with support. We're providing them with support in their home with family respite workers. We're providing prevention services. We're making investments to reduce poverty. We're going to continue to do that.

We have eliminated the use of hotels across this province. We are providing more diagnostic services for families. We're continuing to ensure that for high-risk victims that we have the appropriate services. We work hand in hand with the authorities, the agencies, the communities and, most importantly, the families to ensure that we're providing them with the necessary supports.

We are making investments, which is a stark contrast from what the members opposite, when they did not provide services to children that were over the age of 16. They cut \$4.5 million from the budget and then reduced—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Floodfighting Equipment Contract Tendering Process

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Earlier this week, in their desperation to deflect, the NDP provided misleading information to media that attempted to hide the extent of contracts for Tiger Dams.

The fact is that the NDP spent \$8.7 million on Tiger Dams, Super Tiger Dams, the Tiger Dams in rapid response trailers. This information came directly from a FIPPA response from the NDP's own government Department of Infrastructure and Transportation. Subsequently, Mr. Speaker, the NDP went into damage control mode and tried to assert that the Province spent much less than this, a statement that was completely false.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier (Mr. Selinger) admit that this was wrong and apologize for his desperate attempt to mislead Manitobans?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering, actually, if the members of the opposition and the Leader of the Opposition have had the chance to reflect on comments that were put on the record yesterday, and I have the Hansard where the Leader of the Opposition made a statement alleging kickbacks yesterday.

And I'm wondering if the members opposite and the Leader of the Opposition are either going to apologize and withdraw from that comment or have the courage to take it outside, because those kinds of reckless comments are offensive to this House. They're offensive to me. They're offensive to the individuals involved with this.

There's no room for that kind of accusation, Mr. Speaker, and they should either withdraw it in this House or take it outside where they will be responsible for the full weight of the law for those kind of comments.

Mrs. Stefanson: In their desperate attempts to deflect and cover up, the NDP attempted to mislead media and Manitobans yet again.

In a statement from the NDP, they attempted to deny that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was responsible for awarding the contracts for Tiger Dams as the Emergency Measures Minister. They indicated that he was not the minister for MIT at the time, inferring that the member for Thompson was not responsible for awarding the contracts for 'tiber'—for Tiger Dams at this time, again, a statement that is completely false, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Premier admit that this was wrong and apologize for his desperate attempt to mislead Manitobans again?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, talk about misleading Manitobans, and I note members opposite didn't respond.

The Leader of the Opposition yesterday alleged the kickback scheme. He went on to say, when a contract went out, a donation came in. There are comments that he made in this House where he's protected by parliamentary privilege.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask members opposite again, and I realize it's a rhetorical question, but I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition is either

going to withdraw those comments or make them outside of this Chamber where he's not protected by parliamentary privilege.

Mrs. Stefanson: I guess members opposite are refusing to apologize for misleading Manitobans again. That's unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has expressed concern about this NDP government's compulsion to awarding sole-source contracts, she said, and referred to it as an epidemic. A search on MERX, the place where all provincial tenders are published, did not provide any evidence of a public tender that took place and was awarded for Tiger Dams since 2009.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier: Of the \$8.7 million of contracts the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) provided for Tiger Dams in the province, how many of them were untendered sole-source contracts?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): First of all, there was a suggestion that something untoward had been done when a fully tendered contract was put out for the \$5 million and was done in an appropriate manner.

You've also heard me say in the Legislature that when we purchase flood equipment, we do it specific to the situation at hand. If there's an urgent situation where a community needs to be protected, it is often the case that sole-source contracts are put out in order to make sure that people are protected in a timely fashion.

That's what we did with the air ambulance service, the STARS service. We made sure that service was there in 2009. We made sure that service was there in 2011, and we provide continuity of service.

It has also been the case that equipment has been ordered on a specific basis to meet urgent needs in communities for flood protection.

The safety and security of Manitobans comes first, and that's the job of the Emergency Measures officials, is to do that in partnership with local municipalities to make sure communities are safe. That's priority one, Mr. Speaker, and we are prepared to be fully accountable for that in protecting all of our communities.

Floodfighting Equipment Contract Tendering Process

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, in the September letter from the minister of MIT to Chief Glenn Hudson, the minister acknowledges the invoice and commits EMO to provide the financial support towards the purchase of the floodfighting inventory, otherwise known as Tiger Dams, \$5 million of untendered Tiger Dams. The deputy minister was aware of the purchase.

Mr. Speaker, what authorization did the minister have to make this commitment without Treasury Board approval, and did the Premier know and approve?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, again, I note that the silence is deafening from members opposite in terms of the reckless, libelous comments that the Leader of the Opposition put on the record.

And I point out, Mr. Speaker, over the last number of days, one thing that's very clear from members opposite that they haven't clearly recognized, we were, indeed, dealing with the situation in July of 2014 where we operated the emergency outlet. There were concerns expressed. There was a protest; there was opposition by the AMC, the IRTC, the First Nations, fishers in that area.

We acted in good faith. We committed to two things. One was dealing with—their No. 1 concern was actually fisheries compensation, which we did over the next number of months, and the second was in terms of equipment. We made it clear on September 2nd that that equipment would be provincially owned. It went to tender. No tender has been awarded. The only equipment that has been purchased has been through the federal government.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, the NDP continue to mislead Manitobans and ignore rules on tendering. The minister made this commitment without the—without following proper tendering procedures. The Interlake Reserves Tribal Council acknowledges the untendered purchase with the funds committed from the Province.

Mr. Speaker, the minister directed staff to proceed with the untendered contract. The Deputy Premier knew. Did the Premier also know that an untendered contract had been awarded without Treasury Board approval?

Mr. Ashton: Again, Mr. Speaker, no tender has been awarded. A tender has been put out. It has been out on MERX, I think, since December. The only equipment that has been purchased has been with money and with supply provided by the federal government, so the member opposite is, once again, incorrect. It was put out to tender, but no tender has been awarded.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, the NDP are trying to mislead Manitobans on this issue, but whistle-blowers continue to release information that shows what really happened.

Will the minister just come clean on his several attempts to avoid public tendering of the Tiger tubes? Mr. Speaker, at what point did he try to manipulate the Building Manitoba Fund to pay for the invoice from the IRTC? Was it sometime in November?

Mr. Ashton: Well, speaking of coming clean, Mr. Speaker, this is about the sixth question from members opposite. I have never seen in this House the kind of accusations made by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday. Six opportunities they've had the opportunity to get up and say either that they withdraw that comment yesterday or they have the guts to take it outside where they will be subject, I can tell you, to a very different set of standards.

So the Leader of the Opposition and members of the opposition can hide behind parliamentary privilege if they want, but that accusation yesterday was offensive to this House. It's offensive to people who can't defend themselves. They should withdraw it.

Floodfighting Equipment Ombudsman's Investigation

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): The minister knows full well that what's offensive is \$5 million in untendered contracts to his friends.

* (14:00)

Mr. Speaker, this issue, despite what the Minister for Infrastructure says, is clearly about conflict of interest, and the NDP is misleading Manitobans by claiming that they would welcome further investigation by the Ombudsman when they know full well that the Ombudsman is prohibited by law from doing so. Section 18(a) of The Ombudsman Act explicitly prohibits the investigation of any actions or decisions of NDP Cabinet ministers.

Why would the Premier (Mr. Selinger) be so desperate as to claim that this independent office of the Legislature should now do something that the Premier knows full well that they are explicitly prohibited by law from doing?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the member's been for the last period of time, but there actually was a complaint filed with the Ombudsman in November, and the Ombudsman at that time saw no grounds to proceed further.

We have indicated, and I've put it on the record, I am anxious for the Ombudsman to revisit the matter because what the Ombudsman would find, Mr. Speaker, is, indeed, that there has been a tender put out and no contract is awarded.

And I'll repeat this again for members opposite for probably the 20th time here: The only contract for flood equipment that's been awarded went through federal process, so it's the Harper government, not this government, that paid for it.

Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't get it. The issue is that the Ombudsman doesn't have the authority. This is clearly an issue of conflict of interest. It was a conflict of interest when the minister used his position to pursue a \$5-million untendered contract to 'tiber'-Tiger Dam suppliers, close friends with a history of donating to the party.

In Manitoba, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner is appointed under and administers the legislative act and Executive Council conflict of interest act. It's the Conflict of Interest Commissioner who does this. Now, the Premier has pointed to the Ombudsman, but he has not pointed to the independent officer of the Legislature who has conflict of interest in the title.

On what date did the Premier or his minister seek advice from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner on the minister's actions to pursue an untendered contract for his close friends and political allies?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, a tender has been put out through MERX; no tender has been awarded. The only tender—the only contract for flood equipment went through the Harper government, not through this government.

And I welcome not only the scrutiny of the Ombudsman but in review in terms of conflict of

interest. In fact, I've been very anxious to have that, Mr. Speaker, because, quite frankly, again, I point out that what happened was in July. We had the operation of the emergency outlet. There were two issues identified by the First Nations. They dealt in good faith, but we made it clear that the bottom line is that the equipment would be provincially owned. We said that we would go through our internal processes. We did, and we went to tender, but no tender's even been awarded yet.

So there is no substance to members opposite. Again, I give them the opportunity to withdraw the scurrilous—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

Mr. Friesen: —isn't answering the question.

Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner administers The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Conflict of Interest Act.

Now, the question is simple: Did the Premier (Mr. Selinger) or minister seek advice from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner? Did he do it before the minister made the July announcement when the minister instructed the department to pay the invoice in September '14? Did he do it before they tried to strong-arm approval from Treasury Board? Or did they never take this issue to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner because they knew what the answer of the commissioner clearly would be?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting. Yesterday they were using phrases like kickbacks; they've had the opportunity to withdraw that. Now they're shifting ground, they're talking about conflict of interest. The member might want to read the act.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if it's a conflict of interest, the degree to which the Conservative Party received tens of thousands of dollars of donations from brokers that sold off our telephone system. I don't know if it's a conflict of interest that MLAs, both past and present, benefited from that sale. I don't know if they have any concern about the ethics of that.

But I will say one thing, and I'll say it to the Leader of the Opposition: I will put my public record in terms of what I have stood for against the

scurrilous comments he made yesterday. When will he withdraw them, Mr. Speaker? When will he withdraw—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time on this question has elapsed.

The Pas Health Clinic Timing of Opening

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans learned this week that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and the Premier of Manitoba tried to rush a health clinic in The Pas to help out a political friend who was running for mayor. Many Manitobans, including the current mayor of The Pas, were disgusted by this politicization of capital projects. This is partisan politics at its worst.

Can the minister for Thompson tell Manitobans why he would sink so low and put his interests above all else?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): You know, I can put on the record that there's not any person in this House that doesn't want to see the provision of health-care services improve throughout the province, and that includes the town of The Pas, which has been working for years to have a health clinic. That's a priority for our member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin). It's a priority for everybody in The Pas.

So I would suggest to the member opposite, if she is trying to suggest there's something wrong with the people in The Pas wanting a health clinic to serve the 1,000 patients seeking doctors, I'd ask the question, who is playing politics here? Perhaps it's the member opposite.

Mrs. Driedger: I would refer the minister to the news release that was put out by the mayor of Thompson that might clean up—clear up some of the questions he might have.

Mr. Speaker, not only was the member for Thompson pressuring his Cabinet colleagues and Treasury Board to agree to a \$5-million untendered purchase of Tiger Dams, he was strong-arming his colleagues about the health clinic, and the Premier was there right alongside him. This is a stain on politics in Manitoba.

I would like to ask the member of Thompson to explain to Manitobans why he put his priorities above the priorities of Manitobans.

Mr. Ashton: I realize members opposite get somewhat confused when it comes to northern Manitoba, but we were talking about The Pas, not Thompson.

And I want to put on the record, there's not one member of this caucus that isn't concerned about the provision of health-care services around this province. When I look at what we've done here in the city of Winnipeg in terms of the QuickCare clinics, they're increasingly become a key focus for us, Mr. Speaker. When I look at the work we've done in terms of building our hospitals, doing the work to the Brandon general hospital, doing the work in hospitals throughout the province, when I look at the degree to which we've built in terms of nurses and doctors throughout the province, the bottom line is this is a government where every single MLA cares about every part of the province, including northern Manitoba.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the saga got even worse when the then-Finance minister said that they should hold on any clinic announcement until closer to the provincial election. She said that it could help the NDP win The Pas seat if they announced the construction of that clinic closer to the 2016 election. This is truly disgusting and shows how far this government will go to win an election.

I would like to ask this government to tell Manitobans: How many other projects are they sitting on right now so that they can announce them closer to the provincial election?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we've announced the Tabor personal-care home in southern Manitoba. I know they—people are worried opposite that it's a swing seat. We've gone ahead and built that personal-care home.

I was privileged to be at Notre Dame de Lourdes where we turned sod on a new hospital out there after many years of work building a primary health clinic by the community after some excellent family physicians making a decision to have their lives there. I know the members are—opposite are concerned that that's a swing seat in Midland. We're building that hospital for them.

We announced a CancerCare hub in Winnipeg. You can go anywhere in Manitoba and we are working with communities to provide better health care. In the North, in rural Manitoba, in our urban centres, we want better health care for Manitobans.

We have over 660 more doctors in Manitoba. When the members opposite were in office, they lost 200 doctors. When the members opposite were in office, they fired 1,000 nurses. We have thousands of more nurses working in Manitoba.

When it comes to health care, they eliminate services; we build them for all the people of Manitoba.

Assiniboine Valley Farmers Compensation Claim Settlements

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, for the fourth year out of five, farmers along the Shellmouth Dam have been unable to seed a crop, nor have they been compensated as promised for the flooding of the—from the dam.

When will this government honour their promise for hard-working Manitoba farm families?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Yes, well, Mr. Speaker, I point out to the member opposite that it's this government that brought in the statutory right for coverage where you have artificial flooding.

There undoubtedly has been flooding in the affected area over the last period of time, but I point out to members opposite, and including the member opposite who knows certainly from his constituency, the degree to which there's been natural flooding, very significant natural flooding in the southwest both in 2011 and 2014.

* (14:10)

And, again, what we do, as is required under the statute, we identify what's from natural flooding and is covered through other programs potentially and what is artificial flooding. And, again, it's this government that brought in that coverage, and we take that responsibility to provide that coverage for artificial flooding very seriously.

Mr. Piwniuk: Mr. Speaker, this minister for EMO has often been quoted by saying, we here—we must protect Manitobans. It seems like this minister's very concerned about protecting his friends at this expense of flooded Manitobans who have not been compensated.

Why does this government continue to ignore farm families when it's—farm families when they're flood victims?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I point out that when members opposite were in government, there

was no coverage under statute. We felt it was important to recognize that the farmers downstream from the Shellmouth have the same kind of coverage that we have for people that are upstream from the floodway. So it does cover artificial flooding, and I want to stress again, there may be other agricultural programs that may, indeed, cover impacts on crops from natural flooding.

But we brought in that legislation. It does require we do the analysis and, indeed, where there is artificial flooding, coverage is made available.

Mr. Pivniuk: Mr. Speaker, this government has been using flooding as a scapegoat for their poor fiscal management, the ballooning debt and their ongoing budget deficits, yet the flooded Manitobans have not been compensated.

Why does this government continue to reward his friends with contracts while ignores flooded landowners in western Manitoba?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that we've had huge challenges in 2011 and 2014, and I am proud of the work that we have done as a department and as a government to work to rebuild the 80 bridges impacted in 2011, the 80 bridges impacted in 2014.

I'd like to credit the work of the municipalities, and I recently met with the Two Borders municipality. He may want to talk to them how we work with those municipalities to identify the priorities in the southwest. And if he doesn't want to believe that, he may want to go check out the Coulter bridge, which we built in record time.

We were there for the southwest; we'll continue to be there in the future when it comes to the flood impact.

Teranet Manitoba Registry Fee Increases

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, today's NDP stumbles from one conflict of interest to another. They're—may hope that the latest ones will blind us to the rest of them, but when Manitobans are constantly reminded in daily transactions with our now-privatized Property Registry, that's hardly likely.

Since the bid-free, sole-sourced sale of our Property Registry to Teranet, costs to register a property have increased, some more than doubling, costing homebuyers even more.

How does the Premier explain that a doubling of fees in the last two years is appropriate, and why does so much that the Premier touches result in increased costs to Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that real estate sales are doing very well in Manitoba. It's a strong indicator of the strength of our economy. In other parts of the country, we're seeing a dip in real estate sales. In Manitoba, they've remained consistently strong. At the same time, real estate has remained, in relative terms, affordable even though there's more pressure in that area.

We're building a record number of homes in the private sector. We've seen tremendous expansion even though it's levelled off but still at a high level.

We're building more in the social sector all across the province of Manitoba. More people are choosing to live in Manitoba, and when people want to live in Manitoba, they want good housing, and we're out there providing it. We actually have a tax credit for building rental apartments in Manitoba, and we're seeing a lot of multi-family units being built.

And that's what we want to see: more housing for more people to live in Manitoba.

Sale of the Property Registry Conflict of Interest Concerns

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, and the costs go up.

In March 2014, the Auditor General reported that the government's committee which evaluated the proposed privatization of our Property Registry to Teranet was composed of three people, two of whom were married to one another. It was also reported that one of these two individuals had a previous tie to Teranet.

Mr. Speaker, why did today's NDP government allow such a conflict of interest to occur on a committee which was deciding to bind this province for 30 years to the privatization of our Property Registry?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I think the member has correctly identified it as a lease where all the personal and private information was protected in the public sector with a commissioner to look after that.

If he has a specific allegation to make, I wish he would bring it forward so it could be properly

reviewed, but I look forward to further information on that.

The reality was that it was a lease with a privacy commissioner overlooking the information that's in the registry to make sure that the public interest and the interests of the citizens of Manitoba are protected.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General investigated and said it was a conflict of interest to have two of three people on a committee be married. There's clearly an overlap in interest.

Manitobans are very concerned when members of today's NDP government get involved in very large sole-source transactions as we saw with STARS and the 30-year contract for the privatization of our Property Registry. Today's NDP let an obvious conflict of interest persist, and now the prices being charged for property registration have gone up, as the material I table shows. The lack of due diligence by today's NDP government is siphoning the wallets of Manitobans.

What changes will the Premier be making to assure—ensure that committees don't have conflict of interest like this from now on?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, Mr. Speaker, again, we will take any concerns the member has very seriously.

I note that the fees have gone from \$15 to \$16 two years later and \$23 a year after that. I suspect that those fees are competitive for the services offered and will continue to be offered.

And the other thing I think that—other thing that I think is happening, Mr. Speaker, is we're seeing more of these services available online to make transactions easier for the people that are dealing with these matters in terms of registry. Usually, in most cases, it's lawyers that are handling these transactions on behalf of their clients, and they are now able to conclude those transactions in a more timely fashion.

But if there's any specific concerns that any agency or any officer of this Legislature has, I'm sure they will be followed up, and we will undertake to do that.

Culinary Arts Program Riverton Collegiate Upgrades

Mr. Peter Bjornson (Gimli): I know that students throughout the province have and continue to benefit from our investments in the education system.

Whether it's smaller class sizes or new shops or complete refits of schools and building new schools, they continue to have opportunities to get the skills they need to get a good job and work here in Manitoba.

Now, we all want what's best for our children, and it means giving them a strong start. So, Mr. Speaker, I was absolutely delighted today to be with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) in Riverton where we made a very exciting announcement that will help students in our province.

And I would like to ask the Minister of Education to inform the House about this exciting new announcement.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Gimli who joined the Premier in Riverton today to announce a new industrial kitchen at Riverton Collegiate that's valued at more than \$800,000. Now, this new kitchen will help students get in-demand skills while they are still in high school and serve as a launch pad for a rewarding career.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, as we know, Riverton is the home of The Riverton Rifle, Reggie Leach. He's put a lot of pucks in the net over the years, and we're going to continue to score goals all across Manitoba.

We're making historic investments in new schools, shop classes, gyms, science labs, and we're making sure that students have the ability to take dual credits so that they can go on into post-secondary education and go on then and get a good job.

Mr. Speaker, contrast that with the opposition. They want to cut \$500 million from the budget. Last time, it resulted in 700—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed for this question.

Lake St. Martin Flood Housing for Evacuees

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the minister of MIT and the Premier are relentless in their pursuit of personal gain.

The 2,000 residents of Lake St. Martin First Nation have been displaced for four years now and do not seem to be a priority for the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, why has the minister of MIT prioritized taking care of campaign donors over assisting those from Lake St. Martin First Nation to find a new home?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite may not have noticed, but there was recently a very significant commemoration by one of the communities in that area. That's part of the operation coming home which has brought together the federal government, the provincial government and all the First Nations to, for the first time, deal with the 50 years-plus experience those communities have of chronic flooding, of mould-contaminated houses. And I want to put on the record that we're making significant progress with those communities.

* (14:20)

And in addition to that, we built the emergency outlet for the first time from Lake St. Martin. We're building permanent outlets from Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin.

So we are working for historic redress of the type of circumstances those people have been through for 50-plus years in this province.

Mr. Graydon: Well, there's still 2,000 families out of their homes. When he talks about the outlet being built, it's not being used.

The minister of MIT is quoted as saying: It's far better to invest in flood mitigation and making sure people have homes and live-in communities that are flood protected. However, Manitobans now know that these investments were nothing more than shell payments to the minister's large campaign donors.

I need to ask the minister: Is purchasing flood equipment from campaign donors more important than giving those from Lake St. Martin a live-in community that they deserve?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd suggest the member opposite do a bit of a fact check and he would find out that the emergency outlet was not only used in 2011, but we started the operation of it in July of last year and it has continued in operation 'til this year. So it's there benefiting the people from Lake St. Martin.

I point out, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite not only didn't do it when they were in government, that they voted against the financial measures that were put in place.

So they can talk all they want about Lake St. Martin, but it's this government that has to deal with the historic inequities, the historic flooding. We're acting for the people around Lake St. Martin.

Mr. Graydon: Four years, 2,000 people, over 63 deaths. This is the plight of those from Lake St. Martin. This is the legacy of the minister of MIT. While the minister has been enjoying meals in his own home, sleeping in his own bed, residents from Lake St. Martin First Nation are left searching for a solution.

Mr. Speaker, what does the minister have to say to residents like Dianne Traverse, who gave birth to a young child while living in a Winnipeg hotel, not in the home that she deserves, that she's been out of for four years? What—why have you ignored them for so long? That's the question to the minister.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised that members opposite don't acknowledge the work that has been put in, and if they don't want to acknowledge it coming from this government, I'll put on the record the work that has also been done by the Harper government, by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs of Canada, Minister Valcourt. They have been committed; they have been at the table.

We have allocated. We're building homes. We're building new parts of communities on high ground. We're building an emergency outlet. In fact, we're building permanent outlets as well. We have been working in partnership.

So the member opposite may want to play politics with it, Mr. Speaker, but this government is proud to be partnering, yes, with the Harper government, the federal government, and, yes, with the First Nations, to deal with the historic flooding in that area by flood protecting those communities and getting people back in decent housing.

We're part of the solution; they are part of the problem.

Student Financial Aid System Timeline and Costs

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education stated yesterday the phase 2 plan of the student financial aid software is still on track. He admitted that, in fact, this cost \$22 million-plus, and the launch that was scheduled for June of 2011 is nowhere to be seen but, apparently, is still on track.

Will the minister admit today either he doesn't know what's going on in his department or he's misleading Manitoba students? Which is it, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said to the member yesterday, were he to go online and apply for a loan with the student loan agency, he would certainly be served and well served.

And when he did that, he would find that when he went through his career, he would be among those many students who get interest-free—will get an interest-free loan this year in Manitoba, the first time in the Prairies ever offered.

And then when he's done that and he finishes his education, he'll also get a tuition rebate from this government that will cover a large proportion of his educational expenses over the course of his, I'm sure, long career in post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we invest in post-secondary education. On that side of the House, they made cuts every single year.

Mr. Ewasko: So, Mr. Speaker, I'll take that answer as none of the above.

The current software was brought online in '96-97. The new \$22-million GHOST phase 2 software is obviously not scheduled to launch. The Minister of Education is misleading Manitoba students and Manitoba taxpayers. Manitobans are paying more and getting far less, matter in fact, \$22 million more for nothing.

Will he admit today that his NDP government has now re-tendered the contract for phase 2 software?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think he has it quite right. I don't think he actually understood my answer yesterday.

I said quite clearly that phase 1 of that project had been completed. Phase 2 has undergone some challenges along the way. We're still working on it to try to get it right. We want to be sure that the system is there for them.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's remember that on this side of the House, we lead the country when it comes to investments in post-secondary education, and in addition to that, we have among the lowest tuition rates in Canada as well.

Mr. Speaker, just the other day the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and I announced a new post-secondary education strategy for students that will ensure that our education—post-secondary education is a seamless system where there are no wrong doors and no dead ends.

On the other hand, when you contrast it with the other side of the House, they made cuts to post-second education every single year, and I have no doubt they will continue—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Assiniboine Valley Farmers Compensation Claim Settlements

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I listened intently to the minister's response today to the Assiniboine valley producers who've been flooded out, in fact, flooded out probably four out of the last five years. The minister would lead the House to believe that everything's been looked after, but the reality is quite different. In fact, the legislation the government brought forward, they're actually hiding behind that particular legislation, and clearly many farm families have been impacted by the flooding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister if he could indicate to us how many claims have been submitted and, in fact, more importantly, how many payments have been made to the Assiniboine valley producers.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised the member opposite would talk about hiding behind legislation that for the first time actually defines that people impacted by artificial flooding will receive coverage that's statutory.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if perhaps he's saying that because he's actually hiding behind the fact, by asking a question on this issue, that they didn't do anything when they were in government. They never once brought in that legislation; it was this government.

It does cover artificial flooding. There are other programs that cover flooding from natural sources, agricultural programs.

So he's totally incorrect. It's not this government hiding, Mr. Speaker, them hiding from their record. They did nothing for the producers; we have acted.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for members' statements.

Lac du Bonnet Summer Activities

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): The Lac du Bonnet constituency is well-known for its summer activities such as fishing, fairs and festivals. I would like to mention some of the events that will be taking place in my constituency over this coming summer.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Lac du Bonnet fireworks which take place during the annual Canada Day celebrations on July 5th this coming year—or this coming—within the next couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker. The fireworks show includes over 6,000 shots that are choreographed to music. The fireworks show brings out thousands of people from all over Manitoba.

Another interesting event is the Pinawa annual birthday celebration during the third week of July. At this celebration, individuals can participate in events such as fishing, parades, beach activities, golf tournaments and enjoy the town market and fireworks.

The ninth annual Summer Winds festival and fundraiser will take place on July 17th and 18th in Victoria Beach. This event is hosted by the Victoria Beach Sports Club which has been a vital part of the community for 55 years.

The Lac du Bonnet Fire & Water Music Festival is one of the province's fastest growing and family-friendly festivals. The event features local and international artists, and this year the Eastman judge art expedition—exhibition, a travelling judge art show, will join the festival. This event will take place on July 31st.

Of course, Sagkeeng First Nation and Black River First Nation will be holding their treaty days as well, Mr. Speaker, and invites First Nations from across this wonderful country of ours.

Another great event is the Great Woods Music Festival which is held in Beausejour. It will take place from August 6th to August 8th, and will feature musical artists such as None the Wiser, Andy Nixon and The 44s.

The 4P Festival which will be held in Powerview from August 28th to September 1st will include family fun activities such as Lego

competitions, a family movie night, a slow-pitch tournament and a talent show.

There are several other interesting events taking place over the summer in my constituency, many of which rely on the hard work of volunteers. I look forward to attending many of these events and invite all members of this Legislature to visit the Lac du Bonnet constituency to join me.

We really do have it all in Lac du Bonnet, and I look forward to following up with the members in the fall about the success of other summer events.

Thank you.

* (14:30)

Tim Hortons Unionizes

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Heroes can come from anywhere. I had the pleasure of meeting two members of a whole group of new heroes just yesterday. Their names are Abstinencia Diza and Ruby Syed, and they and their colleagues are with us here in the gallery from the Workers United Canada Council. They work with 35 individuals from all over the world to empower their workplace and strengthen our community. How did they do this? Earlier this month, they became the first to unionize a Tim Hortons restaurant in our province's history.

It takes courage to stand up for what is right, especially when your job may be on the line. These employees saw this first-hand when one of their long-time staff colleagues was initially fired just for talking to a union representative. I am pleased to report that she was able to successfully file an appeal with Manitoba's labour relations board—a body created by an NDP government I might add—and has been now fully reinstated. The management at this Tim Hortons franchise even acknowledged it had violated the worker's rights to unionize on several occasions, a right that has been upheld in Canada's Supreme Court.

Their efforts and their courage have contributed an important new chapter to Manitoba's proud history of labour activism. Very few, if any of the rights and privileges we take for granted today—such as weekends, minimum wage laws, workplace safety, and pensions to name just a few—would have ever happened without the crucial role of organized labour. The members of this newest local of the Workers United Canada Council have now opened the door for workers at many other fast-food establishments to follow their leadership.

Not only are unionized workplaces beneficial for the employees, they offer benefits for employers as well. These include reduced staff turnover, fewer workplace accidents and a stable structure for resolving issues.

Labour rights have always had a special place in Manitoba history, going all the way back the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. That history continues today with our NDP government. I have been very proud to vote every year for budgets and laws that have increased the minimum wage, hired more workplace safety inspectors and modernized pension legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be the only MLA in this Chamber with a unionized Tim Hortons restaurant in my constituency, but I hope that honour will be shared with many other members soon enough.

Congratulations once again to these brave workers and to the Workers United Canada Council on their exciting victory for working people and families everywhere.

Thank you.

Brenda Dyck

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, today's private member's statement wraps up my trio of statements dedicated to paying well-deserved recognition to some amazing volunteers from the Emerson constituency. However, I can promise you this that this will not be the last.

Brenda Dyck is from Woodmore area, and with her husband, Corney, have raised their four children and have helped raise their seven grandchildren.

Despite these family commitments, Brenda still finds time to give back to the community, dedicating an amazing amount of time to supporting and leading local organizations.

Brenda has been a member of the Woodmore Women's Institute since 2009, and during this time she's held the offices of secretary for two years and currently serves as the institute's vice president. As vice president, she is actively involved in the operations of the food security and literacy programs.

Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that the area—everyone who knows the area knows that agriculture plays a large part in the development of the area. And, in this regard, Brenda has been a member of the

Vita Horticultural Society since 1994, and has been a committed member and exhibitor at the Vita and district farmers' market since its inception.

Brenda has been a project leader with the 4-H for the past 20 years, serving as a local leader for the past seven. In this role, Brenda has served the district council and the Eastman area council since 2005 and, furthermore, has served as a camp cook at Star Lake for the past 16 years.

And, if this wasn't enough commitments, Brenda and her husband opened Cobren greenhouses in 2000, the only one of its kind in the district.

Therefore, it's clear that Brenda Dyck is a powerhouse of a volunteer who has shown no signs of letting up in the future. For all the hard work that Brenda has done, and will continue to do to make her surrounding community a better place to live, it is my pleasure today to recognize her accomplishments in the Legislature—Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

Thank you.

World Trade Centre Winnipeg

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Today I'd like to acknowledge the efforts of many who contributed in making the Winnipeg world centre a reality.

One of my dreams has been to build Manitoba a leading economic power in our country. I know many hard-working people of our province have been contributing to achieve that goal. In this regard, I'd like to recognize a very powerful businesswoman who is working hard to capitalize on Manitoba's economic potential.

Mr. Speaker, Mariette Mulaire, the president and CEO of Winnipeg trade centre, part of the global trade centers association—World Trade Centers Association and Winnipeg trade—Winnipeg World Trade Centre, in nearly 100 countries in the world including India and the Philippines, key trade partners of Manitoba. This is first fully bilingual organization in Canada. Ms. Mulaire has been recently elected to serve on the board of directors of the global organization. She is the only Canadian, Mr. Speaker, to have earned this honour so far. I'd like to extend my deepest congratulations to Ms. Mulaire for her achievement. I know she will do an excellent job.

I'd also like to thank Dave Angus, president and CEO of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Ms. Diane Gray, president and CEO of CentrePort

Canada for their role in making World Trade Centre a reality.

For many years, Mr. Speaker, I have been participating in international trade activities. We organized the first International Trade Council, an initiative undertaken by the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and our department of Entrepreneurship, Trade and Training, resulting in the recommendation to establish a world trade centre in Winnipeg. That dream has come true. The Winnipeg World Trade Centre has launched—was launched in October 11th, 2012, in partnership with the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce.

We are fortunate to have this excellent institution here, at home to build our economy and to great—create good jobs for Manitobans.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I hope that all members of this House will join me in congratulating these three individuals, and Ms. Mulaire, and thanking them for their many contributions to our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Rods Football Club 70th Anniversary

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): This year, the St. James Rods Football Club is heading into an amazing 70th season. The Rods have not missed a single season since 1946, making them the longest continually-operated minor football club in Canada.

They began as the Fort Rouge Rods, named after the common 1940s nickname for a young man, a Rodney. The Rods have dominated the football scene in western Canada with 10 trips to the western Canadian final and picking up three junior Canadian football championships. In fact, the 1955 Rods team was inducted into the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame for being the first team from the province to win a national championship.

Over the years, the Rods football club earned a reputation for being a player manufacturing company by developing more professional players than any other junior club in Canada. So far there have been 42 players that have gone on to play professional football who all started their career by being a Rod. I'm sure there will be many more to come.

The Rods are starting their 70th season in July. A few current and former Blue Bombers attended the St. James Rods' pre-season conditioning camp this month to help coach and get the team prepared.

I've very proud to have the St. James Rods Football Club in my constituency. It's so important that young people have the opportunity to play sports. They make new friends, build their self-esteem, and it even encourages parents like me to stay active in keeping up with our children.

The Rods also have a superb group of volunteers who make up their board of directors, including President Laura Shea. And Nathalie Ritchie and Dave Lindberg from the board are here with us today and I'd like to recognize them.

And I ask leave of the House to include the names of these dedicated board members in the Hansard.

And finally, I like to say good luck to the St. James Rods as they tackle the season ahead. I wish them all the best of success.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to permit the names to be entered in the Hansard proceedings? *[Agreed]*

President, Laura Shea; 1st VP Business Operations, Gia Walker; 2nd VP Football Operations, Kyle Boernsen; Secretary, Dave Lindberg; Equipment Manager, Jim McMillan; Director, Paul McKie; Director, Nathalie Ritchie; Director, John Graham; Director, Samantha Boernsen; Director, Michael Gibson; Director, Kendra Haubrich; Director, Darren Pierce; Director, Ian Robinson; Director, Jon McKinnon; Director, Marlene Jayabalan.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes the member statements.

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances, orders of the day, government business.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Rules of the House will meet on Friday, June 26th at 9 a.m., to consider amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced that the Standing Committee on Rules of the House will meet on Friday, June the 26th, 2015, at 9 a.m., to consider

amendments to the Rules, Orders, Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. That's for information of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

* (14:40)

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On a matter of House business, I'd like to table for this House a memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Speaker, I table a memorandum of understanding and I'll read it into the record, if I may.

The undersigned have, on behalf of our respective party leaders and our respective caucuses, come to an agreement on rule changes as outlined in principle, on June 11th, 2015, in this House. We agree to effect these changes in an upcoming rules committee and pass them prior to the House rising for this sitting. And, Mr. Speaker, this MOU is signed by the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), by myself and by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

I just want to put a couple of comments on the record and I would be happy to hear comments from both of the signatories to this agreement as well.

As the House will remember, on June 11th, we put forward an agreement in principle in terms of the rules going forward for this Assembly and we have worked hard—and I say we. There's a number of people that have been involved in that—but we've worked hard to come to this point of an agreement in terms of the technicalities of those rules and how the rules would be worded and worked, and we'll be having that discussion tomorrow and agreeing to those rules in the rules committee just announced by the Government House Leader.

I do want to thank the staff of this Assembly, in particular, the Clerk's office, the legal department and translation for their great work in getting us to this point. They worked late into the night. Just last night I saw the Clerk leaving at 10 p.m. from the House, and I know that there is more work to do. But we really appreciate the great efforts that they have put in as a team. We're very fortunate to have them here in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and I know that you would agree with that.

I also want to thank the two leaders of the government party and of the official opposition. I think they both have given us an ability to go forward with these negotiations, and it takes a degree of vision to make changes that are significant, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how this works.

I want to thank my colleague from Midland who has been involved with these discussions and these negotiations. *[interjection]* Sorry, Spruce Woods—not that I don't want to thank the—my colleague from Midland. But, in particular, on this issue I want to thank my colleague from Spruce Woods who's been involved in this negotiation. And I also thank the Government House Leader, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and also the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) as well, Mr. Speaker, and the member for River Heights. I do have—I had respect going into this process for both the member for Thompson and the member for Kildonan as parliamentarians, and my respect has grown for them through this process, through the discussion on rules.

I think that all of us spent time talking and thinking about the perspective of the government and thinking about their perspective of the opposition and coming up with a balance that would ensure that the mandates of both the government and the mandate of the opposition—and both have a mandate, one to govern and one to ensure that there is an ability to oppose things that need opposition—were met. And I really believe in my heart that we've struck a very, very good balance here, and it wouldn't have struck without the input of the member for Kildonan and the member for Thompson. And so I thank them both very much for their input in this process.

Also, I want to thank again the member for River Heights. As an independent member, we relied very strongly on his advice in terms of how do we protect independent members, and he gave us very good advice on that. And I think we've built on a number of different things within the rules that will protect independent members. I know he's hoping not to be an independent member for long, but whoever the independent members are in the future, they certainly need that protection.

So we put everything, I think, through the filter, Mr. Speaker, of trying to ensure that government is able to act on their mandate and that opposition is able to act on their mandate as well and protect the interests of independent members.

We believe strongly this will modernize our rules and bring us into conformity with legislatures across Canada and probably across all western democracies, Mr. Speaker. We've been lagging behind in terms of some of our processes and I think it'll bring us into that realm.

We also want to note that this is not the end of a process. Within the rules it clearly indicates that the rules committee will meet two times a year and we are hoping to ensure that there is a culture built of continually looking at the rules and renewing the rules knowing that this is not the end of a process, but, really, the beginning of a process, and that we need to continue to ensure that the rules work for all parties in this House and we're committed to ensuring that we have those meetings with that in mind.

To use a sporting analogy, Mr. Speaker, often we are on the field of play and we are combatants in our particular sport, which is politics. Not unlike football or hockey, they can be pretty aggressive times, but all of us need to live by a common set of rules that work for all of us, just like in a sport, and I think we've put in place a common set of rules that will work for all of us but still allow us to be very aggressive in the roles that we need to be aggressive in, Mr. Speaker.

I'll close on this just by mentioning the Deputy Clerk, Mr. Yarish, said to me a few weeks ago that when an assembly—when a collective assembly says—or changes the rules, they leave a legacy for future assemblies, and I think that this Assembly will leave a very positive legacy for future assemblies, and the members of the future will thank us for the work that we are doing here today, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to rise and thank members of the Chamber, and particularly thank the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for River Heights, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen), for—and particularly, of course, the clerks who've—and the legal people who've done tremendous service in order to bring forth these rules.

Mr. Speaker, we're—we talk about the rule of law and—as the most important thing that's demonstrative of democracy, and within the rule of law, the rules of this Chamber are more important than any of us as

individuals. And it's—I think it's quite striking that we've been able, in a non-partisan way, to create new rules and new structures in this Chamber that are reflective of—are better reflective of how the Chamber could work in a more efficient manner and protect the rights of all members of this Chamber and allow us to, as the member for Steinbach said, participate. And sometimes it's very tough legislative life but, at the same time, to be able to conduct ourselves in a fashion that serves for the betterment of the entire province.

I consider myself honoured to have the opportunity to participate in—and creating these rules, and I again want to thank my colleagues, all of the members of the Legislature who've helped, and I personally think it's a very important day in this Chamber when all leaders of the parties can put together rules of order that will conduct our business into the future and that we do so in a fashion that respects all of our rights and, more important, that allows us to conduct our business in a manner that will better the interests of all Manitobans.

So I thank my colleagues and I thank the, particularly, the member for Steinbach and the member for River Heights and the clerks, and there's many, many evenings that—and many, many hours that were put into these rules, and I believe that what we've achieved is a balance that'll have the rules—have this Assembly function even better many, many years into the future. And I consider it an honour to be a participant in that, and I want to thank the clerks, yourself and my colleagues for the opportunity to have worked on these rules and for the opportunity to go into committee tomorrow and see an evolution of this Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to comment on this matter as well. It's been recognized for quite a number of years that we in this Legislature would do well to have some significant changes to our rules. The last changes were, I think, in 2001-2002, that were significant, and over the years we've seen that there were clearly a number of areas where they can—been improved. We have learned by looking at what is happening in other legislatures. We have worked diligently. We have had some major contributions and advice from our Clerk in the Clerk's Office and the Clerk's team. And so after many hours of deliberation and a substantial number of meetings, we have now a package which, I think, will serve this Legislature well for years

ahead but also with a commitment to making sure that the rules committee meets more often than it does in the past and looks at how things are operating on a day-to-day and a year-to-year basis and looks at improvements.

* (14:50)

I want to say a particular thank you to the House leaders for the Conservative Party, MLA for Steinbach, the House leader for the NDP, the MLA for Kildonan, because they clearly had put a lot of thought into this, a lot of effort into this and paid a lot of attention to detail.

You know, it is not just about the overall changes and the substance, but it's very important to have the details right and to have the balance right so that it will serve all Manitobans. And it will serve all Manitobans because it will work for the government and it will work for the opposition and it will work for a third party—if there were a third party, official party—and it will work for independent members. And I think so what we have now is a package in which after many, many hours, we've hammered out a lot of details and I think will be very workable.

I want to also thank the translator, because we've been going down to the wire to get this translated and ready for the rules committee and we are very, very appreciative of that effort as well. And so, as we get close to the end of the session and looking forward to it going to the rules committee and being passed, and I just want to thank, you know, all who've contributed, including the MLA for Spruce Woods and the MLA for Thompson who contributed valuable advice during the process and—based on their experience and their thoughts and effort that they themselves had put into this.

So thanks to all who contributed, and I just wanted to let all members know that this was an effort by all parties to get rules which will work, you know, to overcome some of the problems that we've had in the last few years and give us an improved functioning Chamber.

So thank you very much, and thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I thank all honourable members for their work on—in this regard and also to our table officers, our clerks, Patricia Chaychuk and Mr. Rick Yarish, for their work. I know there was a tremendous amount of hours that went into this, and

I had many comments from them about the late nights and the weekends that they spent working on this effort. So I thank them, too, very much for their work.

Mr. Chomiak: On House business, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call bills 42 and 43, and I'm seeking leave of the House to go through all stages—all remaining stages of passage of these bills, including committee and Committee of the Whole, and leave of the House in order to pass the bills into—through third reading.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to call bills 42 and 43 through all the various stages including Committee of the Whole? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS

Bill 42—The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll proceed then, first, to call Bill 42, The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended).

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 42, The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur la nomination des hauts fonctionnaires de l'Assemblée (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), be now read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as part of the rule and a review and change in the Legislature, it became apparent both by practice and by rule that it would be appropriate to have a bill that ensured that when independent officers were no longer—were resigning or no longer participating, that within a period of six months that we, as a Legislature, could ensure that those positions are filled.

This—it—the process has in the past been bumpy on occasion, and I think, in the spirit of making this Chamber a more effective voice of the Province, we wanted to put in place a bill that would ensure that by law that these positions could be filled as expeditiously as possible.

And I again want to thank all members of the Chamber, in particular the House leaders, for their assistance in doing this. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Government House Leader for bringing forward this bill. I do think it's important. We, all of us, recognize the importance of independent officers to this House. There are a number of them and they perform different functions, but they all perform the function of serving us as MLAs but also serving the public. And there seems to be, over the last number of years, a growing reliance on independent officers for a variety of different reasons, and so the importance of them has grown, as well, and the need to have them in place.

There have been a couple of circumstances where the independent officers were not filled or hired for a couple of years, and, you know, I won't go into all those circumstances. I suspect that there is blame to be placed on all parties on that, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is that we needed to find a way to ensure that we held ourselves to a higher standard to ensure that we got independent officers in place when somebody has resigned. And so we have agreed to put this in as a higher standard for all of us, and then we'll have to live up to that standard, and that falls to each of us here in the Chamber. And I have confidence, though, that we will live up to that, and I suspect that we'll have the opportunity to put that into effect sometime in the near future.

So I do think this is an important thing for all of us as MLAs but, more importantly, for those who rely on independent officers as individuals within the public. So I think this is a positive step forward and I appreciate the fact that the Government House Leader has brought it forward.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Government House Leader for bringing this forward. Clearly, from the events of the last several years when there were delays in hiring independent officers, there's a need for this legislation.

When we're dealing with the Auditor General, the Children's Advocate, the Chief Electoral Officer, the information and privacy adjuster, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, the Ombudsman, in each case it is really vital that we have somebody there who is—and properly appointed—who has been a full-time position, not a temporary position, and is able to do the work that we need in the Legislature but the people of Manitoba need. And this is as much about serving the people of Manitoba as it is about serving the Legislature, because, you know, when

we're dealing with the Auditor General, the Children's Advocate, the Chief Electoral Officer, the information and privacy commissioner, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, the Ombudsman, we're dealing with officers who are providing services to all Manitobans in one way or another. And these are really vital services and it's very important that these positions are filled promptly and that, you know, as we've seen over the last several years, it's got to the point where it's imperative that we have this legislation to make sure this happens.

The MLA for Steinbach, you know, said that the blame is maybe on all parties. I just want it noted that I have made myself very readily available whenever meetings have been called and moved my schedule around and that the government has to have a lead, but if we need to keep the government to account with this kind of legislation, we need to do that and we will do that and I'm glad we're doing it.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on this matter?

House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 42, The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended).

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

The honourable Government House Leader, on House business? [*interjection*] Okay. Yes.

Bill 43—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: I was going to call second reading of Bill 43, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 43, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, be now read a second time and be referred to a Committee of the Whole.

* (15:00)

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: Again, I'd like to rise in the—thank the House leaders and the clerks and the entire Assembly for their efforts in putting this bill forward, these amendments to the Legislative Assembly management act.

Mr. Speaker, the reasons for the amendments are because of the changing nature of circumstances as they occur in the Legislature and as they affect MLAs and our ability for the commissioner to make decisions that are in the public interest. I'm very proud of the fact that we have an independent process that objectively looks after the interests of the Chamber and protects the public in the same—at the same time. There are a couple of occasions, and we've discovered in the last few months that there are occasions that we may need reference to or use of the commissioner between sittings and/or for issues arising, and this amendment will allow for that to be achieved in a—in both an impartial and in an efficient fashion. And I, again, want to thank all members of the House and particularly the member for Steinbach and the member for River Heights for recognizing this and putting it forth.

We're—the very best nature of this Chamber is when we do things in a non-partisan way; it's the very best of a parliamentary system. And this, like the matter, the previous bill and the rules that are coming forward, both reflect that.

So, those few words, I'm urging passage of this bill.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Thank the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) for his comments on this bill.

We certainly do and have always agreed with the principle of having an independent commissioner to deal with issues MLAs are either not best to deal with or that the public would rightly see as potentially a conflict for us to deal with. The most obvious of those, of course, are our salary and benefits. There's, I think, a good feeling in the public, a rightful feeling in the public that MLAs should not be setting their own salaries and setting their own benefits. And so we moved to a system a number of years ago where we would have a commissioner who would be responsible for going forward and making those recommendations. And it's worth remembering, then, in the fine tradition of Manitoba, the commissioner has hearings, public hearings, when he's setting salaries and benefits after an

election, gets input from the public and then makes a decision based on what seems right in Manitoba and what is the experience across Canada in other legislatures.

We continue to support that process. I know there are times when individuals or perhaps members of the media will say, well, you know, this particular provision should be changed and politicians should be changing it, and I continue to say and I'll say it on the record that it's hard to sort of treat this as a bit of a buffet. You either take nothing or you take all of it in this particular situation, Mr. Speaker, and not just take a little bit of this and a little bit of that.

So we, I think, agree with the principle. We do agree with the principle that it should be the commissioner deciding many of these issues, and sometimes, I suppose, members will agree with those decisions and sometimes they won't agree with those decisions, and sometimes the public will agree and sometimes the public won't agree. But we should all agree that it's a much better process when an independent person does those things than when politicians are empowered to do them themselves. And so I think that that is an important principle.

I think that this bill extends that principle by allowing other issues that might arise that shouldn't be decided upon by MLAs, that should be decided upon by an independent commissioner. And so it extends the principle that we agree with, and I think that Manitobans would generally agree with and I think that they would support the idea of that, Mr. Speaker.

There are a lot of things that happen that we can't foresee as MLAs. There are a lot of things that come forward that we might not have thought about, and it's important to be able to have an independent person to be able to look at those things and deal with those things in an independent way.

So I'm glad that this bill is coming forward and I think it will adhere to the principles, the two principles of the fact that MLAs have an important job to do in ensuring that the democratic system continues to work well, but there are certain things that we should not be able to decide upon because we have a unique position that other Manitobans don't, and this fulfills both of those principles, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, you know, I welcome this bill coming forward. I

think that it is incumbent upon us, as members of the Legislature, to make sure that we are looking carefully at the needs of individuals with disabilities, that we are adapting and adopting what we do in this Chamber and how we support MLAs to reflect how we would support people more broadly and should support people more broadly when it comes to issues of disabilities. We should be a province which is at the very forefront of making sure that individuals with disabilities can fully participate.

We—I know that, oh, for example, if we needed somebody with a wheelchair to participate here as has happened in the House of Commons, then I know that the Speaker has told us he has a plan and that it's important that it not only be a plan for the physical structure, but that the plan be there in place for when we're dealing with benefits of MLAs, that they be appropriate, that they be reasonable and that they be decided by an independent commissioner.

And we have already put in place a commissioner—what we're doing here is making sure that commissioner has power in this respect and that the commissioner is going to be there for the Legislature when needed between elections, as well as just after elections as was initially envisaged. So I'm in full support of this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, merci, miigwech.

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): I just want to very briefly speak to this bill. I understand that part of this bill is to empower the commissioner to look at the needs of members of this Legislature who live with disabilities, and I know there are more than a few of us in this Chamber. Some of those disabilities are visible, some are invisible, some are disclosed and some are not disclosed. And so I do want to thank the House leaders for working together to put this legislation forward. I think it is very important.

When we brought in The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, part one of the commitments we made was that we would also do the work to make sure that the Legislature lived up to the spirit of that act. Because a Legislature falls outside of that act, that we would work together through the Legislative Assembly Management Commission and other places to make sure that we, too, lived up to the spirit of that. And I take this as a step to do this.

One thing I do want to say, and I'm sure that any commissioner that's appointed be well versed in

these matters, but I do expect that they will do this kind of review in the spirit and under the guidance of the Manitoba Human Rights Code that provides for a reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. That is a human right of all of us in this province and it's well established that that is to be provided when it can be done without undue hardship to the employer.

And so I just want to say a thank you to the folks who have worked on this and brought it forward and bringing it forward in a speedy way. I think it shows that our Legislature does its best to live up to the spirit of the bills that we pass, and when we talk about accessibility we also take responsibility for our own House.

So thank you very much, and with that I look forward to the passage of the bill.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on this matter.

House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 43, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act.

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

Mr. Chomiak: Can we resolve the House into Committee of the Whole?

Mr. Speaker: We'll now resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Madam Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair.

* (15:10)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Madam Chairperson (Jennifer Howard): Will the Committee of the Whole House please come to order.

The committee will be considering Bill 42, The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended), and Bill 43, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act.

Bill 42—The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended)

Madam Chairperson (Jennifer Howard): We will first consider Bill 42, The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended).

Does the minister responsible for Bill 42 have an opening statement? No.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement? No.

We shall now proceed to consider the bill clause by clause. The title and enacting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass; clause 7—pass; clause 8—pass; clause 9—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 43—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

Madam Chairperson (Jennifer Howard): We will now consider Bill 43, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 43 have an opening statement? No.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement? No.

We shall now proceed to consider the bill clause by clause. The title and enacting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes the business before the committee.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole House has considered Bill 42, The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended), and Bill 43, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 42—The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 42, The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur la nomination des hauts fonctionnaires de l'Assemblée (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Any debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

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

Bill 43—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach, that Bill 43, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

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

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you might call it for 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday afternoon.

CORRIGENDUM

On June 23, 2015, page 2084, second column, second paragraph, should have read:

So those are very important, I think, for the seniors. Not only I am thinking that's personal-care homes; also, we need for them to drop-in centres and different places where they can go, where they can talk about each other—with each other and they can talk about the—their culture, their old times; they can tell stories each other. In that way, they will be—if they're abused at home at least they will be able to talk to each other. So that's a more better way to connect them with other seniors.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 25, 2015

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Assiniboine Valley Farmers	
		Piwniuk; Ashton	2180
		Cullen; Ashton	2184
Bill 42—The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended)		Teranet Manitoba	
Chomiak	2171	Gerrard; Selinger	2181
Bill 43—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act		Sale of the Property Registry	
Chomiak	2171	Gerrard; Selinger	2181
		Culinary Arts Program	
		Bjornson; Allum	2182
Petitions		Lake St. Martin Flood	
Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety		Graydon; Ashton	2182
Schuler	2171	Student Financial Aid System	
Beausejour District Hospital—Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability		Ewasko; Allum	2183
Ewasko	2171	Members' Statements	
Province-Wide Long-Term Care—Review Need and Increase Spaces		Lac du Bonnet Summer Activities	
Graydon	2172	Ewasko	2185
		Tim Hortons Unionizes	
Committee Reports		Altemeyer	2185
Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development		Brenda Dyck	
Fourth Report		Graydon	2186
Jha	2172	World Trade Centre Winnipeg	
		Jha	2186
Ministerial Statements		Rods Football Club 70th Anniversary	
Multiculturalism Day		Crothers	2187
F. Marcelino	2174		
Piwniuk	2174	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		<i>(Continued)</i>	
Oral Questions		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Safety of Children in Care		Second Readings	
Wishart; Irvin-Ross	2175	Bill 42—The Independent Officers of the Assembly Appointment Act (Various Acts Amended)	
Floodfighting Equipment		Chomiak	2190
Stefanson; Ashton	2176	Goertzen	2191
Stefanson; Selinger	2177	Gerrard	2191
Helwer; Ashton	2177	Bill 43—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act	
Friesen; Ashton	2178	Chomiak	2191
The Pas Health Clinic		Goertzen	2192
Driedger; Ashton	2179	Gerrard	2192
Driedger; Selinger	2180	Howard	2193

Committee of the Whole

Bill 42–The Independent Officers of the
Assembly Appointment Act
(Various Acts Amended) 2194

Bill 43–The Legislative Assembly
Amendment Act 2194

Concurrence and Third Readings

Bill 42–The Independent Officers of the
Assembly Appointment Act
(Various Acts Amended) 2194

Bill 43–The Legislative Assembly
Amendment Act 2194

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>