



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

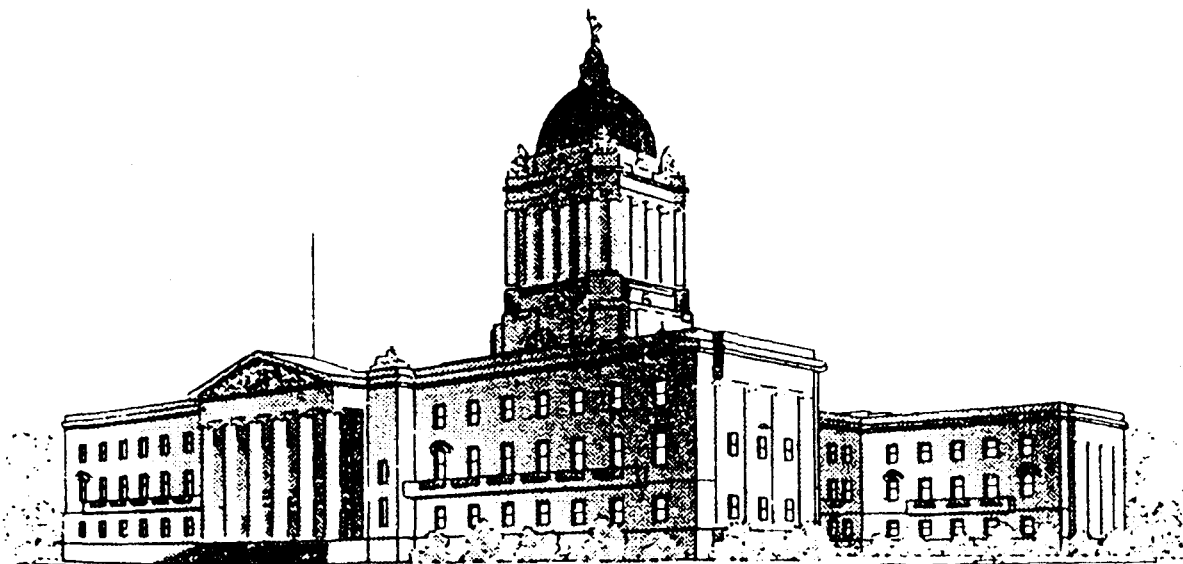
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hicke
Speaker*



Vol. L No. 17B - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, April 27, 2000

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 27, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Day of Mourning

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, since 1991, as the result of a private member's bill sponsored by then-Manitoba MP Rod Murphy, Canada has designated April 28 as the national day of mourning to remember and pay our respects to those who have been injured or who have died in workplace accidents across Canada. This particular day has been selected as it marks the day that third reading took place for the first comprehensive Workers Compensation Act in Canada which was Ontario in 1914.

We all agree that too many workers are becoming ill or are injured, sometimes fatally, at their place of work. Life is precious and all injuries are preventable. Any workplace injury or fatality is a serious matter and of great concern.

All of us are touched by workplace incidents whether the person injured is young or old, male or female, working as a farmer, a construction worker, a miner or as a worker in other industrial settings. Out of each incident that occurs, whether it results in a serious injury or not, must come a better understanding of its cause so that we can prevent similar occurrences and ensure that such tragedies do not happen in the future. As long as workers are still injured or killed in workplace accidents, there is room for further improvement. We must all remain diligent in continuing to make Manitoba's workplaces even safer and healthier. Workplace injury and death brings pain and suffering to all co-workers, families and friends.

The day of mourning tomorrow, on April 28, gives us all a chance to consider the serious nature of work and to set aside a few moments to

think about those persons injured or killed and to reflect on how we can all work towards our common goal of eliminating workplace accidents. Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the Minister of Labour for her statement today, for bringing to the attention of this House that tomorrow will be the national day of mourning and that we wish to remember those who are injured and, even worse, who gave their lives at their places of work. Certainly we on this side also agree that life is precious and all injuries are preventable, and any workplace injury or fatality is a serious matter and of great concern. We all know that should there be an injury, especially if it is the loss of a limb and particularly when it is loss of life, it brings a great deal of pain and suffering to co-workers, families and friends, in many cases leaving behind widows and orphans, and that brings a lot of pain to those families.

So, again, we commend the Minister and thank her for bringing to the attention of this House that tomorrow is the day of mourning, that being April 28, and that we can also all give our respects to those who have seen injury or have seen loss of life themselves or in their families, and we commend the Minister on that. Thank you.

Endangered Spaces Campaign

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, honourable members, today I would like to rise to confirm Manitoba's commitment to the World Wildlife Fund, Canada's Endangered Spaces Campaign. In accordance with our commitment to the campaign, I am pleased to announce that the Department of Conservation is currently in the process of amending regulations under The Provincial Park Lands Act. These amendments will designate over 200 000 hectares in central and northern Manitoba as park reserve.

This protective status will prohibit logging, mining and the development of oil, natural gas and hydro-electric power. The proposed reserves

are located at Birch Island in Lake Winnipegosis, Fisher Bay in Lake Winnipeg and Hudwin Lake east of Lake Winnipeg. These areas are significant for a variety of reasons. Birch Island has been used by First Nations people for thousands of years and is home to a rich mix of colonial nesting birds such as gulls, terns, great blue herons, cormorants and white pelicans. Fisher Bay contains island and shoreline features representative of the western edge of Lake Winnipeg.

* (13:35)

The area is also used by First Nations people as a source of herbs and other medicinal plants. Hudwin Lake encompasses an area that is part of the range of woodland caribou. It also includes two significant wetlands, the great muskeg and the white ostrich muskeg. In addition to these park reserves, the Government of Manitoba will provide protection for an additional 21 wildlife management areas.

Mr. Speaker, we have been able to provide this protection due largely to the input and commitment of First Nations communities, the forestry and mining industries and Agro-Manitoba. We are pleased by the interest these groups have shown and feel there is potential for continued advances in the protection of these natural areas.

Because of such interest, the Government of Manitoba and First Nations have extended the memorandum of understanding on protected areas for three years to March 5, 2003. This action affirms the importance of moving forward on the initiative and our commitment to working with First Nations to identify, establish and manage protected areas.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Manitoba is committed to the task of protecting areas that represent the natural diversity of our province, and we look forward to the challenges this task will provide over the next several years. Thank you.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): I want to indicate to you, Sir, and to Manitobans that we on this side of the House take a great deal of pride in the accomplishments that this party that I belong to

accomplished in this very area. It was then Premier Filmon who was the first in Canada of provinces to subscribe to the Endangered Spaces Program, an occasion that I remember very well back in 1990, I believe, if my memory serves me right.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, it was the government of Premier Filmon and the Conservative Party that in 1993 made very major changes, amendments to our parks legislation that is permitting this kind of announcement today. That is the common-sense multiple use of some of our lands. There is still going to be some logging taking place in parks under this administration, as much as they liked to oppose that when they were in opposition. But I applaud the minister's statement and I applaud the cooperation of the aboriginal community, obviously, in looking at much of the land under their control that they are prepared to set aside for the benefit of all Manitobans in the reserves that are mentioned in this statement.

Mr. Speaker, you will forgive me on a personal note to take a special interest in this announcement because it was on the shores of Fisher Bay that I took my first adult job—as a teacher, I should tell the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell). So I am delighted to see that Fisher Bay is being set aside, perhaps not in memory of Harry Enns but, for other reasons, to have some ecological reserve value. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am tabling the annual report on The Elections Finances Act covering the period from January 1, 1998, to December 31, 1998.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have with us from F. W. Gilbert School, seventeen Grade 5 students under the direction of Ms. Merle Stepaniuk. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik).

Also, seated in the public gallery from Red River College, Winkler Campus, we have two

visitors under the direction of Mr. Dean Schofield. This group is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

We welcome you all here today.

* (13:40)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

First Nations Casinos Information Availability

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

There continues to be both confusion and controversy surrounding the Government's plans to license five First Nations casinos in our province, Mr. Speaker. I know that many members are receiving many calls from angry residents in the Selkirk, St. Andrews and Headingley areas in particular. *[interjection]* Well, the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) is shaking his head. That is because he is not returning his calls. That is what the people tell me.

My question to the First Minister is: Firstly, will he remove the gag order surrounding the proposals so that both proponents and local residents may have a clear understanding of what is contained in the proposals; and will he state clearly what will constitute an acceptable show of local community support in order for the Government to approve the awarding of the casino licence in an area?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the question again speaks to an independent arm's-length process for the siting of casinos. There is more debate going on now about the sites. There is more public debate going on both from the proponents, from the adjacent communities, from the communities than has ever taken place in the past.

I know that this is an emotional issue for people that the former Premier has mentioned in the West St. Paul area and the Headingley area. It would have been a huge emotional issue if the

Government had had or if the community was allowed to have public hearings in the north end or Transcona. We have a process. Our goal, our objective is to remove the perception of politics from the sites that are recommended to us. We trusted two individuals to do that, and we are prepared to take the controversy to get there.

Community Support

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, then, of course the Premier would have to ask himself why his New Democratic Government bought the land on both Regent Avenue and McPhillips and did not hold any public hearings on it.

The Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs is quoted today as saying that formal approval from non-aboriginals is not required in the proposal selection process, and the Premier himself is quoted as saying that he conceded the interests of First Nations may have to take precedence over local community sentiments when determining the location of aboriginal casinos.

In view of that, my question to the Premier is: Will he confirm that his government now plans to force First Nations casinos upon an unsuspecting and unsupportive local community? That is one of the difficulties that we have: the Premier will not come clean to the public and tell them what are the criteria that they have to demonstrate in order to ensure that he knows that there is strong opposition to the location of a casino in an area. He has had 2200 names on a petition in St. Andrews; he has had an 85% plebiscite against the location in Headingley.

What will it take for his government to say, no, a casino cannot go there because it does not have public support, or is he telling us instead that it does not matter what the local community thinks, all he is going to do is go along with whatever somebody else tells him, and that somebody else is whoever dictates to this government, and we do not know that yet, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Gambling in Manitoba expanded from \$40 million in revenue

to \$240 million in revenue without any public consultation, without any public input, without anything except a press release—[interjection] Perhaps the members opposite do not want to listen to the answer to the question, Mr. Speaker. If they want to put a question—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Gambling proceeded to go from \$40 million a year, prior to '88, to \$240 million a year. We regret that, unlike North Dakota and Minnesota and—[interjection] Unlike North Dakota—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (13:45)

Mr. Doer: I know the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) is still frustrated he cannot get a lead question on agriculture and disaster in southwest Manitoba. Perhaps he can allow us to answer the questions that have been prioritized. Minnesota, North Dakota, Saskatchewan and Ontario, all our neighbours have provided for opportunities for First Nations people as the expansion of gambling took place. Regrettably, in Manitoba, there was not that opportunity from '92 on. We have a process that is independent in terms of proposing sites to the government. We have credibility with Mr. Freedman and Mr. Nadeau. If members opposite do not believe in their credibility, they can say so. We have appointed them and we trust them.

Health Care Facilities Closures—Rural Manitoba

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I am in receipt of a copy of a report that recommends closing hospitals in rural Manitoba. It is entitled *Template For The Determination of Minimal Standards For Acute Care Hospitals*. The report calls on all rural acute care hospitals to have at least four doctors on staff and three nurses on duty, a requirement that many will have difficulty in meeting. The closure of rural hospitals would have a significant and negative impact on the quality of life in rural Manitoba.

Can the Minister of Health confirm if his government supports the closing of rural hospitals, as suggested in this report?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I thank the Member for that question because it allows us to clarify some of the difficulties that the members opposite have. I wish the Member, who was a member of Cabinet before, had perhaps questioned the former Minister of Health, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson), when the terms of reference to the report which the Member is referring to were set up on August 9, 1999. But I wonder if the Member would have asked the Member for Kirkfield Park why they set up this commission and set the terms of reference on August 9, 1999. As far as I remember, on August 9, 1999, members opposite occupied the benches on this side of the House.

Mr. Gilleshammer: This is now the Minister's report and the Minister's staff who are working on it.

Is the Minister's solution to improving health care in rural Manitoba to close hospitals, driving doctors and nurses out of Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I asked the department to review this particular matter because I understand Mr. Derkach, the Member for Russell, was going around touting this report, handing it out, going to hospitals and saying the Government is going to close the hospital.

So I asked the department: What is the genesis of this? Apparently things like Grandview hospital, Vita hospital and Reston hospital all had signs covering the "H" sign on the highway for a period of time when the former government was in power, and the chairs of all of the boards appointed by the former government put together a commission to review the basic standards and the basic minimum standards, whether or not "H" signs could be put on hospitals. So the Member could ask me, or perhaps the Member could ask the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson) who authorized that in his department.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Are we to take it then that the Minister rejects this report?

Mr. Chomiak: The question was: Does this particular ministry—Mr. Speaker, this report was prepared under terms of reference entered into by the Member for Kirkfield Park. It was a process that was entered into by the former government, and a report has been put together by chairs of boards appointed by the former government.

Nursing Profession Legislation Proclamation

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): My question is for the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, on July 14 of 1999, royal assent was given to The Registered Nurses Act, The Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act and to The Licensed Practical Nurses Act. This House unanimously supported passage of these pieces of legislation. In fact, the now Minister of Health, when he was in opposition said, and I quote, that he looked forward to speedy passage and completion in this House of those pieces of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it is 10 months, almost a year after the pieces of legislation received royal assent. Why are they not proclaimed?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for River East for posing that question.

I would just like to indicate how soon they forget that there is a process that is entered into with respect to proclamation of acts. In fact, as I recall, some acts were actually proclaimed in the period of time from which the Government was defeated until the time we assumed office. Other acts were not. There is a regulatory process that is gone through. There are discussions to go through with respect to regulations, and those issues are ongoing.

* (13:50)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I do know that the regulations have been approved by the governing bodies and have been sitting in the Government's offices for several months now.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health whether in fact he is dragging his feet on

proclaiming The Registered Nurses Act in order to blackmail MARN into supporting his two-year degree diploma program.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think that the last comment by the Member for River East is below a member of this Chamber, actually, to make that kind of statement in this Chamber. I think she is factually wrong.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, those are not my words; they are the words of nurses that have spoken to me about this issue.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health whether in fact he will proclaim, get on with it, look at the regulations that have been sitting within Government for months and get on with proclaiming them immediately.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I find it passing strange that the members opposite—who failed to notice a nursing crisis three years ago when I raised the issue in the Legislature and did not even have the time to talk to nurses for 11 years in office, mainly because they were cutting them and laying off nurses—should somehow find occasion to talk to nurses today with respect. Our job is to educate and train more nurses, to expand the opportunities for nurses in the province of Manitoba and to ensure that patients have bedside nurses ready to provide the service that they want to provide to the people of Manitoba.

* * *

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the First Minister. In the matter of the civil litigation case that begins on May 1 at 10 a.m., which has been brought forward against this Premier, would the First Minister (Mr. Doer) please assure the people of Manitoba and the members of this Legislature that he did nothing untoward in this matter, whether on his own behalf or on behalf of former Premier Howard Pawley?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Member surely knows that the Legislature and indeed the very fundamental form of government in Manitoba and Canada is that there is deference, there is a referral of these kinds of matters to the forum of the courts to determine. A matter before the courts is rightly the place to deal with disputes between private citizens, between citizens and the Government, and vice versa, but it is improper for that kind of a question to be raised in the forum of a Legislative Assembly. It is to be raised in the forum of the court.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the Member quote from Beauchesne or any specific rule. But let me tell you the rule that we learned was when that Member sat in this seat back here in opposition and asked the same questions over and over again and got that type of an answer, and he would yell and scream from his seat. What was good for them should be good for us.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I thank both House leaders for their advice. I will take the matter under advisement to peruse Hansard and consult with the procedural authorities, and I will report back to the House.

* (13:55)

Dauphin Lake Spawning Fish Regulations

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): My question is for the Minister of Conservation. Last year in the Lake Dauphin basin a conservation regulation was put in place to reduce the take of the spawning fish early in the spring.

I would like to ask the Minister if he has rejected that conservation regulation for this year.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): I am glad the Member raised that issue, because I have been receiving calls from people around the Dauphin area as well as members of

some First Nations in that area. I will be meeting with both groups in the next little while to outline to them the initiatives that we are contemplating on establishing, developing and implementing so that both sides can use the resource in that area in a co-operative way.

As soon as I have more information about the initiative that we are working on, I will be glad to share it with the member.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, there was an initiative in place last year which included extensive consultation. It included agreement from all parties on how we would go forward to enhance the fish population in the area. There are numerous complaints that they cannot get a response from the Department or from the local member. I want to know how soon he will be communicating with the people in the area about what he is going to do about this problem.

Mr. Lathlin: As I indicated to the Member, I will be meeting with both groups in a very short while. Hopefully, at those meetings, I will be able to outline some of the initiatives that we have been working on since October 7. I am sure that once I have been able to share that information with the Member, I think he will support those efforts.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I will support any effort to provide adequate conservation measures on behalf of Lake Dauphin fishery. There has been an enormous effort made on behalf of the local people to build up this fishery. There has been an enormous effort made to provide good will between all of the parties affected, and I would ask that this minister commit himself today to meet with the people immediately so that he can deal with the issue before it is too late.

Mr. Lathlin: For the third time I will advise the Member that I am meeting with both groups in a very short while. I would also like to assure the Member that our government is very committed to conservation, and I would ask the Member to join with me later to review some of the initiatives that we are contemplating on implementing.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. In fairness, because I did not give the Honourable Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) the opportunity to ask a question because of my ruling, I hope members will understand that this really is the fifth question and not the sixth.

In fairness, I will recognize the Honourable Member for Springfield.

* (14:00)

Lloyd Schreyer Government Contract

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): On April 20, in *The Winnipeg Free Press*, the Minister of Labour indicated that a \$500 per day contract was entered into with Mr. Lloyd Schreyer, a former NDP candidate. Will the Minister confirm that the Government has either appointed or signed a contract with Mr. Schreyer?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Springfield, when he had a press conference earlier this month, made some allegations in his press release and in his discussions with the media that were inaccurate to say the least. I am delighted to be able to put on record some of the accurate facts of the situation. Number 1 is the person referred to, Mr. Lloyd Schreyer. We have not finalized a contract with Mr. Schreyer. He is working with the Government, as he has on numerous occasions in the past, to help us deal with labour issues or the many labour contracts that are up, some of which were up while the former government was in power. Mr. Schreyer, with his 28 years of experience in labour-management issues, is helping us greatly. Rather than cast aspersions on the character of this individual, the Member for Springfield should apologize for the comments he put on the record in the press last week.

Mr. Schuler: Will the Minister please make public, first of all, when a contract is going to be signed, and is Mr. Schreyer earning \$500 a day? Can she confirm that for this House? And again, when and if a contract is signed, will she be making that available to this House?

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the processes and procedures that have been followed for decades

by governments in signing contracts with individuals to provide support to the Government will be followed. Mr. Schreyer has been seconded, is on loan from the University of Manitoba where he has been for the last 28 years working in the Department of Human Relations.

I would like to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that he is very highly qualified for the work that he is providing to this government, as the former government attested to in 1993 when he was put in as chairperson of the Provincial Health Care Labour Adjustment Committee of Manitoba. He was hired. He was seconded. He was recognized for his excellent work in labour management relations by the former Minister of Health Don Orchard, and if that government had listened to the report that Mr. Schreyer had provided for them, we would not be sitting here with a thousand nurses having been laid off.

Government of Manitoba Hiring Practices

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Can the Minister of Labour confirm whether her government has created any other positions at the deputy minister level or equivalent, or hired any other senior officials either through appointment or contract?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, since we took office last October, there are five fewer deputy ministers in government than there were then. I would like to suggest that this continual comment about the character of Lloyd Schreyer and he is a contractor or he is not a contractor, what is happening with that situation, is really not very professional. I would like to take this opportunity to ask the Member for Springfield if he is planning to apologize to Mr. Schreyer for sharing with the media a document that had on it Mr. Schreyer's social insurance number? Is he going to apologize for that?

Nursing Diploma Program Approval Process

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Under Manitoba statute, whether it is the old Registered Nurses Act or the new one, which

he has been delinquent in implementing, either one, the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses has the mandate and the authority to approve programs, so that nurses who graduate will know that they can be registered in Manitoba when they have completed the program.

I would ask the Minister when, under the old act, the Red River College two-year diploma program is going to go through this process and what the process is, so that before students enter they can know that they will actually have an approved program?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for that question, and I, for the life of me, cannot understand why the Member has so much against the diploma program that we are introducing, why he is against the program of which 80 percent of nurses, 80 percent of registered nurses in Manitoba are diploma-trained. I do not understand why the member stood up and attacked the program and is continually attacking the diploma program. I might add that the program, which received over 1500 inquiries, has been well received.

As far as the Member's question goes, with respect, Mr. Speaker, we are introducing a program, and we have been assured that it will meet the equivalency, the competencies that will allow those nurses, as the 80 percent of nurses who are diploma-trained work today, to work competently, safely and properly in the province of Manitoba.

* (14:10)

Mr. Gerrard: My supplemental to the Minister of Health: Does the Minister of Health not believe, as many do, that it is unethical to admit students to a program in advance of it being approved by the professional regulatory body charged with the responsibility for such approval in the public interest?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses is the body responsible for regulating and licensing the nurses. We are confident that they will continue to do that for the RNs, as they have for 80

percent of the nurses who have been diploma-trained. I might add, the particular program that we are putting in place is an expanded program from the previous program that the member referred to.

I really wish the member would clarify his position with respect to the diploma program and indicate why he is so against the diploma program when the vast majority of nurses in Manitoba and patients have been demanding nurses to provide assistance at bedside as a result of 11 years of Tory neglect and the 11 years of the Tory nursing crisis that we face in this province.

Mr. Gerrard: To the Minister of Health, a supplementary. Given the importance that students know what they are getting into and that it in fact will be an approved program, and that they are not getting into an unethical situation where they might be registering for a program which is not even approved, can you not give us a time line as to when this program will be approved?

Mr. Chomiak: I think the Member is confused. I think the Member is very confused with respect to the program. MARN, as a regulatory body, is responsible for licensing nurses as they are trained in Manitoba. We have been given every assurance that the program that will be offered at Red River will be equivalent to the requirements to be registered as a registered nurse in Manitoba.

I might add, the Member may not know and I will repeat it again because he seems to have difficulty grasping this, that 80 percent of the nurses who are in our hospitals or institutions and all across the province are diploma-trained. I really think the Member ought to go out and talk to some of those people and talk to the care providers to see what excellent service they do provide all across the province of Manitoba to all of our patients.

Lower Tax Commission Report Minister's Position

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): The Lower Tax Commission report provided recommendations to lower taxes and ensure our system

is fairer, simpler and competitive. The Minister of Finance dismissed the report saying he did not have the ability to take action. The Minister, instead of giving us his usual lines about his lack of abilities, needs to realize that further action must be taken to keep our tax system competitive and ensure a strong economy. Will the Minister of Finance advise this House whether he has read the final report of the Lower Tax Commission and if any of the 29 recommendations will be implemented? And if so, which ones?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I can say that the final draft of the Lower Tax Commission was a very interesting read. I thought it was a thoughtful presentation. There are many good recommendations in it, and as the budget comes to pass we will see which of those have been accepted.

Budget Income Tax Initiatives

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): Let us take this one step at a time. Will this Minister of Finance assure Manitobans today that when he brings down this budget on May 10 that he will not be increasing any taxes, that he will not be increasing any user fees, and that he will not be taking any dividends from Crown corporations? Will he at least give Manitobans that assurance today, Mr. Speaker, at a minimum?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I can assure the Member opposite that the election commitments we made will be followed up on. We will present a balanced program in a balanced budget according to the mandate that we were given by the people of Manitoba.

* (14:20)

Income Tax Reductions

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that answer gives much comfort to Manitobans or people who are looking to invest or expand here in the province of Manitoba, because just earlier this week the Province received a warning signal with an economic forecast that places Manitoba last for economic growth.

To hear that kind of response, does this Minister of Finance not recognize that cutting income taxes is important for the economy of Manitoba in terms of maintaining a strong economy and creating jobs here in Manitoba? Does he not at least realize that very fundamental fact?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, one of the fascinating parts about the report that was recently put out is that Manitoba is one of the four provinces that expects to see higher growth in the year 2000.

Depending on which forecast you look at, if you take the "survey of seven," our projected growth is in the order of 23 percent; if you take the *Globe and Mail* forecast, our projected growth is in the order of 27 percent.

We have always had a diversified, stable and steady economy. The year 2000 promises to be better than the last year of the last government.

Education System Tuition Fee Policy

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, during the election the NDP promised a 10% tuition cut for university students. The Minister of Education has told this House that students will be paying 10 percent less this fall for tuition. Yesterday the media reported the Minister's newly appointed university board is not singing the same tune. The headlines read: Brandon U defies minister, budgets 2% tuition increase.

My question is: Will the Minister visit Brandon and commit to Brandon University students that he will fulfill his election promise and cut their tuition by 10 percent?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I guess like everybody else on this side of the House, I am very disappointed that we have not addressed agriculture in southwestern Manitoba. As the MLA for Brandon East—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Speaker, clearly the government of the day has done nothing for the farmers in rural southwestern Manitoba and is committed to nothing. So we thought we should ask some more questions to exemplify their lack of understanding of the issues.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order, there is no point of order. It was just a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Education and Training, please conclude your remarks.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Brandon East in southwestern Manitoba, the comment that I made earlier is one that I very strongly believe in. I would have been in Brandon today but was denied leave by the Opposition. I was to be attending rural development in Brandon today. Of course, I am in Brandon regularly discussing with my constituents issues in the community, including the farm crisis.

The commitment to the 10% tuition reduction is on and shall be guaranteed as a commitment to be followed through with in September.

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Speaker, with the very board that he appointed and often referred to by him as "my board" that are now defying him, I ask: What steps will he take to ensure students actually receive the 10% tuition cut he promised?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, the short answer to that question is this is an item that has not been discussed at Brandon as of yet. The members opposite should stay tuned for the budget.

Kin Place Personal Care Home Fire Exits

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, residents at the Kin Place personal care home in Oakbank recently contacted me with concerns

about the fire exits in the residence. There is currently one fire exit, because the second exit is blocked off. Their alternative is to escape through a broken window in the living room area if access to the other exit is blocked by fire. As the residents are quite elderly, this poses a significant threat to their safety.

Will the Minister of Labour ensure that all necessary fire precautions are taken at Kin Place personal care home to ensure the safety of the residents?

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I most certainly will look into this. This is the first we have had information about this. We will talk with the Member to ensure that we have all the information we need. The rules and regulations will certainly be followed.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, do I then have the Minister's assurance that she will do everything in her power to address the residents' concerns as quickly as possible?

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I thought my answer to the first question was clear, but if it was not, of course we will do everything to ensure that all of the rules and regulations are followed and every resident in that facility is as safe as is possible to make them. Absolutely. I am surprised that the Member would not recognize that from my first answer.

Flooding Agricultural Disaster Assistance

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I asked a question yesterday, and I did not receive a proper answer.

I would like to ask the Minister today: What kinds of discussions have you had with your federal counterparts? Have you requested a 50-50 cost-shared JERI-type program from the federal government? I am asking this of the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). Have you met with your colleagues in Ottawa to request a 50-50 cost-shared JERI-type program, as was implemented in the Red River Valley, cost-shared 50-50 by the Province and the federal government? Have you requested that kind of a program from the federal government?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I think the Member opposite should recognize that both I as Minister responsible for emergency measures and the Minister of Agriculture have met repeatedly with federal ministers. We met yesterday with a number of federal members of Parliament. I spoke as recently as yesterday with the federal Minister for Western Diversification.

Our message to the federal government is that we want them to sit down with us, as we did yesterday, and talk about additional assistance for southwest Manitoba. That was the position, by the way, that I thought was shared by all parties in this House.

I want to assure the Member opposite that this government is committed to ensuring that the federal government does take up its responsibility under whatever kind of programming because, for the Member opposite, the answer from the federal government up until now has been they are not interested in 50-50, 90-10, 0. We have asked them to reconsider that, and we have started discussions with them.

Mr. Jack Penner: Well, I am a bit surprised at the answer, because we have also had discussions with the federal government. It is very apparent that they are quite willing to sit down and discuss programs other than what are currently in place. They have told us that they are quite willing to sit down and if you—

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Again, I wonder if you could remind the Honourable Member that, first of all, the question should be addressed through the Chair and not directly to the Minister but, as well, on supplementary questions, no preamble is allowed or required. Thank you.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I must agree with the House Leader from the Government side. The questions might be a little long at times, but if the answers could be a little shorter, as well, I think we might get along better.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On both points of orders, I would like to remind all members that questions are put through the Chair, and Beuchesne Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member, please put your question.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, then through you, I would ask the Minister of Agriculture: Given the plight of these producers in southwest Manitoba and the difficulty they are having in financing their operations this spring, seeing that you, as you have stated before, could not come to an agreement with the federal government, what are you then prepared to do as a province? You are the Minister. The Premier (Mr. Doer) is sitting over there. What are you, Mr. Premier, and you, Madam Minister, willing to do to help those producers? Are you willing to put your hand in the Fiscal Stabilization—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I am reluctant to get up again, but I am obliged to. We just raised the issue of addressing questions through the Speaker. I understand the reason for that is long-held; it is to diffuse what could otherwise be intemperate remarks and the raising of tempers. It is a long-held etiquette of the Legislature.

Again, Mr. Speaker, if you could ask him to address the remarks through the Chair and, as well, if he could simply pose a question without a preamble or a post-amble or any ambling at all.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member does have a point of order. I would ask the Honourable Member to please address the Chair and to please put your question.

* * *

* (14:30)

Mr. Jack Penner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thought I had said that I would ask the question through you to the Minister and to the Premier (Mr. Doer). If that was not clear, then I do that now, and I apologize for not having addressed the Chair.

So I ask the Minister: Is she willing to put her hand in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and support the producers in western Manitoba, as a province should?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, the Member raises a very important issue, and one that we have worked on very diligently since we have been elected. We have worked with producers, with municipalities. We have asked for a non-partisan position on this issue, and we have had that up till now.

It is quite unfortunate that the critic for agriculture has chosen to interject partisan rhetoric. It is clearly outlined that the people in the southwest part of the province do not appreciate his partisan politics on this particular issue. We must continue to stand together to get the federal government to recognize that they have a responsibility on disaster issues and that we have to work on it, and we are. As my colleague said, we met with the federal representatives yesterday, and we are going to continue to work on this issue to ensure that these producers are treated fairly in the same fashion as the producers in the Red River Valley were treated.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bonnie Ash

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Bonnie Ash who manages the Morrow Avenue Child Care Program in the St. Vital area. Bonnie was recently voted Child Care Worker of the Year in Manitoba by her peers. Her child care programs are multifaceted, offering child care to families

as well as a wide range of services meant to enhance family life.

Morrow Avenue operates five sites in the St. Vital School Division. First established as a non-profit service in 1987 at the Salvation Army church on Morrow Avenue, the centre expanded as the need for quality licensed child care grew, including Victor Mager School in 1990; Hastings School, 1994; École Marie-Anne-Gaboury and Lavallee School, 1998; and Victor H. L. Wyatt School in 1999.

One example of a new initiative in Bonnie Ash's centres is the Site for Parent and Child Education—SPACE—program, a family resource program that was created to support families whose children attend the centres. It includes workshops based on the wants and needs of families, a parent resource library, a clothing exchange and a place to pick up coupons or advertise items for sale.

Having visited two child care centres run by Bonnie Ash in Riel, I saw happy children with quality programs and a caring staff. Bonnie Ash is to be congratulated on her dynamic leadership and caring attitude as she serves the children in her care and their families. It is most encouraging to have Bonnie Ash working in our community serving our children.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I would like to take this opportunity, my first opportunity to speak in private members' statements, to bring to the attention of all members the topic of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Not long ago, in fact on March 7 in Portage la Prairie, a young couple by the names of Ronald and Judith Perreault left four children without parents because of this lethal gas. I want to encourage and bring public notice to the fact that there are carbon monoxide detectors that are affordable and can in fact detect carbon monoxide quickly.

We have had a lot of discussion in the newsprint in Winnipeg and throughout the province on the importance of detectors, but

primarily one has been focused on fire detection and smoke detection. I would like to take this opportunity to say in fact that lethality of carbon monoxide leaks are indeed hazardous to anyone who comes in contact with them. There are many more opportunities in our current stages of technology that bring forward the opportunity to use open flame and natural gas, in particular, in many household convenience products. It makes more opportunities for carbon monoxide to be of a concern to persons and to also have that opportunity to bring what some of us unfortunately had an opportunity to become very well aware of with this tragedy that occurred in Portage la Prairie.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to have had this opportunity to bring forward this as a concern.

Young Humanitarian Award

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): I rise today to acknowledge the winners of the Manitoba Teachers' Society Young Humanitarian Award of \$1,000. I had the pleasure of attending this ceremony at Miles Macdonell Collegiate on Wednesday, April 26, where the award was presented. This year's winners were 26 students from Miles Macdonell Collegiate who formed a Vietnam Orphanage Committee. This group of students has been supporting various initiatives in Vietnam for the past several years.

In addition to sponsoring a family, an orphanage and a student, they have supported the building of an air-conditioned hospital room to take care of sick children. Many children who previously would have died now live because of their efforts. They also worked to provide for 400 teddy bears last Christmas for these orphans.

The members of the Miles Macdonell Collegiate Vietnam Orphanage Committee are as follows: Velia Amador, Yacine Bara, Jennifer Barton, Theresa Beauchemin, Jennifer Bonefant, Gurpreet Brar, Rachel Carter, Steven Choy, Chi Do, Keit Do, Katherine Gall, Holly Garlinski, Violeta Giron, Sheila Gouriluk, Nichole Hermary, Zenab Ihsan, Carla Jeronimo, Courtney Jones, Charity Karuhije, Dulcelyn Layugan, Jennifer Olah, Anna Purvis, Jessica Schwarz, Lisa Siwek, Jillian Yorke and Natasha Young.

Thanks to the teacher advisors who are Ms. McConachy and Ms. Poustie. I also must mention Ms. Lindsey who went to Vietnam in 1993, visited the orphanage, brought back a video and motivated these students to do this project. The group of students who were the recipients of the \$1,000 award are donating \$100 to a foster child in North Vietnam, \$200 to a foster family in central—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member's time has expired.

Hog Industry

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): We have seen a significant growth in the hog industry over the last number of years, and we will see further significant growth if the Government stays on course. I want to caution the Government today against returning to the days of single-desk marketing of hogs, an issue that was discussed at the New Democratic Party annual general meeting in Brandon. To respond to constant changes in consumer demand, the pork industry requires a great range of marketing options. We have clear evidence of the strength of the Manitoba pork industry, and a great deal of the industry's vigour can be attributed to the pork producers and the processors having access to a variety of marketing options.

We know that the single-desk system is not the best. In other provinces the industry has no choice but to buy and sell through the provincial marketing board. In Manitoba our pork producers and processors can enter into direct agreements and contracts or they can buy and sell through marketing boards or other sales agents. This flexibility, Mr. Speaker, allows the pork industry to respond quickly and efficiently to the changing needs.

I believe that the dual marketing is the best way to foster future development of the hog industry. One only has to look at the construction of the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon and on the pending expansion of the J. M. Schneider plant in the city of Winnipeg to know that this policy is paying big dividends. There are countless opportunities to be tapped in the pork industry, and a return to single-desk selling and marketing would certainly jeopardize these opportunities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ryan Horn

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): It is a great pleasure to rise today and pay tribute to a young Dauphin golfer who was recently named the Sport Manitoba Male Youth Athlete of the Year. This young fellow's name is Ryan Horn. He lives in Dauphin, and on April 7 he received that honour of being named the Sport Manitoba Athlete of the Year. Ryan Horn was also picked to represent Canada with the World Junior Golf Team at the championship in Japan later on this year in June.

* (14:40)

Not only will Ryan golf in Japan and not only has he won the Male Athlete of the Year Award, he is also planning to golf this July in the Canadian Tours MTS Classic in Winnipeg. So today I would like to pay tribute to Ryan Horn, the amount of time that he has put into his sport, the abilities of this young man to golf, and I wish him well in his endeavours in Japan and also later this year here in Winnipeg.

I want to say congratulations to Ryan Horn on being named the Sport Manitoba Male Youth Athlete of the Year. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Would you please allow for the continuation of debate on second reading of Bill 5, to be followed by second reading of Bill 7.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Wildlife Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on Bill 5, The Wildlife Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la conservation de la faune), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Rossmere, who has 32 minutes remaining.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude with a few remarks on Bill 5, which will become The Wildlife Act. I am pleased that both sides of the

House support this bill, but I am disappointed that I have not heard one member from the Opposition speak on it. I would like to hear some thoughts on this from the opposition, but especially from the rural MLAs where there is hunting or possibly from the former Minister of the Environment. In fact, yesterday they were so interested in this bill that they adjourned debate.

The Wildlife Act, however, is a move in the right direction. Whenever humans interfere with Mother Nature, the effect can manifest itself in a negative way in years to come. Bill 5 shows respect to wildlife in Manitoba that will enhance and protect wildlife in Manitoba. I thank you.

Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West): I hesitated, I thought possibly somebody from the opposite would get up to speak to this very important bill. I am pleased to have this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to speak on the proposed bill, Bill 5, that has a significant impact on Manitobans. I would first like to congratulate the Honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) for in fact presenting this bill and doing it as expediently as he did. It is an important bill for Manitobans. During the provincial election last year, all parties in this Chamber stated their opposition to confined hunting and indicated that they would support changes to the act. Many Manitobans opposed the hunting of captive animals and species since they feel that the penned hunting exceeds legitimate agricultural or commercial use of wildlife and is contrary to the principles of fair chase.

A number of stakeholders in our province have spoken quite widely on this issue, and they spoke to me in Brandon West and surrounding area. The hunting industry, the tourism industry, as one person stated to me, the general public feels, the animals are all but tied up and shot for a photo opportunity. Another way that it was put to me was that penned hunting practices reflect, and I agree, poorly on all avid sports people that maintain legitimate hunting practices and is detrimental to the promotion or credibility to our tourism initiatives here in Manitoba. During the election, we committed—and the Minister has acted very quickly on this bill—to ending the practice of penned hunting because it certainly does exceed legitimate agricultural or commercial use of wildlife.

Manitobans are very pleased to see the introduction of this bill in December of this year by our Government, and Manitobans feel that the practice of penned hunting is simply unethical treatment of wildlife species. With regard to penned hunting, no matter what the size or what some of the people that are involved in this deplorable industry would like to say on the size of the pens, they are not big enough. I know there was a caricature in the *Sun* today that involved Winnie the Pooh hiding behind a tree because of the opening of bear season, but can you imagine, if in fact Winnie the Pooh had a chain around his leg and was encased in a small pen with a lot of people surrounding him with rifles? That is a vision that is coming back to me from people that are in the industry, and they had possibly a suggestion. I am not sure if, in fact, our Minister has considered it, but, if they had penned hunting, if the people involved in penned hunting would not possibly consider going in there naked with their fingernails and a grizzly bear released to make the rules a little fairer. The Minister may see that, and it could be passed on. It was something mentioned to me that I will mention to the Minister, and it does strike me that those rules would be a little fairer for the wildlife species here in our province.

The vision of penned hunting from a number of people conjures up the image of ducks taped to a clothesline, flapping back and forth and nowhere to go. As well, it reminds you of the old circus days where the popgun would shoot those little ducks going back and forth when they had such a small area and call it sport.

The industry in our province has a long history of very legitimate hunting practices. There are many of the members who have spoken before me that have stated that they have been involved in hunting themselves. Whether or not I agree with it, Mr. Speaker, there are certainly acceptable ways for hunting practices. The beauty of our province and what we have attracted into our province to become an incredibly lucrative industry, and an industry that we can all be very proud of because of the diversity within this province, are in jeopardy. The resources that we have up North in the beauty of widespread land; and I know a speaker had mentioned before me the genetically

superior wildlife that we have here in Manitoba, is in jeopardy from the penned hunting.

In fact, when you start to mix some of the penned hunting and some of the tuberculosis problems that have been found with the elk population, many of the other diseases that are incredibly widespread, by trying to capitalize on manipulating genetic wildlife into penned environments are only on the tip, and there have been many, many reports and many studies done on this fairly new industry that has darkened our province over the last half a decade or so.

I must say that it has been particularly unfortunate for the outfitters here in Manitoba that have, over the years, developed very respectable hunting practices that have created an ecotourism that is not only noticed in North America, well recognized, but in fact the entire world. Over the last few years, because of what the members opposite had termed as grey areas in The Wildlife Act, we in fact had extremely rich people, who would like to consider themselves as being hunters and sportspeople, fly in from around the world on a 24-hour jet to come into Manitoba to attend these penned hunting facilities and in fact track down, as they would call it, some of the large game that are in these penned hunting institutions and kill them for simply a photo opportunity, never getting their hands dirty, and leaping back on the jet, flying home with the picture. Now this I do not believe is a vision of Canadians and the nation that we have. I do not believe it is a vision of Manitoba, and I have heard very strongly from many people within the constituency of Brandon West and surrounding area that this in fact is very unacceptable practice for our environment and our resources.

*(14:50)

This bill, Mr. Speaker, is a step forward in developing, I believe, potential of an industry that is just on the tip of the iceberg of what we have got to offer the world in the ecotourism strategy that is a vision of our Government that would bring economic development and environmental education together in a sustainable way. Ecotourism throughout North America and in fact the entire world is quickly becoming an effective and non-consumptive tool for

economic development. This is a perfect example of that. If we disallow this panned hunting, we can stand proudly with the resources and the environment that we have here in Manitoba and show the world what we have to offer. The many people in the industry recognize and understand the background that we have here in Manitoba.

I know, as a young person growing up in inner-city Brandon, that many of the people who were in the area that I grew up in, in fact, were sustained not on store-bought meat but, in fact, on the meats from hunting in the wild. Many of those people took resources that they needed and used them, and I believe that there are many, many honourable hunters in our province and throughout North America and throughout the world that believe exactly in the same thing.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The tourists who come to see wildlife in their natural habitat, as someone had mentioned previously, come not only for the beauty of our province and not only to see the animals that we have, but also, as someone had mentioned, they are bringing cameras. On a personal note, I believe that is a nice way to shoot animals, with a telephoto lens or with a camera, but I also recognize that there are many people—and rightfully so—that have an opinion that there is a sustainable resource that we have in Manitoba and that is the hunting of animals. I tend to agree with them on that as well, as long as the sustainability is kept intact and we do not leap ahead with putting such a tragic bill that was previous to the Government and not closing up those grey areas.

The vision of the world, I believe, is that Canadians are honourable and that we have an incredibly beautiful land here, and the wildlife and the animals when you get up around many of the beautiful areas up north—I know the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is here—and when you get up into that riding and that area, you barely drive past the city limits of the city of Thompson and you are inundated with many things which we do not personally see a lot of along the Trans-Canada Highway, but there is the danger of wildlife continually crossing the

road. It is very beautiful when you get up there and you take the time to see the animals in their natural habitat. You get to see the beauties of the large animals roaming wildly out in the area. That is the vision that people have of Canada. The unfortunate vision that is being projected, I believe, by not closing this Bill 5 previously by the last Government, is the grey area that many have come into with the idea that they can fly to Canada, walk into a corral and shoot themselves a large wild animal.

When we raised this issue on panned hunting in opposition, I believe it was somewhere in April of '98, the members across the way said that they, too, opposed panned hunting. I believe many of the members opposite would certainly agree with this bill and with closing up, in fact, those grey areas. Unfortunately, the former Minister, I believe the Minister from Ste. Rose, who, in fact, was a minister at that time, said that he, too, was upset by the panned hunting and the issue that was being raised in opposition of this. The former Minister even stated that the practice was illegal and would not be tolerated. This was at the same time that I read many advertisements in the local papers about panned hunting in Manitoba, and, in fact, many advertisements were placed in European papers as well.

It was quite unfortunate when the former Minister later had to admit that panned hunting was legal in the province of Manitoba, and he said that the fact that this Legislature did not cover panned hunting of exotic animals—an example was wild boar—or the hunting of native species such as the plains bison or wood bison, was a grey area. For the former Government, the panned hunting of some animals was unacceptable, but for others it was an opportunity, and for the plains bison it was perfectly okay.

We have brought this legislation forward to ensure that there are no grey areas. When it comes to ethical standards for wildlife in Manitoba, this legislation certainly reflects general and widespread opposition to this activity but in no way detracts from the Government's recognition of legitimate hunting activities in Manitoba. During the election, we made the commitment to end the practice of panned hunting. We are doing this, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, through the Minister, in two distinct phases, phase one because The Wildlife Act prohibits the killing of wild animals in captivity but is limited only to certain species, and those are listed in Schedule A of the Act. There are no provisions to deal with the exotic wildlife, in other words, species not native to Manitoba, as well as many species that are native to Manitoba.

The amendments in Bill 5 will include reference to exotic wildlife, and strengthen and specifically define regulation-making powers to include exotic wildlife and native wildlife. These changes are administrative and enabling and do not create any new prohibitions with respect to any class or type of exotic wildlife, native wildlife or wild animals.

Subsequent to that, phase two, we will enact a ministerial regulation to prohibit the killing of native and exotic wildlife while in captivity in Manitoba. This will expand the scope of existing prohibitions to include native wildlife that are not listed in Schedule A, for example, as I have mentioned before, the plains bison and privately-owned wood bison and any or all wildlife species that are not native to Manitoba. Existing hunting operations will be given a reasonable time and transition period to comply with the restrictions implemented in proposing the regulation.

Many people were concerned in my area that the legislation would in fact affect exotic animal owners in our province. To name a few, the reptile association and the parrot association in Manitoba were quite concerned that this legislation would adversely affect them. We believe otherwise, and have included it in the legislation. The concerns which I believe were certainly legitimate and brought to our attention by these associations had the certain concerns that they would not be able to keep in captivity the reptiles that they presently have or the exotic animals that they have but, in fact, this legislation does not do that at all. Because the first phase of ending penned hunts includes changing legislation to include exotic wildlife, exotic animal owners are concerned that the government will use the opportunity to impose additional regulations. Since the regulation made subsequent to the bill receiving royal assent will be made to prohibit only the hunting of captive

native and exotic wildlife, a person who possesses exotic wildlife and who is not or does not intend to hunt them will not be affected.

* (15:00)

The amendments will authorize the Minister to make regulations relating to the sale of exotic wildlife in captivity. This changes the authority of the Minister very little, or not at all, because the species of wild animals affected under the current act and the species of exotic wildlife affected under the proposed amendments are both declared under regulations. This authorization already exists in the existing legislation but is being spelled out specifically: exotic wildlife for the purposes of regulating and hunting of exotic wildlife in captivity. Authority to regulate the sale of exotic wildlife is an integral and critical component of controlling and prohibiting penned hunting.

Hunting in Manitoba, as many in this Chamber could attest to and many grew up with, was part of our heritage, and when you look back and in fact you look at many areas, not so much down south in the southern area of Manitoba but in our vast province when you proceed to go up to northern Manitoba, there are many people that still, as I did growing up, relate to the fact that Safeway is just not on every corner, that in fact, meat for many people in this province is from the hunting of wild animals in Manitoba and it is a staple for many children and people growing up within our province. I think that many people in the province tend to look at their own areas of the province and not remember that it is practised quite heavily in many areas of the province.

Just north of Brandon, Riding Mountain National Park is a good example of what can happen when animals are enclosed and, in fact, penned in, and usages that are not intended happen. The regrettable incident that happened up in Riding Mountain National Park a couple of years back with the killing of a very large black bear up in that area, in fact, one of the largest ever killed in Manitoba, illegally—certainly it was a large black bear that everyone recognized. They were constantly going up to Riding Mountain and hiking the many trails and the areas up through Riding Mountain National Park. The black bear was killed and basically

killed only for certain organs of its body. Basically, I guess, it is an example that, although illegal in our national parks and our provincial parks, the killing of this animal just led to pointing out that animals that are in penned hunting get to realize that people that are around them and human beings that are around them pose no threat till suddenly someone pulls out a rifle and shoots them.

Now, the black bear that was killed in Riding Mountain National Park, the tragedy of it made a lot of people look and realize: Within those boundaries what type of sportsmanship was it in fact that someone could pull out a rifle and slaughter this large black bear in the area? It had no where to go and believed that human beings were not to be feared. That is an example of what I personally see leads toward penned hunting and the hunting of some of the beautiful species of wildlife we have here in Manitoba. I point specifically to some of the elk hunting that goes on presently.

The outrage and the effect that that incident had, certainly in the city of Brandon, I remember full well many editorials being written and the issue of penned hunting coming up at that time within those editorials, and basically the similarities compared with what had happened in that incident to what many Manitobans visualize in the penned hunting.

The resource that we have, I had mentioned before, with eco-tourism, I know I met a gentleman about a month and a half ago who was visiting here from Japan, had wanted to go out on an excursion to see some of the wildlife up north of Brandon and was just in awe of the beauty, once you got up into, especially, the Riding Mountain area, spoke constantly about the resource that we have here, the potential that we have here and, what we take for granted, continually to realize that we can go into widespread areas of solitude, visit our wild animals and see the things that we have here in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the introduction of this into Manitoba was quite unfortunate. In fact, I believe a loophole was addressed very quickly by some of the people who were getting into these areas. Our Government has chosen,

through the Minister and the diligence and the hard work of the Department, to quickly address this issue and close up this known loophole that has been there for a couple of years. I applaud the Minister for that and the staff for quickly coming together with our government to do something about this issue.

The many different outfitters that we have in Manitoba, especially when you get up onto the shores of northeastern and northern Lake Winnipeg, is a jewel in our province. The sustainability that these people realize we have to look after here is something that everyone should take the time to go up and visit and see. The different people that have been in this industry that have been handed down, in fact, from settlers' days where many of these people that are in the industry have come down from grandfather to father to daughter to son, have been in families for 70 and 80 years. They have seen the changes of many of the things that have happened in Manitoba, and they can tell you first-hand quickly what they have noticed here in Manitoba about penned hunting and the people who come up to visit their lodges and their facilities.

They get quite a shock when they deal with people that really believe about the ecosystem that we have here in Manitoba in our world, which is a majority of the people that are in this industry—the outdoors outfitters, the fish camps, the many, many people that are in the industry and make their livelihood on it—when they suggest that they can go somewhere and shoot an animal that is penned and tied up. The percentage I do not know offhand, but I would hazard to guess is probably 999 out of 1000 of the operators that would suggest if you, in fact, would like to have a licence to hunt in the province of Manitoba, that is possible. In fact, there are guides in many parts of the province that can take you out and go on a day excursion, hunt and in fact find and stalk wild animals in the wild as opposed to behind barbed-wire fences and small compounds. I think those people speak for the rest of us as clear voices of people that have sustained this industry for a number of years.

It is interesting when you look at the size of the areas that these animals are penned in. I

guess if we in this room can take the Legislative Grounds as a benchmark, look at it and wrap an eight-foot-high barbed wire fence around the area, consider sparsely populated tree areas within that area and a group of 40 large animals—and presently I know of none with the white-tailed deer, but certainly elk that are out there—it makes for a pretty simple excursion to shoot from any corner when you have a rifle with velocities that travel at 6000 feet per second.

* (15:10)

So corner to corner on the Legislative Grounds, you cannot go very wrong if you sight your rifle. You sit in a lawn chair with your cooler beside you; you sight these large animals and drop them while someone else on the other side is petting them. This is unfortunate and it has been very strong from the people of Manitoba speaking to our Government, stating what they would like to see in the changes.

The areas that I know of now are slightly larger than that. There are areas that I have heard of as small as 80 acres, which is not a lot larger, but in fact the land use in Manitoba with these people, they have been pushing to have the areas decreased and in fact go to 40-acre parcels for their penned hunting.

We believe that, by our bringing in this legislation, Manitobans will be extremely satisfied that we are looking after the ecotourism and what the world sees and what we would like the world to see as visionaries: people that care about the animals within our province, people that care about the ecotourists and the ecosystem that we have here in the province.

In fact, that is exactly what this legislation does. The Minister again has brought forth a bill here I know—I should not say I know—I hope that the members opposite will want to bring into effect. The members opposite have stated in fact previously that they were not in favour of penned hunting. In fact penned hunting is detrimental to our industry here that can be developed. You take the birding industry alone in our large neighbour to the south, the United States, and it is a billion-dollar industry. It is not an industry that was created on artificial environments. It is an industry that was created

on the natural beauty and the resources that they have.

We certainly have far more resources when it comes to beauty within our country and, if it is a billion-dollar industry to our neighbours to the south, I think we can expand on that and develop that industry by keeping our hunting and our fishing and our resources in a natural state.

Just in closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud that our Government has introduced this bill as quickly as it has. I know that all members in the Government have had people within their constituencies speak to them on this issue. The lobby group that is extremely small from the people that are dealing in this penned hunting now have been listened to, certainly, their concerns addressed. The majority of Manitobans, be no mistake, are not in favour of penned hunting or the treatment of the animals that are in the penned hunting.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As this bill moves forward, I am sure Manitobans will be very pleased with it.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is our intention to call Bill 7 for second reading.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 7—The Protection for Persons in Care Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), that Bill 7, The Protection for Persons in Care Act; Loi sur la protection des personnes recevant des soins, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this bill, The Protection for Persons in Care Act. I feel it is a privilege and an honour to have an opportunity to present this bill before the Legislature, particularly in light of the fact that I had the opportunity as the Opposition critic to introduce this bill in 1997,

1998 and 1999, as a private member's bill from the opposition side of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the genesis of this bill, I think, is worth repeating because, if one does not, or if we do not learn from our mistakes, we tend to or can repeat them. The genesis of this bill was in the Holiday Haven fiasco that occurred in Winnipeg three or four years ago and, as I indicated in my first reading comments, in fact the origin of this bill was suggested to me by another individual, and let me explain the circumstances.

I was visited by an individual who indicated that there were problems in a personal care home in Winnipeg. When that individual went through the litany of problems I was astounded, in fact, despite believing this individual, could not believe the stories that had been told to me, and my response was I could not believe that this could happen in Manitoba. Consequently, I said to this individual in order for me to pursue, and I would have to pursue it, but I do want to hear confirmation of these stories. I subsequently attended a meeting of a dozen individuals, somewhat less, some of whom worked in that particular facility, some of whom had personal knowledge of that facility who recounted to me some extraordinarily bad and dangerous circumstances that occurred in a particular facility.

As a result, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to recount the subsequent events other than to indicate that the original individual who had approached me suggested that in Manitoba we needed an act that provided for reporting of abuse in facilities and protection for individuals who report abuse. Consequently we did some work; we found there was some legislation of this type existing in Alberta. We took the Alberta legislation and in our fashion we refashioned it to meet Manitoba standards and the Manitoba situation and we presented it in this House as I indicated earlier on three or four separated occasions.

*(15:20)

I would prefer that we not have to have legislation of this kind. However, my experience indicates that it is better to have this legislation,

obviously, than not to have this legislation. It is my firm belief that had we had legislation of this kind during the period of time under which that particular nursing home was under the microscope, as it were, results may have been far more favourable than they ultimately were. Having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I firmly believe, and I said it in opposition and I say it in our position now as the government of the province that 99.9 percent of the time, 99.999 percent of the time, let me emphasize, in fact almost all the time the care is excellent and as good as or better than anywhere in the world. There are unfortunately very few, but there are some very rare situations where an individual for his own protection or that of a loved one, may have to resort to legislation of this kind.

Consequently, we introduced this bill for protection of those individuals. I hope that there is never a need to resort to this bill. My experience as the Health critic for seven years, and now as the Minister for seven months, is that, on occasion, there are circumstances, as we all are human and we all have our weaknesses and frailties, there is occasion when this legislation may have to be referred to. At least it is there to protect—to protect who? Mr. Deputy Speaker, to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Typically, the sick, the infirm, the elderly who are in a position where there is no one perhaps to stand up for them.

This will afford opportunity for employees, visitors, or others to protect those individuals' interests in the event that they are suffering some form of abuse.

I should also indicate at this time that these will not be the only steps that will be taken by members on this side of the House with respect to enforcing rights and standards in our health care sector. There will be other actions that would be followed, but this particular bill will afford at least some protection and perhaps will be a legacy to those who came forward during the trauma and the very, very difficult circumstances that occurred during the Holiday Haven affair.

Members will know that an inquest that occurred as a result of the Holiday Haven affair made a number of recommendations. For our

part, in recognition of how events developed there, how events were responded to, how protection was afforded and what subsequently occurred necessitated the introduction of this bill.

I would like to think that legislation of this kind and protection of this kind will meet the overall consent and the unanimous approval of members on all sides of the House. There is a legacy in this province of non-partisanship on issues of this kind. There also is a history in this province of standards perhaps lagging behind events, particularly as it applies to personal care homes.

I am aware that in 1991 the then-Manitoba Health Services Commission released a study showing that some residents in nursing homes were being inappropriately drugged. In '93, the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation reported personal care homes in some parts of the province had a higher number of conditions that were indicators of poor quality care. Further studies indicated that, in some personal care homes, individuals were more likely to have falls, fractures, pneumonia and be dehydrated. In '94, a task force was set up to deal with the levels of care. In 1994 there was an inquest into the death of a resident in a personal care home which noted that staffing was a difficulty.

I was instrumental, together with the former, former, former Minister of Health in putting together—I was instrumental from the point of view of being an Opposition critic who advocated for it, for the establishment of a study to look at the situation in personal care homes.

A task force was released in 1995 which made recommendations. Subsequently, I also undertook to raise the Holiday Haven issue in this Legislature reluctantly because of the concerns that had been expressed to me and then the subsequent events all members are familiar with, which went through two separate Health Ministers, resulted in ultimately an inquest into a death, hearings that I attended. I am hoping, and I am giving assurances to members of the public that it is our intention as this government to take action in a whole series of areas as it relates to care, in personal care homes in particular. This

particular bill is one small step in that direction, but an important one.

I want to assure members of this House that we intend to put our words into action with respect to many of the issues that were raised in these reports and studies that I have referenced as well as the circumstances surrounding vulnerable individuals in institutions.

The bill, in its essence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, requires reporting of abuse. It defines abuse broadly. The definition again varies from the bill that was introduced in Alberta, and I am hopeful that it is appropriate. It is consistent with what is in The Vulnerable Persons Act of Manitoba. It creates duties to operators of hospitals or personal care homes and it provides for an inquiry process in all reports of abuse. Authority is provided to an investigator to ensure that an investigation can be thorough and complete. Following an investigation reports are made taking into account patient wishes. Then a direction is given as a result of these activities. Very significantly, the bill provides protection for employees who make report of abuse and prohibit any action, including adverse employment action, being taken against the person who makes a report in good faith. It also provides protection for members of a family of an individual who report such matters.

* (15:30)

I have mixed feelings on reading aspects of the bill. I wish we did not have to have bills like this. On the other hand, I wish we had complete protection for individuals. So somewhere in between the balance has to be made. My experience from the events of Holiday Haven indicate that while these instances, at least in my experience, are very, very rare, nonetheless they do happen and we have to be realistic. We have to do everything we can to protect those people, for who is more vulnerable than someone who is sick and infirm, for example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and is completely at the whim and at the mercy, in the best sense of the word, of those individuals and those around them in the institution where they attend?

As I indicated earlier, 99.999 percent of the time that care is given with love and with

kindness. Unfortunately, there are occasions perhaps that do not take place, and we must do what we can as a society to protect those individuals.

On every occasion, I, in my tenure as opposition Health critic, when I received reports of that kind, I took them very seriously, pursued them, and when necessary, raised them with the appropriate authorities. There were occasions when I fronted the problem for the employees who raised them with me to protect those employees' positions. I often said to them that is part of my job as an advocate and they cannot fire me for doing this. Some of the time those allegations proved to be false, fortunately. Many times—and when I say many, I do not mean to overemphasize the number of times. I should say perhaps on a few occasions—they resulted in some kind of corrective action being taken. I saw that as part of my role as a member of the Legislative Assembly. I know that the other 56 men and women in this Chamber also take that role very seriously and, on occasion, do the same thing. This bill provides more of a direct line, a direct reporting structure and a direct process that is being put in place, so it provides for that.

I should indicate to members of this House that the Department is setting up an administrative process to deal with this matter, as well as a communication strategy to deal with this issue. I do welcome suggestions and advice with respect to this bill. When it was first drafted when we were in opposition, as I indicated we took the structure of the bill as it existed in Alberta and reconfigured it to Manitoba purposes. When we assumed Government, we took the same bill and reconfigured it and discussed it. I am hopeful that we achieved appropriate balance and appropriate protection within the context of the Manitoba means of drafting laws, as well as in respect to the Manitoba way of doing things.

We are not so weighted towards this bill that we are not open to positive suggestion and advice, because I think this issue is far too important for one to take a position on it that would prevent more positive improvement to a bill of this kind. So we are open to advice and to suggestions from any member of this Chamber with respect to the bill or any member of the

public as to how this bill should apply. *[interjection]* Yes, I want to stress to all of those who work in our institutions, be they management or employees, that we recognize the hard work that they do and the caring that they provide and the excellent work they provide. This bill is not meant to detract from that but perhaps to enhance that because, after all, their reason for being and our reason for being is to work for the public and to work for, in this instance, those who are vulnerable at one time or another. Sometimes in those instances, you want to tip the scales a little bit more towards those who are vulnerable just to ensure that they are protected.

I do not anticipate any major opposition to this bill because of the nature of the bill and because of the history of this bill. I look forward to the comments and advice of members of this Chamber as it relates to this bill. I am also confident that perhaps this bill, in those very few instances where potential abuse might occur, may even go some way towards working as a preventative measure rather than being a measure that occurs after the fact, but we might be prescriptive in the sense of perhaps knowledge that there is a process in place might prevent those rare instances of abuse taking place.

* (15:40)

So in that sense that actually, I think, should warm the hearts of Manitobans to know that perhaps in some small way this bill will provide a preventative measure to protect those that are vulnerable and will not simply exist as a post-incident process because post-incident means what? It means we were not able to stop the harm from occurring, and while we have in place a measure to perhaps prevent it in the future, nonetheless someone may have been hurt in the process. So I am also hopeful that the existence of this bill will in some small way go towards helping individuals and perhaps prevent any situations of abuse perhaps occurring in the future.

I feel quite strongly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. "Abuse" is a term that is often used in our society for a variety of purposes, but I might suggest that in the case of a person who is

vulnerable and in a position of being unable to protect themselves from this abuse, it even takes on a horrific meaning. I have always believed in Manitoba that we have—and I said this in opposition and I say it in government—that we have an excellent institutionalized care system, personal care home system, hospital care system. I just do not say that rhetorically or say that politically. I say that because of my own personal experience, because of what I feel, because of what I have seen in other jurisdictions and places and because of the quality and the kind of people that I know live in this province. I think that will not change. I am hoping it will even get better. But, again, I feel there is a duty upon all of us, particularly as a result of the instances that I mentioned earlier in my comments that occurred during the last seven or eight years necessitate the introduction of legislation of this kind.

So we are bringing this legislation forward, and we look forward to discussion and debate on this particular bill. We are pleased to have the opportunity of reintroducing it. I might say, insofar as we have been given the honour of being government, I think, we stand a better chance of having it passed than we did in opposition. That is no reflection on the process as such, that there is a tendency to pass government legislation a lot more frequently than opposition legislation is passed. That is the nature of the system. So I feel confident that the bill will be passed.

I look forward to the advice and the comments of members of this Assembly with respect to this particular bill. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank members of the Chamber for this opportunity to speak to a bill that was created as a result of traumatic events and was created to protect and was suggested by those who provided the care and suggested by those who were involved with individuals who received the care. I am very pleased that that kind of legislation can see its passage in this Chamber of the Legislature. Thank you very much.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister responsible for Seniors): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my honour to rise today and to join the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and to speak along with

him on this bill, Bill 7, The Protection for Persons in Care Act.

As the Minister responsible for Seniors, I want to begin by congratulating the Minister of Health for his work in bringing this bill to the Legislature. I know we have often remarked that this Minister of Health has done more in six months than members opposite did during their stint in government, eleven years in government. The fact that this Minister brought this bill into the Legislature so expeditiously is certainly another example of his doing more in six months than members opposite did in eleven years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we can all agree that one of the hallmarks, one of the highlights, one of the symbols of a civil society is the way we treat our most vulnerable persons. The Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has been talking during his speech about vulnerable persons. He talked about seniors. He talked about the infirm. He talked about the sick. We often talk about children as being vulnerable members of our society. So, again, I point out that his bringing in this bill is his commitment to a civil society.

In bringing in this bill, this Minister and this Government have assumed moral responsibility to protect the most vulnerable amongst us. We have recognized our moral responsibility. In fact the Minister of Health tried to recognize moral responsibility for the most vulnerable several times before he became the Minister of Health, because he has tried often before to bring this bill to the House and to have it passed. He tried in 1997, he tried in 1998, he tried in 1999, and each time the members opposite rejected his attempts. I trust that that will not happen this time, that we will indeed pass this bill.

As the Minister responsible for Seniors, I want to assure the Minister of Health that my department will work with him. We will work and we will also recognize the needs of vulnerable people, especially in our case the needs of seniors because, of course, that is the commitment of the Seniors Directorate.

During the Minister's debate and speech, he outlined the bill for us, he explained its genesis, he explained its contents, he explained the

protections it offered, the processes involved in enforcing the legislation. He also mentioned the administrative processes that are being set up in order to receive and in order to investigate complaints, which of course are, as he noted time after time, an unfortunate aspect of life in modern times. He also talked about the need to produce a sound communication strategy in order to alert Manitobans to this legislation, all Manitobans—residents in personal care homes, their families, as well as those who work in personal care homes.

His point was that he wants, by this communication strategy, by the very careful administrative processes that he described, to assure the early passage of this legislation. I certainly join the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) in recommending speedy passage, and I hope that the House will concur in this matter. I regret that speed and expeditious behaviour did not characterize the previous government and its attitude to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if my premise is right and we judge a civil society by its commitment to the most vulnerable, we can only conclude that members opposite are most uncivil. Let me point out some of the attitude, some of the lack of action that has characterized members opposite when they were in government.

The Minister of Health spoke at great length on the Holiday Haven incident, and he referred to this bill, I believe, as the Holiday Haven bill. He indicated some of the reasons for that, and I think they will become particularly clear as I run through the Progressive Conservative record on personal care homes and the Holiday Haven incident in particular. You might remember, perhaps all members of the House remember that the Holiday Haven incident was a tragic incident when one occupant was beaten to death by a fellow resident. Unfortunately, before things escalated to this point, there had been incident after incident, so it was perhaps preventable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to move back in history a few years to 1990 to the then-government, that is, the Progressive Conservative government's Throne Speech which promised, and I quote: Following an extensive consultation process, my government will be

implementing a strategy to protect seniors from abuse while working to ensure they remain independent. This strategy will include initiatives to deal with financial abuses, respite care, a seniors safe house, strengthened enforcement of personal care standards and a volunteer assistance program.

Well, what a load of hooey, in fact, and very sadly, unadulterated hooey. Very sadly, like so many other Progressive Conservative promises, there was no action on this promise of strengthened enforcement of personal care home standards, no enforcement at all. Instead, in 1991, the Manitoba Health Services Commission released a study showing that nursing home residents were being needlessly drugged. Now this is indeed valuable information to know that nursing home residents were being needlessly drugged, and this information is certainly redolent of abuse. But I am sure that you will agree that a study is irrelevant if there is no carry through, and there was, once again, no carry through.

* (15:50)

Let me move ahead to 1993. In 1993, the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, a very reputable initiative, reported that personal care homes in some parts of the province had significantly higher numbers of conditions that are indicators of poor quality care. Again, this is extremely important information, but once again this information requires action. It requires carry through, and once again there were no consequences. Simply nothing happened. The report further noted, and I quote: Privately run facilities run a significantly higher risk of having conditions that indicate a lower quality of care than in non-profit facilities.

Between 1987 and 1991 patients in privately run facilities were 1.2 times as likely to have falls, fractures, pneumonia and nearly 4.1 times as likely to be dehydrated than their counterparts in non-profit homes.

As I indicated, I have great respect for the Manitoba Centre for Policy and Evaluations. They did their work, but having done their work, action was required, and again this government

failed to protect those most vulnerable of Manitobans, persons in personal care homes. In 1994, a task force comprised of the departments of Health, the Seniors Directorate and Family Services was appointed, and I quote its mandate: to consult with various regulatory agencies to ensure that appropriate levels of care are provided to senior citizens and others who are resident in personal care homes.

Now let me just put that on hold for a minute, because I also want to point out that in 1994 the Rusen inquest into the death of Anne Sands found that, and this is a quote from the Rusen report, a quote from Judge Rusen: In my opinion the staffing at the time of Mrs. Sands's death was woefully inadequate.

The judge went on to talk about the lack of regulations and the lack of enforcement by a provincial government, especially when it came to staffing issues. The home in question was the Heritage Lodge Personal Care Home. I point out that it was a for-profit private facility.

The then-Minister of Health, Mr. Jim McCrae, no longer with us, said, and I quote him from Hansard: I do not want there to be any delay in addressing the issues which may be important in guaranteeing the safety of senior citizens and others in personal care homes in Manitoba.

Once again, all talk. If I remember the former Minister of Health correctly, he was quite a talker, all talk. He did not bring in a bill. He did not act. Instead what we had was a new Health minister. Two new Health ministers followed Mr. McCrae before the election of 1999. First of all, we had the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) and then we had the Member for Kirkfield, and again, neither minister, neither the Member for Lac du Bonnet nor the Member for Kirkfield Park during their stints in government, addressed this issue.

Now let me return to the personal care home task force report that was begun in 1994, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the 1995 election, the NDP called for the release of the report from the personal care task force, but the Tories hung on to the report until after the election. Now, Why? you might ask. I can only assume that the answer

for not releasing the report during that election was that they would not like the contents of that report, and in fact releasing the report might prove embarrassing to the Party, particularly embarrassing during an election and perhaps might have compromised their electoral success. In any case, they did not release the report in 1995 during the election.

In 1996, the now Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), who was then the opposition Health critic, called for an inquiry into the Holiday Haven Nursing Home, the personal care home which gives this bill its name, at least colloquially, its name. Now this was before that terrible, tragic incident that I mentioned earlier, well before. The then-Health critic, in calling for this investigation, said: I have taken this highly unusual step because of the overwhelming numbers of concerns brought to my attention by the employees, families and residents of Holiday Haven. Over the past few weeks more than a dozen different individuals have come to me with their concerns, and I believe immediate action is required to deal with the serious problems at the home.

He then went on to say that the Minister must take immediate action to promote the health and welfare of all patients who were resident at Holiday Haven, and he must also ensure that those personnel working at Holiday Haven will have an opportunity to tell their stories without fear of job loss. So extremely important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there is to be any integrity or honesty in the system that workers have the opportunity to tell their stories, to tell the truth without fear of job loss.

The terrible tragedy occurred in February 1997. There was a beating death at Holiday Haven which finally prompted the members opposite, who were then Government, to step in and take some action. They replaced management with a private company. As opposition critic at the time, now the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) said, and I quote: I am sickened to think that this death might have been prevented had the Government taken responsibility late last year to safeguard both patients and staff.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they did not take action, so they did not prevent this death. As I

said earlier, perhaps this death could not have been prevented. We do not know that for certain. But what is most shameful is that this Government did not even try.

* (16:00)

In 1997 the Government did sort of straggle in—the then-Government—with an abuse complaint system. It was implemented under the former Member for Lac du Bonnet, and I think it was during the Estimates process in 1997 that he began handing out posters listing the personal care home complaint line. Speaking in 1997, when he first introduced this legislation, the legislation that is now before the House—it was introduced as a private member's bill first in 1997—the former Health critic said: The lesson of Holiday Haven is that the system does not always protect the sick and infirm. We need new systems in place. While we welcome the new complaint procedures announced by the Minister, they do not go far enough. We need an act to make any abuse, whether it is physical, financial or emotional, a reportable event. In the case of Holiday Haven, and many other personal care homes, often there are no family members or any individuals who can act as an advocate or register complaints on behalf of the patient. The legislation we are proposing would compel all employees and/or personnel in an institution to report any cases of suspected abuse without any fear of reprisal from the employer. The act would thus protect both the employees and the patients.

Of course, this bill was not passed in 1997. It was not passed in 1998, and it was not passed in 1999.

The bill that the Minister of Health introduced today has as its aim to provide seniors and other vulnerable and infirm persons with a humane environment which reflects the dignity, worth, respect and acceptance of all persons.

Earlier the Minister in addressing the bill outlined its contents, its workings, et cetera. So, as I said, I do not want to address those issues, but what I would call on members of the House to do is to imagine if this particular piece of legislation had been in place before the tragedy

at Holiday Haven, if it had been in place to protect those seniors whose stories are very unlikely ever to be told, imagine if those members opposite had honoured their 1990 throne speech promise in 1990. Then I ask members to imagine the difference this bill will now make.

Having done that, let us talk about the contrast between Tory talk and NDP action. Let us talk about the differences between making empty promises and making promises and then keeping them. Let us talk about the differences between ignoring the vulnerable and protecting the vulnerable. Having thought about these things, I am sure all members of the House will join me in congratulating the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), and join me in recommending speedy passage of this bill.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock? [*Agreed*]

The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for private members' hour.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 2—Graduated Driver's Licences

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resolution 2, Graduated Driver's Licences, brought forth by the Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), that Private Members' Resolution 2:

WHEREAS graduated licensing is a system for phasing in on-road driving, allowing beginners to get their initial experience under conditions that involve lower risk and

introducing them in stages to more complex driving situations; and

WHEREAS six of Canada's ten provinces currently have graduated licences; and

WHEREAS road crashes remain the leading cause of death for young Manitobans; and

WHEREAS surveys released in Ontario and Nova Scotia showed traffic-related youth fatalities dropped by about one-third with the introduction of graduated driver's licences; and

WHEREAS a poll conducted by IMPACT, the injury prevention centre of the Children's Hospital, found more than 80 percent of Manitobans would support graduated licences; and

WHEREAS graduated driver's licences would limit first-time drivers from driving unsupervised, limit the number of passengers in the vehicle, enforce a zero blood-alcohol level and limit hours of vehicle operation; and

WHEREAS after a specified period of time and the maintenance of a clean driving record, new drivers acquire full vehicle licensing privileges; and

WHEREAS graduating to a full driver's licence is a privilege that must be earned and such a system of licensing would encourage novice drivers to take more responsibility for their driving actions resulting in fewer accidents, injuries and deaths.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial Government to consider the merits of implementing a graduated driver's licensing program, which takes into consideration an applicant's formal driver's education and experience, for motor vehicles in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would like the opinion of the House whether they are in agreement with certain words being added to the original resolutions, and I will indicate them. On the second WHEREAS, the word "driver's" added between the words "graduated" and "licences."

Also on the fifth WHEREAS, the word "recently" was inserted between the words "conducted" and "by." On the seventh WHEREAS, the word "specified" is changed to "specific."

Is that generally agreed? Is there unanimous agreement in the House that we accept all these changes? [*Agreed*]

The Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou), seconded by the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau). WHEREAS graduated licensing—dispense. So ordered.

Mr. Faurichou: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for recognizing me this afternoon. I have brought this private member's resolution to this Legislative Assembly because, in fact it is a very important topic not only for myself but, I believe, many Manitobans. I would just only like to comment briefly to encourage all members of this Legislative Assembly to support and adopt—yes, adopt—within our short hour this afternoon, this motion.

My training and working experience as a first responder with the City of Portage la Prairie rescue unit, as well as my training and working experience as an RCMP officer with the The Pas highway patrol, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have travelled more than a million miles spanning most of North America as a highway transport driver, experiencing virtually every and all driving conditions imaginable. Working within these capacities, there are vivid memories of the horror and devastation that can occur through accidents involving motor vehicles, mostly due to driver error attributed to inexperience, lack of training or poor attitude. I have supported changes to the Manitoba driver licensing system for an awfully long time; however, it was not until the tragedy involving the Stewart family, December 23, 1997, on Highway 34, north of MacGregor, that truly ignited my commitment to see changes to how we can license drivers of motor vehicles within our province.

* (16:10)

This particular tragedy haunts me today, and I apologize to the House for perhaps being emotional at this point in time. However, it is a

perfect example as to the tragedy that highway accidents cause to families here in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the words spoken by Haley Stewart on that fateful evening: "Only two more days until Christmas, Dad," as the family piled into their white Dodge Caravan for the short, familiar 10-minute trip to grandmother's. But, as they stopped on Highway 34 near Portage la Prairie to make a routine left-hand turn, a Chevrolet Celebrity driven by a 17-year-old young girl, who, only five days earlier, had been cited by police for running a stop sign, smashed into the back of the family's van. The impact forced the van into the path of an Oldsmobile Cutlass, which smashed into it coming from the opposing direction. This flipped the van onto its side. The impact ended Haley Stewart's life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my emotion shown this afternoon is because a young lady who so loved life was ended in a fatal accident that was attributed to driver error. The 17-year-old driver was convicted earlier this year of hazardous driving causing death. The accident also injured other family members. Her mother, a registered nurse, spent the next two weeks in a coma. Her dad, a schoolteacher, and younger sister were also seriously hurt, but those injuries were able to heal. To quote from the RoadWise advertising program of Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, "highway accidents hurt for life" rings so true in this particular case.

Haley Stewart loved piano, skating, highland dance. She was a bright young girl and her father was looking forward to teaching her at school. Haley Stewart came into this world in 1988 within days of my own daughter. In fact, Sharon Stewart and my wife Lori shared the maternity ward at Portage General Hospital. This is why this particular accident is so important to what I do here in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly in regard to graduated driver's licensing in a more defined course for those novice drivers in our province.

If one were to look at the statistics for our province, children's deaths within our province, in fact, are greatest from that emanating from motor vehicle accidents. Last year motor vehicle accidents were the single biggest killer of young

Manitobans responsible for 13 deaths. We talk a lot of disease and of our health care system and some of the things that we are attempting to alleviate so that the young people of our province can truly have the opportunity to fill to their greatest potential, to grow up and become citizens of Manitoba with professions that will contribute to our province and make certain that their families have the opportunity to live in our great province as well.

Currently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 81.6 percent of Canada's population is covered by a graduated driver's licensing system. That asks the question: Why not for Manitoba? One would like to perhaps examine what we have currently in our province, and that leads us to believe that perhaps it is a system that is not adequately fulfilling the needs of new drivers.

I would like to state that my comments in regard to graduated driver's licensing have no bearing as to gender or to age. They are specifically focused on those persons that are seeking the rights and privileges of operating motor vehicles upon the roadways of Manitoba.

In Manitoba currently, we have a staged driver's licensing system that was put in place some 25 years ago, when times were a little less hectic, when our roadways were a little less congested. Those conditions are such that one is expected to have a written test to gather whether that individual has knowledge of the rules of the road. It also requires that individual to take a 15-minute road test to see whether or not the care and control of a vehicle and some of the very fundamental and minor operations of a vehicle can be carried out. There are only two weeks between those particular requirements.

As we can all appreciate, within two weeks one cannot gather a great deal of experience on the roadway. Our province is one that provides to us many challenges, challenges that come from seasonal changes, and within those two weeks, those seasonal changes cannot be experienced. So what happens to this individual that has now had his driver's licence and after two weeks of supervised driving, that individual is provided with an unrestricted licence to operate a motor vehicle throughout North America?

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Many of us think only of our immediate surroundings and the care and the control of a vehicle in those particular sets of circumstances. But this licence that we issue to the novice driver, in fact, allows a permit for those individuals to carry on operation of a motor vehicle on the high-speed, very congested roadways of southern Ontario, namely the 401. It also provides the opportunity for those individuals to cross the international border to the United States and operate a motor vehicle on such roadways as the Ohio Turnpike or the very, very high-speed, highly occupied interstates of southern California.

* (16:20)

Persons have come to me with concerns as to whether or not a graduated driver's licensing system here in Manitoba was fair under their particular circumstances. Persons have given rise to examples of the need to participate in farm activities or those that are to go to-and-fro between work at a young age. But, once I have an opportunity to speak with those same individuals who have those concerns, when I raise the question, do you feel that your son or daughter at that particular age with the current criteria in a driver's licence would be capable of operating that same vehicle on the 401 or on the interstate highways, you see a chill go down that parent's spine, envisioning their young son or daughter taking their family vehicle into those sets of circumstances. So I ask the question if that is the case, then why are you asking or supporting an unrestricted driver's licence to someone who is 16-17 years of age, and they get a whole different answer. Well, maybe we could do something different, and that, ladies and gentlemen, honourable members of the House, is what I am asking here today with the resolution, that we consider the merits of doing something different.

There are examples all across North America. In fact, 46 of 48 of the lower states in the United States of America are either in the process of or have concluded their consultation and their passage of graduated driver's licensing systems for their particular jurisdictions. So when I say that we are perhaps a little behind

here in Canada, let us broaden the scope. I would like to suggest that perhaps we are little behind in all of North America.

I do not want to have to experience the tragedy that the Stewart family had to occur again because we as legislators did not proceed and modify our driver's licensing system here that would in fact have changed significantly this particular situation. For had this 17-year-old, who has just recently received her driver's licence and privileges, been under a graduated driver's licensing system that Ontario has, that individual would have had a fully experienced supervising driver that, no doubt, would have had their eyes on the road and would have avoided such a tragedy.

I bring this forward to the House with the backing of many Manitobans. In fact, as the injury prevention unit of the Children's Hospital has found through their own surveys, Manitobans indeed are looking to a more intensive graduated driver's licensing system here in Manitoba. Their survey involved over a thousand Manitobans. It was recently, because it was just last June 1999, 82 percent of respondents either strongly supported or somewhat supported.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that when it comes to graduated licensing, this is an issue I have raised in the past in this Legislature. As critic responsible for MPIC, I raised it before. I know my colleagues, the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) as Highways critics raised this issue. So it is an issue that I have had an interest in and a concern about well before becoming fortunate enough to serve this province as Minister of Highways.

I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat disappointed, to say the least, that we did not really even have a debate or discussion in Manitoba for many years on this. I appreciate the fact that this is an area in which we have had movement fairly significantly in the 1990s. But, as the Member opposite pointed out, we have a

significant number of jurisdictions in this country and a significant number of jurisdictions in the United States, and indeed overseas, that have had graduated driver's licensing in place and have put graduated driver's licensing in place throughout the late 1980s and the 1990s.

I can indicate that the first day I was appointed as Minister of Highways I asked the Deputy Minister in the Department, I raised this as an issue. I said this was an issue that I felt was important as Minister of Highways to bring forward to the public agenda.

In fact, within a matter of weeks I took this to our caucus. Within a short period of time thereafter we announced a task force headed by the Member for Transcona, a task force that has gone to every corner of this province that has talked to people in community after community after community and that has heard presentation after presentation after presentation. I want to indicate to the Member opposite, because I know he has raised this issue with me both privately and in the House, that we as a government are committed to ensuring that we as a Province and the people of this province have the opportunity to have a say on graduated driver's licences.

I said as Minister when I announced the task force that it was unacceptable, I believe, that we did not have it on the agenda when there is clear evidence in other jurisdictions of up to 37% reductions in accident rates, 37% reductions in injuries and indeed in death because of graduated driver's licences.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note that graduated driver's licensing takes numerous forms. In fact, it has evolved in different ways throughout the areas it has been implemented in in Canada. There are no two identical systems that are in place. So what the task force has been doing is not only asking the people of Manitoba the obvious question of whether we should be proceeding with graduated driver's licensing, particularly given the clear evidence that it does save lives, but also the specific question of what form it should take.

I know we have members of that task force here in this Chamber today who will be speaking about their own impressions. I might say that

even though we do not have the full report yet—I am anticipating it very shortly—every member of the task force I talked to—and I attended the meeting actually in my own community—indicated this was one of the best public processes they have ever seen. When did any government of any political stripe go to the people on an issue as important as this before the final decisions were made early on in a mandate and give people the chance for input? That is what we received as a message from people.

I do not say that in a strictly partisan sense because I think it is a model of how we can deal with other issues as well. I know members opposite and particularly the Opposition House Leader will know that I have raised this in opposition, as well, because there is an important role for us to consider issues such as this in a way in which you get public involvement, involvement from all members in this House. I do want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I was quite puzzled for many years that previous ministers and governments did not proceed on this issue.

* (16:30)

I know the Member for Portage (Mr. Faurichou), by the way, and I think it is important to note, even though one works within caucus discipline, I think it is fair to put on the record, and I do not think he would be embarrassed in any way, shape or form if I indicated that even though there had been a decision not to proceed at the government level, I believe the Member for Portage had raised this issue repeatedly within his own caucus. I think that is important, and I say that in the true sense of recognizing his own interest in this particular issue like many of the rest of us.

I want to stress again a couple of key points about graduated licensing, first of all the announcement we made about the task force. We made it very clear that it refers to the concept of a licensing system that is based on all novice drivers, all new drivers. This is not an attempt to single out one age group. The evidence indicates, Mr. Speaker, that learners in a controlled environment tend to have very few accidents. Experienced drivers, in fact the more

experienced the driver, have fewer accidents. But amongst novice drivers of all ages, there is a significantly higher accident rate than the general population, and that applies, by the way, to novice drivers of whatever gender. We often get into stereotypes about who is at the greatest risk demographically, but it can be shown that men or women of any age who are novice drivers are at greater risk. It only makes sense because they do not have the driving skills an experienced driver has.

I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, I was quite frankly shocked to find that in the province of Manitoba you can move from getting a learner's licence to getting a full licence in two weeks—in two weeks. I do not think that is the kind of licensing system that most Manitobans would expect, and I can indicate that the task force has been looking very carefully and raising the issue about whether indeed we have to be looking at a significantly longer period.

Given the awareness on drinking and driving, I was surprised that we as a province had not moved to look at what virtually every other jurisdiction has done with graduated driver's licensing, and that is to have a zero tolerance in alcohol for novice drivers. Let us not forget that even a novice driver who is not above the legal limit, is not impaired, is still facing the combination of dealing in many cases with the challenge of some degree of alcohol intoxication plus handling a vehicle which in many cases which, to a novice driver, is enough of a challenge. So that is another area that they are looking at.

There are various jurisdictions that have restrictions on hours and passengers for novice drivers. I think that is very important for us to look at as well, Mr. Speaker.

There are other areas that have been brought in as well, and I look forward to the task force's report on whether we should be looking, for example, at identifying vehicles where you have learners or novice drivers. That is the case in British Columbia at the current time. It is the case in many European jurisdictions. It gives other drivers on the road some opportunity to have awareness, if the driver ahead of them happens to be a new driver, perhaps give them

that little extra caution, a little extra time. I think we have all seen that at times. That is another area we can look at as well.

I think we do have to look very much at the kind of time period the graduated driver's licensing would apply to because the experience once again shows that the greater experience a driver has under controlled circumstances as a novice or a learner, the more those drivers are given the opportunity to develop the skills they need to be safe drivers.

I want to add to the tone, I think, of the member for Portage because I know I have received letters and I have talked to many people who have outlined their own personal situation, their own personal experience, as have members of the task force, and as have other MLAs. They have talked about the terrible sort of feeling of whether this type of graduated licensing might have made a difference. It has hit home in my own particular case, Mr. Speaker. I was shocked a very short time ago when a 14-year-old was killed by a drunk driver in my community; a 14-year-old that my son went to the same school with; a 14-year-old who was active in Teens Against Drunk Driving with both my son and my daughter. This is before the courts in terms of appeal, so I am not trying to interfere in the court case in any way, shape or form. The driver, barely over 18 years old, was obviously a relatively new driver, intoxicated according to the court records by double the legal limit.

Mr. Speaker, I often said to myself when I looked at that and when I met with the family, who are now starting a chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving in Thompson, what if we had had graduated driver's licensing in place? What if the driver had had some experience at driving without alcohol, would we perhaps have developed a greater consciousness in that driver? Would that driver in fact still have been within a prohibition period if we had the graduated driver's licence?

So I have much the same sense as the Member for Portage because when one looks at that, one has to ask not only a question, would it have made a difference, but the very real question, whether we can make a difference in

the future, by seriously looking at graduated driver's licensing.

I want to indicate to this House that I fully expect a report from the task force within a very short period of time. I want to indicate to this House as well that we have indicated as a government once we receive a report, we are looking at acting on it very shortly.

It would take some time to implement and I know the members opposite are aware of that because it does affect the driver's licensing system which has to be changed, but I can indicate we are looking very seriously at graduated driver's licensing in this session of the Legislature because I think, and without knowing the full report yet of the task force, I think we all have a sense that at a time when—we are actually one of only three provinces that does not have it. One has enabling legislation, Alberta; another, Saskatchewan, is looking at it.

When there is so much clear evidence, how can you say no to up to a 37% reduction in accidents and deaths, and that is real people. If we can do anything through driver's licensing to make a difference in the future, Mr. Speaker, I would say it would be unconscionable for us not to do anything.

In fact, I want to suggest in my closing comments that I would hope—and I realize there has been some skepticism. There must have been for this not to have proceeded before, but the evidence is fairly clear and I want to put out my hope that when we do get to discussing this formally in the Legislature, that we may even see a fairly unique circumstance where perhaps we may be able to get some unanimity on this. Surely if there is an issue out there where we can get all-party support, it should be issues related to safety, and this is fundamentally a safety issue.

I just want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, that this is one of the first items I identified as Minister of Highways, and I am committed to working with the task force to make sure that we not only put this on the agenda but that we deal with the issue of graduated driver's licensing in this session of the Legislature, so that we can make that very important decision on safety.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Earlier today I made—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Minister of Education and Training, on a point of order?

Mr. Caldwell: Yes. Earlier today, I had made a statement to the House, Mr. Speaker, that I now find to have been in error. It was a statement about pairing and my ability to travel to Brandon. I have since found out that I was, in fact, paired, and my statement was, in fact, in error, and I wish to apologize to the House for that.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Honourable Member.

* * *

* (16:40)

Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West): To err is human, I have heard before.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Member opposite—I guess I cannot say any names—the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) for bringing forth this very important issue. I must say that the Minister who has spoken previously deserves a lot of credit on this issue. In fact, within 45 days of being in office, as I know he has mentioned, it was very early on after being in office that he, in fact, found this issue to be of extreme importance and then brought it back to our caucus. In fact, the Minister had suggested that a task force be derived, headed by the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), and composed of myself, the Members for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) to compile a task force and investigate this very important issue to Manitobans.

I know the Member for Portage, which was one of the 14 communities that we consulted on the matter—I believe Portage la Prairie was our No. 1 that we went to—has all rights for being

very emotional on this issue. In fact, he brought up the tragic loss in the Stewart family that we heard while we were in Portage among numerous other social impact statements that we heard in the 14 communities that we travelled to, the 14 meetings that we had, I guess, in 13 communities and many, many tragedies that have occurred throughout Manitoba involving automobile accidents.

In fact, throughout the entire month of February, we travelled throughout those communities, heard the impact statements. We heard many people speak of graduated driver's licensing in other provinces and the strong feeling from people out there at those meetings of the importance of such a program in Manitoba.

The Member opposite had mentioned the accident rate of novice drivers. Very much of the information that we have compiled are close to the numbers that he has. Regardless of age, statistics have shown us that inexperience increases crash risks. Novice drivers with less than two years' experience have a much higher crash involvement rate experience than drivers in any other category. To be perfectly clear on novice drivers, I believe as the Minister had mentioned, novice drivers are not to be mistaken for people of age initiating starting into the driving world at a young age of 16. Novice drivers can be of any age.

Our statistics have shown us that, of all novice drivers, 45 percent are in fact over the age of 18 years of age, but the statistics still show that novice drivers make up 4 percent of all drivers and, yet, represent nearly 13 percent of all crashes. This obviously is an extremely high number that we found. It surprised, I believe, most people on the task force that that number was so high. Another way to put it, Mr. Speaker, in the information we found, was driver supervision appears to drastically reduce and lower the crash rates. Driving under a learner's licence with supervision has proven to be a very safe practice in this province. These individuals had the lowest crash rate of drivers at eight crashes per thousand drivers for females and fourteen per thousand for males.

The crash rate, although in that instance suggests gender specifics, it goes throughout all

age groups in the same type of statistics. In fact, the graduated driver's licensing program would allow novice drivers of all ages to learn crucial driving skills in a lower risk environment. Drivers would then graduate to a full licence following completion of an intermediate phase. Changes in the way we issue licences would allow drivers to experience a number of different road conditions while accompanied by a supervising driver.

This issue is extremely important to Manitobans. I know previously the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) had brought this issue up many times throughout the years when he was in opposition. I know the Minister of Highways from Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) brought this issue up a number of times. In fact, there was a statement by the then-Minister that stated as early as last June, provided a lengthy list of reasons why graduated licensing would not work in Manitoba. I am glad to see that the Member for Portage (Mr. Fauschou) and a number of members opposite do not agree with that. His words were: I am not an advocate at this point in my career for graduated licensing. It would not be something I would be particularly interested in advancing.

I know the member for Flin Flon at the time was extremely disappointed in those words. Members now in the Government see things very differently.

The communities that we visited, and we visited, as I mentioned, 13, covered the entire province from south to north, east and west, and the impact statements were at times very difficult to sit and listen to. As the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) previously mentioned, the impact in his community and the tragedy that it caused in his community and the feeling that this tragedy could well have been avoided in his community stands out, and we heard that over and over and over again.

It is important to emphasize that any changes to the way licensed drivers would apply is to all new drivers, and there are 33 340 novice drivers in our province. When you look at the statistics and the figures of the crash rate of novice drivers that are involved, it is absolutely

startling with the numbers. We in Manitoba are very much behind graduated driver's licensing throughout North America, and when it initially started in the United States, in Maryland, in 1979 and spread throughout the United States into 24 different states, into Canada, into I believe six different provinces within Canada, Manitoba is very much behind. When you look at the results and the differences that have been made in other jurisdictions and across Canada, it is startling to see the reduction of rates by provinces that have gone to graduated driver's licensing.

We in Manitoba have found that many of the meetings, and many of the areas that the task force travelled to throughout the month of February, found incredible support from folks within the communities that graduated driver's licensing is effective in many other states, in many other provinces. It was quite overwhelming personally for myself in travelling to all those communities and speaking to the hundreds and hundreds of people who we spoke to in those communities, only three after seeing the presentation that was put together by the task force in conjunction with members from the vehicle licensing branch came out, I believe there was somewhere in the area of two or three people who were then opposed to graduated driver's licensing in some form in Manitoba.

What we heard over and over and over again was that some of the restrictions that may work in Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island or others that have gone to graduated driver's licensing may not work in Manitoba. We found that there was a real flavour of things that may work urban and things that may work rural, and in the cities where you have access to buses and taxis and the like are not always recognized and the availability is not there in a rural area. So we found out that different times that graduated licensing came into curfews in other provinces may not work for rural Manitoba.

The amount of information that has been compiled will be eventually given to the Minister in the form of a report and facts, figures from all other jurisdictions within Canada, and from the incredible consultations that we have had throughout Manitoba will be combined in that report.

* (16:50)

In Nova Scotia, it is interesting to note that a 37% reduction in automobile accidents for the novice category was startling. In 1994, they had introduced graduated licensing, and to now, the reduction that they have seen by applying graduated licensing in Nova Scotia has reduced their crash rate by 37 percent. In Ontario, the numbers are very similar, and I believe in Ontario the numbers are definitely in the mid-30s, the reduction that they have seen in novice drivers in the crash rates there, and obviously that reflects a reduction in serious fatalities in all of those communities, as well as No. 1 the social impact and the dollar impact that it has in all those communities.

In Manitoba, if we took the numbers and reduced them, even if it is 37 percent in Ontario is startling, in Manitoba those numbers when you think novice drivers right now are 33 340, 37 percent of reducing that number of crash rates is incredible.

The support has been overwhelming in graduated driver's licensing. To mention a few: Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Teens Against Drunk Driving, IMPACT, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Manitoba Medical Association, the Canadian Automobile Association, Winnipeg Police, and many, many other groups.

The Children's Hospital published results from a recent poll that found 82 percent of Manitobans would support this type of licensing and believe it is important to note that support was consistent regardless of age, gender, geographic location, education or social impact status.

The task force and the information compiled found that a lot of things in Manitoba were quite shocking. One worthy of mentioning was the last time that licensing in Manitoba was looked at was two and a half decades ago.

Just in closing, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans realized and the minister realized that consultations were extremely important on this issue, and people in Manitoba have been consulted. We believe that the report that will be

compiled to the minister will carry all the information that I have mentioned here today and my colleagues I know would like to mention as well. So thank you very much.

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Good day, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to state my support for graduated licensing and this whole idea.

I had the privilege of serving on the graduated licensing task force, and I would like to publicly thank the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), who was the head of the committee. He has done lots of different activities. I would like to thank the members for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), St. Vital (Ms. Allan).

We ended up going and having 15 hearings. During the 15 hearings, it was truly amazing how many people actually participated, came out and actually got involved. We talked to hundreds and hundreds of people.

The interesting part about this process is that we did not have a final product in mind. We wanted to see what the public had to say. We wanted to hear what their ideas were in looking at the whole driver's licensing system.

It is interesting to note that in a survey for graduated licensing that 82 percent of the population supports the theory behind graduated licensing. Not only that, but it is not just a rural or urban issue. It is across the board as far as urban people support it, rural people support it, young people support it, and older people support it. So across the board Manitobans support this concept.

What it is is a system of licensing that allows people to learn how to drive properly. It is really strange in our society that we have training courses to teach many, many things. If you are going to be any type of profession, you go through a many-years training course. If you are going through most machinery, you go through a major training course. Driver's licensing, though, is a very simple project.

Right now, what you do as a process is you write a simple written test, you drive for 10 minutes, and you can get your licence and drive

anywhere in the world. That means you can drive on the 401. That means you can drive on highways. That means you can drive in any conditions with minimal training or no training. So what we do is we have to set up a system that is fair and that is appropriate for all novice drivers, not just young drivers, not old drivers, but all drivers that are learning how to drive. We can do that in a system where we provide safety, security and an environment where people can learn to drive appropriately.

It was really neat to see the statistics that when people are driving with someone, with an experienced driver and in the learning process, they had crash statistics at about 3 percent. That is the lowest crash statistic available. What happens is that that is the least crash statistics. The biggest crash statistics come in the next group. It is those people who are no longer learning but are the novice drivers. They are the people who have been driving for less than a year. What happens is these are people who have the highest crash statistics. We are talking about people who have three times the regular crashes as the normal population. That goes across all age groups, so those people you are talking about, almost 150 crashes per 100 000 versus a statistic of about 50 in males. So what you are talking about is three times the statistics for crashes and that is very, very scary.

The other thing that is interesting is every single jurisdiction that we surveyed, once they implemented graduated licensing, saved money as far as accidents, saved injuries. Huge amounts of injuries were dropped, and that is just a huge toll on the families and on society.

You have to look at the toll as far as hospitals, as far as our police services and, of course, the human toll. It is interesting to see that the decline of injuries was between 7 percent to 32 percent on average. That is a huge decline in a short period of time. In driving a motor vehicle, it is one of the most complex tasks. It is one that you do not have absolute control over, because you have drivers driving that are in their own vehicles. It is a rapidly changing environment. It is a very scary environment. When you look at Manitoba, we have some of the most challenging weather conditions in the year. We have ice. Of course, we have all sorts of different

weather conditions that are hard to drive in. For the novice or inexperienced driver, that makes it very, very tough. So what we have to do is develop a system where people can learn how to drive in those challenging environments in a controlled environment. Give them a chance to learn with assistance. Do not just throw them out there and say you can do it. What we want to do is set up a system that makes sense.

Some of the interesting things that we learned on the task force were the impacts statements. I do not think there was one session, including the one out in Birchwood Inn or the Holiday Inn Airport West, where people did not come out and talk about the personal tragedy that could have been avoided if it was not for the errors of youth or not being experienced enough as far as learning how to drive in their vehicle.

It was really scary to hear of how families were decimated, how you have loved ones killed because people are young, inexperienced. I know myself, when I was a young teacher in Norway House, I know some of the people in the graduating class, there were four or five of them that rolled their vehicle, and it ended up that a number of them died. What it was was they were out there inexperienced, going too fast for the conditions. It was just icy, and they rolled the vehicle. Every month you see another case where people have gotten injuries. They are in over their head driving the vehicle, and they get into trouble, and because of that we have death and disabilities and, of course, suffering.

* (17:00)

The statistics prove that graduated licensing works. Statistics prove this across the board no matter what the age. It makes sense to implement the system. I would like to thank the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) because what he has done is he has allowed us as a task force to go around the province. I would like to thank the members of the task force, because it was probably one of the most open experiences of public consultation. What we did was we talked to everybody. It was an open dialogue. We had good discussions from multiple groups. We had representatives from the motorcycle groups. We had representatives from youth. We had representatives from medical associations.

We had all sorts of assistance from different groups, and they came and they made presentations to us, and they were very open and frank and gave us a lot of feedback. This feedback was compiled into a very good report that we are putting together now that we are going to give to the minister.

What it basically gave was the opinions of Manitobans. The interesting part about this whole process was there were not a lot of people who did not agree with the process. When I talked to a group of students, I asked them: How many people figure that people should be allowed to drive in the first year of operation of a motor vehicle? There were about 50 students there, and only one kid put up their hand and said no. Forty-nine agreed that novice drivers, new drivers, should not be driving while drinking at all. It was funny. You asked people this and we got an agreement that I was very surprised at.

I would also like to say that we also had a lot of impact statements from people who across the province said time and time again, do it now, do not wait. When you look at something that can be so simple, that will save lives in the long term, that will, in fact, make a true difference then I do not think that we have any right not to act. Therefore when we are talking about this law, when we are talking about the theory of graduated licensing, we have to take action. We have to take action quickly because we cannot allow the carnage to continue. We must continue the process and go on from here.

Some of the interesting things is that if you look at a three-stage graduated licensing system it truly works. What happens is the kids or the new drivers or the older people get a chance to learn with someone. Then what happens is they get more controlled circumstances where they are working with someone. They have some restrictions and then, of course, you have the full licence where they can do anything.

Any skill, what you want to do is you want to learn it in stages. You do not want to jump into something that is way over your head. I think a graduated licensing system allows people the chance to learn a highly complex, dangerous, tough skill over time and gives them the

controlled circumstances to do it. That way I believe that we should really do well as far as setting up a graduated licensing system.

The interesting part when we are reading this is you look at all the organizations that are supporting it. The Insurance Institute has said that in Ontario, the amount of money that was saved is in the multimillions of dollars. The Mothers Against Drunk Driving, it was interesting to hear their proposals and they are all for it. The Teens Against Drunk Driving, I was really happy to know that St. James Collegiate did a presentation. The kids, I met with them and they were really, really supportive of the whole concept.

You have other places. The Motor Vehicle Branch has mentioned that, again, the statistics show that it does save lives. The interesting part about our province is that we are not a leader in this, but we can be at least proactive as far as getting it in quickly and setting it up. The National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration says that it makes sense. It is got to be the

way we go. They have, in fact, a whole bunch of information on how we can present it and do it, and we have read that into part of our proposal and our presentation will be that to the Minister. The New Zealand graduated driver licensing system, one of the oldest systems in existence, has proven—if you read the study it proves that the system works and does make a big difference as far as teenagers' attitudes towards to experiences in car driving for their entire life.

So, therefore, as a government I think it is important to support this initiative. I also think it is very, very important to save lives and make a difference to the youth and to our entire population.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member will have four minutes remaining.

The hour being 5:05 p.m., as previously agreed, the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 27, 2000

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