

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 19, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 30—The Planning Amendment Act (Deemed Single Operations)

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford), that Bill 30, The Planning Amendment Act (Deemed Single Operations), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: The intention of this bill is to amend The Planning Act to prevent multiple livestock operations under the same ownership and of the same species category from establishing in close proximity to each other without first going through a local review.

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

PETITIONS

Removal of Agriculture Positions from Minnedosa

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Nine positions with the Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, Crown Lands Branch, are being moved out of Minnedosa.

Removal of these positions will severely impact the local economy.

Removal of these positions will be detrimental to revitalizing this rural agriculture community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider stopping the removal of these positions from our community, and to consider utilizing

current technology in order to maintain these positions in their existing location.

This petition signed by Ross McNabb, Darren Blake, Barry Ross and many, many others.

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

Grace General Hospital ER

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government has not ensured that the Grace Hospital emergency room is staffed with a full complement of ER doctors. The ER has been short several doctors for more than two years.

Because of this shortage, only one ER doctor is working on many shifts, forcing long patient waits for emergency care.

Residents of the community fear that the Grace Hospital ER will be forced to close if this ER doctor shortage is not fixed immediately.

The provincial government has not come forward with a clear, immediate plan to address the ER doctor shortage.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), to consider developing a clear, immediate plan to address the ER doctor shortage.

To request the Minister of Health to consider taking all necessary steps to ensure the Grace Hospital emergency room does not close.

Signed by F. Altvater, E. Deacon, M. Diacos and many others.

Provincial Nominee Program

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Immigration is critically important to the future of our province, and the 1998 federal Provincial Nominee Program is the best immigration program that Manitoba has ever had.

The government needs to recognize that unnecessary backlogs in processing PNP applications causes additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

The government needs to recognize the unfairness in its current policy on who qualifies to be an applicant, more specifically, by not allowing professionals such as health care workers to be able to apply for PNP certificates in the same way a computer technician would be able to.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his government to consider improving and strengthening the Provincial Nominee Program in order to recognize and acknowledge how important immigration is to our province.

This is signed by R. Gonzales, R. Sumala, F. Purificacion and many, many others.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from St. Boniface Arts and Technology Centre 25 adults who are under the direction of Ms. Lucille Miller. This group is in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

Also in the public gallery we have from Pinkham School 16 grade 5 students under the direction of Mr. Richard Scrapneck. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos).

Also in the public gallery we have 25 retired school teachers and 23 retired health care workers.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement Delays in Transfers of Land

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): In May of 1997, the former Progressive Conservative government made a commitment to the First Nations people of Manitoba

to move forward in good faith on the issue of traditional land claims, and those claims were to be settled in a fair and an equitable manner within the Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement that was drafted and signed under the previous government. This historic document provided that about a million acres of land transferred to 20 First Nations across the province would be transferred and converted to reserve lands and, Mr. Speaker, was a great moment in the history of our province. That was the hope back in 1997.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of progress, the foot-dragging that's occurred under the current government, the hopes that were so high in 1997 have been reduced to a state of frustration and anger today. The last public figures available show that only approximately 25 percent of the total amount has been transferred, almost a decade of NDP rule. At this rate, Mr. Speaker, it's going to take another 24 years to fulfil this commitment to our First Nations people.

So I would like to ask the Premier: After eight long years in government, why have they failed to follow through on this promise to our First Nations people?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): When I go to meetings with other premiers, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we are extremely disappointed that the agreement we reached on Kelowna to invest money into water, sewer, health care, preventative health care, public education, post-secondary education—I would point out that there are many acres that have been transferred to the national government, close to well over half a million. I'll have to get the exact number of acres.

There are some acres that have been identified and ratified as Treaty Land Entitlement. There are some acres that are still in ratification process. For example, the Peguis First Nation had a vote; I believe it was very close, on the ratification of Crown land and federal Crown land that was moved forward for purposes of that Treaty Land Entitlement.

I also would point out that the members opposite had the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry which recommended that the issue of mineral resources be treated as a modern-day treaty. I am proud of the fact that we not only honoured that recommendation but we brought it into law after it gathered dust in the 1990s, if the member wants to reminisce about the

fact of failure to deal with Aboriginal people in the 1990s.

* (13:40)

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I think many of the current leaders within our Aboriginal community would beg to differ about the areas of progress that were made in the 1990s, whether it be settlement and implementation of northern flood agreements or progress on treaty land entitlements.

I find it interesting to hear the Premier today criticizing the Prime Minister, when yesterday in the hallway he was talking about what great respect he has for the Prime Minister and how much support the Prime Minister has here in the province of Manitoba. So he needs to decide what his message is with regard to the Prime Minister of the country. Yesterday he's the Prime Minister's biggest fan; today he's a critic of the Prime Minister. I think he needs to try to be consistent.

Now, Bill 32 was introduced in this Legislature more than a year ago. This was a piece of legislation that was designed to enable the transfer of lands and the creation of easements on public lands in order to facilitate the process of treaty land entitlements. That was more than a year ago. That bill is not even close to passage as of today. So it is why we hear comments from people like Grand Chief Ron Evans this morning expressing frustration at the process and also a comment from a former chief who said, and I quote: It's a very slow process. It's a very frustrating process for me as a First Nations person.

I want to ask the Premier whether he agrees with that former chief that this is a slow and frustrating process for Aboriginal people.

Mr. Doer: I would point out that certain components the member is talking about are under federal jurisdiction. I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, it is important when one talks about the Northern Flood Agreement and the 1990s, I recall Mr. David Newman standing up in this House when there were hearings taking place on Cross Lake. I remember David Newman condemning the Mennonite Church, the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and other church groups for having these public hearings.

I also remember that twice, not once but twice, Cam McLean, a former Conservative activist who was the independent arbitrator, ruling in favour of the Cross Lake bridge, and twice the Conservatives said no. We said yes to that bridge, and if the members opposite ever want to drive on some of

those highways and drive into some of those roads, they'll be able to cross the Cross Lake bridge, unlike the 1990s, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we'll talk about the frustrations of the people of Cross Lake in just a moment. If he wants to talk about injustice and frustration at Cross Lake, then we're certainly happy to have a debate on that very issue, and we certainly will.

I just want to ask the Premier: The former chief that I quoted earlier, who indicated it's a very slow process, it's a very frustrating process, is none other than the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin) who indicated it's a slow, frustrating process.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier again if he agrees with his own minister and whether he's prepared to fast track his process so that we don't have to wait another 24 years for justice on the issue of treaty land entitlements. We're happy to debate our record versus the record of past NDP governments on this issue any day of the week.

Mr. Doer: Yes, I remember just two weeks ago, the chief of Poplar River—we'll talk about today. The chief of Poplar River said, concerning the Conservatives' so-called strategy of changing the name and doing God knows what else with Manitoba Hydro, I remember the chief of Poplar River said: Who is Hugh McFadyen to decide what's best for—*[interjection]* No, I'm quoting—*[interjection]*—the Member for Fort Whyte—who is the Member for Fort Whyte—that wasn't the term he used, but the Member for Fort Whyte—Who is the Member for Fort Whyte to tell those of us who have lived in this community for over 3,000 years what's best for us? We'll decide what's best for us. That's why we support them, Mr. Speaker.

Northern Flood Agreement PCN Protest

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon I wrote the Premier asking for an expeditious resolution to the concerns of the PCN residents as they continue their process at Jenpeg generating station. I also sent a copy of this letter to the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin) as he had stated in the House that he had been in correspondence with the PCN members.

I would like to ask the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs today if he has met with the Premier regarding this issue, and when we can

expect and when can the community expect a resolution to this process that is in the best interests of all parties involved.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I have visited the PCN community on a number of occasions with the Minister of Culture (Mr. Robinson) and the Minister of Northern and Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Lathlin). On a number of occasions we have met with chief and council, and we have also met with the community. Many times we've had town hall meetings, electronic town hall meetings with the local television station, and we have had very good ideas from the people of that community on roads, on bridges, on education. We get good ideas from many First Nations communities. The member of northern and Aboriginal affairs has been working on cadet programs for some of our First Nations communities that have worked out quite positively.

We believe we are moving ahead with the community, and we will continue to move ahead with the community, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, but it appears he's going backwards. I have been in contact with members of PCN, and they tell me that no resolution has been forthcoming from the provincial government. They have stated they will continue to protest at Jenpeg until provincial officials, including the Premier, are willing to meet together to move the Northern Flood Agreement process forward.

I would like to ask the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs why he has been unsuccessful in negotiating on behalf of PCN residents in the past and in resolution of the Northern Flood Agreement, and why he has been unsuccessful in resolving the current situation.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): On behalf of the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, I'm sure he would have been delighted to stand up and answer the question, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just give the Member for Minnedosa a bit of history on what has been occurring. It was this government in December of 2000 that recognized the Northern Flood Agreement is a modern-day treaty for the first time ever. Further, this government and Manitoba Hydro's continued efforts to finalize an agreement with the Pimicikamak Cree Nation, Cross Lake First Nation, has been met with, I would say, greedy lawyers and selfish consultants. The people that actually need the service have been cut off from

direct communication with their elected government and also Manitoba Hydro. The unfortunate—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, all the members of PCN are seeking fair treatment from a government and a resolution to the issue at hand regarding the Northern Flood Agreement. That the minister would state in the House that he has written a letter and then consider the issue dealt with shows a lack of respect in a desire to find a solution to the concerns of the PCN residents.

So, Mr. Speaker, when will the minister take concrete steps to bring all of the players to the table, including Hydro, the community and the Premier?

Mr. Robinson: Repeated efforts have been made to have the leadership of the Pimicikamak Cree Nation come to the table. Repeated efforts by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs have gone unnoticed. His latest has been written communication in the last couple of days, writing to Chief Miswagon to encourage him to meet with the provincial government and Manitoba Hydro. Unfortunately, because of the law that is within PCN, it disallows their councillors or their chief to meet with any ministers of the Crown and only allows them to meet with the Queen, the Prime Minister or the Premier.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I'm describing is a very complicated system of government in the Cross Lake community imposed upon a non-Indian person.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Liquor Store in Vulnerable Community

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, Knowles Centre is a treatment facility in my community for troubled youth, many of them that have FASD, drug and alcohol addictions. They've been doing excellent work in our Manitoba community for many, many years.

I would like to ask the government, the minister responsible for the Liquor Control Commission why he would approve a liquor store right next door to Knowles Centre which is dealing with some of the most vulnerable youth in our society.

* (13:50)

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission has about 46 locations throughout the province. There are about 185

privately owned liquor stores throughout the province of Manitoba and about 300 liquor vendors for beer in the province of Manitoba. The rules and regulations are very clearly set out, taking community input into account in each and every store that is open.

The Show Your Age campaign that's been brought about by the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission is one of the best recognized in Canada. People who are underage, anyone under the age of 25, is asked for identification. The follow-up by the inspectors—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Speaker, what an answer. How many residents in North Kildonan, how many businesses in North Kildonan, and was Knowles Centre ever consulted before they put a liquor outlet a stone's throw away from some of the most vulnerable children in our society?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Manitoba Liquor Control Commission takes very seriously the responsibilities of making sure that youth don't have access to liquor.

As you look at some of the most populated areas in Winnipeg, in Brandon and many of the cities around Manitoba, there are constantly people that are going by. There are people within the community, in schools and others. The Manitoba Liquor Control Commission has a stellar record of dealing with the community, in dealing with youth in the community and making sure that its rules and regulations are very strictly adhered to. We're proud of that fact.

The member from Headingley, that constantly gets up in this House asking for a location, is much closer to—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, those—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River East has the floor.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Those answers are almost unbelievable.

We have very troubled youth at Knowles Centre, some of the most vulnerable children with alcohol

addictions. They have enough problems of their own. They don't need a liquor store to tempt them right next door.

Will the Minister responsible for Healthy Living, the minister responsible for addictions, stand in this House today and indicate whether she agrees with her government's position that it's okay to have a liquor store right next to a youth addictions facility?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric and the nonsense coming from the member opposite is absolutely out of line.

There are many liquor establishments in the province of Manitoba, many fine and reputable businesses in the province of Manitoba, the liquor stores as well. Underage people in Manitoba are absolutely not served in the Manitoba Liquor Control Commissions. They are identified, and if any report is made to the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission of anyone providing or serving alcohol to underage people in Manitoba, we take it extremely seriously. The rhetoric and the nonsense on the location of a Manitoba Liquor Control Commission is out of line, unjustified and, quite frankly, we take it extremely seriously.

Task Force for Health Care Waiting Lists Number of Meetings

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, that was an appalling answer from that minister.

The NDP quietly struck a blue ribbon task force almost 10 months ago to improve waiting lists in Manitoba. Despite adding \$2 billion more into health care since they formed government, the NDP realized that money alone was not going to fix health care, and so very quietly they struck this blue ribbon task force to fix their problems.

Can I ask the Minister of Health why this very important task force has only met four times since?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite concerning work that we're doing concerning patient safety, work that we're doing reducing wait times. I'm very happy to report that any number of individuals, whether it's in the context of our region, whether it's with Manitoba Health, whether it's with a patient access network, are

working together to ensure that we're not only increasing our human resources here in Manitoba, probably the single most important thing in giving people the best care possible.

I'm sure the health care workers in the gallery can attest to the value of the human resources, but, indeed, we're also ensuring—*[interjection]* Thank you. We're also ensuring that we're not only investing in technology, but in system change to help reduce those wait times and get people even better care sooner.

Mrs. Driedger: The Minister of Health didn't even try to answer that question. Manitoba's health care system is rated dead-last in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, 1,100 doctors have fled this province since the NDP have been in government and \$34 million has been spent on nursing overtime and private-duty nurses to backfill nursing shortages. Our ERs are in a meltdown because we've got a very severe doctor shortage in our ERs.

So I would like to ask this Minister of Health again, especially for the retired health care workers in the gallery, to answer why this task force, this very, very important task force set up to address wait times in this province, has only met four times since she formed the committee.

Ms. Oswald: Well, really the question pertains where to begin. Do we begin on the issue of nurses that she raised in her question? Mr. Speaker, 1,573 nurses left the province under the Conservative watch; 1,589 back under the NDP. Is that where we begin? Do we begin an answer on wait times and the progress that we've made, maybe just starting with orthopedics, where we've cut our wait list in half in the last year from 44 weeks to 22. Do I speak about that success?

Or, Mr. Speaker, should I speak about the great announcement today at Misericordia hospital to talk about the incredible work that we're going to do with the Centre of Excellence on eye care to bring those wait times even further? We've got all kinds of groups working here in Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By the time the election rolls around, I'm sure those nursing numbers are going to be escalated to about 5,000 nurses. They keep going up—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: And, Mr. Speaker, by the time the election rolls around, we'll be rated 100th out of 10 provinces in terms of being dead-last in our health care system. NDP math.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers. We have a lot of visitors in the gallery and we have the viewing public. They came down here to hear the questions and the answers, and I'm asking the co-operation of all honourable members.

The honourable Member for Charleswood has the floor.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government announced a new CT scanner at the Health Sciences Centre, but there aren't enough technologists to run it. It's sitting quietly.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: And, Mr. Speaker, maternity care, according to the experts, is in crisis in Manitoba. This government set up this task force to fix health care, to fix waiting lists in Manitoba, but they have only met four times, and this Minister of Health has refused to provide us with the minutes of that meeting.

I wonder if today she would provide us with the minutes of that meeting, or tell us what's in the minutes that she doesn't want us to see.

* (14:00)

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, once again it gives me an opportunity to correct the inappropriate and inaccurate information that the member opposite is putting on the record. Since forming government, since 2003, indeed, there have been 201 technologists educated and hired here in the province of Manitoba. This fantastic new CT scanner that we announced at HSC today, 64-slice fabulous machine, only two in Manitoba, is being operated by technologists. So are the other 19 CT scanners in the province of Manitoba.

We've got more work to do in hiring technologists, but, you know what? We're not losing 1,500 nurses, we're not driving over 100 doctors out

of the province and we're not cutting education to our health care professionals.

Federal Equalization Payments Amount of Transfers to Manitoba

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Federal equalization payments to Manitoba have increased by nearly 44 percent since 2000. Manitoba now receives \$554 million more in equalization payments than it did in 2000. Increases in federal equalization payments are an indication that Manitoba is falling farther and farther behind other provinces. Rather than taking steps to make Manitoba a have-not province, the NDP is firmly entrenching Manitoba as a have-not province.

So, I ask the Minister of Finance: Why does he refuse to take steps to make Manitoba a have province?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the equalization transfer to Manitoba today is roughly equivalent as to what it was in 1999, it's about 19 percent. The additional transfers that have been received in Manitoba are the restoration of cuts that we had from the federal government under the Liberals for health care. We've gotten some of that back.

Unfortunately, they put some of the money back into health care by taking it out of post-secondary education. That money did not show up in the federal budget this year, but we do have a commitment from the federal government to start restoring the federal cutbacks to post-secondary education next year.

But overall, Manitoba is growing above the Canadian average in the GDP this year, as it has last year, and Manitoba is moving forward like it never did in the decade of the '90s.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the minister may want to recant his statements, because Manitoba's population increased by less than 3 percent since 2000. Yet, during that time, federal equalization payments increased by a whopping 44 percent. According to Bryan Schwartz, a constitutional law professor and a recognized constitutional expert, he says, when free money comes from Ottawa, governments do not have to make adjustments to become self-sufficient; adjustments like controlling taxation levels.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why has he failed to make Manitoba tax competitive? Why has he failed to provide a stable environment for

business? Is this because he is content to keep Manitoba a have-not province for a very long time?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when you look at the performance measures in Manitoba, we are above the Canadian average on 24 out of 32. Let me start. Total exports: percent change in Manitoba, 18.5 percent; percent change in Canada, 1.5 percent; exports to the United States: percent increase in Manitoba, 15.5 percent; percent change in the rest of Canada, down 1.7 percent; urban housing starts: 35 percent increase in Manitoba; for the rest of Canada, down 10 percent; public capital investment: up 24 percent in Canada, down 17 percent in the rest of Canada; construction work: up 14 percent in Manitoba, only up 4.7 percent in the rest of Canada. These are just some examples of how we're leading the country in economic development.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, let me give the minister an example of how we're following the country. We're below the national average in real GDP growth for each of the last seven years and the only province in Canada with that dubious distinction, the only one. Professor Schwartz, who's an expert in constitutional law and has written seven books on Canadian constitutional reform, also indicated that ineptitude and irresponsibility are rewarded with higher equalization payments.

Since Manitoba has been rewarded with \$554 million more in equalization payments, a whopping 44 percent since the year 2000, and all while the NDP has been in power, I would say that Professor Schwartz is calling this NDP and this Finance Minister both inept and irresponsible.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Is he inept or is he irresponsible or is he both?

Mr. Selinger: One of the great things about the members of the opposition, when they can't actually win an argument based on the facts because they actually have no facts to support their argument, the last refuge of a scoundrel, Mr. Speaker, is a personal attack, and that's what the members opposite do.

Now let's talk about real GDP. Real GDP in Manitoba this year was growing above the Canadian average. It's the fourth-highest growth in the country. Real wage increases this year are the fourth-highest in the country, growing at 3.3 percent. Youth employment rate is the fourth-best in the country. Manufacturing shipments are the third-best in the country. Private capital investment is No. 2 in the country. The only thing the member doesn't

understand is that when it comes to incompetence, it's himself who should look in the mirror.

Federal Equalization Payments Province's Dependence

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, equalization is killing us with kindness. Free money makes Manitoba's status mediocre. Not our words, not my words, these are the words of Professor Bryan Schwartz, a constitutional law professor at the University of Manitoba. After eight years in government, this is a third party analysis of this Premier's (Mr. Doer) performance and this Minister of Finance's performance.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance, since his Premier said, and I quote: I think it's important to have credible third party analysis on the budget, unquote. Can the Minister of Finance tell us what he has to say to Professor Bryan Schwartz in terms of his damning analysis of this Province's and this government's performance?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite. We should have credible third party analysis of the budget. We've had four credit rating increases by Standard and Poors, by Moody's, by the Dominion Bond Rating Service. These are the same credit rating agencies that the members opposite, when they were in government, stand behind. We've had more increases in seven years than they had in 11 years.

When it comes to third party validators, you could look at any of the banks across Canada, any of the bond rating agencies, any of the people that buy the products that we put out there in terms of the export market, and all of them say: Manitoba is the place to be, Manitoba is the place to invest, Manitoba is the place to live, Manitoba is the place to educate your young children. We have among the highest quality of life of any province in the country.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure Professor Bryan Schwartz will be more than interested in reading the answers of the Finance Minister. Neighbouring provinces have moved their economies forward and have stopped relying on Ottawa for handouts. That is not the case in Manitoba.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance why he has refused to follow the leadership of neighbouring provinces who have moved their economies ahead, and instead, this Province, this government, relies on Ottawa handouts.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we have 4 percent of the Canadian population. We have 8 percent of the national biotech activity. We are the envy of all the provinces in Canada. Manitoba's boom in biotechnology is explained by the provincial government's effort to grow the biotechnology sector. That's what third party individuals say.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, we increased the research and development tax credit by 33 percent, something the members opposite never did. We increased the manufacturing and investment tax credit from zero refundable to 50 percent refundable. We are eliminating the capital tax. We have the lowest small-business tax rate in the country. Other provinces look at us with admiration for how we're growing the economy, but making sure that all Manitobans can benefit by it, not just the trickle down from the members opposite to their broker friends.

Mr. Derkach: Despite this minister's rhetoric, he still can't explain to Manitobans why it is that Manitoba relies so heavily on free money from Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. High taxes, backdoor fees, youth leaving our province is hardly a way to build an economy.

I want to ask this Minister of Finance why he has mismanaged our economy so badly in relation to other provinces in this country and why he continues to rely on free money from Ottawa.

* (14:10)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the percentage of the budget of 20 percent in '99-00 is now just over 19 percent from equalization. It's actually, as a percentage of revenue, gone down. I would also point out that when members were in Cabinet and he was in Cabinet, Minister Stefanson and Manness all asked for a 10-province average, and they asked for all resources in, which is less than what the federal government came out with just last month.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, hydro-electric development for Manitoba is what oil and gas is for Saskatchewan and Alberta. Members opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Members opposite mothballed Limestone; we built it. We negotiated Conawapa; members opposite mothballed Conawapa. The future for Manitoba is in building hydro-electric

development for the benefit of all Manitobans. Members opposite would sell Hydro; we'll build it, Mr. Speaker.

**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
Funding for Prevention**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River Heights has the floor.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the government of the last three weeks, excluding the budget, has made individual election-spending announcements which cumulatively add up to more than \$3 billion. Of course, there has been no funding for the COLA for retired teachers or for retired health care workers.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, if there had been real action on FASD eight years ago, we might have saved some \$1.7 billion in public costs through the prevention of new cases of FASD and had plenty of money for COLAs, for retired teachers and health care workers.

Why has this government done so little to prevent FASD and why is it that this government doesn't even know, at this point, the precise incidence of FASD in Manitoba? Why is it that this government did not support Bill 203 this morning to help prevent new cases of FASD?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite had a number of issues he raised in his question or statement. Every announcement that has been made has been contained within the budget. Every one of those announcements the member opposite voted against. Also included in the budget was money we put in for the HEPP pension plan that was underfunded, and we negotiated with all the health care professionals to fund that pension plan.

Also in the budget was dealing with the unfunded liability of the teachers' pension plan that was 45 years old. We put that in the budget. We accounted for it. It was off the books. We put it on the books. The member opposite voted against COLA ability in the unfunded liability pensions that we put in the budget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the government did not address the cost-of-living adjustment. They failed to do that.

I would ask the Premier: If the minister or the Premier is so concerned about FASD, why does he

or she and their government in eight years not even have a scientific study to know the real incidence of FASD in Manitoba?

When an NDP Member of Parliament, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, tried to introduce a bill and did introduce it in Ottawa, she was not able to get it passed. This government has an opportunity to support our bill and pass it here in Manitoba. Why is the government failing to do so?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, this government has been committed to supporting people diagnosed with FASD since 1999.

On April 13, I was very proud to be joined by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh) and make yet another announcement to support FASD with a \$7.5-million announcement to provide a range of services around prevention, intervention, family support, a comprehensive spectra for strategies to deal with the issues.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, a moment ago the government was claiming Manitoba has the highest quality of life in all of Canada. This morning Grand Chief Ron Evans noted the First Nations communities in Manitoba have the lowest quality of life of First Nations communities in all of Canada, all the problem of this government.

Earlier this morning the MLA for Burrows said that the problem was that the NDP government in Manitoba is handcuffed by Ottawa. Why is it so important when we're dealing with FASD and other important issues, Bill 203, that this government lets itself be handcuffed by Ottawa?

Why is the Premier not standing up for Manitoba? Why is the Premier letting himself be handcuffed by Ottawa and providing an excuse for Ottawa instead of taking on the real problems of Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, you know, the member opposite makes a lot of noise and he brings a candle in this room. I know every member in this Chamber cares deeply about FAS and cares deeply about prevention programs. I know every person in this House, particularly those people that represent many Manitobans that have FAS, are concerned about it.

I know that we also are concerned about underweight babies and we brought that program in, the first in Canada, recommended by Fraser Mustard, and called revolutionary in terms of its approach.

You know, Mr. Speaker, none of us are perfect. The member opposite cut the social allowances for children in Aboriginal communities in the '95 budget, and the child welfare payments for Aboriginal children under his budget were less than what the provincial budget is but that didn't stop him from bringing a candle into this Chamber and feigning indignation.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Fort Garry Community Cadet Corps

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an exciting opportunity for young people in Fort Garry.

A community cadet corps program was recently established in Fort Garry and has been meeting weekly at General Byng School since January of this year. The community cadet corps was originally developed by the RCMP in order to provide students aged 10 to 17 years a place to learn discipline and goal setting.

It was modelled after the existing air and army cadet programs that operate in military settings, teach drill and leadership and promote good citizenship. The CCC couples drills and marching with sports and recreational activities which allow for fun, healthy competition, teamwork and common goal setting. During their weekly meetings, participants also have the opportunity to learn more from a variety of presenters from the community on a number of topics.

The CCC, unlike other cadet programs, is closely tied to education. Cadets must attend school full time and the corps monitors attendance and grades. Indeed, promotion within the corps is contingent on these factors. The CCC also emphasizes giving back to the community. For everything that cadets are given, including their uniform, pins and programs, they are expected to do volunteer work.

The individual corps are not created by the cadet program, but originate in the community and are partnerships between the community organizations and Winnipeg Police Service. In Fort Garry, the cadet program is delivered through a partnership between the Winnipeg Police, City of Winnipeg, Lighthouses and myself. I am pleased to say that the program is free of charge and therefore accessible to

everyone. There are currently participants from Oakenwald, Maybank and General Byng schools.

Mr. Speaker, the CCC provides youth with skills that they will need to build a positive future for themselves and their community. I'd like to congratulate all the members of the CCC on their participation and thank the adult volunteers who make the program possible. Thank you.

* (14:20)

Government's Record

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): We on this side of the House are genuinely concerned about a condition the Premier (Mr. Doer) should have checked, Mr. Speaker, his tunnel vision. Side effects for this condition include a lacklustre budget, fiscal irresponsibility and a fixation with the past. This can also lead to the unfortunate habit of blaming others for their own shortcomings and mistakes.

His government colleagues should be deeply concerned, as we are, with the Premier's litany of broken promises; for example, his claims that there is zero hallway medicine. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I'm starting to think the Premier's tunnel vision must have affected his ability to count. But, perhaps, I can help him out for just today. Seven and a half years, and still no end to hallway medicine. There are still many people in the hallways.

This obsession with the past can manifest itself in many serious ways, most notably with the continuous distortion of facts and a tendency to take credit for the same announcements over and over again.

But I have a remedy for what ails Manitobans before the Premier's tunnel vision impacts our province more than it already has, a fresh and forward-thinking new government, a Progressive Conservative government. Manitoba simply cannot afford another four years, another seven years, any more years, Mr. Speaker, of the NDP.

Again, the Premier should have that tunnel vision looked into. Perhaps we can even recommend a good spin doctor.

Moving Around Manitoba Program

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the recent launch of Moving Around Manitoba, another new and progressive program developed by this provincial NDP government.

This program encourages Manitobans to make healthy lifestyle choices and provides the information needed to make positive changes. By registering through the Moving Around Manitoba Web site starting tomorrow, participants can virtually tour Manitoba by inputting the number of kilometres of activity that they have accomplished in reaching their personal goals.

All Manitobans are invited and encouraged to register. To ensure the broadest possible participation and to help people from all walks of life track their fitness success, a wide range of light, moderate and vigorous activities can be converted into Moving Around Manitoba kilometres.

Moving Around Manitoba strengthens both mental and physical health. The program's Web site also includes techniques for managing stress and seeking support during difficult times of life. A healthy body is important, but we also know that a healthy mind is just as important. Moving Around Manitoba provides information and tips that allow each one of us to increase our quality of life and prevent future health care problems.

This interactive initiative will allow Manitobans of all ages and all abilities to benefit by keeping track of their own well-being while gaining insights on how to keep active and stay healthy for life. I encourage all members of this House and all Manitobans to get involved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2PPCLI Change of Command Parade

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I recently had the opportunity to attend the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry change of command parade in Shilo where I witnessed the transfer of command from Lieutenant-Colonel Sharpe to Lieutenant-Colonel David Corbould.

Change-of-command ceremonies mark a significant point in a battalion's history, providing both an opportunity to reflect on the events that characterized the outgoing commanding officer's tenure and a chance to think about the challenges and opportunities that await the incoming commanding officer.

Outgoing Commanding Officer Lieutenant Stu Sharpe's tenure witnessed a number of significant events in the history of 2PPCLI over the course of Stu's 34 months of command. The battalion moved from Kapyong Barracks in Winnipeg to Canadian Forces Base Shilo. In the last 14 months, 2PPCLI

was deployed to Afghanistan. They returned with seven less men in what was a sobering reminder of the dangers that exist on the battlefield.

Throughout these extreme challenges, Stu characterized his leadership with integrity and a high sense of duty. Within the next two years, 2PPCLI will again deploy to Afghanistan in what will be the largest single deployment of troops from Shilo since more than a quarter century ago. The next few months will be spent preparing for the challenges of this mission. While meeting those challenges, 2PPCLI will be led by Lieutenant-Colonel Dave Corbould whose father and grandfather both served as the commanding officers for the 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. This upcoming deployment will be his first tour of duty in Afghanistan.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Lieutenant-Colonel Dave Corbould all the best as he assumes command of the 2PPCLI. I would also like to thank Lieutenant-Colonel Stu Sharpe for his service as a commanding officer for 2PPCLI, and I wish him well in all of his future endeavours.

Lastly, I want to commend the work of the soldiers of the 2PPCLI and offer them encouragement as they prepare for their upcoming deployment. I have no doubt they will execute their duties with the professionalism and skill that we have seen in this battalion over the years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earth Day

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring the attention of this House to Earth Day, happening this weekend. Earth Day, of course, is an international day of celebration, and it is the largest global environmental event on our planet. As someone who has been an activist on environmental and other issues for nearly two decades, I am very proud to be a member of this government. We have established ourselves as not just national, but as international leaders on some of the most pressing environmental issues that our world is currently facing.

Beginning with climate change, our government was the first one of any level in our country to formally recognize the increasing and incredible importance of addressing climate change way back many, many years ago. I am pleased to see that other provinces are now following our lead and adopting many of the policies that we have brought into place.

We have also managed to become the most energy-efficient province in the country. Contrast that with the situation when we first came to office in 1999, when we were second worst.

I'm also pleased to see that Manitoba is the national leader on geothermal energy sources. My family converted our home this past summer to this very sustainable and appropriate technology. I encourage all members to spread the good word with their communities about the enormous potential of this new approach to heating and cooling our homes and businesses.

Mr. Speaker, on water, it's hard-pressed to think of another issue that would equal climate change, but water, I think, would do it. Our government was the first one in the country to ban bulk water exports from our territory and that ban stays in place along with this government. We have also become the first government in the history of the country to create a Ministry of Water Stewardship and to bring in laws protecting the quality of water at source, from source to tap.

Also pleased to see, Mr. Speaker, that our leadership on international issues such as Devils Lake continues. I would encourage all members to engage with their communities and to work together to make our world a better place. Thank you so very much.

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, before I outline the business for the day, I wonder if you could canvass the House to see if we have unanimous consent to move the committee hearings scheduled for the Human Resource Committee from 7 this evening to 4 in the afternoon—from 6 in the evening to 4 in the afternoon, the sitting to be held concurrent with the sitting of the House and the House having no quorum and no votes during that time—[interjection] No votes. [interjection] Well, it's no votes.

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House for the Standing Committee on Human Resources, which will be meeting today, which was to meet at 6 p.m. be moved to 4 p.m. and that during that time would be sitting concurrent with the House? At that time, there would be no quorum calls or votes or recorded votes. [Agreed]

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the indulgence of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that you call second reading of Bill 22, as well as debate on second reading of Bill 3.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we're going to call second reading of Bill 22, and then when we conclude with that we will resume debate on Bill 3, The Healthy Child Manitoba Act. That's for information for the House.

So now I'm going to be calling second reading on Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 22—The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Robinson), that Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lemieux: I am proud and pleased to present Bill 22 for second reading. The proposed legislation will set up three foundations to commemorate firefighters, peace officers and workers who have lost their lives while at work or in the line of duty. The foundations will be responsible for building and maintaining monuments on or near the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature to honour each group and to educate the public about the groups' very important contributions.

We believe it is important to be proactive by setting up a framework now that enables ongoing, fitting tributes to be made to our fallen workers. Bill 22, if passed, will set out the framework to establish these foundations and provide them with clear mandates. The proposed foundations are the Firefighters Memorial Foundation, the Peace Officers Memorial Foundation and the Workers Memorial Foundation.

The proposed legislation will create each foundation with the power to raise funds towards the design, placement and ongoing maintenance of the commemorative monuments. The foundations will work with the Province to ensure the placement of the monuments shows respect for the fallen workers

and complement the function and overall appearance of the grounds of the Legislature.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

With clear mandates to follow, the foundations can focus on memorializing their fallen colleagues in a manner befitting their positions and contributions to our great province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel that Bill 22 is important legislation that allows for the proper recognition of individuals who lose their lives while at work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the support of this House in having this bill passed. Thank you very much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Opposition—House Leader.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Thanks for the correction, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It's a gracious mistake.

Mr. Goertzen: I know, those are always career-limiting mistakes when it comes to the bench.

It's a pleasure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to rise in the House and to speak to Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundation. Certainly, I know that there has been discussion over the last number of months regarding this sort of monument for the many men and women who serve each and every day, of course, not just within the city of Winnipeg, but really throughout all of Manitoba, who are protecting us and our loved ones from those things that can happen, either natural or not, within our communities. I know that other provinces, other jurisdictions have led the way in having this sort of a memorial. I've had the opportunity to talk to individuals across Canada and other parliaments or in other legislatures about the memorial that they have on their grounds, and I certainly know that in discussing this with government I think all of us would say that it's a good initiative.

There are always times when certain incidents happen which bring into sharper focus than usual the dangerous work that our police officers or that our firefighters, for example, do each and every day. Certainly, we know when tragic incidents happen like the one involving Officer Strongquill not so long ago here in Manitoba, while we recognize it every day and I think while Manitobans understand it every day, it does certainly bring a sharper light on the

many dangers that police officers, for example, do face as they respond to situations.

I also want to thank this Assembly. We had at one point, not so long ago, brought forward a resolution thanking police officers, and their families of course, for the sacrifice that they make to our community. It's always important, I think, to remember that families play an important part in that. They provide the support. They provide the encouragement to those men and women who are serving as officers and leave their homes each and every day to face unknown dangers. So that resolution was agreed to by all members of this House and, certainly, I think, that that's the same sort of spirit of co-operation we'll generally see in regard to this foundation, this memorial, which will be created here at the Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course, no members of this Chamber, and certainly no members of Manitoba need a reminder of the work that our firefighters do, both full-time and part-time and volunteer firefighters. All of us were touched by the tragic incidents and loss of firefighters here in Winnipeg earlier this year, and I know there was representation from all members of the Legislature at the memorial that was held at the MTS Centre. I think all of us were touched by the unity that those men and women within the firefighters had in terms of supporting each other, and we certainly realize it. In fact, it is a special group of men and women who do that job each and every day.

We know also it's not just full-time firefighters. I know there are many part-time and volunteer firefighters throughout Manitoba. My own community or in my own region that I'm fortunate to represent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many volunteer and part-time firefighters, some of whom are family members of mine, who work on very small sort of fire detachments within their communities, but the danger that they face is no less than those who are serving full-time. I would say that probably the number of calls that they go out to and the level of intensity of the fires is similar in some of the larger communities where volunteer and part-time firefighters are serving.

So having a memorial, of course, I think, is important because it will help us to remember in between tragic incidents. Of course, all of us would hope that there would be no more tragic incidents, but, of course, I think we also know that it's inevitable because of the nature of the job either as

police officers or as firefighters. But in between those incidents, which we hope will be minimal, it is important to have a lasting monument to remember those who have fallen in the line of their work, of their duty, but also to remember those who are actively serving and the dangers that are posed there.

* (14:40)

I note as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there are other professions who every day face the dangers of their own. Paramedics, I think, are a good example of individuals who are out in the community responding to emergency situations in their own way putting their lives on the line. I have the good fortune to know well some paramedics as part of the fire and paramedic system here in the city of Winnipeg, even though they're constituents of mine. I know from what they tell me about the general nature of their work that they are very much putting their lives on the line and providing a community service here in the city of Winnipeg. Of course, there are many others who do it throughout Manitoba. I think that they, in fact, need to have special recognition as well.

I would certainly hope that the memorial will partly recognize the good work that those paramedics do each and every day in ensuring that lives are saved even as they put their own life on the line, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The appreciation that we have for all of these individuals who are within these various services, I don't think we can ever show our appreciation enough. This is certainly one way to do it, but we also know that there are others.

I would use as one example—though it is only one example—a piece of legislation, a private member's bill that's currently before this legislation, or before this Legislature, sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, regarding the ability to test for blood for those who have been out serving as Good Samaritans or as paramedics and they come into contact with an individual who is in need of help, in need of assistance. More often than we might think, those who are out there acting as either Good Samaritans or performing their profession as paramedics, for example, will come into contact with blood as part of that service. The ability to have that blood tested to ensure, for example, that it's not HIV positive, is something that other provinces have allowed for. I cite, specifically, Ontario and Alberta. They allow those paramedics or Good Samaritans to test the blood that they came into contact with in performing

their good service to ensure that, in fact, it was not HIV positive.

What that really does, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is give peace of mind to the individual Good Samaritan or paramedic, for example, so they don't have to wait for 12 months or more than 12 months to see, in fact, if they are in danger; to see, in fact, if they need to have medical intervention as a result of their work. So while, certainly, I think it's important to have this lasting monument here for firefighters and police officers, it's also important to remember that we can do other things to support those who are serving within these various professions. I would ask the government to seriously consider this particular piece of private member's legislation.

I know in speaking with paramedics throughout the province that there are other issues that they deal with. One has to do with driver's licences. I know that paramedics, for example, have to respond very quickly to certain situations when they're driving an ambulance, for example, and often it's the nature of the way they have to drive in responding to something to rush to a scene of an emergency. It's a more difficult and a more challenging driving environment, as you can appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There are special provisions in other provinces and for other workers in this province to allow for a separate licence, in effect, so that there is a licence for an individual acting as a paramedic, and then they would have their normal driver's licence so that, if, in fact, they were in an accident while responding to an emergency and having to drive in a more dangerous or more quick fashion than they normally would in their average life, it doesn't affect their normal driver's licence, because, in fact, they aren't driving in a normal circumstance. I think that is a reasonable request that paramedics have brought forward to say: We are forced by the nature of our jobs to sometimes drive in a way that we wouldn't normally if we weren't on duty. So we would like to see a special provision within our licence because, certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if somebody who is unfortunately in an accident—they're responding to an emergency—to then have their normal driver's licence affected because of that and take away their ability for employment, I think would be a disservice to all of us who rely on these paramedics.

So let's not forget, in the context of this particular memorial, that there are things that we can continue to do for those men and women who are

servicing in the various capacities to the extent that the paramedics aren't included in this act. I certainly look forward to speaking to the minister about this during committee, when this bill proceeds to committee, which, I suspect, would be relatively shortly, to ask the minister if, in fact, the paramedics are specifically included, because I would hope that because of the good work that they do they would also find a place on this memorial and a specific recognition. I think all of us would hold in its highest esteem their work as the tremendous work that firefighters and police do in our community.

But we'll have those discussions, obviously, at committee, and I certainly look forward to those, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, with those comments, I look forward to hearing the comments of my colleagues on this side of the House, as well as colleagues on all sides of the Legislature.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is of great pleasure that I congratulate the minister, and certainly look forward to speaking on Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that this proposed legislation will create the ability for these foundations to have the authority and the ability to raise funds for design and placement of very important monuments of recognition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the general community, I believe, holds firefighters, peace officers and workers in our province in high regard. I know that many times throughout our jobs and our lifetimes everyone in their capacity, in their jobs, does create a positive society. But I also know, in speaking with my neighbours and the general public, the firefighters and police officers certainly are held in high regard in our communities and in our neighbourhoods, and people do recognize the extreme dangers that firefighters and peace officers have in their day-to-day lives.

The peace officers and firefighters that work together, normally on shift work, Mr. Deputy Speaker, begin to develop a kinship and a family that is extremely close. You see it with military personnel, and you certainly see it with people that are in a dangerous occupation. At any time on a given day when a firefighter or peace officer is working on a shift, many times 12 hours in length,

for long periods of time, they have time off and days off that are a little off of other people's regular schedules, for instance, working throughout the evening and having their sleeping time during mornings and into early afternoons, and having a bit of a social gathering quite often with their colleagues and others who are firefighters and peace officers and many times military personnel develop friendships. In those friendships, you become very attached, as we all do certainly working with fellow employees in whatever job it may be, but it's much, much closer when you face danger and at times you face situations where death is very, very close.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no matter what education you have and no matter what safety precautions you take, it's still an extremely difficult position and job to be in for many of those people. Over the 20 years that I was a firefighter and paramedic, many times I saw a number of injuries very, very near death, and certainly, death of people in incidents and different calls that I had gone to.

It's very difficult to deal with in those situations. Many times you rely on each other and you rely on families of each other to get through some very difficult times.

I believe that people of Manitoba are very encouraged by this legislation to give recognition to heroes in our communities, to give recognition to people we all respect greatly, and to give the ability for families to heal in many cases and many times knowing that everyone within Manitoba certainly appreciates the value of peace officers and firefighters.

* (14:50)

The synergistic effects, not only from fire, but from many of the chemicals that firefighters and certainly police officers are involved in, and the chemicals that travel by truck, rail and by plane today, are just as dangerous and just as harmful as—but what many of us see are tragic events in fire. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hidden danger puts many cases when people's blood pressure goes from very low, to very high, to very low many times over the day. It develops a health risk for these professionals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the cumulative effects of that number of years puts at danger many of those workers, which we have addressed through legislation over the last number of years on both sides of this House and we're very much in

agreement on. I believe that this really sends a message to Manitobans. I believe that this sends a message that the 57 MLAs that are sitting in this House do hear the neighbourhood's importance of our peace officers and the importance of workers and the importance of firefighters in our communities.

The Manitoba Legislature is a jewel for Manitoba and, I believe, a gathering spot for Manitobans to come and get recognition both from people within our province and from people from outside of our province. I'm very proud of the fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our minister has chosen the Legislative grounds to have that recognition put forward for all Manitobans to come and visit not only our beautiful Legislature here, but to have these memorials dedicated and being on the grounds. I know that, if we ask any of the MLAs around the room, I don't believe this would be an issue where all of us don't respect the personnel that we're recognizing here with this legislation. I know that, when the horrific fire happened just a short time ago and we lost two very brave individuals in a fire, I believe that it just highlighted—and we heard over and over in the media and from our neighbours—just how proud we are of these individuals, the police, firefighters and, certainly, all the workers.

I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is extremely meaningful for the thousand firefighters in Winnipeg and the hundreds and thousands of firefighters throughout Manitoba and right across Canada. This is a message that's being sent nationally. I know when I was in Colorado Springs, Colorado, we had talked about such a dedication. Colorado Springs has the ability and they have monuments set up there that see thousands and thousands of visitations each year by emergency response personnel and families from across the nation.

So this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe, is very, very good legislation reflecting, I believe, Manitobans' views and, certainly, Manitobans' concerns that we address and show respect, and we show praise for people that are in these positions where normally many of us are afraid, and we see a situation we're running away from and these brave men and women are running towards. It's not an easy thing to do in many cases. I know the commitment of these individuals is being reflected, and I believe that it's being shown by these monuments.

I'm very hopeful that others, as we get up and speak about this, will reflect that they have the same feelings that I'm seeing, and I know is in each one of

our 57 constituencies. This, certainly, pays tribute to these men and women in this legislation. Thank you very much for those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon to put a few comments on the record regarding this legislation. I guess one doesn't really pay a lot of attention to events that happen a long way from home, but within a small province like Manitoba, when an event happens for a firefighter or a police officer to lose his life, it indeed impacts on all of us.

Over recent years, we have seen that that reality is indeed not just prevalent in cities, but indeed has also happened here in this province. My first chilling moment in this kind of an incident happened when Constable Strongquill was shot and killed in Russell, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I happened to, for whatever reason, just come onto the scene when events were in progress. Not only was the shock real, but, indeed, how you manage a situation like this immediately following, especially when it happens on the premises of the police officers whose responsibility it is to protect us. Because the scene had become a murder scene, it could not be used as the headquarters anymore, so the entire community, whoever was there got behind the police officers and the headquarters. The command centre was quickly set up in a community hall, a community facility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's fitting that, when people who put their lives on the line every day to ensure the safety of our communities, of property and people, it is appropriate that we recognize the dedication, the commitment and sometimes the life that is lost in this kind of line of work, as recognized by a monument and a foundation, which, indeed, is going to be a lasting memorial for those who have given of themselves in the line of duty. I know the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) was a firefighter before he joined this Legislature, and I know he only knows too well some of the tragic situations that happen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the 21 years I have been in this Legislature, from time to time I have found myself on the highway, and, because of the number of kilometres I travel, there have been numbers of occasions when I have come on to an accident where emergency personnel were on the scene. You know, the reality of what really happens in an accident or in a tragic situation really strikes home. It's with you for a long time. I can't help but think that those people who are involved in lifesaving situations themselves

take home with them some of those images and memories and some of that pain that is endured by victims and by those people who find themselves in these circumstances. That is why I related very closely to what the Member for Brandon West—the minister said in his comments that the camaraderie that you have within an organization is important because not only is it camaraderie, but, indeed, it is a way of healing in terms of relating to each other after a day's work and, perhaps, after some very tragic kinds of situations that occur in the line of work. So there is a very close tie.

As it happens, some of my former students, when I was a teacher in Russell, happen to be firefighters in the city of Winnipeg right now. After the loss of the two firefighters—as a matter of fact, they were, I forget how they call it, but they were in the same troop, if you like, as the individuals that I know from the Russell area. On the weekend, I had a chance to speak with them. They indicated to me that this is something that is still with them and they are still having difficulty getting over it. They're still healing from that event.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a society, I think we have a responsibility to recognize sometimes that ultimate sacrifice that is paid. We have a responsibility to recognize the efforts that are made to keep our communities and individuals and property safe, and this is indeed a fitting kind of legislation that I think needs to be supported.

* (15:00)

Having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is one element of it that I think needs to be added. I wasn't really paying close attention to detail in this legislation until a constituent of mine e-mailed me and asked the question, why medical emergency personnel were excluded from this legislation, because they, too, have given of themselves, and in some instances there have been some tragic accidents, if you like, or loss of life in that particular field as well. I think it would be fitting for us to see an amendment brought to this legislation that would recognize those individuals, and I would be hopeful that the government would be accepting of an amendment, in report stage or in second reading, to also recognize medical emergency personnel in this legislation as well. I'm going to be ensuring that our side of the House, at least, brings this forward, and if not, I will be speaking with government ministers and the minister responsible to ensure that that

indeed is brought forward in this part of this legislation.

So, with those few comments, I want to say that in principle I'm certainly supportive of this legislation, and I think it's appropriate that this kind of legislation and the recognition through a memorial is appropriately done in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): It is indeed a privilege to rise today to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 22, in regard to Firefighters, Peace Officers and the Workers Memorial Foundations bill that has been brought forward.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, I've served as a volunteer firefighter for a number of years serving out of Glenboro, South Cypress area of the province, and, obviously, as the member spoke, we are as firefighters quite a group, a real brotherhood, if you will. I think when an issue as significant as this comes forward, we, certainly, on this side of the House agree with the premise of this legislation going forward.

As my colleague from Russell indicated, I think the paramedics and the emergency medical technicians, those people, should also be recognized in this type of legislation. I think Manitobans will recognize that those individuals also work alongside the police and firefighters at different situations and also come into harm's way. So I think this is something that is very important, that we recognize those individuals and the role they play in protecting Manitobans as well.

Over the years, Mr. Speaker, we've had a number of our volunteer firefighters from the Glenboro community move into the professional ranks. I believe at this point in time it's about seven of those members have gone on to find work professionally full time with fire services across Canada. In fact, one of those individuals, Darcy Funk, was one of the individuals involved in the flashover incident in Winnipeg not too long ago. Luckily, for him, he was able to survive and go on and deal with the situation. Unfortunately, Captain Lessard and Captain Nichols were not as fortunate, and we certainly feel for them and their families and certainly all of the people associated with that group of firefighters.

Again, I just want to point out that the training that goes with by our firefighters in Manitoba is

recognized across North America, and I think that's a real benefit for all Manitobans quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. I just want to pay a tribute to those people that get into the fire service, those that get into the policing services and also those that take the training and get into the emergency medical side of things as well. It really does take a lot of training to be involved, to be up to date in terms of all the technologies and the methods used in terms of combating whatever situation may be addressed.

I think that's the other message we should put out there in terms of firefighting. We're not just faced with fire situations. We're also faced with vehicle accidents, hazardous materials incidents, confined space and just about any kind of rescue you can think of. So there is a lot of training that goes on, and I also want to commend the people that take the time to train the individuals that are involved in these different areas of public service.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that there has been some good legislation passed here in terms of some of the presumptive coverage for firefighters over the last few years. We're glad to see that more firefighters are now covered, and that some of the volunteer firefighters are also covered for some of those situations that they will encounter on a daily basis.

I think the other thing that the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) did raise was the fact that we don't really think about these particular individuals until we arrive in a situation where we need their services. Then I think when we're at a situation where we've called upon those resources for help, we're extremely happy when you see either the fire truck or the emergency or an ambulance, a rescue vehicle, or the police arrive on scene.

I think we, as Manitobans, come to expect that we do have some of the finest people available, some of the finest services available across this country, and we come to expect a very prompt service. I think Manitobans are given that prompt service. I think they are given a first-class service, and a lot of that goes back to the training and the diligence that those particular and those respective people put into their work, again, day after day, and month after month.

Those of us involved in the rural side, out in the country in rural areas who are volunteers, basically we're called on 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So those individuals are expected to answer the call whenever that call may come.

I think what does happen, and sometimes we forget about it, is the family of those particular individuals that are called out on those respective calls. When those particular individuals put their lives at risk, the respective spouses and family are left home wondering if those particular individuals are going to make it home safe at the end of the day or the end of the incident. So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to recognize the fact that there are not just the individuals involved, but it's the family and spouses that have quite a commitment into what these people do in their role as public servants. So I think that should be noted as being a very important aspect to what these people do.

I think all Canadians grieved, back when we heard the story in Mayerthorpe, Alberta, back in March of 2005 when those four constables with the RCMP were shot and killed while serving a warrant on that farm in rural Alberta. Constable Myrol, Constable Johnston, Constable Shiemann and Constable Gordon, those lives were taken way too early, Mr. Speaker. Those sorts of incidents highlight the need for us as society to honour individuals that risk their lives on our behalf day in, day out, and those that are called on 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say I think it's very important that we proceed with this particular bill in terms of the Firefighters Memorial Foundation, the Peace Officers Memorial Foundation and the Workers Memorial Foundation. Again, we will certainly be raising the issue in terms of the paramedics, emergency medical technicians and those sorts of people involved in this particular area of public service as well.

Just a reminder, of course, April 28 is going to be coming up fairly quickly, and that is a time when we do take and observe a National Day of Mourning to honour those who have been killed or injured in the workplace or who suffer illnesses related to their occupation. So, Mr. Speaker, I think this will be a tremendous opportunity for us as Manitobans to go one step further to recognize all those individuals in that regard.

Thank you very much for your time, Mr. Speaker. We look forward to having this particular piece of legislation move forward and, we hope, with a positive amendment from our side of the House. Thank you.

* (15:10)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure I take this opportunity to be able to add a few thoughts that I have in regard to Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act. I think that it almost goes without saying that the support of our emergency services personnel for the work that they do and the endangerment of their lives almost on a daily basis combined is so very much appreciated and valued. One of the things in thinking about the bill is that we need to ensure that we don't take these types of occupations for granted, that we do extend our appreciation.

When I look at this particular legislation, I think that it does two things. One is it recognizes the tragedy of what happens quite often in the workplace where someone, because of their line of work, passes away, and we're acknowledging how much we appreciate that they were there for us in many different ways. Another thing, Mr. Speaker, is that it acknowledges how much all of us, not only inside the Chamber but I believe outside the Chamber, recognize how important it is that we do not forget about some of the things, those accidents that do take place. There are many different heroes throughout the province.

I was at the memorial services over at the MTS Centre, and it was very touching to see so many people in attendance. In particular, you know, someone made reference to that whole teamship, how people sometimes kind of cling together and they develop. I was in the military a number of years back, and you do get somewhat of a special bonding that does take place in a number of these different types of forces. Mr. Speaker, I think that it goes again without saying that all political parties of varying stripes, not only parties that are inside this Chamber but parties that are not represented inside this Chamber, people as a whole do acknowledge and see the merits of what it is that this legislation is wanting to do.

On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, I can recall having a couple of discussions with a gentleman by the name of Jim Woodman. Jim was, I believe, a very strong advocate. He knew Alex quite well within the firefighters' association, and for many years had some battles that he had to attempt to overcome. I got the chance to meet him because he was one of our candidates, I believe it was in the '95 election, and he spoke with passion and was very proud of the fact that he was a member of the fire department here in Winnipeg and talked about some

of the dangers. I can recall seeing his widow in committee and the contributions that they made in debates and discussions while we were sitting in committee on other legislation.

So I think that we have been moving forward in certain areas in an appropriate fashion. In other areas, maybe not as quickly as we would have liked to, but at the end of the day, I do believe that we have seen significant forward progress. That progress has occurred because there is a sense of obligation of all members of this Chamber in recognizing the value of our emergency personnel in wanting to do the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe that it's also important for us to recognize injured workers that die in other occupations, because all occupations are important to the province of Manitoba. You know, there is a great deal of effort that is put in by employees of all occupations, and, unfortunately, at times, whether it's in a construction field or other non-profit—I shouldn't say non-profit—private-sector jobs, that people die on the worksite. I think that, again, it's important to recognize that fact.

You know the military—when I was over at the MTS, we were watching the memorial service for the firefighters. One of the things that came across my mind was the war in Afghanistan. Here are individuals that have again put their life on the line in order to ensure that our institutions are going to be protected and I couldn't help but think in terms of what sort of support and why it is maybe the government, whether it's the government of Canada or other local governments or the people or whomever, that we need to acknowledge those types of efforts.

I was pleased to hear that, along with the firefighters and peace officers, we're talking about the workers memorial foundation, and to have some presence on the grounds of the Legislature which commemorates the work force in the province of Manitoba where organizations or individuals might be able to provide input as to what might be appropriate to have on the Legislative grounds. As I say, I do believe that there are a number of occupations and there are a lot of people that we need to recognize and appreciate the efforts that they put in.

We were all touched because of two heroes, Mr. Speaker, not that long ago, and I think it stayed in the minds of Winnipeggers. People, not only in Winnipeg but across Canada, really paid tribute to

those two heroes. I think there are many heroes that are out there and we need to ensure that we recognize the value of those that have lost their life in the work force and I can understand and I can appreciate why. I'm one of those that really do tend to want to focus on those that have lost their lives in the line of protecting us, such as our fire people, our police people. The opposition—I think the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach)—made reference to medical people. Mr. Speaker, there are so many. I would throw into it our military, whether it's the reserve or regular forces, and the efforts that they put in. And there are others.

So I'm glad to see that the bill is here today. It would be nice to see it go to a committee and ultimately receive some sort of input from the different stakeholders that might have some more words that they would like to add to it that could potentially even give it some strength.

The Member for Russell had made reference to the fact that he might in fact be moving some sort of an amendment at third reading. So it will be interesting to see how this bill evolves through the Legislature. But, suffice to say, the principle of the bill is a very positive, and I think that most inside this Chamber will support its passage. I suspect all of us indeed will support its passage, Mr. Speaker, because I think that all parties, as I say, inside, outside the Legislature want to do what they can to express our appreciation for the men and women that are out there protecting our homes and so forth.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, we're quite prepared to ultimately see the bill go to committee. Thank you.

*(15:20)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege, as well, to stand today to put a few words on the record in regard to Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act that's come before the Legislature.

I want to say, as well, that we would support this bill in moving it forward, but I'd like to just say that it is put forth, this bill, to provide foundations be established for firefighters, a memorial foundation, a peace officers' memorial foundation and a workers' memorial foundation. I, too, would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I feel strongly that there are others who could be included in this, as the Member for Russell has indicated, the emergency medical services

personnel, paramedics, that are active every day in many of our communities.

I just want to add from the constituency of Arthur-Virden, Mr. Speaker, that there are many, many volunteer firefighters, medical personnel and police in our local regions that everyone respects, and as they do their work daily as all other citizens in their communities do, sometimes only a tragedy reminds us of the importance of the work that these people do on a daily basis for us, or until a person, as I'm sure all of us have had, constituents, have to be treated by paramedics, ambulance personnel and others, emergency services people, or have had the occasion to have firefighters come to our homes or our places of business. It's important that we recognize those who have given their lives in these kinds of circumstances in what they feel was doing their normal process of duty.

Mr. Speaker, the memorials are put forward as a tribute to the persons who gave their life in the line of duty to help others, but they are also important in that they are a lasting memorial for those who are living, for all of us, and for, particularly, the families of the individuals who have given their lives in their time of duty.

I think that as we move forward on a bill like this, I just wanted to recognize that the foundations have the power to solicit and receive donations of real property and personal property, as the act states, that they would convert or sell any of those properties into the foundations' accounts and engage in the trust companies to manage, invest those accounts. The funds are established to deposit those funds, the whole, real or personal property, and manage and invest them, and these are normal processes that would be in place, Mr. Speaker, what we would encourage in order to establish the fund and receive the donations from others that would so choose to do so.

But I think that the establishment of the foundations indicates that there would be five persons appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to represent the individuals in the cases of firefighters, peace officers and workers in regard to the particular area of jurisdiction that each memorial would be set up in. It states that there are terms of offices, those number of areas, Mr. Speaker.

I think if there's one thing that I would encourage the government to do, it's in regard to this bill coming into force. They've indicated that it's fixed by proclamation, and as a bill like this goes

forward into committee or into third reading, Mr. Speaker, once passed—and we will be supporting it—then I believe that I would encourage the government to move forward and declare that this bill be done as quickly as possible and that there be the minimal of delay, if any delay is necessary at all, in proclaiming this particular act.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, as well, that with these particular peace officers, firefighters, workers that have been indicated in this bill, the purposes are, as well, to not only raise funds but to erect and maintain monuments on or near the Legislative grounds in Manitoba here, the Legislative Building, and we would concur with that.

I think this is an important opportunity for the foundations. It's something that's very important, I think, to the public, is to educate, to provide some funds to educate the public about the contributions made by these particular individuals and their organizations as they do their work across Manitoba to make sure that their importance is never forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said earlier, these particular individuals put themselves at risk for society's sake and we must make sure that these memorials are tributes so that their efforts are never forgotten. As has been mentioned by some of my colleagues, the loss of officers in any region impacts the local communities. I represent 11 rural municipalities in Manitoba and many, many towns in southwest Manitoba, from the Peace Gardens to Kirkella on No. 1 highway. I know that each and every citizen in our constituency that I represent was concerned that even though the two deaths occurred here in the city of Winnipeg in last winter's flash that occurred, and the losses of the lives of Captain Harold Lessard and Captain Thomas Nichols, it brought home how close sometimes these types of issues can be to us as individuals.

I know our leader, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), and myself and others had the opportunity to be in the Peace Gardens at last September's 9/11 celebration honouring the dead of those who have died in the tragedies of 9/11 in New York City, Mr. Speaker. Both of these captains were in attendance that day at the Peace Gardens. We had an opportunity to speak with them, and it drove it home even more when I was able to attend the memorial ceremony in the MTS Centre here in Winnipeg, at the public memorial to both of these fine gentlemen. It can happen to anyone at any time.

Of course, these are opportunities that we would not want our friends to be lost in, or events, I should say, that we would not want to lose friends in. It reminds me, as the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) spoke of Constable Strongquill and others, that I, too, have had friends in the RCMP in Canada. I grew up with a young man by the name of Andrew Barnes [*phonetic*] from Elgin, a good friend of mine. Fortunately, though, he has retired well from the force, but gave over 20 years of his service to the RCMP and looking after law enforcement in Canada, mainly in British Columbia. He still lives there with his family today, Mr. Speaker. We're only thankful that citizens like Mr. Barnes [*phonetic*] and others throughout Canada that we grew up with, and have had the opportunity of being friends with and calling friends, have been able to have the opportunity through these kinds of memorials to remember others that might have been lost that they have worked with.

I want to just say, as well, that when the presumptive coverage came forward and was introduced in 2002 for full-time firefighters, it was an opportunity to be extended to volunteers and part-time firefighters. Our side of the House encouraged that. The government saw fit to do that in 2005. We agreed with that and pushed for it, and we're glad to see that come into being.

I know the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) that spoke earlier today from our side of the House, Mr. Speaker, as well, put forth an appreciation for Manitoba's law enforcement resolution back in 2002, I believe, as well, earlier, or 2005, pardon me, a year ago last November. This was an opportunity to just acknowledge the persons that have provided law enforcement across Canada and their importance to our efforts in keeping peace, not only in Manitoba, but other areas as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying that it's a tribute, an opportunity, a great honour, I should say, to be able to have the opportunity to speak to this bill today in honouring the peacekeepers, firefighters, workers of other areas, and to say that our side of the House would be glad to see this bill move on to committee, and look forward to being able to pass this legislation at its earliest convenience.

* (15:30)

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I am pleased to speak to Bill 22, the monument act, the purpose of which is to establish new foundations that would create tributes in the memory of peace officers,

firefighters, and workers who have lost their lives on the job.

The proposed monuments act gives three new foundations the authority to raise funds for the design, creation, placement, and ongoing maintenance of three monuments to honour each group's members. The monuments would be located on or near the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature. These projects would be awarded to groups who are dedicated to recognizing those who have died at work. This legislation would put their fundraising efforts in motion, eventually leading to new, suitable monuments to honour all fallen workers and the efforts of these people to make this a better province.

In passing, I'd like to say that I know a little bit about foundations, because I'm the president of Fred Douglas Foundation. It's a rather highfalutin name. I prefer to call myself the chairperson of Fred Douglas Foundation. It's probably the smallest foundation in Winnipeg. We have very few assets, but the proceeds, the interest, go to help make seniors' lives better at Fred Douglas Lodge and the other facilities that Fred Douglas Society owns and operates.

So I know how difficult it can be to raise money, but, I think, in this case it will be relatively easy, I would say, because it's a good cause. I think the public will rally behind it, and I don't think it'll take very long before sufficient funds have been raised, not only to erect the monument, but to keep it up in perpetuity, which, I believe, is one of the requirements.

The new foundations will work closely with the government to ensure that their eventual plans and the placement of the monuments are compatible with the surrounding area. The proposed foundations include: the Peace Officers Memorial Foundation, the Firefighters Memorial Foundation, and the Workers Memorial Foundation. I think this is entirely appropriate.

We do know that police put their lives on the line every day, and that occasionally and tragically some of them lose their lives in the line of duty. The same with firefighters who put their lives on the line every day, and as we saw in the fire in St. Boniface, tragically, two people died.

Many years ago, in my capacity as a minister, I officiated for the funeral of a firefighter. It was someone who, I believe, retired early because of illness acquired, actually, due to smoke inhalation as a firefighter, and it was before the presumptive

legislation that this government passed a couple of years ago. It was a very interesting experience, because the firefighters were there in uniform as an honour guard, including senior officers of the fire department in Winnipeg. It was very obvious that it is a fraternity—well, I guess it used to be a fraternity of brothers, but now you'd say brothers and sisters—and that they feel very close to one another because they spend a lot of time together on the job. It was a sad occasion, because this person had died, I believe, in their late 60s or early 70s, prematurely due to cancer or something that occurred as a result of their job. But it was also moving to see the solidarity of firefighters with each other.

Also, workers will be honoured with the Workers Memorial Foundation. I think this is entirely appropriate, as well. They don't wear uniforms, but, actually, many more workers die on the job than police officers and firefighters. So I'm pleased that they are part of this, as well.

In addition to raising funds, the three foundations will also promote public awareness and recognition of the positive contributions of their members who died while at work. Peace officers, firefighters, workers are dedicated heroes that are integral to our society. Recognition of their important role is ongoing, illustrated time and time again.

Most recently, these roles were celebrated when thousands came out to mourn Winnipeg's fallen firefighters, Captains Harold Lessard and Tom Nichols, this past February. I was at that memorial service, as were thousands of Winnipeggers and many others who watched it broadcast live on TV. It was certainly a very moving memorial service. It was done in a very dignified manner, and it brought tears to many, many people who were there or watching.

One of the people who was on the scene, in fact, the officer who was in charge at the scene of the tragic fire in St. Boniface, is one of my constituents. So I went for breakfast with him at Eddy's Place restaurant. He told me the story of that fire from his perspective. I learned that it could have been much more tragic than it was, had it not been for decisions that he made at the time based on his experience as a firefighter.

I know that this has taken a toll on the colleagues of the two individuals who died, not just those who are hospitalized, but all firefighters in Winnipeg. I, certainly, learned about this first-hand

and how it's taking a toll on this individual that I met with.

So the monument act contributes to paying honour to individuals and to firefighters, peace officers and workers, and contributes to public respect and support for people in these occupations. We look forward to this bill passing unanimously with support from all sides of the House.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to speak to this bill as well. Perhaps heading in the direction as the Member for Burrows, I do want to take a slightly different focus. We've heard many members this afternoon speaking, and indeed speaking very eloquently about the need to preserve the memory of firefighters and peace officers killed on the job. Certainly, I want to confine my comments today to the need also to remember workers who have lost their lives at work.

Now, I suppose, like many others in this Chamber, I do have some family history, unfortunately, on this very subject. My great-grandparents were Ukrainian immigrants who came to Winnipeg, and they lived, as many other railroad families did, in a small home on Lorette Avenue in Fort Rouge. One day, my great-grandfather headed off to work with the railway and never came home, leaving my great-grandmother who didn't speak English to raise five children on the pittance that was welfare back in the '20s in Winnipeg.

Certainly, that tragedy had an impact on my great-grandmother, on my grandmother and all of her brothers and sisters. It is something that has had a major impact on our family. I know, even in high school, I had a friend's father who was killed on the job, which, again, was a huge tragedy for their family, created great financial stresses for their family and truly was a tragedy in every sense.

So it's going to be fitting that this is one of the three monuments that we hope will come to pass with the passing of this legislation. It's important that we remember, as I've indicated, not only firefighters, not only law enforcement officials, but also everyday workers who, unfortunately, continue to lose their lives in workplace accidents.

I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, of the efforts that our Province has made to reduce the number of workers losing their lives in workplace deaths. We know there's been a reduction in the number of workers being killed on the job over the past many

years, but as we know, any worker killed on the job is too many. We certainly have to continue to do so.

I'm very pleased that our government is a supporter of SAFE Workers of Tomorrow which is an organization which is dedicated to getting into our schools to educate young people on workplace health and safety, because often, unfortunately, it is younger workers who find themselves most at risk for being killed on the job. It's a pleasure to work with the SAFE Workers of Tomorrow to try and make things safer for young workers in our province.

As well, I'm very pleased that there've been improvements to workplace health and safety legislation regulations here in the province of Manitoba. Certainly, very proud of the improvements to the workers compensation legislation to modernize those laws and provide further protections for workers.

Later this month, Mr. Speaker, of course, it is the National Day of Mourning for workers across Canada who are killed on the job. I'll be standing shoulder to shoulder, as will members of the NDP caucus, with our brothers and sisters in the labour movement to mourn those who have died and also to recommit ourselves to making sure that there are not workers killed on the job in the future. Certainly, I intend to attend that march together with my colleagues. Again, it's a solid reminder for all of us of the need to work together to protect our workers.

As I've said, others have spoken eloquently on the need to preserve the memory of peace officers, firefighters. It's certainly my honour to put some words on the record of the importance to remember workers who've been killed on the job, and also to pledge ourselves to work to make sure that that doesn't happen in future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:40)

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to put a few words on record regarding Bill 22. As my honourable colleague just mentioned, it is indeed the proper thing that we're doing to honour those who put their lives on the line for us every day. When we walk around the Legislature, we see various memorials, between the Holocaust Memorial and war memorials. It would be, I think, appropriate and just to have a memorial as well that would recognize peace officers, firefighters and workers.

As my colleague just mentioned a few minutes ago, April 28 is dedicated to workers injured on the

job, workers who die on the job. I'm very happy to state the fact that I'm sure most people know that this initiative which was put forward in Ottawa a number of years ago was put forward by Rod Murphy, who was the M.P. for the Churchill riding, which happens to be the riding in which I am also located, and in which the Flin Flon constituency is also located, Mr. Speaker.

Anything we can do for those brave men and women who on a daily basis put their lives on the line for us is indeed worthwhile and memorable. I think this is just one more way of saying thank you to let them know and let their families know that we really appreciate the difference that they make in our lives and that we appreciate those people who go forward to do the job they have to do. We shouldn't forget those brave people and, in fact, workers who are hurt on the job. That's why in this province, in this government, we try so hard to make the workplace safe because we feel that work shouldn't hurt.

So I am very happy to be able to put a few words on the record with regard to Bill 22, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased to be able to stand and speak in support of this Bill 22, the monuments act, which purpose is to establish new foundations that will create tributes in the memory of peace officers, firefighters and workers who have lost their lives on the job.

Many members have spoken today very eloquently about the need for this bill to go forward. The bill, giving people the opportunity to focus their lives after they've lost one of the members of their family in terms of being able to raise funds to be able to place a monument here at the Legislative Assembly, I think is very important. When we look at the three different groups that are going to be able to raise funds, the firefighters, the workers and the peace officers, I know many of us have the opportunity in our constituencies to work with individuals who fall in these categories, and we cannot speak enough about the value of these members to our society.

When we take a look at firefighters and peace officers, it always amazes me, if you think about it when you're driving down the street, when a fire truck or a police car comes behind you, you have to pull out of the way. We pull out of the way to make it safe so that they can move forward so that they can respond to the tragedy that is there in front of them,

whether that happens to be a fire or somebody who's injured or whether that happens to be an incident involving violence. Many of us have just recently witnessed a horrific incident of violence down in the States at Virginia Tech. I think when we take a look at the peace officers who were going into that, not necessarily knowing what it was that they were going into, we have to say how much we honour those individuals who move forward not knowing what it is that they are moving into, not knowing what it is that they're going to face when they come forward and present themselves either at the door or at a facility, may it be a university, a college or a business.

I think that we have to say how very proud we are to have these people here in our midst, and there is no other place than the Manitoba Legislature that is as important to Manitobans. So I think it's very, very fitting that this is the place where workers, firefighters, police officers, peace officers are able to erect a monument.

Many of us, when we think back to September 2001 and the two towers falling, we think back to the people who were running out from those buildings and the firefighters who were running in. I, Mr. Speaker, will always remember that image and it will stick with me forever. That's why I'm so supportive of this particular act going forward and becoming legislation here in Manitoba.

Also, in my family we have suffered the loss of a zookeeper who worked at the Assiniboine Zoo, and was a worker, and as a worker injured and did succumb to his injuries as a result of taking care of animals in the zoo. So I think, Mr. Speaker, that we need to take a look at workers and we need to be respectful of the kinds of things that they face. That's why our government has been so supportive of things like changes to safety and health legislation, putting more safety and health officers out there on the workforce so that they can inspect and take a look at some of the things that are happening out in the work force.

Mr. Speaker, I really think that these projects will help also make people aware of some of the issues that these individuals face in terms of raising funds. I do agree with the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) that having a foundation, these people probably will have no problems in terms of raising funds from the general public that will lead to suitable monuments that will honour their co-workers.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for letting me speak in favour of this motion.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to rise today to put a few words on the record on Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act. I think it's commendable that the government wants to recognize in a meaningful way the work that many of those people that put their lives on the line on a daily basis do for us, and the kind of peace they give us whether they are policemen or the workers in a memorial foundation or the firefighters. Specifically, I want to talk a little bit about the volunteer firefighters in the brigades that are prevalent in all our rural communities.

Many of those people put huge amounts of time, time of their own that they could be spending with their families, put that on the line for their communities and train day in and day out, week in and week out to ensure that they have the talents and the abilities, when a fire happens, to walk into a building, to search those buildings, to see if there are any survivors left in those buildings or whether there are any people left in those buildings. I believe it's important to note that the amount of effort put into being when volunteer fire brigades are formed in those rural communities, that we, and in this Legislature, and from time to time they give their lives as the firefighters in the city of Winnipeg just very recently did.

We also have a friend in the city of Winnipeg who is a firefighter, and his name is Wally Hergesheimer. Wally and Sue and ourselves have become good friends over the years, Sue working in our office in this building for a number of years. But she, every time the fire siren rang in this area, you know, sort of stiffened up because she knew that it might be her husband that went out there and put his life on the line for all of us. I believe that the peace officers that patrol our streets on a daily basis and nightly and ensure that most of our streets are held safe, and very often those officers also put their life on the line. Some of them don't return home to their families.

I believe this memorial foundation is certainly an indication of the honour that we will bestow on those firefighters, the peace officers and workers that also on a daily basis sometimes have to enter a very dangerous place, and sometimes they also give their

lives to ensure that the work that needs to be done is done in a meaningful way.

* (15:50)

We believe, on this side of the House, that there needs to be also some recognition of some of the changes that have been made by this government in lieu of how emergency services are provided in rural Manitoba. It was only just a year ago, almost to the day, that my wife had a very serious accident, and the call went in, the 911 call went in, and it took exactly seven minutes for the local fire brigade to come out from Letellier and help stabilize Dora on the field where she lay. Had it not been for that fire brigade and the training that they had done during the past, I believe that the situation might have turned out much differently than it did.

So I want to put on the record the tremendous appreciation we have in our family, in our community, as I believe all Manitobans would concur, that the times these people spend away from their families in training and those kinds of things serve a purpose that many of us truly don't appreciate well enough. I just want to say that had we had to wait for the ambulance that was only 11 miles away to be able to reach us and not receive services prior to that—it took 20-some-odd minutes before that ambulance got there and the local fire brigade took seven minutes. I think that's an indication of how local training and local emergency measures can act very quickly when they are allowed to.

I want to mention this because we have an ambulance in Emerson that had a trained crew of people to operate that ambulance and are not allowed to do so today. They would have been within five minutes of where the accident occurred, but they were not allowed to come out there because they were not allowed to receive the 911 call.

I think we have to sometimes as legislators really think hard when we look at putting systems in place that might serve closely knit communities and might serve well in some areas, but, when you look at sparsely populated rural areas, some of these things that work on paper don't always work well in reality. I think we need to be careful that we don't just put in place monuments to honour those who have passed, but we should see those police officers that walk the street. We should see those firefighters that walk into homes. We should see those workers who do this day in and day out as the true monuments and pillars of community support that I think we need on a daily basis. Those, in my view,

are the true monuments that we should be mindful of day in and day out.

I hope this legislation, this act, Bill 22, will recognize that in a meaningful way instead of putting up monuments of bronze or granite to remember those whose lives have been lost because I believe, when I see a policeman walking down the street, I see a life on the line. I think that is the important thing and needs to be recognized by this bill as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): I am proud to stand up in support of Bill 22, the monument act. This act is going to establish new foundations that will create tributes in the memory of peace officers, firefighters, workers who have lost their lives on the job.

Many of my colleagues have spoken about heroic acts that workers and emergency workers have demonstrated throughout time, and they will continue to do that. I think that this monument act will provide an opportunity for these three new foundations the authority to raise funds for the design, creation, placement and ongoing maintenance of the three monuments to honour each group's members.

These monuments will bring community together, help them resolve the loss of the loved ones that they've experienced, provide comfort to families and make sure that the lives that have been lost will not be forgotten, as we know that emergency workers and workers in general put their lives on the line every day when they go to work to ensure our public safety. We need to have this monument to honour their role in our communities.

I'm very excited to see that maybe it could be located at the Manitoba Legislature. It would be a welcomed monument on our grounds where hundreds and thousands of people would see it every year and pay respect to the workers who have lost their lives.

I think that, also, through this legislation, through the fundraising efforts and the sustainability of these monuments, we're going to ensure partnerships between these groups, people working together to ensure that the eventual plan of having the development of the monuments will become a reality.

As I've stated before, it's going to serve as a reminder to all of us about the heroism of many men and women throughout the province of Manitoba

who have continued to put their lives on the line. We need to ensure that they have the capacity and the authority to raise the funds to ensure that these monuments can be built, and also will be developing public awareness and recognition of the positive contributions of people who've died.

Peace officers, firefighters and workers are dedicated heroes that are integral to our society. They run into homes when they're burning. They provide support to families in times of crisis. They rescue people when there are water incidents with drowning. They're there when we need them. They're a phone call away, and we need to ensure that we give them the respect that they deserve.

We know that our province, we're very fortunate with the number of industrial and construction projects that we have. We've worked really hard as a government to make sure that workers are given the rights and also the ability to work in safe environments. We need to keep doing that, but, I think, also, the development of the monuments will support the efforts of the workers as well and be a constant reminder for all of us, but we also have to recall and remember that work shouldn't hurt and make sure that we continue to do the prevention as well as support the development of these monuments. Thank you.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, Monsieur le Président, this is just on House business.

I just wanted to inform the House, and I know that we're going into concurrent committee, I just want to inform the House that it's the government's intentions to table the Estimates sequence before the end of the day. It's our intention to not have Estimates tomorrow, which is Friday, but, depending upon the ability to distribute information, it is the government's intention to have Estimates on Monday—

Mr. Speaker: We don't sit on Friday.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the government's intention to proceed with Estimates in the order and sequence that we'll be tabling shortly on Monday. Should there be interruptions or difficulties on the Monday, we obviously will revert to bills on Monday and do the Estimates on Tuesday, but it's our intention to proceed with Estimates on Monday. I'll shortly be tabling, for all members, the Estimates sequence. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: For the information of the House, the sequence of Estimates will be tabled later. The possibility of going into Estimates could occur on Monday, or, if you don't go into Estimates, you'll go into bills on Monday. That's for the information of the House.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private members' resolution that'll be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Manitoba drainage and management programs sponsored by the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

Mr. Speaker: Okay, for the information of the House, it's been announced that the private members' resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Manitoba drainage and management programs sponsored by the honourable Member for Lakeside. That's for the information of the House.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We'll now resume debate on Bill 22. Are there any other members that wish to speak to Bill 22?

* (16:00)

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put a few words on Bill 22, the monument act. This bill, as some of my colleagues and others have spoken, is to establish the new foundation that will create tributes in the memory of peace officers, firefighters and workers who have lost their lives on the job.

Mr. Speaker, as we talk about the particular types of jobs that are risky, to sacrifice your life is not very easy for people to offer. They must have a tremendous amount of passion to deliver services that go beyond just earning your wage and doing the job. I think this is a very well thought and very worthy act that is being proposed, and I am particularly a little moved by this because there are a lot of firefighters that live in my own constituency.

It so happens that, in that tragedy of Captains Harold Lessard and Tom Nichols, tragic departure from the earth because of the accident that happened that night, a very good friend of mine, a firefighter, Murray Rougeau, was with me that night. We were

having dinner, and suddenly a phone call rang. Then he went to the washroom and came out with tears. He was very nervous, and he said, I have to leave. I asked what happened, and he said, there's something very serious that is happening, and this is maybe tragic. I could see the emotions flying, Mr. Speaker, that night.

In our minds, to say that there are people who, on the weekends, Fridays, Saturdays, when we have our own get-togethers and relaxed time, go and sacrifice their own lives, risk their own lives to save lives, which is a very honourable job, very honourable thing. There is no doubt in my mind that this is something that will be widely accepted by people honouring those people that sacrifice and give their lives to save others.

The proposed monument act gives three new foundations the authority to raise funds for design, creation, placement and ongoing maintenance of the three monuments to honour each group's members, and the proposed foundations include the Peace Officers Memorial Foundation, the Firefighters Memorial Foundation, and the Workers Memorial Foundation.

I would like to add, Mr. Speaker, the peace officers, again, go not to kill and hurt, but they go to save lives. In the process they pass, they die, and they give their lives to save others and bring peace. The same thing goes with the workers, that they risk their lives in doing, performing their job, and accidents happen. They leave the world with the dignity of their honour.

So I think it's very, very important for us as legislators to recognize and respect those, that they give their lives to save lives for other people in this society. I'm very happy and very honoured to support this particular bill. I would say that all of us should really feel very proud that this bill has come and that we are passing this. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I'm pleased to rise to add my comments to Bill 22, the monument act, Mr. Speaker, and this bill will be a recognition and will pay tribute to the memory of peace officers, firefighters and other workers who have lost their lives on the job.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this bill. I think this is an important piece of legislation. I hope all members of this Assembly will support it. I know that

Manitobans, no matter where they are in any one of the 57 constituencies of this province, share a common thread in the fact that we all respect those that serve our community, serve us in those communities. Of course, for those individuals who have lost their lives in the performance of their duties, we would like to pay respect and tribute and keep them in our memory. This particular bill will allow for that memory to occur and for that tribute to occur to these individuals.

This proposed legislation will provide for the establishment of foundations that will include the Peace Officers Memorial Foundation, the Firefighters Memorial Foundation, and the Workers Memorial Foundation. This legislation, of course—and we all know, I'm sure, or at least I hope we all recognize that a little later this month, the end of April, on the annual Day of Mourning, members of our society come together and remember those that have lost their lives at work, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this bill will go the next step in recognizing those that have lost their lives in the performance of public service, protecting society in general.

I know that just this week, I had the opportunity to do a ride-along with firefighters in this province. It was a unique experience for me in that I had a chance to sit with firefighters and also to travel to the emergency calls that the firefighters have, and to see first-hand the duties that they perform on behalf of the citizens not only of Winnipeg but, of course, all across our province.

Mr. Speaker, at that time, I had the opportunity—that was on Tuesday evening of this week—I had the opportunity to also share dinner with Mr. Ed Wiebe and Lionel Crowther and their spouses at the fire hall here in Winnipeg, as we shared dinner and talked about the horrible injuries that these two individuals sustained while they were protecting Winnipeggers during the recent fire that unfortunately claimed the lives of two other firefighters in the city of Winnipeg here.

I think it was an incredible opportunity to be able to listen first-hand to the experiences that these two surviving firefighters had as they shared their experience and, of course, shared with me some of the problems they were encountering in the recovery from their burn injuries, and the fact that it's going to take some time for them to recover physically. But I would expect and noted that there were additional concerns that they had with respect to how long it would take for them to recover from their

psychological injuries that occurred as a result of fighting that fire. Mr. Speaker, these individuals, of course, had pressure garments on their wounds and Mr. Wiebe, in particular, lost the use of his fingers in that he lost the tips of some of his fingers.

So these individuals put themselves in harm's way on a daily basis, and I think it's only fitting that we pay tribute not only to the firefighters that performed the service on behalf of all Manitobans but, of course, the peace officers and the other workers that have lost their lives in our province serving our communities.

Mr. Speaker, we have also unfortunately, as a result of that particular horrific fire, lost Captain Harold Lessard and Captain Tom Nichols. This act will, I think and hope, allow for an ongoing tribute to the memory of these individuals that have lost their lives protecting us because they did go into—as I've often said here when we debated legislation that will help firefighters in our province, that firefighters are rushing into buildings that others are leaving in a great hurry, and yet these firefighters do so knowing that they're putting themselves in harm's way to try and protect the lives and property of all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, this monument, I think it's fitting that this particular bill highlight the respect that our constituents have—and I know I've had a chance to talk with many of my constituents about firefighters and the role that they play—and my constituents believe very highly that this would be a fitting tribute to the memory of those that have given their lives in public service, and that we do this out of respect for those individuals.

* (16:10)

We have taken steps through the course of our government since coming into office in '99, introduced legislation that would provide for workers' compensation legislation protection for the expansion of those services and care for firefighters, whether they be volunteer or for professional full-time firefighting forces. We have expanded legislation to protect those particular individuals.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think this particular bill is in a partnership with those particular organizations for peace officers or firefighters or workers in our province. We have taken steps to this bill to make sure that we honour their memory, all of the fallen workers, with the efforts that these people give to make our province a better place to live.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 22, the monument act. I say, and indicate, that I am in support of this particular bill, and that the memory that it honours and the tribute that we will pay to peace officers, firefighters and workers who have lost their lives on the job. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to put a few words on this bill. A lot has been said about it but, again, I think that what we have to do is, as a society, as an institution, we have to look at the contributions people have made to create our society as we enjoy it.

So what you'd look at is you look at the long-term contribution that the firefighters, peace officers and other workers who have died or been hurt on the job while contributing to society. These are the people who put themselves in harm's way. They're the ones who walk into the fire instead of out of the fire. These are the people who go and get into the altercations, who change it and make our life safe and secure. I think that this public service is truly wonderful, and that's probably why, if you look at the firefighters, if you look at peace officers, they have one of the highest approval ratings in society as a career. They are looked up to. Many kids, young children, look at them and say this is what they want to be, because they're role models. They're models not for the kids but everyone in society.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

My brother who is a firefighter talks about it being the best job in the world because what you're doing is you're helping others each and every day. So as a person who actually had a home fire, who realized the importance of firefighters, to realize the contribution that they make and understand how devastating a fire can be to a person, how dangerous it is, how fast it can spread throughout a house. I know that we ended up having our house written off in a four-to-six-minute-long fire. It was just amazing to see the damage. These people are able to respond instantaneously, run into the fire, ensure people are safe, and that is unbelievable. I think these people are true heroes.

I also look at when I volunteered at Cranberry Portage ambulance. I look at some of the cases that we put in, where kids were hurt or auto accidents or accidents on the highway. These are dangerous situations. There is fuel out there. It's cold; it's

slippery. One year we had complete ice storm and it was horrendous driving. Cars had gone off into the ditch and people were hurt. Yet your obligation was to go out and help others. You do put yourself at risk to help others. I can remember some of those cases, and it was scary, but you did it because it was the right thing to do.

So these proposed monuments give new foundations, the authority to raise funds for design, creation, placement and ongoing maintenance of monuments to honour each group's members. More importantly, they'll be located on or near the Legislative grounds that all people can see them and enjoy them. These will then look at the contributions people make.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that when I look at my own constituency, it's a middle-class constituency. There are a lot of people who are public servants there, and there are also a lot of firefighters there. I look at what they contribute, not just during the fire, not just during an emergency, but every day because these are the scout leaders. They're the community leaders. They're the ones who organize burn fund activities, who raise funds for people in the future. These are the people who are true, true leaders in our community.

I'm proud to represent a number of people who are firefighters. I know that currently one of the injured firefighters in the last incident in St. Boniface is a constituent of mine. I know that we all wish him well as we do everyone, and I think as a society, as an institution, our goal is to make sure that we respect those people who allow us to have the safety, security and peace of mind that these professionals, these dedicated individuals, give to us every day. So as a society I say thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): I, too, am very pleased to rise to speak to this bill today. The monument act is a great act because it allows us as the people of Manitoba to be a part of creating the monuments to the peace officers, to the firefighters and to the workers.

Of course, the first hope is that everyone who goes to work in the morning or the shift at night will come home after that shift. It is with great pride as the youngest daughter of a firefighter—my father served with the firefighters in Winnipeg for 40 years, and as I was growing up it was just sort of a normal thing that my father would go to work and that he

would come home at the end of his shift. Fortunately, he did.

That is not the case for all firefighters. That is not the case for all workers and that is not the case for all peace officers. So I think it's very important that we recognize the tremendous contribution these people make. I'm very pleased that the monuments will be located within the vicinity of our provincial Legislature. I think it's only fitting that those who pay the ultimate price have the ultimate honour which is around our Legislature.

So, again, I commend this bill coming in. I'm very, very supportive of this bill coming in, and I look forward to the time when we will actually be celebrating the rising of these three monuments. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A point of order is being raised.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I apologize for interrupting my colleague from getting up. The Standing Committee on Human Resources just finished passing Bill 17, and I was wondering if there was unanimous leave to report the bill back to this House for third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A new point of order, the honourable Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): I believe, then, on House business we will be seeking unanimous leave of the House to have Bill 17 reported back to this Legislature for third reading immediately.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker: On the issue raised on the floor, negotiations shouldn't take place on the floor. House business is set by the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak). That's our standing rules of the House.

* * *

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): I am pleased to rise today in the House to put a few words on Bill 22, the monument act.

I would like to start, Mr. Speaker, by sharing a story about someone who was very important to me and somebody who I got to know quite well in the community of Gimli when I was a young man working in a store in Gimli. On a daily basis what would happen is this individual's wife would drive up with him in the passenger's seat, and he would get out of the car and come into the store, and then his wife would drive off and run some errands. Gordie who was about 40 years my senior would come into the store and he'd tell some jokes, some of them good, some of them not so good. After a while I got to know Gordie quite well, and finally I was at that stage in the relationship when I asked him, well, why is it Gordie that you don't drive? At that point, he explained to me that he was legally blind.

*(16:20)

Now, I took some perverse pleasure in this because he used to go to the bank, and I said to my sister who worked at the bank across the street, Judy, have you ever met Gordie, and she said, well, yeah, he comes in every day and says, hi, gorgeous. But, having said that, my sister does know I tell this story and she is indeed gorgeous. But a little while later, Gordie came into the store one day, and he said, I'm going to be gone for a couple of weeks, and I'll see you in a couple of weeks. I'm going to a reunion. Lo and behold, he comes back from the reunion and he was really distraught. So I said, Gordie, what's wrong? How come you're so distraught? He said, well, the person I really wanted to see at the reunion had died two weeks before the reunion took place. I said, well, of all the people that you saw at the reunion, what made this particular individual so special? That's when Gordie said to me, well, he was the guy that chewed my food for me. You see, Mr. Speaker, Gordie was a prisoner of war. He spent six years in an internment camp, and he was so malnourished that he could not feed himself.

That was a very powerful point in my life, Mr. Speaker, where I realized how important it was that I continue to pursue my studies in history and I continue to teach about the sacrifices that have been made in our country for us to enjoy the democratic freedoms that we enjoy here today.

I say this about my friend Gordie today because it's important to tell Gordie's story, but also to put it in context with the type of people that we're going to recognize in the monuments that will be constructed on or near the Legislative grounds, because it takes very special people like Gordie who made those

sacrifices during the wars for us to enjoy our freedoms, just as it takes very special people, Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis, to risk their lives to go into the houses while the fires are burning to try and save our loved ones and protect our property, very special people who risk their lives in law enforcement agencies and very special people who make a living trying to procure food; in my case, in my constituency, a number of fishers who have been lost to the lake in their efforts to procure food for us to enjoy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we recognize these individuals appropriately through these monuments and the foundations, to support these monuments in perpetuity. I'm very pleased that we've brought this bill forward and look forward to its passage. Thank you.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): When the Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth was on the surface of the earth, and he was preaching the good news, he said that no love is greater than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

These people, the policeman, the peace officer, the firefighter, the health care worker, that is their duty and obligation. That is the role that they perform in our society and it is a very meaningful role for anyone to perform. In so doing, because they face danger together, individually and collectively, they sometimes develop this collective feeling that they are a fraternity, and they are. They call it a brotherhood. There are fraternities in universities and they are also a brotherhood. We have fraternities everywhere. These fraternities develop some kind of a unity among themselves because the risk of danger to one is the risk of danger to all.

What does unity mean in the sense of the collective? It is written, if there be any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the spirit, any bowers of mercy, fulfil ye my joy and ye be likeminded. That is one meaning, having the same love, being of one accord and being of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory but in lowliness of mind. Let each esteem one another better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Now I beseech you, brethren, he said, tell the apostle of the Gentiles, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye speak the same thing and there be no division among you but ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. That's what is meant by a fraternity; that is what is

meant by brotherhood; that is what is meant by a single collectivity. In other words, when one member suffers, all the other members also suffer. If one member is honoured, all the other members rejoice with that member that was honoured. For the collective body to be one hath many members, yet all the members are really members of one another.

All are one in the ultimate objective, which is to achieve the good of society in their task, the good of everyone in our society. To do good to those who have the least and who, in social justice, are entitled to the most. Let loving kindness and selfless giving be our motivating spirit, for this is the very thing that we are earnestly yearning to do, to serve others by giving ourselves, our time, our treasures, our talents. We want to establish, in the word of the founder, a movement in the prairie, an era of justice, truth and love. Our supreme task is to make our dreams come true, to make this land, in reality, God's own country. Thank you.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to add a few words to Bill 22 and the importance of it. I believe that monuments are far more important than some people tend to think about, maybe because I've had the pleasure of working with people who have wanted monuments, for instance, just recently the peacekeepers' three-pillared monument just out on Memorial Boulevard.

The Minister of Energy, Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), and I had a good deal of input into having that bill, so we know the passion behind, and the need for, remembering the acts of people who put their lives on the line every day—people, likely firefighters, likely police, and many, many workers that think nothing of stepping into the line of fire, whichever kind of fire you wish to see. They should be acknowledged and their memory should be put up where people can see vividly. The Manitoba Legislature grounds are a perfect example. I don't know how anyone cannot appreciate the Vimy Ridge memorial we just had here in ice over the winter and how incredibly important and poignant this monument has been worldwide. It's recognizing the people, the many, many, the thousands and thousands that died protecting and helping to bring peace to us back here at home.

* (16:30)

Valour Road is another example. For years they had named the street Valour Road, and it's only been in the last couple of years that they have built now a

monument on Valour and Sargent that shows the importance of having that physical memory for people to come and honour, to remember. For goodness' sake, the Tribute Building that I spent the last eight years fighting for, I was quite horrified that people would allow that monument to our World War I veterans, they would allow it to deteriorate and hopefully disintegrate so they could maybe build a parking lot, I'm not sure. But the fact that, even back in 1920, it was a group of women that decided that our soldiers needed to be remembered, and it took them 14 years to build that monument. I think that's a good example of how important it is. It's been rejuvenated now to bring solace to many people in the community.

I guess I'm just trying to say that I agree that the proposed foundations of the Peace Officers Memorial Foundation, the Firefighters Memorial Foundation and the Workers Memorial Foundation would, should and do receive full support. Again, we can't emphasize enough, in the present, how important the work is that they do for us.

Another monument that stirs me each year is that near the 17 Wing, just off Air Force Way, is a monument dedicated to the Battle of Britain. Every year, they list off the names of the pilots and crew who died. It's their ages that never cease to amaze me and bring a tear to my eye.

I guess I'm choosing the Bruce Park Cenotaph again because I do have a lot of military in my area, but it's the whole idea of a monument to our heroes. Be they military, or be they firefighters or policemen, they deserve to be not only recognized, but recognized in perpetuity. I support this bill very, very strongly, and I am expecting we will have a unanimous passing on it.

Mr. Speaker: Any other speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 22, The Firefighters, Peace Officers and Workers Memorial Foundations Act.

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 3—The Healthy Child Manitoba Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll resume debate on second reading of Bill 3, The Healthy Child Manitoba Act,

standing in the name of the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). What is the will of the House?

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Steinbach? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure to speak to this bill, Bill 3, which actually was introduced some time ago, back in November 20, 2006.

I guess in my view here this particular piece of legislation, The Healthy Child Manitoba Act, is clearly a feel-good type of piece of legislation the government has brought forward. Basically, this bill, the intent, I believe, is just to enshrine some of the activities that have been undertaken by the Province and the government over the past number of years.

I think in general terms, Mr. Speaker, we all agree that we should do whatever we can in all aspects of, in the different departments, we should be doing what is best, in the best interests of the children in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it's pretty hard to argue about a piece of legislation that has that title and that name to it, this type of feel-good piece of legislation. We know this particular government is good at spending money at different issues. Some issues are good and worthwhile; some are not so worthwhile.

But we have issues with the government throwing money at different areas where there's no accountability. The Healthy Child organization and group spends in the area of close to \$30 million a year on different endeavours around the province of Manitoba. The part that concerns us on this side of the House is the accountability. Are we getting value for our dollars? This is a very considerable amount of money that's being invested in the province and we want to make sure that that is a worthwhile investment in terms of the children of Manitoba.

Our fear is what this particular legislation could do would be to enshrine entirely another level of bureaucracy within government. That's something that we are trying to avoid. We have seen bureaucracy balloon and develop in the health care system. I speak specifically of RHAs around the province where we have seen front-line workers, nurses, doctors being drawn off the front lines and put into the bureaucracy and the management of health care. Mr. Speaker, we, and I think along with

many Manitobans, view this as being very detrimental.

So, Mr. Speaker, the point of the matter being here is, if we are going to enshrine this piece of legislation and the Healthy Child Committee, we want to be very cognizant of the fact that this doesn't allow the bureaucracy within the department to grow out of context. Certainly, the premise of the Healthy Child is very good, where we have a number of departments coming together to administer and look after the interests of Manitobans and that's very important. But, again, in the context of, there has to be value for money. We can't just be throwing money at an issue and not, at the same time, have a way and a means to evaluate that particular program.

We talked this morning at length about FASD and some of the money that is being invested in that particular program. The unfortunate part again even about that particular program: millions of dollars going into that program, a kind of scattered approach across the province. We don't have a meaningful way for us as legislators to evaluate where that money's going. That's exactly the point that we want to make with this particular piece of legislation too, that there has to be a way for us, as legislators, to evaluate how that money is being used across the province of Manitoba. So this is certainly a major concern from where we are on our side of the House. We will certainly be looking at the details of the act. Of course, when it does get to committee, if it does down the road, we will certainly be interested in hearing what Manitobans have to say in that regard, as well.

At this point in time, the Healthy Child coalition has eight government departments. There is one executive director and one full-time staff. At this point in time, there's very little reporting back to us as legislators in terms of how well that particular system is working. So, hopefully, going forward, this particular bill, if we can make the proper changes to it, we will have the proper mechanism to evaluate the kind of money that's being invested around the province.

Again, it's all about doing what's right for the children of Manitoba. We certainly believe that health and wellness of children is a high priority. Just to highlight that, Mr. Speaker, it's quite frightening to hear some of the statistics coming forward in terms of the health and wellness of this generation that's growing up. When we hear that these particular kids may not live as long as their parents, it cries out for

us as legislators, to be at the table to make some very, very hard decisions about the future for these kids. Obviously, down the road, the decisions we make today will have implications for health care dollars down the road. So it is very important that when we look at this legislation, we're sure that we're making the right decisions because these decisions will obviously be noticed down the road. So it's very, very important that we have a hard look at legislation like this that's coming forward today.

* (16:40)

We want to ensure that the close to \$30 million that's being invested in our children and in the programs are not eaten up in bureaucracy, and consumed by staff and different organizations such as that. So, I think when we move forward on this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, we have to be very cognizant of that fact, that there has to be accountability, and there has to be some very clear results, some evidence to show the results that this investment is actually working for all Manitobans, and it will, in fact, down the road.

Some of the details in this particular legislation are very vague. We look forward to making suggestions in the future that we feel could be a very good improvement to this legislation that's being brought forward.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, that is my comments on the legislation at this point in time. We certainly look forward to hearing what other members may say and, of course, the public when this particular legislation comes to committee. Thank you very much.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, as indicated earlier, I want to table the sequence of Estimates which we hope to commence on Monday in the Chamber, room 254 and room 255, commencing with Executive Council in the Chamber, Finance in room 254 and Health in room 255, to be followed by the departments and agencies as outlined in the tabled documents.

So I'm tabling that for the information of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the sequence of Estimates has been tabled by the honourable Government House Leader for the information of all members. Now we will resume debate on Bill 3.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it's really my pleasure to stand to speak in favour of Bill 3, The Healthy Child Manitoba Act.

The purpose of this act is to formalize and establish Manitoba's nationally recognized healthy child approach to working across ministries and departments to prioritize the needs of Manitoba's children. This bill guides the development, implementation and evaluation of the Healthy Child Manitoba strategy and sets out the necessary cross-departmental structures and mechanisms in government and in the community to carry it out.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there is no single one agency, government department or even in the community that can meet all the needs of children as they grow. That's why this bill, Bill 3, is so very important. It's important because it creates a cross-government initiative that works with community partners to develop, implement and evaluate policies, programs and services to help our youngest children and our most vulnerable citizens and their families achieve their fullest potential.

When we look back to 1999 when our NDP took government, one of the priorities of this NDP government was to establish a way to put children first and foremost. We did that by establishing the Healthy Child Manitoba and Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. The mandate of this committee was to look at prevention and early intervention strategies for Manitoba children. Now they've done this in this respect looking at physical and emotional help, safety and security, learning successes, and social engagement and responsibility. The Healthy Child Manitoba strategy is directed and guided by Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet which was announced in March of 2000. Now, currently, that committee consists of eight ministers whose portfolios relate to the well-being and the health of children and adolescents.

It's really important to remember, Mr. Speaker, when we are working in the Legislative Assembly, there are many things that happen and they seem to happen without the impact of other departments. So sometimes it's very difficult to get a holistic approach happening. That's why this is so very important. Since April 2000, Manitoba has increased investments in early childhood development by over \$64 million. Now, this budget provides for more than \$48 million in new resources to improve child protection services by reducing caseload and

increased funding for foster families and children in care.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard a little bit prior to this afternoon about Healthy Baby program and how important it is to communities. This program enhances the ability of children to thrive and to be able to exist well and be well nourished while they're living in the community. This program also enhances the Positive Parenting Program and supporting parent-child coalitions. The budget makes a major investment of \$7.5 million to step up Manitoba's integrated program related to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

One of the things that we've learned from early childhood development educators and leading neuroscientists and economists is how really important the early years are and that, in supporting the early years, we can make a huge impact on our economy. It is during a child's early years that the brain is most active. It's the most connected and flexible, and it is at this time that we can have the best and the biggest impact on the life of an individual.

It's really interesting to note that by the age of three a young child's brain is apt to be more than twice as active as that of any other adult. Leading economists have shown that investments in early childhood development have really high returns, up to \$17 for every \$1 we invest. Investments in the very young pay dividends over a long period of time. They enrich the return on subsequent investments such as public education. They reduce pressure on other systems and reduce the need for costly, less effective interventions later in life and, Mr. Speaker, they contribute to the long-term economic growth of our society.

When we get things right early in a child's life we improve our ability and capacity to get things right later. It's really important, Mr. Speaker, to take note of—you know when you have a new baby, a little new one in your arms, you take a look at it and as it grows you realize just how much it changes in those first two years. When you take a look at a child who learns how to stand, who learns how to speak, what very difficult concepts those are to someone to learn. That investment that we're making right now is making a big difference in the development of children.

We know that the health and wealth of Manitoba tomorrow is directly related to the quality of our investment in early childhood development today. The best minds in Canada and around the world have

used science to conclude that children should be at the centre of public policy. Child-centred public policy needs to be flexible, dynamic and collaborative.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the things that we've been doing here in Manitoba with the creation of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. I want to speak for a moment about what the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) was talking about, whether this is money that's being put in just to work with bureaucracy and I have to say that that's not the case. This money has been working through the establishment of parent-child coalitions, the council of coalitions and an advisory committee.

Currently, there are 26 parent-child coalitions across Manitoba, one in each of the 11 rural and northern regions and one in each of the 12 community areas in Winnipeg. There are also three cultural or language based coalitions. Now, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say that it is with a very small amount of government funding that these coalitions offer an amazing range of activities that help parents work with kids doing things like focussing on parenting support, nutrition, literacy and building the capacity of communities to support healthy families.

Mr. Speaker, we know that a community-based cross-departmental approach is the best way to support children, and the proposed Healthy Child Manitoba Act strengthens these foundations. Manitoba's approach to developing child centred public policy is evidence-based and reflective of both community strengths and needs.

* (16:50)

Mr. Speaker, it is through parent-child coalitions that we've been able to offer our Healthy Baby Prenatal Benefit and this has been able to assist 4,600 women per year, including 25 percent from First Nations. We've also been able to offer Triple P parenting support programs; Families First home visiting programs; FASD services and prevention, including STOP FAS; family resource centres; teen clinics; Healthy Schools program grants; Teen Touch; mentoring programs, like grants to Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and the Roots of Empathy anti-bullying program.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, I heard just yesterday from the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) that there is information being made public that the impact of the Roots of Empathy program show up

even three years later after the program has been available for children through their schools. So that's really positive news.

It is through a combination of financial and community-based family supports that Healthy Child Manitoba works to help families and communities raise children who are healthy, safe, secure, successful at learning, and they're also socially engaged and responsible. Mr. Speaker, we often hear the phrase that it takes a village to raise a child. I would like to say that through Healthy Child Manitoba, we are doing just that.

Mr. Speaker, this Healthy Child Manitoba Act builds on our work, and it commits Manitoba to permanent, child-centred structures and mechanisms in government and community for children and for youth. Under this act, the Lieutenant-Governor will appoint all ministers whose portfolios or departments directly impact the lives of children to the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. Under this act, all coalitions and advisory committees are essential partners in the Healthy Child Manitoba strategy to promote community development and help identify, assess, and communicate local strengths and needs relating to children and families. This legislation ensures the ongoing involvement of parent-child coalitions, and it formally establishes a provincial Healthy Child Advisory Committee.

I know the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) was speaking about whether or not this is a success, and I must say, Mr. Speaker, that this program is recognized nationally, and it is considered a huge success.

Under this act, the Healthy Child Manitoba Office must provide a report to the public on the status of Manitoba children in relation to achieving the outcomes of the strategy. This report must be provided at least once every five years, and it's envisioned to follow in the footsteps of the health of Manitoba's children. Released in March 1995, commonly referred to as the Postl report after Dr. Brian Postl who chaired the committee.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's really important to see, too, that The Healthy Child Manitoba Act facilitates effective cross-sectoral information collection, use disclosure analysis, and reporting by the Healthy Child Manitoba Office.

Mr. Speaker, we have had some amazing results. We've had some amazing people come out and talk about the success of this program.

It is by breaking down government and community silos and better connecting the dots regarding our children, while still protecting individual privacy, that we can increase policy coherence and co-ordination, reduce program fragmentation and duplication, evaluate cross-sectoral impacts, and make better choices regarding limited public resources.

But, most important of all, Mr. Speaker, it is through this act that we can ensure that Manitoba children have positive outcomes. The Healthy Child Manitoba Act strengthens the foundation that our government has worked so hard at to establish healthy child development.

Mr. Speaker, as a graduate of the Bachelor of Physical Education program, I must speak for a moment about the importance of children and the importance of childhood development. One of the things that I did do, while I was taking physical education, was that I focussed on young children. You had an opportunity to learn about movement education, gymnastics, aquatics, and how important those were—movement, in the life, and how important they were to make sure that children grew healthy.

This program does that, Mr. Speaker. The Healthy Child Manitoba Act is an important next step in the long-term agenda of our province. Through enabling this legislation, Manitoba will continue to be recognized internationally as a leader in putting children and families first. But, more importantly, Manitoba will be in a better position to determine the right policy mix, supports, and investment for children and families and, ultimately, and most importantly, improve outcomes for children in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke just a moment ago about some of the endorsements that we've had, and I was really pleased in April 2006 to be able to join with some of the other members of this Legislative Assembly when Charles Coffey, who is the executive VP of government affairs and business development for the RBC Financial Group and Rob Gruenwald, research economist from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, spoke in Winnipeg to support the economic argument for investing in early childhood development. They voiced their support for the Healthy Child Manitoba partnership approach.

You know, when you have an economist, somebody from the RBC bank come to speak about the investment in children and the impact that has on

our economy, I think that's really quite a statement. Mr. Coffey stated that the future economic well-being and growth of countries rests in very small hands. Of course, we're speaking of children's hands. An investment in children strengthens the very fabric of our workplace, our societies and our economies. We must make smart investments in children, in early economic development and in care to ensure a competitive workplace and economy.

Mr. Speaker, I know that many people here in the Legislative Assembly are aware of some of the things that have been happening in the Healthy Child Initiative and with the creation of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. Some of those things that have happened is that we have invested, since the creation of this initiative in 2000, an amazing amount of over \$153 million. The Healthy Child budget was just over \$6 million in 2000. In budget 2006, we brought this funding level to over \$25 million.

Mr. Speaker, I know that in my community the Fort Garry community network is very well-respected. It has been able to offer a huge amount of programs for people, programs in my constituency, including nursery school programs, early literacy programs. It also assists with the Lighthouses program that's happening in Fort Garry.

We know it's really important for women to receive effective prenatal care. Mr. Speaker, 26,771 women have received the prenatal benefits since its introduction in 2000. That is approximately 4,500 women a year who have received this benefit.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that I have spoken about the importance of young children to our economy, but not just to our economy to the future of our province. We have to take a look at that, and we have to say that, as many of the members here in this Legislative Assembly know, children are our future, and we need to invest in that future. Between 2000 and 2004, 3,725 families have received weekly home visits through the Baby First, and over 1,210 families have participated in the Early Start program.

Mr. Speaker, I think that many of us know that the caring that a nurse and a home visit can provide is just amazing to those families who receive this benefit. Having someone come in and give you support in terms of working with your child and helping to overcome some of those obstacles in terms of how you relate with your child, I think that has really been an amazing benefit of this program.

Mr. Speaker, in 2004 the Baby First and the Early Start were integrated into the Families First program. Since then, over 4,636 families have received home visits through the Families First programming.

Mr. Speaker, it is with the 300 percent increase in the evidence-based programming aimed at giving Manitoba's children the best possible start that our government is able to stand here and say that we are investing in children; we are investing in families; we are investing in the province of Manitoba to ensure that we have a healthy, strong future.

I really want to congratulate our government on this initiative. I am very pleased to see this move

forward. I think it's a very positive step for our province that we're ensuring that the economic well-being and the growth of this province is in good hands. They may be small hands right now, Mr. Speaker; they will be big hands in the future. They will strengthen our workplace. They will strengthen our society and they will strengthen our economy. It's with those small hands that we will be able to grow a very strong Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the debate will remain open.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 19, 2007

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