

Spring Session Wrap up

Report from the Legislature

Liberals lead the way with new ideas

NDP follow Liberal lead

The Phosphorus Bill

Liberal Leader Dr. Jon Gerrard introduced the first ever 'dishwasher' bill in Canada, *The Phosphorus-Free Dishwashing Detergent Act*, on November 21, 2006. At the time, the NDP called this a 'mere dishwasher bill' but a year later on November 29, 2007 introduced a watered-down bill following our lead.

The NDP bill does half the work in twice the time but is a step in the right direction which can only be attributed to ongoing pressure from the Manitoba Liberals.

The NDP is trying to rewrite history by claiming they introduced the first in Canada phosphorus legislation but despite the giant billboards, TV commercials and full page ads they can't change the facts – Manitoba Liberals are first on the environment and were first on phosphorus legislation.

Bill to end smoking in cars with children

In April, Inkster MLA Kevin Lamoureux introduced a progressive bill dealing with the health of children which calls for a ban on smoking in vehicles when a child under the age of 12 is present.

The government said they preferred an educational approach rather than a legislative one and did not support the bill.

The Premier was voted "Jerk of the Week" by the Winnipeg Sun for not supporting this bill.

Less than a week after the bill failed to pass second reading because of a lack of NDP support, the Premier announced that the government was going to implement a smoking ban in cars with children however no date was announced. Score a second victory for the Liberals!

The Personal Health Information Amendment (PHIA)

Dr. Gerrard has on many occasions introduced a bill that would enable patients in hospitals and personal care homes to access information about their own health within 24 hours, provided that it is readily available.

The government on an equal number of occasions has denied the passage of this bill first saying that it could not be done and then claiming that patients were already receiving 24 hour access to their health information.

However, a Freedom of Information request (FIPPA) for a list of hospitals with this policy said that there was no such policy existed to provide access within 24 hours

In September, the government has said it will amend their own bill to ensure that patients receive access to their health records within 24 hours. Score a third victory for Manitoba Liberals.

LIBERALS LEAD THE WAY

Liberals are first on the environment

Liberal bill to ban plastic bags has received national attention and is gaining support and momentum in Manitoba.

Liberals put children first

Kevin Lamoureux introduced a bill that would prohibit anyone from selling or serving a beverage containing more than 0.5% alcohol without a warning about birth defects caused by consuming alcohol during pregnancy. The practice of warning labels have decreased the incidence of FASD in other jurisdictions.

Two forms of warning are required:

- o warning labels on bottles, cans and other sealed containers of alcoholic beverages, unless they are sold by the case or carton;
- o warning signs posted in places where alcoholic beverages are sold or served.



Liberal also introduced bills to make bike helmets and booster seats mandatory and to have standardized milk prices across the province. High milk prices in northern communities contribute to negative health outcomes including severe dental problems for children.



Liberals—The voice of health care

A Liberal bill, The Apology Act, came to effect on February 6, 2008. The Apology Act gives medical practitioners the ability to apologize for medical errors without the 'I'm sorry' being used in a court of law as an admission or guilt or legal liability.

Liberal introduced a bill to bring accountability in health care and a second bill that establishes the right of all Manitobans to have timely access to quality health care and to be fully informed as to their medical situation. This Bill provides for legal recourse if quality health care is not provided in a timely fashion.

Liberal bill to cut poverty in half

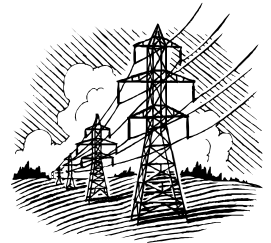
Liberal introduced a bill which aims to cut poverty in half in four years requiring the government to table an annual report with a fully detailed plan on how they will combat poverty.

Hot Topic—Bipole III

While the NDP and Tories have been beating each other up on East versus West hydro transmission line. Liberal have recognized that the underwater option, up the centre and under Lake Winnipeg, is best. We have become champions of the underwater route and passed a resolution at the recent AGM to support the underwater option.

There are several reasons why Manitoba Liberal see the line down the centre of Lake Winnipeg as the best choice:

- 1) It is less expensive, by several hundred million dollars, than the NDP west side choice.
- 2) It is the most secure compared to the west or east side options.
- 3) The environmental impact of the line down the centre of Lake Winnipeg is much less intense than either the west or east side lines.
- 4) A properly installed under water line will not need any maintenance for its entire lifespan, 50 to 100 years.
- 5) The line down the centre of Lake Winnipeg is the shortest of all the three lines.



Broken promises and bad policy

The government **broke two major promises** that they campaigned on.

They went back on their promise to have a balanced budget by introducing a weak “balanced budget” bill, Bill 38. Bill 38 no longer requires the government to balance the budget annually.

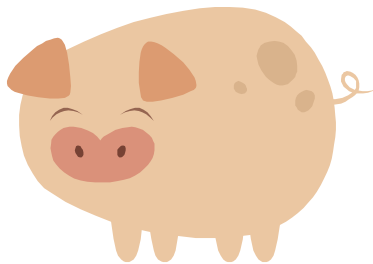
They also broke their vote getting promise to extend the tuition freeze by announcing that the freeze will be lifted in 2009.

The government followed up its broken promises by introducing several badly thought out pieces of legislation which had the public lining up to oppose.

This is what the Liberal Leader had to say about these bills:

Bill 15—The Climate Change Bill

“Manitoba Liberals have called for greenhouse gas targets for years now, but the Premier’s targets are weak and his plan of reporting greenhouse gas emissions once in 2010, once in 2012, once in 2016 and then once every fourth year, is inadequate,” Dr. Gerrard said. “Manitobans need regular tracking to ensure that the Premier’s plan for climate change is working, and if the Premier’s plan is as good as the news releases claim, then he should have no problem in reporting emission levels on a quarterly basis.”



Bill 17—The Hog Moratorium

“Moratoriums are generally ineffective when it comes to regulating industries and is bad public policy,” Dr. Gerrard said. “Between 50 and 75 percent of hog producers are now injecting manure directly into the soil to ensure that phosphorus run-off does not occur and this has greatly reduced odour issues. We need to expand environmentally sound practices rather than put the industry in a straight jacket.”

Bill 37—The Elections Reform Act

“We have called for fixed election dates for some time now and are happy that the government has come on side,” Dr. Gerrard said. “With increased financial reporting it is reasonable to have the \$1.25 given to parties however the cap should be lower to make it more equitable. The extra money should help with day to day operations and not be used as an election war chest.”

Note:

The Tories tried to take credit for changes to Bill 37, but in reality it was Liberals, particularly Kevin Lamoureux, who were most effective in getting the NDP to make changes. Kevin Lamoureux has led the call for set election dates and was instrumental in getting the government to lift the restrictions on MLA mail-outs.

The Tories congratulated themselves for filibustering, but in the process angered many presenters. Many people had to wait much longer to present, either because of poor NDP management of the committees, or unnecessary Tory interruptions.

Big events

As much as possible we try to involve Liberals in the work we do at the Manitoba Legislature. Lately we have expanded our news conferences to include Liberals, advocacy groups and interested individuals to gain support and build awareness for our bills.

To mark the Apology Act becoming law, on February 6, 2008, over 30 people—including health care and law professionals attended a “Lunch and Learn” event to learn about the effects of the new legislation on their practice.

This event received national attention with coverage on a Quebec radio station and an article in the National Review of Medicine.

On June 3, 2008 Liberal Bill 233 – *The Jordan’s Principle Implementation Act* reached second reading and was debated in the chamber before a crowd of 50 plus supporters.

Prior to the second reading a panel discussion held to broaden understanding and gain support for this first-in-Canada bill which puts the needs of children first.

The panel discussion was attended by many individuals from the First Nation Community including Southern Grand Chief Morris Swan Shannacappo, Keewatin Tribal Council Grand Chief Arnold Ouskan, MKO Grand Chief Sydney Garrioch and former AMC Grand Chief Dennis White Bird.

The panelists included Cindy Blackstock the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Norway House Councilor Mike Muswagon, Ellana Freisen—an occupational therapist working with special needs children—and Doreen Dumas, President of the First Nations Disability Association of Manitoba.

Sadly, the bill did not receive government support however Liberal MP Tina Keeper recently introduced a bill modeled after Bill 233 at the federal level, and the momentum for implementing Jordan’s Principle continues to build.



Raising the issues

Liberals were the first to bring media attention to the following issues:

- The severe crime situation in Leaf Rapids
- The Aboriginal Lost Boys and the plight of Sam McGillivray
- The Fisher Bay Provincial Park Reserve
- The high incidence of cancer in Flin Flon

