



First Session — Thirty-Fourth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

37 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fourth Legislature**

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	LIBERAL
ANGUS, John	St. Norbert	LIBERAL
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BURRELL, Parker	Swan River	PC
CARR, James	Fort Rouge	LIBERAL
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	LIBERAL
CHARLES, Gwen	Selkirk	LIBERAL
CHEEMA, Gulzar	Kildonan	LIBERAL
CHORNOPYSKI, William	Burrows	LIBERAL
CONNERY, Edward Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
COWAN, Jay	Churchill	NDP
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose du Lac	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James Hon.	Arthur	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Emerson	PC
DRIEDGER, Herold, L.	Niakwa	LIBERAL
DUCHARME, Gerald, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	LIBERAL
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Laurie	Fort Garry	LIBERAL
EVANS, Leonard	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen Hon.	Virden	PC
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	LIBERAL
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	PC
GRAY, Avis	Ellice	LIBERAL
HAMMOND, Gerrie	Kirkfield Park	PC
HARAPIAK, Harry	The Pas	NDP
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	NDP
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HEMPHILL, Maureen	Logan	NDP
KOZAK, Richard, J.	Transcona	LIBERAL
LAMOUREUX, Kevin, M.	Inkster	LIBERAL
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANDRAKE, Ed	Assiniboia	LIBERAL
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
McCRAE, James Hon.	Brandon West	PC
MINENKO, Mark	Seven Oaks	LIBERAL
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
OLESON, Charlotte Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ORCHARD, Donald Hon.	Pembina	PC
PANKRATZ, Helmut	La Verendrye	PC
PATTERSON, Allan	Radisson	LIBERAL
PENNER, Jack, Hon.	Rhineland	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	PC
ROCH, Gilles	Springfield	PC
ROSE, Bob	St. Vital	LIBERAL
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
TAYLOR, Harold	Wolseley	LIBERAL
URUSKI, Bill	Interlake	NDP
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
YEO, Iva	Sturgeon Creek	LIBERAL

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, August 26, 1988.

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Municipal Affairs): I would like to table the Supplementary Information for Municipal Affairs.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Before proceeding to oral questions, we have in our gallery this morning 25 Girl Scouts visiting from Bismarck, North Dakota, under the direction of Kate Elkema. On behalf of the entire Legislature, we would like to welcome you here this morning.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Mr. Speaker: I also have a statement for the House here this morning. As Members know, a Legislative Internship Program has been in operation in this Legislative Assembly since 1985.

Each year, six interns are selected. This year, two will be assigned to each of the three caucuses. The term of employment is for 12 months.

During their term, interns perform a variety of research and other tasks for private Members, as distinct from Ministers; participate in a series of academic seminars on the political process in Manitoba; and prepare an in-depth research paper on some aspect of the legislative process.

Successful applicants for the program are chosen on the basis of their academic achievement and potential; personal qualities such as maturity, responsibility, judgment, tact and discretion; and a demonstrated interest in the legislative process.

I would like to take this opportunity to express to the 1987-88 interns who will soon complete their assignments, on behalf of the many Members whom they have assisted, the sincere thanks of this Legislative Assembly and best wishes in their future endeavours.

* (1005)

My main purpose today is to announce that six young people have been selected to serve as Manitoba's 1988-89 legislative interns and that they will begin their assignments in September.

Working with the Government caucus will be Mr. Brent Kroeker from the University of Manitoba and Ms. Lisa Daher from the University of Manitoba; and working with the caucus of the Official Opposition will be Mr. Jeff McLaren of Carleton University and Ms. Shelly Cory

of Brandon University; and working with the caucus of the Second Opposition Party will be Ms. Shauna Martin of the University of Manitoba and Mr. Jim Thompson of Brandon University.

Brief biographies of the newly-appointed interns and an information sheet on the program are attached to my statement, copies of which are being distributed to all Members.

I know that you will join me in welcoming the new interns when they take up their new appointments.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Laboratory Centre for Disease Control Site

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

The federal Government, Mr. Speaker, is preparing to choose the site of the proposed laboratory centre for disease control. A blue-ribbon committee and advisory panel has selected the site. They believe it should be next to the Health Sciences Centre so that it can work closely with the physicians in that centre as well as with the University of Manitoba Medical School.

Regrettably, however, it has been confirmed that the Tory Member of Parliament for St. Boniface, joined by others of the Tory caucus, is flying in the face of that judgment. He is calling for the centre to be located at the fringe of his particular federal riding.

I ask the First Minister (Mr. Filmon): Has this Government given any indication to Ottawa as to where they would like to see the site located?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, to begin with of course, the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) full well knows that was a common practice of the former Liberal administration. Your friend, Lloyd Axworthy, used to place all sorts of federal initiatives within the federal constituency of Winnipeg-Fort Garry. He used to bend over backwards to take things from all over the city and the Province of Manitoba, and make sure that they were all located within the constituency of the federal Winnipeg-Fort Garry, to the extent that he took so much away from his colleague, Mr. Bockstael, the Member for St. Boniface, that he was defeated in the 1984 election. So she knows full well about how individual Members of Parliament work very hard for their constituents to try and place federal initiatives in their constituency.

I would say that we have taken a very strong position with the federal Government, and that is that the disease control lab ought to be built in Manitoba. We think that is a tremendous accomplishment for Manitoba. It builds on the medical infrastructure, on the support that we are building for medical technology, for medical

manufacturing and all of those things. We are delighted that the federal Government has selected Manitoba as the location for that lab.

* (1010)

Mrs. Carstairs: I can only assume from the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) response that they have not made any contact with the federal Government about the location of this site. Will this First Minister, knowing that Mr. Duguay is fighting for his political life, ask the federal Minister of Health to make sure that this site is placed in the most reasoned academic setting for this particular facility.

Mr. Filmon: I can tell you that my colleagues have been meeting with federal Ministers, federal officials and representatives to ensure that we keep on track the federal commitment to locate this urology lab in Manitoba. As I am sure the Member knows and I am sure she may be unhappy with the fact that Manitoba has been chosen as the site and that the federal Government is making this major investment in Manitoba. I know that her colleagues have questioned whether or not there is a sincerity on the part of the federal Government. Her federal colleague, Mr. Axworthy, suggested that maybe this was a promise that would not be delivered upon.

We know that it is important to have this promise delivered upon. We continue to meet. My colleague, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), has met with various people who are a part of the decision to locate that lab here. He is aware of the issues and the concerns surrounding that. He, on behalf of the Government of Manitoba, is ensuring that everything possible is being done to make sure that lab is located in Manitoba for the benefit of Manitobans.

Mrs. Carstairs: There is no question that the lab is going to be located, unless of course the Government has additional information. We all congratulated the federal Government in the location of the lab last December.

What we want to do is ensure that it is placed in Manitoba and in Winnipeg at a site in which academic and technological information can best be achieved for the betterment not only of the people of this province but all of Canada. Will the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) meet with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and put on the record, with the federal Minister of Health, that the site of this facility should be the one chosen by the committee, chosen on the best interests of the intellectual medical environment community in the Province of Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, in all of our discussions with the federal Government, we have taken the position that the lab should be located in the place that is the best place for that lab to be located. That is having regard to all of the issues, including the views of the medical establishment in Manitoba, including the views of those people who will be the ones who work with the lab, those people who have the background and the knowledge of the cooperative and the

complementary supports and facilities in Manitoba. We want the decision to be made on the merits of what is the best location.

That of course is why a Blue Ribbon Committee was set up, and that of course is why various officials from the University of Manitoba, from the federal Health Department and all of those areas have gone into the investigation to ensure that they chose the best possible site. We want to ensure that lab, firstly, is located in Manitoba and, secondly, is located on the most appropriate site. That has been our position throughout the discussions.

PCBs Safety and Storage

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): With a question to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Connery). The last few days in this House, Members on this side have repeatedly urged the Minister to take corrective action with regard to a boxcar containing PCBs in the North Transcona Yards. While we acknowledged that there are jurisdictional problems, there are still things which can be done to ensure the safety and protection of the people of this city. I ask the Minister: Is he now prepared to deal with the inadequacy of the approach which is now being used, and will he move to establish stricter controls on PCBs and their storage in the Province of Manitoba.

* (1015)

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister of Environment and Workplace Safety and Health): Mr. Speaker, there is an established protocol for the handling of PCBs. There is a site-specific list of all holdings of PCBs in Manitoba. My department has assured me that all sites are safe. To double ensure that all sites are safe, I have ordered our staff to review every site that there is.

Some Honourable Members: Hear! Hear!

Mr. Connery: We are also taking a second look at that particular site to ensure that, if there are other protective measures needed, they will be done. We are not going to leave the people of Manitoba in jeopardy because of an unsafe site.

Mrs. Carstairs: We welcome those comments from the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Connery). Mr. Speaker, the safety of the site in Quebec was also not questioned. Will this Government come up with new rules and regulations which are stricter than those enforced by the federal Government in order to ensure the protection at all sites here in the Province of Manitoba?

Mr. Connery: Yes. This afternoon, in fact, I am going to the Manitoba Hydro site where PCBs are stored. I want to have a first-hand look at what is called the state-of-the-art storage. I will be inspecting other sites personally, just to make sure that I know personally what those sites are like, and are they safe. Mr. Speaker, we will be ensuring that these sites are safe.

As you know, there is no safe way, there is no known way today to dispose of PCBs, the high-density PCBs.

As I pointed out yesterday, our Waste Management Corporation and Manitoba Hydro are working on a process to do this. As soon as we have a process, we can dispose of those high-density PCBs.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, again we welcome that response from the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Connery).

There is a drought here. Grass is very dry. Would the Minister of the Environment, in light of the very progressive statements he is making today, get in touch with the CPR at the North Transcona site and ask them to ensure that there is more protection so that the boxcar is enclosed and the wooden bottom of that boxcar is not subject to brush fire?

Mr. Connery: . . . in talking to the CP and ask them if they would do more measures. As you know, Environment Canada has inspected the site, has inspected the car and has ensured us that it is safe. But if more concerns are raised and if additional protective measures are required, I would have no problem talking to CP, and I would ask all Members to once again be environmentalists. We had a report of a car leaking on Wilkes Avenue this morning by somebody who went by. Our staff is out there investigating.

Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about these things and, if the press would like to come to a site in Weston, there is a car there that apparently has PCBs. Our staff did cover it, inspected it. It is considered safe by Environment Canada, but I am going to view that site this afternoon myself. If anybody in the press wants to come along, I will be pleased to have them.

* (1020)

Foster Care Funding

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): I again have some questions on a serious matter. I regret having to raise such a serious matter on such a joyous occasion as the wedding day of our beloved Leader, the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer). It is obvious all Members of this House join with the NDP caucus in wishing the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) and his wife to be, Ginny Devine, the best today and for years and years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for indulging me in that.

I have a question for the Minister of Community Services. Given that we are another day closer to the moratorium scheduled for next Thursday in the foster care placement situation; given that moratorium, if it takes place, will only put children at risk, will only affect the lives and welfare and well-being of children in our society; given that the Minister yesterday indicated a willingness to carry on with discussions but that we are at an obvious impasse, could the Minister indicate today if she has, over the course of overnight since yesterday's Question Period, contacted the Manitoba Parents Foster Association; has she made any arrangements to set up a meeting; has she put any new position on the table?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Community Services): Mr. Speaker, yes, and I thank the Member for the question. We are all concerned. None of us, no one I am sure in this Chamber or anywhere in Manitoba wants a moratorium on child and foster care. I have directed my staff to contact the Foster Parents Association and call them to a meeting on Monday, at which time we will discuss our position and try to come to some grips with the problem.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: All of us in this House I am sure are delighted to hear that some meeting has been set up to carry on with discussions.

My question to the Minister of Community Services—and I paraphrase this by saying I am not attempting to negotiate in public—would be to ask her if, given that the Manitoba Foster Parents Association has indicated a willingness to sit down and consider a compromise position, has she considered putting a small increase on the table to show some good faith, to indicate that she would be willing to get things moving and to break the impasse with respect to the longer-term question of appropriate rate structure for foster parents in the Province of Manitoba?

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, to the Member. Every possible aspect of this is being considered. Many, many things are being considered and I think she, herself, said it in her question, we should not be negotiating in public. I was at a meeting with the Foster Parents Association and we will be discussing all possible ways of solving the problem.

Social Assistance Special Needs Allowance

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): I have another question to the Minister in her capacity as Minister responsible for Employment Services and Economic Security, and again it relates to the serious situation, and potentially risky situation facing children in our society. Today we learned that the Government has decided not to proceed with a special allowance for books and clothing for children of welfare recipients. Could the Minister indicate to this House whether or not she is prepared to reverse that decision and put back in place a lump sum of money to help welfare recipients, to help parents with children in great need to equip themselves for the winter in terms of purchasing clothing and to get ready for school with the purchase of books?

* (1025)

Mrs. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Community Services): Thank you to the Member for raising that question. Many people have raised it with me and my staff on the telephone. Last year, as the Member will recall, the then Minister of Employment Services and Economic Security put in place a one-time-only—I emphasize one time only—grant for this purpose. There is no intention I do believe of the former Government doing this. It was said at the time it was a one-time-only grant.

Now, earlier this summer I directed staff in the field to tell welfare recipients that they could access their special needs allowance for school books and other school supplies. The staff were directed to indicate to people that this would be available for that purpose. When the Member speaks of clothing, there is a clothing allowance in the social assistance structure already.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: I would like to inform the Minister that was put in place as a first-time arrangement in response to a very urgent and pressing problem facing the children of parents on social assistance. Given that workers in the field are telling welfare mothers, welfare recipients, who are in need of this money to take that money that they need for book supplies and for winter clothing out of their food allowance, given the fact that that situation is just not acceptable in terms of the kind of society we live in—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. Will the Honourable Member kindly place her question.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: —my question to the Minister is, given the seriousness of this situation, will she consider going to her colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), and suggesting that a certain percentage of the \$5 million break to CPR, because of the change with respect to the locomotive fuel tax, will be put in the direction of welfare recipients of children in need of book supplies and winter clothing?

Mrs. Oleson: I would remind the Member that to say that this was a first-time grant is ridiculous. It was a one-time-only grant. The former Minister will tell you that, I am sure, if you ask him. It was a one-time grant to assist people last year. There is an allowance in the social allowance structure for clothing. I seem to recall a period of time, when the Member's Government were in power, we had a special clothing drive for the needy, so I do not think the Member needs to lecture us on care of children. The welfare recipients are not being asked to take money from their food allowance. I said earlier, and I earlier answered, that they be allowed to access the special needs allowance for books and school supplies.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We are experiencing technical difficulties.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: As you all know, we cannot hear through the earpieces, so therefore I would ask all of the Members to just try and keep it down because neither one of us can hear anything. I apologize through this mike. I understand it is being recorded through Hansard.

PCBs Safety and Storage Public Inquiry

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour and the Environment (Mr. Connery). Earlier this week a wag in private conversation said to me, "Harold, do you know what PCB stands for?" I went to answer and give a technical response. It stands for Progressive Conservative Bumbling.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

* (1030)

Mr. Speaker, there is insufficient knowledge about PCBs in Manitoba and there is insufficient information exchange between Governments in dealing with them. Will this Minister institute an inquiry into the way PCBs are handled in Manitoba so that the residents of this province are assured of their safety from an environmental disaster?

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister of Environment and Workplace Safety and Health): It seems to be the year of inquiries. If we submitted to every inquiry, we would be doing nothing else. Our department is in consultation with Environment Canada, continuously looking at it. I am going to be doing some on-site investigations personally. I am not satisfied that everything is right myself. I have been informed by my staff that it is, but I want to look at it personally. After these personal investigations, if I feel that there is a hazard to the people of Manitoba and an inquiry is an appropriate vehicle, I would be most pleased to do so.

PCBs Safety and Storage Locations

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): I will follow on with that response from the Minister. This Government shares a decisive disaster response role with Environment Canada. Supposedly the Minister's staff now knows where those PCBs storage areas are.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Taylor: Will he provide those locations to this House and confirm that his staff is adequately informed about the nature of the facilities, the drainage in the surrounding terrain and other buildup in the area, such as residences?

Mr. Edward Connery (Minister of Environment and Workplace Safety and Health): I will ask our staff if there is any reason why this cannot be provided. If there is no reason why it cannot be, I will. As I said, we are going to taking on-site investigations. I appreciate the concern of the Member opposite, because PCBs are a concern to all people of Manitoba, and this is not the first time we have discussed PCBs. Two months ago when I first came into our office, I sat down with our staff and we talked about PCBs. I was informed at that point that the sources, the sites, have been investigated on a regular basis, but we would be redoing it to ensure that there are no problems at any of these sites. By personally going, I will have a better knowledge of whether there is need for further investigation, for further dialogue and the need for a hearing.

Mr. Taylor: A final supplemental. CPR secures its locked work trains in that same yard behind high fences and under lights, and with security patrols. My question, Mr. Speaker, is will the Minister insist through the offices of Environment Canada that the same level of

performance be set for the PCB-laden boxcars in those same CPR yards?

Mr. Connery: I would be pleased to have our staff discuss with Environment Canada if there is any need for any change in the security of those boxcars.

Emergency Physicians Malpractice Insurance

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): My question is for the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Recently, the present Government has allocated funds to the MMA specifically for the distribution to the physicians to compensate for their malpractice insurance. Mr. Speaker, some of the physicians, more specifically emergency room physicians, have been ignored. They are told that those people are not eligible for these funds. What will the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) do to correct this discrimination against the emergency physicians who are providing very essential services at all the hospitals of Manitoba?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): I had some difficulty without the earphone in hearing my honourable friend's question. Basically, if my honourable friend is asking about the distribution of the Government's contribution towards malpractice insurance, which was arrived at during the recent MMA negotiations. I can answer in this regard, that the money for malpractice insurance was, if you will, block funded to the MMA, and the MMA is responsible from that point on for the equitable distribution of that lump sum provision which was part of the settlement to assure that the provincial contribution toward support of malpractice insurance is equitably shared amongst members of the MMA.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the Minister of Health that MMA is telling the physicians that Emergency physicians are not covered under that agreement. Given that the Minister has allowed a single situation which developed in 1987, and that resulted in the withdrawal of emergency services, what steps is the Minister going to take to avoid a similar crisis?

Mr. Orchard: Again, I will pursue with the department the specifics of Emergency physicians who are employed by the hospitals. I believe that therein lies the peculiarity of this issue. However, I will investigate with the department and determine whose responsibility, and indeed whether, with the settlement of the MMA and the lump-sum provision of liability insurance coverage, that the Emergency physicians employed by the hospital facilities themselves were intended to be included. I will provide that information to him. In terms of any other aspect of concern, I am not aware of any threatened or potential withdrawal of services.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary, again to the same Minister. We have never been able to retain psychiatrists; we are losing other professionals and, given this Minister's promise that we will regain physicians in Manitoba, could this Minister advise us of what steps he will take so that we do not lose Emergency physicians in 1989?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, if I was to give the complete answer you would be on your feet because I would be abusing the privileges of the Question Period by a long and detailed answer.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Orchard: As we all know, I attempt at every opportunity to abide by the Rules of the House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Orchard: I would simply ask my honourable friend to wait with patience, bring his concerns to the Estimates line where we can have a full and complete debate on physician recruitment, physician retention, physician training, physician allocation, Emergency Department physician difficulties, including the issue of malpractice insurance, if it is an issue. I look forward to that debate.

* (1040)

Vocational Schools Bonding Regulations

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker, on August 16 I took several questions as notice from the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) to which I would like to provide the answers today.

This was a question with regard to the John Casablancas Career College and the bonding issues. On July 5, department staff were informed that the John Casablancas Career College was closing its doors. The John Casablancas school is a national franchise with operations in Winnipeg and headquarters in Calgary. The department officials immediately contacted the headquarters in Calgary and we are assured that this was only a temporary measure and that the school's doors would reopen. In addition, we found out at the time that another operation in Toronto of the same franchise was also closing its doors and as soon as we were apprised of that knowledge, we forwarded this information to the Attorney-General for comments from his Department.

Our only recourse, Mr. Speaker, in the whole matter would have been to call in the bond; however, following the advice of the Department of the Attorney-General, we thought that perhaps we would allow this school every opportunity to come back into existence or recall the bond. We would essentially be closing the school down completely.

Today, approximately eight students have contacted the department who have had some problems and concerns about tuitions and the fact that they can not get into the school. Department staff right now are working to try and accommodate these students and other colleges in the city.

I might say, Mr. Speaker, I know this is taking some time, but there were three questions that were asked and I would like to answer them in their entirety. In addition, department officials had been advocating for

some number of years to change legislation with regard to bonding and it was not until 1986 that the Government decided to act on that advice. It also would be worth noting that it took two years for the former administration before this process in fact was implemented. There has been a year given to all vocational schools because of the financial implications on tuitions and so forth to implement the regulation changes and those changes will come into effect in July of 1989.

Public Schools Funding

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): My question is for the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach). In January of 1988, the previous Minister of Education announced funding increases to public schools totalling some \$663 million for the year. Yesterday, the Minister of Education announced a reduction in funding to the public school system. Given that the public school system provides quality education to 200,000 Manitoba students, given the Tory promises on a continual basis not to cut social spending, not to cut spending to education, how can the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) justify this reduction in funding for public schools to the people of Manitoba and the 200,000 students that are going to be going back to school in a week?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education): As a former Minister of Education, I would have thought that the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) would have done his research a little more thoroughly and would have his facts straight.

Two issues come into play when we talk about public schools finance and in terms of the overall funding that has been allocated to the public school system. First of all, there was a reduction in interest costs as a result of the change in the remittance dates, Mr. Speaker, which was not taken into consideration in January of last year when the former Government's Budget was struck. So therefore that amounts to something like \$2 million. In addition, there was a requirement or a reduction in this requirement by Frontier School Division because of some over budgeting instances and that amounted to some \$1.4 million. This is the reason why the figure for the Budget appeared less, but the funding, as a matter of fact, had increased in two areas, one being Native Languages—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Storie: The changes that the Minister of Education has brought in have been noted. I appreciate that there has been a small overall increase of .054 percent. Mr. Speaker, the point is that additional \$3.3 million which could have been available from public schools was used in private schools in this Province. My question to the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) is, given that there is no consultation with the Teacher's Society or the Manitoba Association of Trustees on this particular issue, why did this Minister of Education choose to fly in the face of the advice he has been given from those organizations year in and year out and provide an

additional 40 percent increase to the privileged few who go to private schools?

Mr. Derkach: The Member for Flin Flon's comments certainly do not parallel the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Manitoba Funding for Schools 1988 as proposed by the former administration in January of 1988 and the Manitoba Funding for Schools 1988 Revised document which will illustrate that in fact funding for public schools has not increased one single bit. However, if I can elaborate on that just for one moment, in January of 1988, the final figures were not known, the preliminary axles were not known.

However, when this Government took office in May, at that point in time, the preliminary axles were known and, therefore, that is what the member is alluding to. He knows that is not the truth. As a matter of fact, he is trying to distort the facts.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Storie: The fact of the matter is that this Government, this Minister of Education, had a choice. They had a choice, Mr. Speaker. This Minister of Education in his announcement yesterday indicated that he was going to limit increases to 10 percent; he was going to provide a minimum of 1 percent where it was needed.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Storie: Why was the change in this Government, in the face of the Opposition, by the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and Teachers who needed money for private schools when the Public School System is clearly in need?

Mr. Derkach: No one is denying that the Public School System of Manitoba is always in need of extra funds. We are providing to the best of our abilities. By the time that this Government took office, many of the public school budgets were struck and therefore it was very cumbersome and very difficult to attempt to change the entire funding process of public schools for this year. We were able to increase funding in two areas which I alluded to before.

Our intention in funding private schools or independent schools in this province is one whereby we are trying to provide Manitobans with the best possible education opportunities that are here and the best possible choices that the students can have in this province.

* (1050)

Social Assistance Special Needs Allowance

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): My question is for the Minister of Employment Services and Economic Security (Mrs. Oleson). I apologize if I did not hear the answer—the sound system in the gallery . . . (inaudible).

Is there a specific budget in your department that will provide this year, other than specialties, for parents on social assistance for school supplies for children?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Employment Services and Economic Security): I would point out to the Member in case he did not hear that the grant that was given last year was a one-time grant. I have indicated to staff and said to directors that the staff allow the people on social assistance to access this special needs grant for school supplies. Many of them, I am sure, are doing that. As the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) indicated, I am not told that we need to take it out of food allowances.

Mr. Rose: For the same Minister, all we have heard here is that you have a substantial cut in textbooks and we have now heard about where we are going to in the school year 2000.

Mr. Speaker: Question.

Mr. Rose: What the Minister has said is in conflict of

Mr. Speaker: With a question.

Mr. Rose: I am saying, would you give specific directive to your staff as to what the program that is available, what funds can be used, because certainly the information that we have is that it is coming from funds other than special needs?

Mrs. Oleson: I have undertaken to send a directive to staff. If there needs to be another directive sent, I will send it. If the Member has some specific case that he wishes to discuss with me at another time and not, of course, put the needs on record, I would be happy to discuss it him, if there is some extra particular problem that someone is having.

Mr. Rose: Perhaps there are specific cases, would really include—we have, as I said, that program that has been put into place as a result of the problem. I am wondering what directives and what forms this Minister has to inform this committee of how to deliver a program to people to avoid confusion, therefore the service of people and not an inconvenience that they have had in the past. Like other departments, we see you being so often reactive and proactive. I am just wondering if certainly for next year this will be cleared up.

Mrs. Oleson: We are always working on trying to improve the programs. There just needs to be some specific directive sent out. If there has been a misunderstanding, I will try to correct that. The directive has gone to the field staff to tell their social assistance recipients that there is special needs, funding is available.

A.E. McKenzie Co. Board Appointments

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I would like to ask a question of the Minister responsible for McKenzie

Seeds Company Ltd. which as Members should know is a very important Crown company in the good City of Brandon.

It has been recently reported that the Minister has ignored the rank and file of staff of the members of the union and has not allowed the employees to choose their two representatives to the board of directors of that company as they have done previously. The two existing members that were democratically elected were arbitrarily dismissed and two other staff were arbitrarily chosen to put in their place.

My question to the Minister is why would the Minister responsible want to ignore the previous practice which was democratic? Why would he not wish to consult employees to democratically elect their representatives? How can it be said that these employees which he chose, ignoring the rank and file, really represent the staff of McKenzie Seeds?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for McKenzie Seeds): I am somewhat surprised that it has taken the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Evans) to show some interest in McKenzie Seeds. In fact, I am extremely pleased to be the Minister responsible. I have had a lot of consultations with my colleague from Brandon West (Mr. McCrae). I have had a lot of consultations with my colleague from Brandon West in the operations of McKenzie Seeds, the importance of it to the Brandon community. He has been a strong supporter and has paid a lot more interest than the Member for Brandon East.

As far as the appointing of board members, we wanted to assure that top quality people who have the capability, like the people who were employees, are very much an extremely intricate part of that, the feelings of confidence and longevity of that company. People were recommended to us, not particularly by his buddy in the labour union movement, but in fact by many people from the Brandon area, two of them that are selected from the employees are long-time dedicated people. I am surprised

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The time for oral questions has expired.

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENT

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I wonder if I might have an opportunity for a non-political statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable First Minister have leave? (Agreed) The Honourable First Minister.

Mr. Filmon: I am rising on behalf of the Members on this side of the House, and indeed I am sure on behalf of all Members of the House, to extend our congratulations and best wishes to the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) on the occasion of his impending marriage to Ginny Devine, who is known to many of us in this House. I want to assure you that this is absolutely a non-political statement.

We hope that this occasion will be one filled with joy and happiness. I am sure that it will, and that it will result in the Member having an even better disposition than he has had, particularly in Question Period. He has normally a pleasant disposition but I am sure that marriage, being the wonderful institution that it is, will have a tremendous positive influence on him. I can speak personally of the fact that it has made my life fuller and happier. I am sure that it will have similar effects for him.

So on behalf of all Members of this Legislature, I extend sincere and very best congratulations and best wishes to the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer).

* (1100)

Some Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Do I have leave to make a non-political statement?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mrs. Carstairs: I too would like to join with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and Members of the Conservative caucus and with all Members of the Liberal caucus and I am indeed sure all Members of the New Democratic caucus to wish, of course, long life and happiness to the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) and to his new bride. Marriage, for those of us who have experienced it, is one of life's greatest treasures. After 22 years, I can say that my relationship is the cornerstone of my life. I wish the same to the Honourable Member and, if I could be given that licence, would suggest that all his blessings be liberal ones.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): May I have leave for a non-partisan—

I would like to thank all Honourable Members for their well wishes for our date this evening. I would say that I tried to keep it a secret but I obviously failed. Thank you very much for your comments. I just would like to assure this House that the person who I am going to spend the rest of my life with is even more feisty than I am.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Ed Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, do I have leave to make a non-political statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member have leave? (Agreed) It is Friday.

Mr. Helwer: We have visiting here today a foreign exchange student. His name is Jean Luc Divisia. He is in the gallery. He is from Chambéry, France. He is here through NASL, a group that arranges foreign exchanges. He has been in Manitoba since August 2 and will be leaving August 30. We are pleased that he could visit our Legislature this morning.

ORDERS OF THE DAY MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill) that, under Rule No. 27, the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, and that this Legislature call upon the Conservative Government to immediately present to the Manitoba Foster Parents Association a compromise proposal which would include the following: an immediate additional increase of 50 cents a day in the basic foster care rate above and beyond the 12.25 percent increase already committed; an immediate commencement of negotiations to implement a commitment to phased-in rate increases over a two-year period, using the recommendations of the special committee struck in October, 1987 as a base for consultation and negotiation; a commitment to resolve the outstanding issues of education training supports, legal fees, insurance and the role of the Manitoba Foster Parents Association as part of this consultation process; and finally a submission to the Manitoba Foster Parents Association, as soon as possible, with a proposal for establishing this consultation and negotiation process.

MOTION presented.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank all Honourable Members for their indulgence. We just wanted to make sure that Hansard was receiving.

The Honourable Member for St. Johns has five minutes to present her case.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, under Rule 27, Members of this Legislative Assembly are offered the opportunity to ask that the ordinary business of the House be set aside so that matters of urgent and of public importance to the citizens of Manitoba can be discussed, so that legislators here in this Assembly can deal with that urgency and that major issue of public importance and find a resolution to that serious problem.

Let me, as quickly as possible, outline the reasons for my feelings, and the feelings of my caucus, that this is a very urgent matter, a matter of great public importance that needs to be debated today. I have appreciated the response of the Minister of Community Services (Mrs. Oleson) today and an indication from her that she is prepared to carry on with discussions, that she is looking to set up a meeting with the Manitoba Foster Parents Association on Monday.

It is our view that the situation, the seriousness of this looming crisis, requires more immediate and more urgent attention than that provided by the Minister today in this House. I make that statement for several reasons. The first is that this is a serious, widespread problem. That means if it is not dealt with and steps are not put in place to deal with it immediately, the whole system gets out of whack and is affected by our inability to move, our inability to start to resolve the

matter at least a week before something as serious as a moratorium on foster parent placements in Manitoba.

All of us know the kind of system that has been built up to ensure proper care of our children in this province, to ensure that the special needs of children in our province are dealt with in a proper caring environment. All of us know that the foster parent home provides the most stable, the most nurturing and the least costly type of environment for children needing special care, children needing placements.

With the moratorium looming on the horizon, with the moratorium looming to take place in but a few days away from now—Thursday, September 1, to be exact—if we do not as legislators, if we do not as Members of this high office, come to grips with the problem, six days before the problem, six days before the moratorium, six days before the crisis, it will be very, very difficult to recoup the negative impact on the system to deal with the devastating effect that will already have happened with respect to our system, to the children in that system, to the children waiting for placement in a nurturing, caring environment.

In my view, it is not good enough to wait until Monday. It is not good enough to wait until Monday just to have a meeting and then to begin discussions. We lose the whole weekend.

It is critical that we begin to use the time available to us today, that we meet today, that the meeting take place so that this incredible impasse, this incredible roadblock can be eliminated, so that the two sides can sit down. We in the NDP caucus have suggested that, and we are not blaming any particular side, although all of us I know in this House recognize the work of foster parents and the incredible contribution they make to our society. But all of us here want to not blame anyone but want to get the two sides together and begin discussing this incredibly important matter so that by Monday there is some movement, so that by Tuesday there is some closer movement with respect to a proposal, and so that by Wednesday the problem is resolved and the moratorium does not take place, the system is not impacted and children are ensured of a safe and secure future in a nurturing and caring environment.

* (1110)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):

Let me begin by expressing the appreciation of Honourable Members on this side of the House to the Honourable Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) for her conciliatory attitude in this matter, and the concern she expresses certainly is a matter that is shared by everyone in this House, indeed, I believe everyone in the province about a situation which has been ongoing.

I do have to take issue with the suggestion, on the part of the Honourable Member, that what we are faced with is an impasse, when daily in the House the Minister of Community Services (Mrs. Oleson) reminds us that discussions are ongoing every day between the Foster Parents Association and officials in her department.

As usual, Mr. Speaker, and I would like at some point to ask you, Sir, to make some comment on the form that these so-called motions of urgent and pressing importance come before us. The ones that I have seen in this Session all have a striking resemblance to a Private Member's resolution and I suggest that you, Sir, make some comment on that and give directions to Honourable Members with regard to the form that those motions should be taking.

The Honourable Member should also be aware that there are indeed opportunities and have indeed been opportunities for debate on this very matter. The Honourable Member has raised the matter herself in the discussion of the Estimates of the Department of Community Services. The Honourable Member has raised the matter in Question Period and we appreciate that. We appreciate her concern. The Honourable Member should also know that she, as every other Member in this House, is entitled to make use of the grievance procedure that we have as laid out in the Rule Book. The Estimates procedure is ongoing. The Department of Community Services—the Estimates of that department are presently before the House.

I do have a problem with the Honourable Member's motion today. The motion seems to ignore or disregard the fact that the Government of Manitoba has a mandate to deal with this matter and is indeed exercising its mandate by having those daily meetings and conversations and discussions with representatives of the Foster Parents Association of Manitoba.

The Honourable Member has been cautioned and warned that this particular matter, as sensitive and important as it is, it is dangerous, I suggest, to be negotiating such an important matter in this Chamber or publicly or in the media. I do think that we should all try to avoid the tendency to make politics out of an issue as important as this. What we do when we get into a discussion in this House, no doubt there will be the kind of negotiation that we should all, I should suggest, be trying to avoid doing in this place. Bearing in mind that the concern of everyone involved in this situation is for the children involved, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that all Honourable Members should allow the Department of Community Services to do the work that is its mandate to do, and that is to continue with the meetings that it is having. There will be meetings again on Monday. I am just suggesting that it is a dangerous thing to do to negotiate this kind of thing in this House today.

If Honourable Members were sitting on this side, I am sure they would argue exactly that point, if the matter was put to them by any Member of the Opposition, that this kind of thing is not something that should be negotiated publicly and in this Chamber. I ask your Honour to take note of that. I would ask you to not be convinced in terms of the urgency of the situation and the lack of ability to debate. There has been the ability to debate; the ability to debate is still there. I caution Honourable Members that this is not the place to negotiate with the Foster Parents Association.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Opposition House Leader): We would support the Honourable Member for St. Johns (Ms.

Wasylycia-Leis) in her belief that this is, in fact, a matter of urgent public importance.

We have raised questions on this matter many times over the last while. Each time we have done that, we have been told by the Minister that there are negotiations ongoing and that there are in fact going to be solutions arrived at. Each time, when those meetings pass, we have yet again another impasse. Each day, the moratorium looms larger. None of us want the moratorium, but we are concerned about the equitable treatment of foster parents.

However, we do have a problem with the motion that the Honourable Member has made. We do agree with the Government to this extent. It is wrong, we believe, to debate a specific solution. We feel that the foster parents are more than capable of negotiating on their own behalf.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have had a Ruling the last time that we debated a matter of this sort in the House that a motion to amend was not allowed on a matter of this sort. I would ask leave from the Honourable Member for St. Johns to amend her motion, to delete all of the words after, "urgent public importance," in paragraph 5 and replace them: "that the matter of public importance which is the impasse between the provincial Government and the Manitoba Foster Parents Association." If that is the item that we are to debate today, we think it is urgent, we think it should be debated today and we will be participating in that debate.

Do I have leave, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member does not have leave.

Order, please. I did receive prior notice of the matter raised by the Honourable Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), as required by the Rules of the House. I have read carefully the Honourable Member's motion, and have listened attentively to the advice just offered by all Honourable Members. In order for me to rule in favour of such a matter, I must be satisfied that the urgency of debate is so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not taken into immediate consideration. There must be no other reasonable opportunities for debate.

I am not satisfied that these conditions have been met. The Estimates of the Department of Community Services are being considered in Committee of Supply. The particular item—(Interjection)—Order please—in these Estimates, which deals with this matter, has not yet been considered. Additionally, it is my understanding from comments from the Minister in Question Period yesterday that negotiations between her officials and the Manitoba Foster Parents Association are still ongoing.

With respect, therefore, I must find that the Honourable Member's proposed motion to set aside the business of the House is out of order because the matter raised does not meet the required conditions. The Honourable Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis).

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: With all due respect, I challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. All those in favour—(Interjection)—The question before the House is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained? All those in favour, please say Yea. All those opposed, please say Nay. In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: I would like to call for Yeas and Nays.

* (1120)

Mr. Speaker: Call in the Members.

The question before the House is shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained. All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

A STANDING VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

YEAS

Burrell, Connery, Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger (Emerson), Enns, Ernst, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Manness, McCrae, Mitchelson, Neufeld, Oleson, Orchard, Pankratz, Penner, Praznik, Roch, Alcock, Angus, Carr, Carstairs, Charles, Cheema, Chornopyski, Driedger (Niakwa), Edwards, Evans (Fort Garry), Gaudry, Gray, Kozak, Lamoureux, Mandrake, Minenko, Rose, Taylor, Yeo.

NAYS

Ashton, Cowan, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Harapiak, Harper, Hemphill, Maloway, Storie, Uruski, Wasylycia-Leis.

Mr. Clerk, Mr. Remnant: Yeas 41; Nays 11.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Order, please; order, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call the Government Bills in the order they are listed on today's Order Paper.

ADJOURNED DEBATE ON SECOND READING

BILL NO. 4—THE RE-ENACTED STATUTES OF MANITOBA, 1988, ACT

Mr. Speaker: On debate on second readings, on the proposed motion of the Honourable Attorney-General (Mr. McCrae), Bill No. 4, The Re-enacted Statutes of Manitoba, 1988, Act, standing in the name of the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards). The Honourable Member for St. James.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not have extremely lengthy comments on this Bill. I would like to make some comments however, as this Bill I think is significant for the people of this province in that it is the culmination of a long journey taken by this province in the process of translating our Acts into the French language.

I want to start by harkening back to the voyage first started by Mr. Forest and continued by Mr. Bilodeau in this province to lead the resurgence of the French language rights in this province, an extremely important step to be taken by this province. It almost, as I was thinking about it and I remember living through that in this province—and in fact I had the opportunity to be outside the province and see how the rest of the country viewed it. I was not impressed, let me tell you, with some of the ways that what was happening in this province was interpreted by the rest of the country.

But getting back, I harken back to the voyage taken by Louis Riel in this province, bringing it into provincehood within this nation, and the agony that he went through and the persecution that he went through in bringing this province into Confederation. As you all know the unhappy demise that he faced as a result of his work, and now of course he is commemorated in a statue on the grounds of the Legislature, and is certainly a hero of this province, having brought us into Confederation through his struggle for the protection and enhancement of the Metis rights and the French rights in this province.

Well, Mr. Forest and Mr. Bilodeau continued that fight. I think that we as Manitobans owe them a debt of gratitude for their long and hard struggle. This Bill and the Bill which follows it is in fact, as I have said, in a sense the culmination of this process. We have now incorporated the French language and the rights of the French people into our justice system which is the cornerstone of—certainly of participation in a democracy is to have your rights in law and in the courts of law within the province. I think it is an opportunity to be thankful for the involvement of the French in this province. They were the founders of this province and let us not forget that.

I am very pleased that this work has been done and I want to go on to say a bit about the translators who have worked very hard and have by all accounts done a very good job. Obviously, there are going to be adjustments and there are going to be things that have to be changed, perhaps mistakes have been made in translating from English to French. Oftentimes words take on different connotations in different languages, and over time we will have to work those out. I am sure that there are not many of them, but I am sure they will come up as they have in the federal arena where the laws in fact are, of course, in both French and English.

The translators, as I have said, have certainly done a great job and I know that the legislative counsel department that has headed up that translation has worked very, very hard at the translation of these Statutes. The Supreme Court of Canada, of course, imposed a deadline and as I understand it that deadline is fast-approaching, so the Official Opposition certainly

would not want to impede meeting that deadline and meeting the Supreme Court of Canada's decision.

Let me speak briefly on that Supreme Court of Canada decision, which put us into this time line. I read that decision with great interest when I was at law school and when it came down. In fact, I very narrowly missed going to Ottawa to see it delivered and I certainly regret not having been able to attend. The decision itself, I think, shows a sensitivity to the realities of nationhood and of this nation that truly should inspire confidence in our highest judges.

I remember that soon after that decision there was much consternation and adverse comment amongst other judges and constitutional experts in this country as they struggled to determine the rationale behind Mr. Chief Justice Dickson's comments when he said, well, it is true that the laws of this province should have been in English and French, but, in fact, they were not and now it is time to rectify that situation. He struggled with the technical rule of the law which one might take to say all laws should be nullities in Manitoba and he got past that.

He got past that by recognizing that is simply not politically realistic. It is not politically realistic to say that all the laws in the province are simply of no force and effect. That would create chaos. So he struggled with that admirably, and I think he dealt with it in a way that served Manitobans and served Canadians by saying these are things that happen in the growth of a nation. Certain people's rights are simply forgotten, left out, certainly such as the French in this province and the Natives in this country. Over time those people struggled to vindicate their rights and to reassert their rights in a province and in a country, and that struggle is to the benefit of us all.

That is why I commenced my comments by paying tribute to Mr. Forest and Mr. Bilodeau, because we do owe them a debt of gratitude for going through what they did, as I think we will come to realize that we owe the Natives in this nation a great debt of gratitude for bringing to our attention the great pain and anguish that they have undergone in the growth of this nation. I encourage all Members of this House to make that link and to understand that certain peoples in our country have not been treated well and have been forgotten. When they get mad and when they come to our Courts and ask for justice and justification, it should be celebrated. We should welcome those very brave and courageous people who sacrifice time and much money and effort in bringing to our attention that they have been left out of our plan for prosperity and happiness for all of us.

* (1130)

This Bill is one that I am extremely happy to see early on the docket, because I think it is important and the deadline looms. We are pleased, therefore, on this side of the House, at least in the Official Opposition, to recommend that this be sent to the committee stage. We look forward to speedy passage there. I am happy to support passage of this Bill, being Bill No. 4 of the Government. Thank you.

Mr. Bill Uruski (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, unless there are other Members who wish to speak, I will take the adjournment.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), that debate be adjourned.

MOTION presented and carried.

BILL NO. 5—THE STATUTE RE-ENACTMENT ACT, 1988

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Attorney-General (Mr. McCrae), Bill No. 5, The Statute Re-enactment Act, 1988, standing in the name of the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards).

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): As I referenced in my comments to the Government Bill No. 4, this Bill is also, it is my understanding, a continuation of the process of putting these Statutes of Manitoba into proper form in accordance with the Supreme Court of Canada's decision. Therefore, my comments previously on Government Bill No. 4 are equally applicable. I would simply state that the Official Opposition is certainly pleased to recommend that this Bill also be sent to the committee stage. We certainly support the speedy passage of this Bill and are happy to see it on the Government docket early. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper), that debate be adjourned.

MOTION presented and carried.

BILL NO. 6—THE FIRES PREVENTION AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of the Environment (Mr. Connery), Bill No. 6, The Fires Prevention Amendment Act, standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Radisson (Mr. Patterson). (Stand)

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): I am prepared to let the Bill stand in the name of the Member for Radisson (Mr. Patterson), but I would like my right to speak on this Bill. Is it my imagination or is the volume a little loud?

An Honourable Member: It makes you sound better.

Mr. Storie: It makes me sound better. Good, I can always use something that makes me sound better.

The Fires Prevention Amendment Act is an interesting one. When the Minister introduced the Act, he noted, I think quite correctly, that this Act, although minor in nature, has important consequences. I will be getting to what I think are some potentially negative consequences.

Could we have that turned off? Just shut it right down.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Member was quite right to note that -(inaudible)- I am not sure, however, that all of the implications that the Minister had in mind are in fact implications that the Members on this side might have in mind. I want to indicate at the outset that I believe that this minor amendment is in itself indeed an amendment for some security reasons, not that I would disagree with the intent of the legislation. But I do believe that some amendments may define it to the point where it is more acceptable and will not have the time and attention that I believe it ordinarily would have.

I want to address the intent of the principle at this point however, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by suggesting that the whole issue of fire prevention is important to all Members. I believe, it is important perhaps to a greater extent in northern Manitoba. Some of us have whole communities who need it to a greater extent than any large urban centres, who already have very well-defined fire prevention facilities, have full-time staff with the latest in technology and equipment to aid, in any event fire fighting. That, Mr. Speaker, is always the case in northern Manitoba. If anyone had had the opportunity, as I have, to visit the dozens and dozens of small remote communities that populate northern Manitoba, he would know that fire prevention in those communities take on a much more important meaning, and is much more a matter of public awareness in those communities than it is in Winnipeg. That is the case because of the extremely significant costs both in property and in terms of lives that is the experience of fire in rural and northern communities.

I think history will show you quite clearly that there is a much greater potential for loss of life, a much greater potential for loss of property in northern Manitoba than in the southern part of the province, particularly in urban parts of the province. The fact is that fires are much more likely to cause serious injuries and loss of life, if you compare on a population basis or community basis, in northern Manitoba.

It is also true that fire prevention in the main in those northern communities is undertaken by volunteers. That is where this particular Act, I think, has important significance because those volunteers, like their professional counterparts, require training on a continuous basis. Professional firefighters, as part of their daily regime of activities, undertake fire prevention training activities. They prepare for emergencies; they learn to use the equipment. They develop an understanding toward the complexities that are involved in firefighting today. It simply is not the old chain gang with the bucket anymore.

It is also true that firefighters are required to deal with the complex substances that our society is now producing. They have to learn the techniques that are being developed to fight fires of different kinds, whether they are chemical fires, electrical fires, petroleum-based fires, all of the different types of fires that can happen in the community, have skilled professional firefighters and have the fire fleets in Winnipeg and surrounding districts who are full-time to get that training.

* (1140)

Northern Manitoba requires the participation, the involvement of virtually the entire community. It is a marvellous thing to behold, small communities like Waterhen or Sherridon, Manitoba with a population of perhaps 200—it is growing imminently now, but had a population of less than 200. It is a marvellous thing to watch that community mobilize for fire-training drill, never mind the real emergencies that occur from time to time. The fact of the matter is that the entire community gets involved. They get involved, because there are people in those communities who have received training through one of our fire colleges, who with the assistance of the Fire Commissioner developed some expertise in their community, but it is the whole community involved. It is an amazing contrast between what happens in rural Manitoba and what happens in the city.—(Interjection)— Well, it certainly would not amaze the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) because, as he said before, he has seen it all.

But it does amaze me to watch fires and emergencies in the City of Winnipeg where you have bystanders who come to act as spectators. In northern Manitoba, I can assure you that, in very few instances do people come to act as spectators. They come to act as participants in the firefighting in terms of dealing with the emergency and it is expected that people in those communities will participate.

So this is an important piece of legislation and has been used to great benefit in many northern communities. Over the past, I dare say decade, the number of trained firefighters, volunteers who are trained firefighters, in the North has quadrupled or multiplied by tenfold, perhaps. Every community now, I think, boasts some people in the community, volunteers who are trained to fight fires. They thankfully provide the leadership for those communities when there is an emergency.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I remind Members that the communities that I am talking about—Sherridon, as an example of 200 people is a larger Northern Affairs Community. There are, in fact, communities much smaller than that who also have equipment, who have volunteers, who need training. Communities like Herb Lake Landing, which has a population, at last census, of 11 people whom —(Interjection)— the community of Herb Lake, which is 11 people at last census, also has people in that community who are responsible for firefighting and for mobilizing the community in the event of an emergency. I say that they do that admirably and they do it with a great deal of professionalism, despite the limited training they get.

The Minister in his introduction went over a rather lengthy review of the history of fire colleges in Manitoba, and certainly the establishment of fire colleges in Brandon and Dauphin over the last few years and Winnipeg's fire college efforts. The staffing that is provided throughout the province is much needed, and I know that it is a costly venture as well; that the Fire Prevention Officers, the colleges, require substantial funds to carry out their duties.

I would say, and I have indicated, that I think everyone recognizes their duties are expanding. That it is not simply firefighting, it is dealing with all of the hazardous

chemicals that every community has in abundance around them, in use in the homes and in the industries. So their duties are expanding and the money that comes to the fire colleges through the fund, which is supported by premiums, is necessary.

I recognize that this amendment is, in effect, trying to ensure that fund has available to it the necessary resources to increase our ability to provide fire protection in those communities.

That in itself is a noble exercise and I think the Minister in his remarks, if my memory serves me correctly, indicated that the previous Government had this amendment in the works, that it was being prepared and worked on. I am not sure whether it is in exactly the same form that it would have been introduced by the previous Government, but certainly there was an awareness that there was increasing pressure on the fire colleges to accept students from other jurisdictions. The Minister in his remarks and the Bill, although it is not clear by reading one subsection of one clause, the intent of the Bill was to allow the fund to, through the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, to prescribe tuition fees for individuals who come to us from other jurisdictions or private corporations. What was intended, Mr. Speaker, was to allow CPR, to allow other corporations who handle dangerous chemicals, who are likely to be faced with fires from time to time, to send their staff to the Fire College for training, and allow the colleges to recoup some of the costs by way of tuition.

I think that the intent of that is acceptable and desirable. I know that that is what the amendments would support. However in doing my review of this piece of legislation, in comparing the clauses, for example, Subsection 68(1) is amended. When I went back and looked at Subsection 68(1) it became obvious that the amendment itself, I think, leaves open a number of questions. The amendment simply provides that the college provides that the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council may make regulations, prescribing tuition fees payable at a central file college established under Clause 35(3)(e) or at a regional fire school established under Clause 35(3)(f). I went back to both of those clauses and I am left with the concern that what we have done is opened the question of tuition, not just to being applicable to private corporations or to other jurisdictions, but we have left open the question of tuitions being applicable in the entirety.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, what we have done is left the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council with the ability, through an Order-in-Council, to direct individuals coming from other organizations within the province including other levels of government if we consider community councils, for example, in Northern Affairs communities other levels of government. We have left them with the ability, through the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, an act of Cabinet, in the position of being concerned about whether in fact that sometime in the future they themselves will be the targets of tuition, tuition fees or course fees or what have you. I am not suggesting for a minute that that was the intention of this amendment. I have no reason to suspect that whatsoever. I know that the Minister of Highways and

Transportation who also has some interest in fire safety in northern communities would not want the openness of this amendment to leave northern communities to draw the wrong conclusions.

So, Mr. Speaker, in an effort to satisfy myself that this amendment needed amending, I have spoken to a number of northern residents, people who are involved in firefighting to get a sense of whether there is any concern, whether we need to—if we are going to make amendments in this case—err on the side of safety. I think it is quite clear in all cases, in every opportunity, when we are amending legislation we have to make our intentions specific. It is not good enough to simply introduce amendments and say this is our intention because the Attorney-General (Mr. McCrae) well knows and has indicated in many instances, the final jurors will be a court of some jurisdiction and they will interpret for us. The more specific we can be the better the legislation.

* (1150)

So what I believe we need to do, based on my conversations with Northerners, and as I say volunteer firefighters who look at this fund and the training that is provided to our Fire College very positively, we need to make sure that this intent to have a fair charge applied against individuals who come from other jurisdictions, who come to training to us from private corporations is specific. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the amendments, I believe, are not specific enough, leave open the very real danger that some Legislature at some point, some Government, may determine that tuition fees are appropriated from other Manitobans; that they may decide that individuals who come to us from northern Manitoba to receive training, be they volunteers or fire chiefs or deputy fire chiefs from smaller municipalities, that tuition is applicable. I do not think that was the intent; I hope it was not the intent. I do not think it is necessary in any event to have legislation which leaves open that door.

So, Mr. Speaker, the legislation itself, the intent is good, but I think we have to be careful that the principle that we are enshrining in this legislation is clear to all of us.

The Minister of Highways (Mr. Driedger) says to sit down and let us vote on this. It is not that simple. I am obviously not getting my message across. If the Minister of Highways and Transportation, notwithstanding my concerns, says sit down and pass it, well, does that mean that the Minister of Highways and Transportation is not concerned about the fact that a Government and perhaps his Government will be charging northern residents a fee? We are talking about volunteers. He is going to charge volunteers a fee to come down and be trained by our fire colleges. The legislation makes it very clear that can happen at some future date.

The Minister of Highways will note that I have been very careful not to impute motive to Members on that side, Members of the Government. I have not been attempting to impute motives, but I will tell you that the Minister of Highways and Transportation's

comments leave me somewhat concerned because the Minister of Highways said well, let us pass it, never mind your concern. He sounds like the Minister of Environment (Mr. Connery), for heaven's sake! And he would be the last Minister I would have expected to sound like the Minister of Environment. He is indeed a nice guy. He is a nice guy.

So, Mr. Speaker, just backing up, I am not sure whether I would take the Minister of Highways and Transportation's comments seriously. I do not believe he wanted to rush into passing this. I would say that one of the reasons this Bill is suspect is because it has been introduced by the Minister of Labour and Environment (Mr. Connery), which everything he does is suspect and there is justifiable reason to be suspicious.

I am going to leave aside the Minister of the Environment and his record and deal with the principles of this Bill which I am supposed to do in second reading.

I want to close by making the case for considering amendments. I would find this bill very difficult to support in its present form. I indicate that not because of any difference of opinion with respect to the intention of the legislation, but difference of opinion about whether we are being specific enough, whether we are being certain enough. I have to stand here as a northern representative and representing Northern Affairs communities who do not have the resources to pay tuition, to pay fees for volunteers to take the training that is absolutely essential in those communities. Those communities need that training and I do not think that they are going to be, either as individuals or communities, in any position to access the funds to take that training should some Government decide that we want to make tuitions payable for all Manitobans who attend fire colleges.

We believe the system that is in place now is fair and equitable and the communities are developing the training. I am not saying for a minute, and I would not want the Minister responsible for this act to believe for a minute, that all of the training that needs to be done has been done. There is still a significant demand and ongoing demand for this kind of training and we have to make sure that it takes place.

My colleague, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), has exactly the same feeling, and I know that when push comes to shove he will be supporting the amendments that are introduced, perhaps at Committee Stage, because of his deep and abiding concern for the interests of volunteer firefighters in communities in rural and northern Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, how much time is remaining? I certainly do not want to run out of time without having made my point.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member has 20 minutes remaining.

Mr. Storie: Oh, for heaven's sakes! Mr. Speaker, could I get leave to expand that time a bit because I have not got to the substance of my remarks yet. Could you check your watch, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): A point of order, Mr. Speaker. It does appear that, when the Honourable Member asks that you check your watch, he is making some reflection on your previous ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member does not have a point of order.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take up any more time. I know that there are other people who want to speak.

I just want to say the intent of my comments were I think for the Minister responsible for this Act and Government Members on the Front Bench to indicate that, while we had some concern with this Bill, we were in support of the intention, and I wanted to raise the issue of the importance of this amendment to northern communities. It is a very serious—I do not know that Members who have not had the chance to visit some of the smaller remote communities in northern Manitoba really appreciate the role that the volunteer fire departments play in those communities.

Perhaps the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Connery) has not had a chance or the Minister responsible for this Act has not had a chance to attend the Waterhen Firemen's Rodeo. It is part fun, it is part training. Members from many northern communities, volunteer firefighters, men and women, get together for a bit of fun, some training, to share ideas and knowledge about fire-fighting techniques. It is a tremendous sense of community that these people, these people being the firefighters, the volunteer firefighters in the main, have with one another, and the importance that they attach to the training and the activities that they are involved in to support their communities in the event of emergencies.

I would challenge the Minister responsible for this Act, the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Connery), to do some research, to have some staff do some research and bring back to this House an assessment of the circumstances pertaining to fires, loss of life, loss of property, on a per capita basis in northern Manitoba versus the South. I think you will find that the danger for loss of life, the cost in terms of loss of property is very disproportionately weighted against northern Manitoba, and that is why this particular fund and the fire college are extremely important to those people. I would also say, although I am not formally involved with the Waterhen Firemen's Rodeo or the Firemen's Rodeo, to invite Members, if they get a chance to take a look at it, to visit. It is an interesting experience.

I am going to conclude by indicating again, and there was loud applause, that we will be introducing amendments to this legislation, I hope what would be considered friendly amendments, amendments which will enhance the purpose of the Bill. I think that is our job as legislators, and I know other Members want to speak and I would thank you for your indulgence.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin, as critic for this area for the New Democratic Party, by thanking the Member for Flin Flon

(Mr. Storie) for his comments both to myself privately and also the comments that he has made in the House, because I think this is something we have to do as legislators and that is look carefully to whatever Acts are introduced. I can speak from experience.

* (1200)

I remember a number of times, when we were in Government, that Acts were introduced which Ministers insisted were minor Acts which would not have any major implication in terms of the Act of which the amendments were being passed to, and then we found by the time that we went to committee that there were serious problems with the way the amendments were worded, problems that had not been anticipated either by the Minister or by ministerial staff. I think that is a warning to us all in the sense that, even though in this particular case the Minister has suggested that this is only a minor Act, we ensure that there are not any unforeseen complications that might arise by passing Bill No. 6, The Fires Prevention Amendment Act. In fact, I think the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) has identified some potential problems because the Act is not specific in terms of limiting the tuition fees that would be payable at a central fire college, which is the essential subject of this particular Act.

I think the Member pointed out, for example, that I do not think anyone would want tuitions to be charged to the residents of the many northern communities who have taken an opportunity to take advantage of the fire college in Thompson, the many people in rural communities who have used the fire college in Brandon, which was opened I believe in 1983, or the many people who have used the facility in Winnipeg. I do not think anybody would want that, and I do not believe that is the intent of the Act that was introduced by the Minister of Labour.

The one thing that courts have indicated quite clearly to us as legislators is that the intent is not what counts. It is the specific wording. If the intent is not to have tuition fees paid by residents of the Province of Manitoba or municipalities or Northern Affairs' communities on their behalf, that should be specifically in the Act.

That is why I think the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) made the excellent suggestion that while, in terms of the principle, we should be passing this on to committee that we should look at some specific amendments that would make not only the intent clear, but the actuality of the Act, because currently the Act does not state clearly who those tuition fees would apply to. That is his concern and it is a concern that is shared by our caucus, and I hope it is one that the Minister will take seriously.

I must say that I would hope at some time too that we would be looking at a review of the Act as a whole, The Fire Prevention Act. I have had some experience in terms of this area. I had the opportunity to attend the first conference of Ministers responsible for fire prevention and protection when I accompanied the then Minister responsible, Mary Beth Dolin, to that first convention which was held in Toronto a number of years

ago. I found it to be a very productive exercise because here clearly there was an issue that was not one that was driven by partisan differences. In fact, there were officials, there were MLAs, there were Ministers at that conference from virtually every political background possible. You know, politics never once came up in the discussion in this area because I think people recognize that what we are all seeking is the same thing, which is to see greater protection for the public in terms of both fire prevention and also in terms of, where fires do break out, that there are proper fire departments and facilities to ensure that loss to life and loss to property can be minimized.

I must say that I found it very interesting at that particular meeting, because one of the problems I think we have in Canada in terms of fire prevention is the fact that we have a problem with various jurisdictions. One sees it here in Manitoba. If one looks at the role of the provincial Fire Commissioner's Office, for example, essentially their role is to recommend to municipalities in terms of municipal by-laws that should be established in terms of fire safety.

That is a concern that I have because there are a number of differences between various municipalities to the extent of which fire protection is made available. I have seen in recent years to my concern that recent advances, such as the very inexpensive fire detectors that we have now available to us, are not being implemented in some older buildings. While many municipalities may have as part of their by-law that new buildings have to have such detectors—smoke alarm detectors, as they have been often referred to—in place, many older buildings do not.

I have seen a number of situations occur where I believe that the use of the smoke alarm detectors would have made a substantial difference. There have been a number of apartment fires, for example, in Thompson where I believe that if smoke detectors had been used inside the apartment, certainly there could have been some greater warning of the fact there was a fire. I think beyond that if there were smoke detectors in the hallways, that would also provide a greater degree of protection.

I have had that raised with me by constituents. They have expressed concern that an alarm that could probably cost no more than about \$15 or \$20 is not mandatory under municipal by-laws, even though it has proven to make a substantial difference. And what we are talking about here is not property damage. We are talking about lives. A number of people have died over the last number of years in Thompson, for example, and in other communities. I really believe that the use of those detectors would have made the difference.

I do know that under The Fires Prevention Act, there is a provision for public education; there is a fund that is available for public education. In fact, the tuition fees that would be paid according to this regulation would go towards that. So in essence that is very much involved with what we are discussing today.

But I really believe that public education in terms of fire safety has been relatively inadequate. And I believe, in particular, in my own community, and also in many

other northern communities, there have been a number of tragic fires that have taken place. I believe it is important to get out there. In fact, I was talking to the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) and he was saying that given the amount of money that we spend on fire departments and training, etc., to deal with fires after they have occurred, it is unfortunate in a way that we could not have funds available, for example, to provide people with, for example, smoke detectors. If we could not in the many northern communities, where there have been very serious fires in the last number of years which have resulted in the loss of life in many occasions, have provided that kind of very inexpensive protection and a very basic course in fire safety. Because really, when one looks at it, it costs \$15, and that \$15 could save the lives of people living in that particular house. When we are looking at apartments where you could use a smoke alarm detector at each end of the hallway, for example, you could use two or three or four to protect the lives of maybe the 20 or 30 tenants in that particular hall. That would seem to me to be perhaps the wisest expenditure we could look at, the wisest sort of move we could be looking at in terms of fire prevention.

* (1210)

It does relate to this Act, because I think if we are looking at amending this Act, in a way it is unfortunate that we are not looking at an overall review of the Act itself in the many areas in which this Act could have a greater impact in terms of the public of Manitoba. In fact it is interesting to note that the amendment that we are talking about applies to the section that gives power to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to provide regulations.

This section allows for regulations that relate specifically to the standard of design and construction and inspection testing, installation, operation, maintenance, repair and alterations for the prevention of fire. It talks about the type of equipment that would be used in buildings or premises to prevent or reduce the risk of fire. It talks about regulations in regard to relevant codes, rules or standards which would apply in terms of fire protection. It talks about prescribing the safety measures that should be observed in storage, sale and transportation of goods in terms of the impact that has. But it is interesting to note that once again there is a limiting factor and right in these very regulations is reference to the limits of the legislative powers of the province.

I realize that we are talking in many ways, I guess, about something that relates to constitutional limits on the role of provinces in this particular area. But I really think it is the kind of area where surely reason can prevail and surely we should be able to in this country be able to establish a consistent set of rules and regulations in regards to fire protection and fire prevention.

I realize there has been an attempt. That was one of the major items that was being discussed at that conference that I attended of the Ministers responsible for Fire Protection. But I really think that if you look at it even despite that effort, there is a balkanization,

if you like, if I can use that term, of regulations that apply in terms of fire prevention and protection. I think that is really not acceptable. I do not think that we should, in Canada, allow ourselves to be in a situation where because of differences in jurisdiction that we end up with one municipality, for example, having stronger regulations for fire protection than another municipality. I think if one looks within Manitoba, I think if people would review the situation in Manitoba, they will find that is exactly the case. The different areas have different rules and regulations.

I do not think that is acceptable, because I think fire safety is something that is fundamental. It should not depend on the ability of, say, a building owner in a certain municipality to lobby the local council. I can understand there are cost elements involved but surely, with our rent regulation that is in place, for example, landlords could pass on additional costs. Surely if there are problems at the cost level, perhaps we in Government can look at the advantages, maybe even the cost savings to us as a province, of having funding available to municipalities or funding available perhaps to landlords or residents of homes to provide the safety protection. As I said, we are not talking about major expenditures. I think the cost benefit of having greater use of smoke detectors, for example, would be tremendous. The cost is so minimal and yet the benefit can be so great. Even if it only saves one life, surely that would be worth it.

I can pinpoint, as I have said, many occasions where I believe the regulations have not made that compulsory on older buildings. In fact, when I am talking about older buildings, I am talking about buildings that were constructed as recently as the 1970s that are exempt from having to have smoke detectors. I think that is very unfortunate, because we are not talking about fundamental changes to those buildings. We are talking about something that could be added after the construction without any additional cost. I would encourage -(Interjection)- two screws in the ceiling, as the Member for the Interlake (Mr. Uruski) refers to it.

* (1220)

I have heard all sorts of responses when one talks about fire protection. I know there were a number of apartments, for example, I had received complaints from constituents in my own riding where even fire extinguishers were not being kept in place or fire extinguishers were not kept fully charged. What was happening is the response I got from one particular landlord was essentially that the problem was that they were being vandalized. I realize that is a serious problem but surely we should not use the excuse of vandalism or potential vandalism as a reason not to have fire safety mechanisms in place. I realize there is an additional cost involved perhaps in having to maintain those fire extinguishers or the smoke detectors, but what additional cost is it to replace a fire detector that is screwed into a ceiling with two screws? What additional cost is there, once again, and what benefits? I think that is the bottom line that we have to be looking at.

That was one of my greatest concerns, I think, coming out of that particular conference was the fact that,

despite the talk that was in place and despite when I got back looking further into the fire prevention regulations and legislation that we have, was the fact is the bottom line is that we have limited ability to obtain this fire safety really that we deserve in this province.

As I am saying, this has been raised with me by individual constituents. It is not something that I have come up with myself. It is a concern that was identified. I know a number of years ago I was going through a high-rise apartment block. I was asking people—there was no election—I was asking people for their concerns, and this was raised with me. Someone pointed out that, in a building that was constructed, I believe, in 1970, there are no smoke detectors. They asked why that was not the case? I explained after following up that basically regulations did not require that it be implemented in those days. Since it was an older building, there was no way of forcing the landlords to raise it. I encouraged the individual actually to raise it with the landlord, because I think it is something that everybody would have supported and they would have paid extra on their rent.

How much extra would it have cost to purchase three or four smoke detectors on the floor? A very marginal amount, \$1 a month or \$2 a month. But I think the residents of that particular block would have been more than happy to pay additional rent so that they would have a greater sense of security and a greater peace of mind.

This is something that has been raised, and unfortunately it tends to be raised more frequently after a tragic fire when the concern is fresh in people's minds. I know that I just recently had neighbours of mine, good friends. Their son lost his wife and they lost their grandchild in a fire. It was tragic because, once again, it is difficult to say, but it could have been avoided if there was a smoke detector. In fact, what happened was that they were suffocated by the fumes from furniture that caught fire, and that was really sad because it was the fumes not the fire itself that caused the great difficulty.

It is sad as well because if we had proper regulations in this country that would never happen. In Europe, for example, they have been bringing in strong regulations to ensure that whether it be clothing or whether it be furniture, that they be flame retardant, because there are processes available to ensure that furniture can be made flame retardant. What it means is that if a fire does occur, the spread of the fire, the situation with the toxic fumes, is far less serious and it gives people those valuable few 30 seconds, or one minute, or two minutes, in which they can leave the area where the fire is occurring.

It is something I find particularly unfortunate because that technology has been developed in response to the many fires that have occurred following plane crashes. In fact, the sad thing is that many of the fatalities that occurred following plane crashes have occurred because of the fumes that have come from the plastic seats, the plastic fixtures. They were not killed by the fire itself; they were killed by these fumes, and those fumes can be avoided. The materials are available.

Once again, there is a cost involved, but what is the cost compared to the savings in terms of human lives? I do not even want to mention the savings in terms of the money we spend in putting out fires, because I really think that is secondary. The real bottom line is the difference that we are looking in terms of human lives. And once again, we have the technology available; people are aware of the concern, but because of the various jurisdictions that we have, it is impossible to enforce it. I really think if you were to survey people, and I would encourage people in this House to survey people in their constituencies, you would find that most people would not be aware of the hazards that are involved, for example, with the very furniture they buy, in their apartments. They would not be aware that many people have died because of the fumes that have come from that furniture.

Really, if one looks at it, I would encourage people, perhaps this weekend, to talk to their constituents on this particular issue and ask that how many of them are aware of the safety mechanisms that are in place and the dangers are in place, because what we would find is that very few are. Surely, when we are discussing this bill, that should be something we should consider.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 12:30, I am interrupting proceedings. When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member will have 22 minutes, but I understand initially that it will be standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Radisson (Mr. Patterson).

Therefore, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.