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

DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

38 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, Guizar	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
DOWNNEY, 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, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Laurie E.	Fort Garry	LIBERAL
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Virdeu	PC
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	LIBERAL
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	PC
GRAY, Avis	Ellice	LIBERAL
HAMMOND, Gerrie, Hon.	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	LIBERAL
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

Wednesday, June 21, 1989.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Provincial Sales Tax Reduction

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, may I direct Honourable Members' attention to the gallery where we have from the West St. Paul School, sixteen Grades 7 to 9 students under the direction of Heather Stewart. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Selkirk (Mrs. Charles).

Also this afternoon from the St. Francois Xavier School, we have twenty-six Grades 4 and 5 students under the direction of Erv Single and Bill Grant. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns).

From the Springfield Junior High School, we have twenty-five Grades 7 and 8 students under the direction of Moira Honey. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Roch).

From the Robert H. Smith School, thirty-one Grade 6 students under the direction of Signy Stewart. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs).

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Federal Sales Tax Application

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Finance Minister (Mr. Manness). Michael Wilson has stated that he cannot control whether his national sales tax will be added on to the purchase price at the time of purchase, or if it will be built into the price. He further stated that it is a provincial matter.

Will our Finance Minister tell us today what the policy will be in the Province of Manitoba? Will it be built in or will it be added on?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, first let me say with respect to the general application of any tax that we would prefer that it be visible. That is a general statement. Specific to the news that came by way of the front page of the paper and probably caused the question to be asked by the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs), we are trying to ascertain what, within the Constitution, gives the provinces the right to determine basically how a federal tax is to be applied within the provincial context. Certainly it is news to us, and we are attempting right now to find out what gives us supposedly that power as indicated by Michael Wilson. It did come as news to us.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): With a supplementary question to the same Minister, if the sales tax is added on, for example, 9 percent federal tax on the purchase price, 7 percent provincial tax on the purchase price, that will not result in any additional revenues to the province. But if the federal tax is a hidden tax, it will in fact result in about a 1 percent increase in tax paid into the coffers of the Province of Manitoba.

Will the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) tell the House today if his Government will commit to reducing the sales tax in this province, if cascading or building it in results from the national sales tax?

* (1335)

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the question is fair and it again comes from a Free Press article that was written by Fred Cleverley on the past weekend, but -(interjection)- I will answer the question. To the Members opposite, I will answer the question.

Again, my statement holds that visible taxes are a fairer representation. As far as the degree to which the province may offset some of its share or its rate given that it may take in more under one system versus the other, no determination has been made on that. That is a policy decision that would have to be made by the Government of Manitoba.

Federal Sales Tax Revenue Neutral

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, with a supplementary question to the same Minister, this Minister has consistently said that he wants the national sales tax to be revenue neutral. Will he guarantee in the House today that it will be revenue neutral in that he can control the rate of the provincial sales tax and that will be affected if cascading is permitted?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Again, I give the same response. Depending on what system ultimately comes into place and given the fact that we prefer to see visible taxes—indeed the sales tax of Manitoba is very much a visible tax—and given in the past that supplier mark throughs, and indeed to a lesser degree the federal tax on liquor, is something that we have tried not to gain additional revenues from, that ultimately all becomes part of a policy decision that will be made by this Government.

Manitoba Telephone System Sales Tax Elimination

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): With a new question to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), we have already seen that this Government is quite capable of adding provincial taxes on top of federal taxes, because they have continued with a policy that was initiated under the NDP with regard to the Manitoba Telephone System whereby provincial tax is assessed on federal tax.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us today if he is prepared to eliminate this provincial tax on federal tax with regard to Manitoba Telephone System subscribers?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Again, Mr. Speaker, that was part of the Fred Cleverley article, so I must say that same consideration. Again, I say to the Member opposite that has not been discussed in the policy development sense on behalf of this Government to this point in time. No doubt, given once the full implications and the full implementation of the national sales tax, the goods and services tax comes about in January 1991, that will be a decision point at which time the Government will have to have made those decisions. At this point, it has not.

Mrs. Carstairs: One keeps hearing Fred Cleverley mentioned. Maybe the Minister is considering resigning and allowing the Premier to appoint Fred Cleverley as the Minister of Finance and then maybe we will get some action.

Federal Sales Tax Tourism Impact

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): With a supplementary question to the Minister of Finance, we learned today that the ERDA agreement in Tourism will not be renewed. We have learned from the Conference Board that \$1 billion will be taken from the tourism industry as a result of the national sales tax. Can the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) tell the House today exactly what will be the effect on tourism and tourism dollars in the Province of Manitoba as a result of the national sales tax?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): I cannot give the Leader of the Opposition a definitive response to that, because again that would require a model to have been in place and to have run to give the results as to what an added tax would mean. Certainly, the Conference Board of Canada recognizes that there will be some inflationary aspects to the imposition of the new national goods and services tax. Obviously, that means that the purchasing power of those who are wanting to consume tourism services will not go as far. Therefore ultimately, there will be some smaller contribution to the economy through that sector. I mean, that is the theory. I understand it fully well, but to ask for a definitive response to the question, I think, is something that the Leader of the Opposition cannot expect at this time.

* (1340)

ERDA Agreement Tourism Expenditures

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): A final supplementary question to the Minister of Tourism (Mr. Ernst), the ERDA is cut, his department budget is cut, tourism, which is already tenth out of 10 for all provinces in Canada here in Manitoba. Can the Minister of Tourism tell the House today how much of the \$30 million ERDA agreements have actually been spent in the last four and a half years?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Seventeen million dollars.

Home Care Program Underspending

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). Certainly, we know that over the last couple of weeks we have been making the claim that close to \$21 million has been underspent in the Department of Health. We could not get the answers from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) a couple of weeks ago when we accused the Government of putting that money in a so-called sock for future use. We have since had it verified, that ridiculous argument. We have had it verified in a Free Press article, and I will quote my source on that one this weekend, but I will use my own sources in my question to the Minister of Health.

Can the Minister of Health confirm that consistent with our claims from last year that there had been reductions in services in the Home Care field, that they have underspent the Home Care services between \$4 million and \$5 million in the last year, and that is part of the money that has been put in this so-called rainy day fund?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I wish my honourable friend would share his research document with me. I must have missed that article in the Free Press. I cannot confirm the accuracy of the dollar figure my honourable friend uses, but I can tell my honourable friend that there are increased levels of service being provided in the Home Care Program in the last fiscal year compared to the previous fiscal year.

I can also indicate to my honourable friend that any underspending in the Department of Health did not appear, as my honourable friend wishes to allege and lead the public to believe, in the so-called trust fund set up by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). That is absolutely a false accusation by the Leader of the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Minister did not confirm the numbers and he knows them full well. He is a well-briefed Minister.

New Admissions

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question to the Minister is, has there been a reduction in the number of new admissions to the Home Care Program based on the vigorous implementation of the policy by this Government and indeed the cutbacks that are taking place in the Home Care Program, cutbacks that have been taking place specifically in the North End of the City of Winnipeg, with the policy that this Government has put in place with the people, our aging population and others who need the Home Care services in this province? Why did he not leave that \$4 million to \$5 million in the Home Care Program for our people and our patients in Manitoba? Why did he put it in the so-called Tory trust fund?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Minister of Health.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I know that the New Democratic operative method of campaigning inside and outside the House is to distort facts. I again repeat for my honourable friend, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, that his accusation that monies have gone from the Department of Health to the trust fund are totally and absolutely false. If he wishes to continue with that accusation, nothing prohibits him from doing that but I wish him to know that he is not telling the truth, Mr. Speaker. He is not telling the truth period, period.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in a phrase that was probably less direct than the phrase just used by the Minister, involving the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), the Member for Flin Flon withdrew unequivocally the phrase that he used. I would suggest that the Minister of Health, just having repeated twice the suggestion that the statements made by the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) are not true, which I think is highly debatable given the facts, but beyond that it is clearly unparliamentary. I would ask you to have the Minister of Health withdraw that statement.

* (1345)

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, did my honourable friend have a point of order?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order. A dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

Mr. Orchard: Absolutely.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer).

Mr. Doer: Is he still rambling on?

Mr. Speaker: I believe so. He was interjected by a point of order.

The Honourable Minister of Health.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, if "rambling on" is trying to make an honest person of the Leader of the New Democratic Party, yes, I am.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. As the Honourable Minister is quite aware, all Members in this Chamber are Honourable Members. Therefore, I would ask the Honourable Minister of Health to kindly withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I did not call him a dishonourable Member, but I will withdraw whatever you found objectionable to the House that I have said.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the Honourable Minister of Health.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I am very confident in this issue because when the Fourth Quarter figures come out, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) knows, the numbers will be there, and it will be close to the \$21 million I have been maintaining and that he had confirmed over the weekend, unless they find another bookkeeping way to change it.

Underspending

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Health. Why will he not confirm, over the budget that we approved in this Legislature last year, the budget for the Home Care Program that we approved collectively last year, that he indeed cut back between \$4 million and \$5 million in underspending for the elderly, the aged and the other people who required the Home Care services, which we brought forward case after case last year and have been forwarding to the Minister of Health over the last year? Why will he not confirm the truth in terms of the numbers and the cutbacks?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Concordia is quite aware that the Honourable Member should ascertain the accuracy of his facts before bringing it to the Legislature. Would the Honourable Member kindly rephrase his question?

Mr. Doer: Will the Minister now confirm that he underspent \$4 million to \$5 million in the Home Care Program in—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I have asked the Honourable Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) to kindly rephrase his question because the Honourable Member has to ascertain the facts before bringing it to the Legislature.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Health why, when he said that there were no cutbacks

in the Home Care Program, why did he underspend the Home Care Program between \$4 million and \$5 million in the fiscal year, cutting back that money in his underspending for the aged, for the elderly and for the people who need the Home Care Program in this province?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm the accuracy of my honourable friend's numbers simply because I have not seen the year-end March 31 numbers from the department and the Manitoba Health Services Commission. When I have those numbers, I will confirm to the last dollar what is involved in last year's spending.

Let me indicate to my honourable friend, because his allegations of cutbacks have been disproven every single step of the way, absolutely disproven. When we approve budgets in this House, I want to remind my honourable friend, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, that those numbers are maximum expenditures that we are given approval to spend. If the admissions to Home Care or any program do not meet the projections made some 15 months before the end of the year or longer in some cases, then the budget is underspent, the same way it was underspent in 1985-86 by the NDP.

Mr. Doer: The last year we were in office we overspent it because we were dealing with the aging population through Supplementary Estimates, and the Minister well knows that. My last question to the Minister of Health—(Interjection)—my final question to the—(Interjection)—the aging population was a priority of ours. You are absolutely right. Perhaps it should be for the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Downey).

Health Care Underspending

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question to the Minister, has there been any underspending in his department in the '88-89 fiscal year in major surgical areas, such as the surgery that we have seen and the line-ups that we have seen at the Health Sciences Centre, and in anaesthesiology in terms of the Province of Manitoba, another area that is begging for help from the Minister of Health.

* (1350)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as we explained last week when we were on a multi-Party, I guess it was, television debate on this issue of open-heart surgery that my honourable friend has referenced, I indicated then and I will indicate now that more open-heart procedures were done in the first year of our Government than have ever been done in the history of the Province of Manitoba.

The waiting list has increased admittedly, and we are investigating why that has happened in one hospital compared to the second hospital providing open-heart surgery. The bottom line remains, which my honourable friends in both the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party will not admit, that there were more

open-heart procedures and more angioplasty procedures done last year under our Government than ever in the history of the Province of Manitoba, an increase in service to those Manitobans needing that service.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): And, Mr. Speaker, more people on the waiting list.

ERDA Agreements Tourism Termination

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): On March 31 of this year, economic regional development agreements representing more than \$240 million in federal investment in this province lapsed. Now we are informed that the \$30 million Tourism Agreement will not be renewed.

This Government prioritized tourism as a major area for economic development. Last Session during Estimates, the Minister responsible stated that we need to spend some money in order to prepare ourselves to run a new marketing program next year. This year, the marketing program has been cut. The Minister was not even aware that the ERDA had lapsed or it was not going to be renewed, and he has no awareness of the impact of the sales tax on the industry.

My question to the Minister responsible for Tourism (Mr. Ernst) is, how is he going to meet the commitments contained in his own Throne Speech?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, part of the problem of obtaining your research from the front page of the paper is that very often it does not reflect the facts.

With regard to the existing ERDA Tourism Agreement, I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) in her final question, \$17 million has been spent, \$13 million has been allocated and is in the process of being committed over the next 10 months.

We have until March 31, 1990, to commit funds under that agreement. We have a further 18 months after that through which to flow the money so that until September 30, 1991, there will be funding flowing to the tourism industry in the Province of Manitoba through the Tourism Agreement.

In terms of the Honourable Member's suggestion that the tourism marketing budget has been cut, it has not. I indicated during the Budget Debate, I believe it was, that if they had bothered to look at the tourism global figures for marketing they would have known, or if they asked me they would have known that the funding under the marketing budget was overspent in 1987-88, had to be picked up in '88-89, so that the net result is no different than it was last year.

Mr. Alcock: In face of 5 percent inflation, that is indeed a cut, although the number is 8 percent.

Negotiations

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, it was just yesterday when the Premier (Mr. Filmon) assured us that they were actively negotiating these ERDAs and the other economic development issues which will be of, to use his words, benefit to Manitoba. Today, the very next day, we hear that the ERDA agreement will not be renewed. Can the Premier inform us of the status of the other agreements that he is currently negotiating?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has indicated and I will indicate again today to Members of the House, all earlier agreements—let me suggest, first of all, that the use of the term ERDA may not be what ultimately happens. Economic development agreements for Manitoba are under discussion at the moment with the federal Government. We are discussing those.

As a matter of fact, this alleged story that the Member opposite refers to with regard to the Tourism Agreement came from a meeting of Tourism Ministers two weeks ago wherein the Tourism Minister for the country indicated tourism funding of this nature would not now be delivered by the Tourism Department, but would be delivered in the case of western Canada by the Western Diversification Office, in the case of Atlantic Canada by the Atlantic Opportunities Office. So the question that it is not going to be renewed is also not entirely correct. On a technical basis, yes; on a practical basis, it is under discussion at the present time.

* (1355)

Mr. Alcock: So now we go to the WDO, which has been cut in itself, for money that has been cut from Manitoba, when we know we get a disproportionately small share of that money.

ERDA Agreements Premier Intervention

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, perhaps a question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) though, similar to the question I asked him yesterday, once again we hear of another federal program that has been allowed to lapse or been allowed to lapse to the detriment of Manitoba. The eastern Premiers have been able to arrange meetings with the Prime Minister. When will the meeting with this Premier (Mr. Filmon) take place with the federal Prime Minister to discuss these issues?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Believe me, Mr. Speaker, when and if I am meeting with the Prime Minister, it will be a public event that will be well-known to this Member and to anybody else who is interested.

Workers Compensation Claim Delays

Mr. Allan Patterson (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, today, all of us in this House received a copy of the letter written on Monday. By the way, I should say my question is directed to the Acting Minister responsible for the

Workers Compensation Board (Mr. McCrae). All Members received today a copy of a letter written on Monday to the Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board, expressing considerable dismay about the very lengthy waiting period for appeals at the Workers Compensation Board. Will the Minister today tell the House if he or she can give specific information as to the length of appeals now compared with a year ago?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney-General): The Honourable Member seeks specific information. In that regard, I will take his question and pass it on to the Minister responsible and see that the Honourable Member gets his answer.

Claim Analysis

Mr. Allan Patterson (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell the House today if the Workers Compensation Board has completed a claim analysis that was promised some time ago, and if so, what are the results?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney-General): With this question as well, I will ensure the Minister responsible is made aware of the question.

Business Plan

Mr. Allan Patterson (Radisson): Again to the same Acting Minister, can he tell us the status of the promised business plan from the Workers Compensation Board?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney-General): I am sure the Minister will want to answer that question as well.

ERDA Agreements Northern Development Agreement

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned from the federal Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Mr. Hockin, that the federal Government would not be renewing its commitments under Economic and Regional Development Agreements as they expire.

My question is to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey). Considering that both the Northern Development Agreement and the Special ARDA Agreement with the federal Government has expired on March 31, 1989, has the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) entered into negotiations with the federal Government to renew these agreements?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Native Economic Development Policy

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): These two cost-shared programs provide the essential human and economic infrastructure support to the northern and

Native communities. This Government has a year and a half to negotiate these agreements. I believe the federal Government will simply let the NDA and Special ARDA agreement expire. This means a cut of \$72 million under these two programs, together with the Native Economic Development Program.

My question to the Minister is, what plans does he have to ensure that the services to the aboriginal people and communities such as the education of Native teachers, Northern Nursing Program, Northern Bachelor of Social Work Program, assistance to upgrade sewer and water facilities, and the support to maintain traditional Native economic endeavours like trapping and fishing?

* (1400)

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for that question dealing specifically with the Northern Development Agreement and other agreements as it relates to northern Manitoba.

I have had a series of meetings with the federal Government. Staff have been meeting very aggressively these last few days. In fact, Monday senior officials of my department and senior officials of the federal Government met to discuss, under the Native Economic Development Program that was recently announced of some \$800-and-some million, we are preparing, with the federal Government, a Memorandum of Understanding as to how we, the province, and the people of the northern and Native communities, can benefit from that program. So there is an aggressive Memorandum of Understanding being worked on and we will be announcing that very shortly, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Contribution

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupertsland): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that the provincial Government has nothing in place to deal with the crisis that will result from the termination of these agreements. Last week, the federal Government announced a Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy to help fund commercial projects over five years, but it would not provide support for human and committee projects I have just outlined.

I want to ask the Minister of Northern Affairs, what is the provincial Government expected to contribute to this program? Will it make any decisions how the funds are allocated and how much can we expect here in Manitoba from this fund?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we want to make it very clear that when we were elected into office there was not a long-term agreement in place. In fact, all the former administration were able to accomplish was a one-year extension two different times. So they really did not have a long-term agreement in place, they had a band-aid approach to northern development and nothing firm or nothing long term. They had two one-year band-aid approaches, so we came into office where there had

not been any long-term planning on behalf of the North or Native communities.

So let it -(Interjection)- Well, Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the New Deppers does not want to hear the answer, then -(Interjection)- He will have his opportunity. But I say, the Member asked a specific question. I told him in my earlier answer that we were working on a Memorandum of Understanding with the federal Government, working very aggressively, and I hope within days that we are able to make a public announcement on it.

Rafferty-Alameda Dam Project Environmental Impact Study

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, when Lucien Bouchard was appointed as federal Environment Minister, replacing Tom McMillan, he said he would carry out to the letter all federal environment rules, laws and regulations, and then said, never, ever will jobs be ever considered impacted in any way from any environmental protection.

He also said he would correct the wrongs on Rafferty-Alameda, as carried out by his predecessor and the former Environment Minister here and the Environment Minister in Saskatchewan. Well, we know he stopped very short of a full, formal Stage 2 EIS, complete with a public hearings process and an independent panel.

So the question I have for our Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) is, what assurances has he received in writing from Mr. Bouchard that he will actually carry out that formal EIS on the Shoal Lake gold mine?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I presume this question was prompted again by the reporting that we saw in the Free Press today.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order. The Honourable Member for Wolseley has asked his question. I am sure he would like his answer.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we are in very serious negotiations with both the federal and the Ontario provincial Government as to what would be an acceptable and highly detailed assessment of the Shoal Lake project. He is indicating, from what he has read in the article, that there is a commitment to a federal EIS. That is not the case. The federal Minister has indicated to me personally, the same as he obviously indicated in response to questions in Ottawa, that he would assure that an assessment was done properly and in terms of what he considers adequate, and that may very well be a decision that he will have to make on whether or not Ontario comes forward with an adequate enough process.

Mr. Taylor: As usual, the assurances are not exactly clear-cut.

As a result of my visit to Stevens Island on Monday—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Chair is having some difficulty this past couple of days with this post-amble that we seem to be getting. These are not a preamble nor are they a question, so therefore they would be out of order.

The Honourable Member for Wolseley, with a supplementary question, please.

Mr. Taylor: I assume those rules will be applied to everybody equally.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member is coming very close to reflecting on the Chair. I have said that the Chair has been having some difficulty for the last couple of days. I would ask the Honourable Member to kindly withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Taylor: Those comments are withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the Honourable Member for Wolseley.

Gold Mine—Shoal Lake Tailing Sample Analysis

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) is, in that I was able to supply him with samples of ore from Stevens Island from the visit I had there Monday, when will he carry out an analysis of those tailing samples and provide same to this House?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): First of all, yes, I have received the samples from the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor).

I want to indicate to him that we have been indicating in this House for quite length of some time that we would be doing an analysis on and around the island. We have indicated that we would have that done before the end of this month. We would be sending people who were qualified hydrologists and qualified in the mineral area to take the samples and then oversee the analysis. We will also analyze the samples that he has brought forward. We will take samples that would be taken in a similar manner so that we may have a comparative sample and not unnecessarily create an impression that the situation on this island is out of control by possibly having taken a sample that cannot be totally verified or repeated.

For that reason, we will certainly be checking quite carefully on what we have in terms of the samples that the Member has brought forward. I want to indicate that this is no way reflects on his responsibility in bringing them forward, but that we want to have verifiable samples in all cases.

Winnipeg Water Protection Group Funding

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Wolseley, with his final supplementary question.

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): In that the only citizen group organized to fight for the maintenance of the pristine qualities of Shoal Lake is the Water Protection Group, WPG, the question to the Environment Minister (Mr. Cummings) is, will he involve WPG in all his discussions between his department and Ontario and the City of Winnipeg? Will he consider funding their operations, and will he consider using them as guides when his officials finally do inspect the Stevens Island site?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, there is a long list of questions there. First of all, let me indicate that I have met on a couple of occasions with the organization. At our first meeting, we indicated that we would share information. Certainly, they felt that they had information that was valuable to us and offered to share what they had at that time, and certainly we will keep them apprised.

Garrison Diversion Project Manitoba Impact

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): My question is also to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings), and I also want to comment that the Winnipeg Water Protection Group has been doing an excellent job of educating everyone of the importance of Shoal Lake to the citizens of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are well aware of the harmful effects posed by the Garrison Irrigation Project in our waters. While the full project has been mothballed for quite some time, there remains considerable support in North Dakota for the transfer of water from the Missouri water basin and the construction of the Lonetree Dam and Reservoir. Can the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) tell this House whether he has had an opportunity to familiarize himself with the project, and how is he being kept abreast of the project and how it may affect Manitoba?

* (1410)

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, if I may, just to indicate to the House and to the Honourable Member for The Pas, it is through my department and the office of Mr. Bob Clarkson that maintains a continuing monitoring service on what is happening on the Garrison.

The Honourable Member is correct. There are reasons that we ought to be monitoring that project. Currently, an appropriation Bill is moving through the federal House in Washington that adds some additional \$28 million to the project. In other words, proponents for the Garrison Project have not given up their hopes and aspirations of enlarging the project to its intended scale and size, which has problems for Manitoba.

I invite the Honourable Member to contact Mr. Bob Clarkson of my department at our Boundaries Waters office, now located in the basement of this building, for any information from time to time on that subject matter.

Mr. Harapiak: Mr. Clarkson did an excellent job for us when we were working towards stopping that Garrison Diversion.

Funding Appropriation

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): I would like to ask the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings), from an environmental perspective, is he aware that yesterday the U.S. House Appropriation Committee in Washington approved \$25 million for the Garrison Diversion Water Project in 1990? Is he aware that it is \$17 million more than the U.S. President himself had asked for, had recommended for the committee, and has he contacted the U.S. department to see what parts of the diversion it is going to be appropriated to?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, as was indicated by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), his department and mine are working quite closely on these trans-boundary water questions. I certainly will be wanting to keep myself apprised through Mr. Clarkson as he follows the progress of that, and I will be quite interested to see if that is the precursor of some action that is intended.

Mr. Harapiak: The Bill HR 2696 passed yesterday includes some strong statements in support of future funding for the project. It was also confirmed by the senator from North Dakota and the comments were supported by several speakers in the House. Will the Minister attempt to get details to see how this allocation is going to be affecting the water projects, how they will be affecting the waters of Manitoba?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, that goes without question that we absolutely will be following that project because certainly it is well-known that the proponents have never admitted they would be prepared to accept anything other than the going forward of that project.

Handicapped Students Transitional Committee

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): My question is for the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach). The Minister had indicated in this House the other day that there was a transitional planning committee that had been established across three departments and his department is certainly represented. The Prince Charles graduates graduate this evening and there are many graduates from other special programs throughout the city who will be graduating in the next couple of weeks. Can the Minister of Education tell the House today, have plans been established for programs for these graduates?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I have to indicate to the

Member that the transition committee that has been set up between the three departments was set up to plan for the transition of students who are graduating and are going into the post-education program, if you like, into the communities.

The committee met on June 7 and certainly have discussed their mandate on how to approach the many cases, not just in the Prince Charles, but there are many others that they are addressing. There will be another meeting scheduled in order to be able to address those concerns. This is a new and innovative step to help those students who have handicaps to be able to acclimatize themselves to a post-education kind of community program.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Ellice will have time for one final supplementary question.

Ms. Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting that the Minister has indicated this group has met only once when the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) told us that this committee was in place one year ago.

Can the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) indicate why he and the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) do not seem to have their facts straight, and why the community groups, the schools, the parents, the mentally handicapped and the community services workers do not even know that this committee that is supposed to do planning exists?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, there are continuously new programs that this Government is embarking on to assist those kinds of students who need this special kind of assistance to accommodate from the school setting to a community program. Our Government has seen that there is a need for departments to co-ordinate these kinds of programs and, for that reason, we have an interdepartmental committee that is made up to deal with these situations, and certainly that committee is dealing with them.

Mr. Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of urgent public importance.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), that under Rule 27, the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the impact of the federal Goods and Services Tax on Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Before determining whether the motion meets the requirements of our Rule 27, the Honourable Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) will have five minutes to state his case for urgency of debate on this matter. A spokesperson for each of the other Parties will also have five minutes to address the position of their Party respecting the urgency of this matter.

Mr. Alcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to address two issues. The first is simply the opportunity,

or other opportunities, for debate of this matter. There are no other Bills currently before the House and we are past the Budget and the Throne Speech Debates, so I think the debate that we are currently into is narrower and does not allow us the opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order. This is a very serious matter and the Honourable Member for Osborne does have five minutes to state his case. Each of the other Parties, as I have stated, will also have five minutes.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, the more important matter, the thing that makes this a very urgent matter is that the federal Government is, today and this week, deciding the contents of its technical documents that are going to come forward describing how this tax is going to be implemented. Our Finance Minister (Mr. Manness) states that he has no knowledge of the legal positions, that he has no knowledge of the impact of this new tax on Manitoba, and right now the federal Government is making the decisions that allows them to implement this tax.

Mr. Speaker, they said, when the Finance Minister federally announced that he was going to go ahead with this tax, it was because he needed time to prepare the system to implement it. That is why he could not wait any longer for the provinces and that is why we had to move immediately. They are now moving, and yet our Minister of Finance does not seem to have taken the time to apprise himself of the impact on this province. It is going to reduce personal income for individuals. It is going to cut job creation. It is going to harm tourism and, Mr. Speaker, I think the federal Government needs to know very clearly how this House feels about this tax.

I think the Minister of Finance federally needs to know Manitoba's position on this tax, and we need to know it now. We need an opportunity to express that opinion, Mr. Speaker, and the opportunity is today. So I would ask you to allow this debate to proceed.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Alcock) and I work together on an almost daily basis to discuss the arrangements for this House. The Opposition House Leader knows, as I do and as the House Leader for the New Democratic Party (Mr. Ashton) knows, that the end of June is approaching rather quickly. There are some important legislative matters in this Legislature to be dealt with, including important matters such as improving safety on our highways and streets relating to impaired driving, other legislative measures that the House Leaders have worked out together dealing with other legislative measures.

* (1420)

As a matter of fact, the Honourable Opposition House Leader (Mr. Alcock) and the House Leader for the New Democratic Party (Mr. Ashton) know that scheduled for today is the discussion on Bill No. 11 relating to electoral

divisions in this province. Now, at this stage of the day, the Opposition House Leader brings in another matter to discuss in the House, setting aside all other matters. The matter the Honourable Member raises is indeed an important matter. There is no question of the importance of the matter raised by the Honourable Member today. The fact of the matter is though, it is a federal issue, it is a federal decision that has been taken.

With regard to the Honourable Member's feelings about this issue, there are opportunities in this House. Honourable Members in this House each have the opportunity to grieve. Each time the Estimates motion is raised in the House, Honourable Members have that opportunity.

The Estimates of the Department of Finance are coming up. The Honourable Opposition House Leader could, at that time, raise the matter and spend as much time as he wishes to discuss the issue. This was the same, the issue is not a new issue. The issue was there at the time we had a wide-ranging debate on the Budget, wide-ranging debate on the Throne Speech, Interim Supply is coming up. The Honourable Opposition House Leader knows the schedule that he and I and our counterpart in the New Democratic Party have been working out together. Now today, we find that he wants, at the eleventh hour and with no notice to me, to change the schedule. The rules, I think, adequately cover the situation, Mr. Speaker, in this matter.

At this point, we have legislative initiatives that we need to get on with. We have a time consideration here and so I think the Honourable Member has ample opportunities available to him to discuss the matter he raises today.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I think that the Members of the Liberal Party are growing somewhat confused in terms of the role of matters of urgent public importance. I would submit that this matter has already been debated on a matter of urgent public importance through the motion that was introduced by the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) on Friday, May 19, and I will just read what the resolution discussed. It was a matter of urgent and public importance and it discussed the impact of the federal Budget and the devastating effect on Manitoba families and communities. The federal Budget included the proposals by the federal Government to bring in the value-added tax, the national sales tax, that this motion now, on June 21, is considering.

Now, I want to indicate that in the New Democratic Party we are quite pleased to debate the value-added tax and the national sales tax. We oppose it. We debated it on May 19. I might add that the Liberal Party, at that time, switched its initial position of opposing our matter of urgent public importance and actually supported it in the House, so it did proceed. I would submit it would be an abuse of the rules if this House was now to again debate this matter, given the fact that we did discuss it on May 19.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that there are other opportunities to debate it, as we have been

discussing. I am surprised the House Leader of the Liberal Party would be raising this, given the fact that we are discussing, as House Leaders, bringing in Interim Supply. I want to indicate, from the New Democratic Party, that certainly we would be more than happy to bring in Interim Supply at the earliest possible opportunity in order to further debate this matter, which could be legitimate.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

This is a very serious matter and the Honourable Member for Thompson is attempting to explain to me what is the urgency of this matter. The Honourable Member for Thompson, I would like to hear his remarks.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, we in the New Democratic Party would be more than happy to co-operate in bringing Interim Supply for it as soon as possible so that we can debate these and other matters.

I do feel, as I said, that this matter has already been considered. I think there is a growing desperation on the part of the Liberal Party when having, in this Session, decide they are going to vote against everything that they are attempting, Mr. Speaker, to I think turn the rules on their heads in this particular case and bring in a matter that we have already debated.

I would therefore, Mr. Speaker, in keeping with our rules which are very clear in terms of debating matters a second time, indicate that we in the New Democratic Party, while we are certainly willing to debate the issue of the sales tax at any time, feel that the way in which this has been brought forward by the Liberal Party is not appropriate. It would be better dealt with through Interim Supply.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I would like to thank all Honourable Members for their advice. The Honourable Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) has provided me with notice of this matter as required by our rules.

As Honourable Members know, Beauchesne Citation 389 provides that a matter, to be considered as a matter of urgent public importance, it must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention.

Similarly, Beauchesne Citation 390 provides that there must be no ordinary opportunity which will allow the matter to be brought on early enough. It is my understanding, from information contained in the federal Budget papers and from information obtained from provincial and federal Government sources that the tax referred to by the Honourable Member will be implemented on January 1, 1991.

Therefore, in my opinion, the two conditions referred to in Beauchesne's have not been met. I must, therefore, rule the matter out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, it is with the greatest respect I must challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained? All those in favour will please say yea. All those opposed will please say nay. In my opinion, the yeas have it.

Mr. Alcock: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Call in the Members.

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

YEAS

Ashton, Burrell, Connery, Cummings, Cowan, Derkach, Doer, Downey, Ducharme, Driedger (Emerson), Enns, Ernst, Evans (Brandon East), Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Hammond, Harapiak, Harper, Helwer, Hemphill, McCrae, Maloway, Manness, Mitchelson, Neufeld, Orchard, Oleson, Penner, Pankratz, Praznik, Storie, Wasylcyia-Leis.

NAYS

Carstairs, Charles, Cheema, Carr, Alcock, Edwards, Kozak, Yeo, Angus, Gaudry, Evans (Fort Garry), Minenko, Lamoureux, Rose, Patterson, Mandrake, Gray, Taylor, Driedger (Niakwa).

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas, 33; Nays, 19.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

Mr. McCrae: Perhaps now, Mr. Speaker, we can get on with the agenda as agreed upon by the House Leaders.

Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Bill No. 11?

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENT

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupert's Land): Can I have leave of the House to make a non-political statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for Rupert's Land have leave to make a non-political statement? (Agreed)

Mr. Harper: Mr. Speaker, the Indian organizations have closed their doors today to commemorate the First Nations' special relationship with Canada and to draw attention to the continuing struggle for recognition of aboriginal and Treaty rights by the Government of Canada.

June 21 is a day which the First Nations in Canada recognize as National Indian Solidarity Day. Based on a General Assembly Resolution passed in 1982, the chiefs of Canada unanimously declared that June 21 of each year will be so recognized.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (1450)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECOND READING

BILL NO. 11—THE ELECTORAL DIVISIONS AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier) presented Bill No. 11, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les circonscriptions électorales, for second reading, to be referred to a committee of this House.

MOTION presented.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present for second reading to this House an Act to incorporate changes to the electoral divisions we represent in this House.

We in this province can be proud of the long-standing process that we have established to ensure the boundaries of our electoral divisions are set in an open and non-partisan fashion. This is now the fourth time that a Government has presented the recommendations of an independent Electoral Divisions Boundaries Commission with its membership established by law and direct accountability to this Legislature.

During the course of their deliberations, the commission held hearings in Thompson, The Pas, Winnipeg, Dauphin, Brandon, and Portage la Prairie. A total of 65 representations were made at those hearings. An additional 66 written briefs were submitted by individuals and organizations.

I would like to commend the commissioners for the fine job that they have done, given the constraints of the Act. My caucus and I will be supporting this Bill when it comes to the floor of the House.

But let me return to the public hearing process for a moment, Mr. Speaker, to address the concerns that were incorporated within the Electoral Divisions Boundaries Commission's report under "Other Observations.

Although the commission recognizes that it is not within their mandate to make recommendations regarding regional representation, there was such a strong outcry at the reduction of rural and northern representation incorporated in these changes that the commissioners felt bound to include a specific section dealing with those concerns.

We as a Legislature would be derelict in our duty if we did not listen to the concerns raised in the hearings and noted in the report. We as a Legislature will be derelict in our duty if we do not act to address those concerns.

Members who represent rural and northern communities face many unique and difficult challenges above those shared by urban Members. I know I do not need to remind you, Sir, of these difficulties. Rural and northern Members have a fundamental handicap in serving their constituents through the requirement to spend much of the year here in Winnipeg, in the Legislature, rather than in their constituencies meeting and listening to the people they serve.

As an urban Member, I can meet constituents or attend events in my constituency with relative ease at any point in time. I have the ability to go home every night to my family. Rural and northern Members do not share these advantages. They must spend a great deal of time away from their families and away from their constituents.

Not only do the rural and northern MLAs have less time to give to their constituents, it takes them longer to get around their constituency. You can drive through some city ridings in less than five minutes. The new riding of Rupertsland stretches from Fort Alexander to the Northwest Territories border. These difficulties must be addressed.

I believe there is a two-step process to be undertaken if we are to ensure that northern and rural Manitoba receive fair and adequate representation in this Legislature.

The first step is the one that we are taking as a Government. The strongest argument for better representation for rural and northern Manitoba would be more people in rural and northern Manitoba. The changes incorporated into this Bill reflect the ongoing shift of population towards Winnipeg, away from our rural and northern communities. The best means of countering that trend is to proceed with policies that foster strong economic growth and thus create opportunities for rural and northern Manitobans to stay and prosper in their home communities. We have established a number of rural and northern development programs to secure that goal. We have certainly, throughout our short time in Government, been meeting with Chambers of Commerce, with regional business development organizations.

We have established Cabinet offices in Brandon and Thompson to try and spread the influence of Government into those areas, so we can be more aware of and more involved with opportunities for economic growth.

We have taken some initial steps toward decentralization, with the addition of staff in the old former Boissevain Land Titles Office, with the Unified Family Court, with its operations in Brandon and its influence going beyond into northern Manitoba and the region surrounding The Pas.

We have established a task force to try and come up with viable plans and alternatives for diversifying Government activities and operations into rural Manitoba. We have keyed on a number of economic development activities, not the least of which is the sale of Manfor to Repap, the largest single industrial development activity that will ever take place in this province, with the investment of a billion dollars, the addition of some 400 new jobs, Mr. Speaker.

All of these are an indication that we believe it is important to decentralize Government activities to accentuate opportunities for economic development and, therefore, jobs and more opportunities for people in rural and northern Manitoba.

There is a second step that must be taken but which can only proceed with the co-operation of all Members

in this House. I believe we need to establish an all-Party committee to address some of the legal and constitutional aspects associated with northern and rural representation. There are four particular issues of concern that I feel such a committee would have to address.

Firstly, such a committee should consider expanding or altering the Electoral Division Boundaries Commission to ensure that rural and northern views are represented within that body. As well, we need to look at the option of expanding the Legislature, perhaps to 60 seats, as a means of providing more Members to represent rural and northern communities while allowing the City of Winnipeg to retain its strength. We need to examine the issue of variance from the provincial average and see if we can do a better job of balancing the principle of every vote being equal against the realities of representing rural and vast northern constituents.

Lastly, we need to examine the issue of timing of the next redistribution to see if we can readdress the imbalance that has been created as an unfortunate side effect of a very valued process. It is important that we proceed to pass this Bill even despite our concerns, to ensure that the boundary settlement process remains above and beyond the reach of day-to-day politics that is part and parcel of this House. However, we as a Legislature would be negligent if we simply pass this Act without taking any further action to meet the needs and concerns expressed through the public consultation process that accompanied the development of this Bill.

I call upon all Members and all Parties of this Legislature to join with our caucus as we strive to find new and innovative solutions to the outstanding issues which remain. I certainly recommend this Bill to the House, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of my Party to indicate our support for this piece of legislation, but also to put some comments on the record.

I was asked by the previous Premier, Howard Pawley, to meet with him prior to the introduction of this legislation which brought about these present boundaries. I am sure the now Premier (Mr. Filmon), then Leader of the Opposition, did exactly the same thing.

* (1500)

At that particular moment, I expressed to the previous Premier my desire to see the House increased to 60 seats because I believed that was a way in which we could provide for both adequate representation from the City of Winnipeg, and also not decrease the number of seats that were given to rural Manitoba and to the North.

At that point, the Premier indicated that was not the will of the Government and that they wish to maintain the present number of seats in the Manitoba Legislature. Therefore, I agreed to the legislation as did all Members when it was introduced. That legislation provided for differentials. It provided for a 25 percent differential

for the North and it provided for a 10 percent differential for the remainder of Manitoba outside of the Perimeter.

Unfortunately, when the boundaries were presented, they did not reflect the 25 percent differential nor indeed the 10 percent differential. That caused my Party to have concerns, sufficient concerns that they made representations to the Boundaries Commission. We indicated, at that time, that we were unhappy with the lack of attention that had been paid to both the 25 percent and the 10 percent differential. We also indicated our concern because place names of historic value had been lost. Constituency names like Fort Rouge had disappeared. A constituency name like Seven Oaks had disappeared. We offered the suggestion that perhaps they could be double-barrelled, that the constituency of Osborne could have been Fort Rouge-Osborne, because it included almost all of historic Fort Rouge, and that Seven Oaks could have become Seven Oaks-Kildonan and in that way again an historic name was apt to be preserved.

Unfortunately, because it is an independent Boundaries Commission, all we can do is give advice. We cannot dictate to them and that is as it should be. If we are not to be accused of gerrymandering, if we are not to be accused of using undue political influence, then they need only listen to our advice and they need not accept our recommendations.

We also had concerns, Mr. Speaker, because of what was happening in terms of the commission itself. That is why when a piece of legislation was introduced in a Private Member's Bill in this Chamber, broadening the numbers of the individuals who would make up the Boundaries Commission, I supported that legislation. Unfortunately, it was not supported by the Government of the Day and, therefore, it did not pass. I have grave concerns when the Boundaries Commissioners all have their residence within the City of Winnipeg and, therefore, there is little or no input from those who live in the North or live in rural Manitoba.

We look forward to a committee which the Premier has indicated he wishes to establish, an all-Party commission which, before the next boundaries are developed, will create a number of new ideas and innovative procedures, one of which hopefully will be to broaden the number of individuals represented on the Boundaries Commission so that rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba will be represented by those commissioners.

We also believe that we must look at how much dictation can be provided in the legislation to the Boundaries Commission with regard to the differential. I look forward to a lively discussion in that all-Party committee to establish rules which will maintain the absolute independence of the Boundaries Commission but at the same time create an understanding and an awareness that Manitoba is a strange and unique province in that so many of its citizenry live within one city.

It is unlike any other province in the nation and, therefore, we must look to see if we cannot have legislation that would reflect that ambiguity, that strangeness within the Canadian family, but at the same

time not in any way violate any Charter provisions as, for example, has been challenged in the Province of British Columbia where the Supreme Court has said that the British Columbia constituencies are not reflective of the principle of one vote-one individual, and that their differentiations are so widespread that it cannot even be considered to be within an average. It cannot even be considered to be practicable in a democratic society which represents representation by population.

We are pleased to support this legislation. We are looking forward to the challenge of establishing a new Boundaries Commission, to the challenge of establishing new legislation and, with deep hope, that next time the boundaries are developed there will be fairness and equity to all sections of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition):

I too rise to support the Bill which is a reflection of the Independent Boundaries Commission Report of Manitoba, a system that has been put in place, as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) have indicated, in the fourth occasion in terms of this province, an independent system of establishing political boundaries that is impartial and unique in many of the western democratic systems where Governments today have some kind of Government-appointed commission, usually through personalities, and decide on the boundaries. Often they are, if not gerrymandered, perceived to be gerrymandered, and I think that is very unfortunate.

The tradition we have in this House, through three political Parties being in Government, of an impartial Boundaries Commission I think is a good one, and therefore it is consistent with that principle that one rises to speak on this Bill.

I have travelled through northern and rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that there are some weaknesses in the commission's report. I believe the variation that was allowed for in the Bill should have been considered more in the deliberations of the independent commission. I respect their right to disagree with us, and they did, but I believe the variations that were placed in the Bill for northern Manitoba and for rural Manitoba were fair.

Perhaps we should be looking at the words "shall" rather than "may." As an old person who was involved in a bit of negotiation before, I understand the difference in the meaning of those two words.

I think that is important for us to look at over time to deal with the obvious problems of representing a challenge, as representing a northern and remote seat, a rural seat versus an urban seat, which I represent. It is easier to represent an urban seat. I mean, you are in a situation, whether it is in Winnipeg or Brandon or Dauphin, but even Dauphin now has a rural component. You are in a situation where your community is much closer together geographically and you are also closer to this Legislative Building, as has been indicated before.

I have travelled throughout the communities that now will be represented by one constituency in Rupertsland.

The vast nature of that constituency and the impossible, almost impossible, task of travelling to communities that are not even on highways or are not even on normal transportation routes, some of which do not even have regular air service in any way, shape or form. I know whoever wins that seat in the future, it is going to be an absolutely horrendous job to represent that seat.

I have travelled in seats in rural Manitoba that also will be much more difficult to represent and I respect that. We certainly will look at any creative way of dealing with that reality in Manitoba, balancing the principle of population in voting but also balancing the other factor, and that is distance, in our deliberations in the future. I believe that it is important that we maintain the principle in this Chamber of passing the boundaries as they have been prepared by the independent Boundaries Commission.

* (1510)

I think it is important that in future deliberations, the Boundaries Commission—I believe there was a resolution on the floor last year and I spoke to it about the representation on the committee looking at institutional positions from the North, institutional positions from rural Manitoba, to add to the institutional positions that are presently on that. So we have a very open mind, as we said last year when the resolution was before the Chamber from the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer).

We believe that this is the one Bill that all Parties support traditionally in this Chamber in a very statespersonlike way. I noticed that in the last time we had it, there was one speaker or two from our Party. Before in '69, there were a few others to talk about the local concerns, but the tradition has been one of principle in this Chamber for the last number of years. We will be voting with the principle of the Bill and, therefore, with the Bill in terms of the independent Boundaries Commission.

We are pleased it is going to be debated and decided upon on that basis, but we will be looking forward to the day that we can deal with the remote and northern problems and the real problems of representing rural ridings as well as the balance with population. We look forward to any kind of endeavour in that regard after the Bill is passed. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs):

Mr. Speaker, I rise to put a few comments on the record as a rural representative and a Member who has, for many years, felt very strongly about the concerns of representation. I guess, first of all, we want to be very thankful as a province and as a country that we have the right and the opportunity to have a democratic system of elected people who speak on behalf of those constituents. I know that is the basis from which we all work, and we want to continue to make that system work as effectively as possible.

I just have to say, Mr. Speaker, that the comments of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) very much reflect my desire. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) and the Leader of the Second Opposition

Party (Mr. Doer), I hope, are very sincere, and I am sure they are, in their concern for the second step which has to be taken, that second step of an all-Party committee after this Bill is passed to deal with the difficulties of the remoteness and the rural communities being represented, the changes to the Boundaries Commission make-up, that we do have people who understand the boundaries of where the communities of trade, the hospital regions, the school division regions and the general make-up of our different communities, so that when a Member is travelling throughout their constituency that they can communicate as easily as possible in a common arena. That, I think, is extremely important that we have someone on the commission who understands that very thing. Communities of trade, hospital districts, school divisions, there are many communities of common interest that MLAs can communicate with on a very, very good basis and that again is the basis for the make-up of the commission being representative of those areas.

I think timing is another one, Mr. Speaker, and I say this very sincerely. There are many Members, my colleagues, and I am sure the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), sitting in the position that he is in, as many other rural and northern Members, that sometimes we tend to pass these Bills, it comes into place and we sit back and say, well, you know, it is done, we cannot do much about it. I think, as 57 legislators, we do have the opportunity to do something about it, and I do not want to see us sit back and say it is done, we have to wait 10 years. I would hope that the all-Party committee would deal very seriously with the time element because our life, as politicians, does not last that long. We do not want to leave the situation that would develop in the province for the people following us that we leave a mark that is not one advantageous to representation, but in fact could take away that very important voice of rural and northern Manitoba.

Let me say, it is my understanding of the original history of the province that we had a Senate, as we have in the Canadian system, to look after some of the regional problems that were developed. Now, Mr. Speaker, I say this very seriously. I guess, if we were not able to correct it, then there would be many of us who are getting to our latter years in political life—well, not quite that far, however—that we would be standing here advocating a Senate so that we could in fact take care of the imbalance of representation.

Appreciating the difficulties we are having today with the Canadian Senate and getting some reform, I do not think we would want to go in that direction, but it is probably the last option. So very seriously, it is a matter that our constituents, the Union of Municipalities and all the organizations, have been speaking out very loudly and clearly as to what they feel should be done. We cannot take lightly their recommendations. I am sure that all Members here do not take lightly the responsibility. I am sure that any committee that would be established would work very aggressively to deal with the matter at hand, to make sure that we have a balance in this province, we have a fair voice in this province, not only for the City of Winnipeg but for rural and northern people who are equally as important, and

their say is equally important in the expenditures and to the policies of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I fully endorse the Bill plus the second step to get on with reform of the legislation for this province.

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put some comments on the record in discussion of this Bill, not so much to deal with the substance of the arguments which have been made so far because I agree with all of them. I agree with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs), the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) when they talk about fairness and equity for all Manitobans. I also agree that it is very important that these decisions be made by a group of individuals who represent all of Manitoba and not just the citizens of Winnipeg.

Rather, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mourn the passing of the name Fort Rouge. I do so as likely the last representative of that constituency until another Boundaries Commission makes more recommendations about names. Let me remind my colleagues in this House that it was in the 1730s that the great Pierre La Verendrye who explored much of the mid continent of North America, who built on the north bank of the Assiniboine River and the forks of the Red, Fort Rouge. The name has resonance in the history of our province.

Mr. Speaker, many very distinguished Manitobans have had the pleasure of representing the people of Fort Rouge. It is in many ways the most unusual riding in all of the province because it has contained within it not only the historic confluence of the Red and the Assiniboine Rivers, but this very building itself. The history of democracy in our province, the exploration routes that were taken by the early explorers not only of this part of Canada, Mr. Speaker, but all of North America, has its roots in this very centre of what I consider to be our community.

* (1520)

It is with deep regret that I mourn the passing of a great historic name, not only because I do not have a seat any more, Mr. Speaker—that is a political matter that will have to be debated and choices will be forthcoming—that is not the important issue. The important issue is that a name that is laden with meaning and of historical significance for all of the people of Manitoba has been lost. It is my duty, as the representative of the people of Fort Rouge, to put on the record the mourning of that passing.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise and put a few comments on the record on behalf of my constituents with regard to the new electoral boundaries map which has a fairly large impact on the western side of the province. Numerous Members already have touched on the issue that representation is difficult in a large riding that we have out in rural Manitoba.

I can tell the Members that in the present riding that I represent, Virden, it is a little over 100 miles from

corner to corner. It will take me as long to drive across my riding as it will take many city Members to walk across theirs. Plus, the distance I am from my riding is not easy. In fact, it is nearly impossible for me to be home during the week to attend events or to go to meetings or meet with constituents for any reason so, therefore, we have suffered a severe disadvantage because of distance and size.

Clearly, what has happened in western Manitoba, just for the record, I would like to tell people what the rural people are looking at out there. In the 1970s, before the last electoral boundaries map change, we had four ridings down the western side of the province. They were Roblin, Birtle-Russell, Virden and Arthur, right down the western side of the province into the southwest corner. The last boundary change took it down to three. That was about 10 years ago. At the present, we have Roblin-Russell, Virden and Arthur. This new map, if you look at the map, down the west side we go down to two ridings, Roblin-Russell and Arthur-Virden. We have gone from four to two ridings over a course of a little over 10 years.

My constituents are not pleased with that because they have half the representation in here to voice their opinions on issues, and the ability to meet their Member or see their Member is greatly decreased by that size factor, the size of the riding factor.

Although I support the democratic process very strongly, we have made a decision in here or the previous Government passed an Act. It set up a Boundaries Commission with representation, a non-partisan representation, and they came forward with recommendations, all legal and all up front, and we have to support it. The recommendations put on the record by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) with regard to looking at how we address the problems that this map has created, it is very essential they be done immediately and they be done, as the Member for Arthur (Mr. Downey) said, sooner than 10 years. I think it is very important that it be done that way.

The purpose for my rising today is to express concern for the decrease in representation that we are going to experience, concern that the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) mentioned, that the difference between "may" and "shall" in terms of using the variance that was allowed. In my opinion, they did not use it to the extent they could have to maintain the representation. There is no question that the City of Winnipeg deserves this representation. If they shall stay at 30, 31 seats, rural Manitoba would like the opportunity to have the equal representation. To expand the House to 60 seats would be one way to accommodate that.

I guess on my side of the House we are somewhat disappointed the Private Members' resolution that the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) brought forward last year was not supported by the other side of the House. So I guess I am pleased at this point to see that probably they changed their position on that issue, by what the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) has said in her comments today and the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) too.

Maybe we are coming to a common position with regard to trying to have some representation that is

as fair and equal for rural Manitoba. I see the Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) nodding his head no, saying no, we should not have representation equal for Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for St. James, on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, the Minister has made reference to my nodding of my head in response to a comment that he has made. It in no way was reflective of disagreement with the fact that rural and northern Manitoba need better and more representation.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The point of order is?

Mr. Edwards: It had to do specifically with how the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) proposed to address that problem, that alone.

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

Mr. Findlay: That is interesting because the same end result occurred. You said no to it before and, if you are saying yes to it now, I would like you to get up when your opportunity comes and put that on the record very clearly as to where you stand.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker, William Chornopyski, in the Chair.)

There is no question that we want, in rural Manitoba, an equal opportunity to be heard on issues in this Legislature because it is a democratic process. We all believe in it. It is the strength of our society. The only reason for my rising today is not to object to the Bill that is in front of us, because that is not something we want to do, but to put on the record my desire to have my constituents' concerns recognized in what happens after this Bill is passed, in terms of the all-Party committee, which will look at trying to have some variance to get the representation back to where we consider it to be fair and justified.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to put those comments on the record because my constituents and many other rural Manitobans came forward in great numbers in the some 65 representations, oral representations, and 66 written briefs and said precisely the same thing. We want to have maintained equal representation in rural Manitoba, and however that can be achieved by our abilities here and hereafter this Bill is passed, is very important to them, and I hope that you will all look at it in the light of fairness and equality. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too rise to speak on this Bill and speak in support of the Bill as it is introduced. I hope I will be able to put a new topic on the table. As a Westerner—and I do consider myself a Westerner now—I moved out to Manitoba in 1968, and I have constantly and incessantly heard, and I am now certainly a believer of it, that the West continues to be ignored by the East, that being the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario.

We are, in this House and throughout Canada, particularly those classified as western provinces, discussing Senate reform and the need for equality in representation. As a person living outside the Perimeter Highway, I see the same attitude occurring within the Province of Manitoba that some people feel that all the power lies within the City of Winnipeg, and then there are the others. I am sure when you go beyond the lakes and become a Northerner that they then feel and realize that the power is not with the North. It is with those to the south, and particularly those in the City of Winnipeg.

As much as we speak on inequalities across the nation, I think we have forming in Manitoba inequalities of representation within the province itself. Even if it is a perceived inequality, it is a very serious matter, because I think we are as free and democratic as we believe ourselves to be, and that we are more likely to take and stand up for our responsibilities and our rights when we believe we have full ability to do so. I really do fear that I am hearing out in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba the sense of hopelessness of, what is the matter, the City of Winnipeg will decide it anyhow. I think that is being discussed here over and over again, the sense of helplessness of those in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba, the sense that their vote does not count quite as much because it is so scattered around.

It is very difficult for rural people to get to their Members of the Legislature. When you look at some of the new ridings decided upon within this Act, this Bill that we are looking at today, you realize that some will be almost impossible to get to their Member of the Legislature. The expanse is just impossible. I see that quite obviously even in the small riding I have myself, the centre being the Town of Selkirk. The way the past boundaries have been made, the constituency of Gimli surrounds my constituency, and I have as many members from the constituency of Gimli come into my office as I do people from Selkirk. That is understandable because the Town of Selkirk becomes their service centre. People from East Selkirk are not going to drive over to the Town of Teulon on a daily basis to meet their Member of their Legislature, and I appreciate that. I am very pleased to be able to help my neighbours, my fellow constituents, and my neighbouring towns with any of their problems.

I am sure we all have that, we who represent particularly rural Manitoba, where we know that transportation problems exist and coming into town from time to time can be a big event on varying scales. I can appreciate how much it is in the North, that this becomes a day they put aside to do their errands, and one may be to raise a problem of concern to their Member of the Legislature. I have no problems in dealing with these constituents, but I am sure that the person who they elected would be their preference to go to if that were possible.

I certainly appreciate those people in this House who represent large rural ridings, who have several towns and service centres within it, if not numerous, and the difficulty in trying to get out to their people whom they represent. I think that the sense of inequality does exist.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) asked us whether we have changed our mind in supporting the resolution put forward for the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) last year. The answer is definitely we have not. We do not believe that numbers should be fixed within the Bill itself, the Act itself. We do not believe in fixing the numbers of representation because if this commission had taken in the numbers that they could have given, the 25 percent and 10 percent differences, then they would have been able to create an equality there. They were left out only in the manner that it was undertaken.

Because of that, I myself have put forward a resolution last Session and again this Session, which I hear spoken to today, and I am very pleased to hear, that we have to change the representatives on the commission in some manner to represent the make-up of Manitoba. That, I hope, will include representation from the North and from rural Manitoba and perhaps may not be limited to three in number but perhaps go to five or whatever it would take to make true representation on the commission of what Manitoba is about.

I think we all have to deal with the perception of equality in this province because we all need to feel that we have as much right to our elected representative, we have as much right to a vote as anyone else does, whomever your neighbour may be. If we do not have a sense of equality, then it will be reflected somewhere along the line. I think we all support all Manitobans and their rights and their accessibility to being part of the democratic system.

* (1530)

I look forward to hasty passing of this Bill. There is no need to hold it up in any way that I can see. I look forward to an all-Party committee where we can discuss these issues in more detail and come up with an agreed-upon solution to the problems in Manitoba. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to make a few remarks. A lot of remarks have been made already in terms of the representation in the rural area, the difficulty that it is to serve in some of the rural areas versus the urban ridings. I will not get into that. I would be remiss if I did not express some concern and disappointment in terms of the way the boundaries were cut up in this particular case.

I know that all 57 Members here look at how it affects their riding. If anybody wants to take the time to look and see what they have done with the initial Emerson riding, I think I would probably have a lot of sympathy from a lot of the Members. This is the second time I have had the privilege to be involved in redistribution, an important position, whatever, because I went through this last time, based on population, and I had no argument at that time. They extended my constituency dramatically, starting from the Perimeter all the way to the southeast corner in Middlebro, the southeast corner of Ontario and the United States. However, I have always enjoyed serving that area. It has been a real challenge. What has happened, the people themselves sort of have

developed the understanding of how they fit into the constituency plan.

What they have done in this particular drawing, if anybody wants to go and have a look, they have cut it out four different ways. Unfortunately, the quota of the population figure in my constituency did not really fall, but it was a matter of how they started drawing. Then they came finally to the southeast corner and they used it as a jigsaw puzzle to sort of make things fit because they took the bottom portion and left that as the Emerson riding and moved the majority of the population across Highway 75 to the west. Then they took out another chunk of it, the St. Pierre-Otterburne area, and moved that into the Morris riding. Then they took two more communities and threw that into the new riding of Steinbach. Then they took the north end of my constituency and threw that into the La Verendrye riding. Now, if anybody really wants to, look at what a hodgepodge they created in my constituency.

I have to be a little careful that I do not get a little emotional about this thing because you develop a relationship within your constituency over a period of 12 years. Now that does not assure me that next time I would be the representative, but most certainly the thinking and the feeling within the constituency, people take certain pride in that. All of a sudden, you massacre the thing in four different ways, and I just want to express that kind of disappointment.

I think I would support any activity in terms that we review how the process is being done. Obviously, nothing will change in this particular time and the next one is 10 years from now or whenever. I want to express that kind of a concern that we develop a better system of doing this because I think what has happened in some cases—you know, we are all a little selfish. Some of the Members, obviously, their ridings have maybe enhanced their potential for re-election.

Be that as it may, and I do not fault them for saying, well, it is not that bad. In my particular case, I feel I have a genuine concern that I wanted to express here today. I would support anything that we look at for the future in doing it in a better way. I just once again ask the Members, if you have concerns whether the system is right, look at the figures in my constituency, Emerson constituency, over the last ten years, the population figures, and then look at what they have done with my riding. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there must be a better way. I felt I would be remiss if I did not express my concerns here today. Thank you.

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to add my thoughts to this debate today.

I think there are two issues that I would like to deal with. One is the process that has taken place regarding boundaries revision. While I do not agree with the end result, I think I can agree with other Members who say we must support that process and that we cannot tamper with that at this late date. I think, on that basis, I will certainly be voting in favour of this legislation. I think there is general agreement that the process has to be maintained.

Secondly, I am very interested in the new-found recognition of the merits of a resolution I introduced last year. I think it is important that we revisit some of those things. I am pleased to see the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) and the Leader of the Second Party embracing some of those ideas.

Previous speakers have talked about the lack of rural representation that this new legislation is going to bring about. I think it is important that we address that and address that fairly quickly. The concept of an all-Party committee seems to have garnered some support, and it would be the proper place to deal with that.

I would point out that this sort of situation is not unique, that the concept of balancing the one person-one vote with regional representation has been dealt with in the United States. Two hundred years ago, when the makers of the American Constitution met, the manner in which they chose to deal with the large state-small state problem was a compromise, and that was the creation of an American Senate, where all states had equal representation.

I am not suggesting, as perhaps the previous speaker did, that is a solution here. I am making the point that it is not a unique case, that other legislators, other framers of constitutions have had to deal with that problem, and have found the creative solutions that the Leader of the NDP (Mr. Doer) suggested.

Within Canada, there have been examples where regional representation was a concern and solutions were found there. I think we in Manitoba can find a made-in-Manitoba solution to this dilemma we are facing.

Other speakers have mentioned the difficulty in representing a rural riding as opposed to an urban riding. I would certainly echo that, that the distance from this seat of Government makes it a little more difficult to represent the people in the rural part of Manitoba, and most certainly in northern Manitoba.

I think we have to address that issue, and by increasing the size of the House to 60, by changing some of the other factors involved with redistribution, I think we can maintain that representation in the rural areas. I am only sorry that this had not happened a couple of years previous to this. I think it is a problem that perhaps was perceived too late to do anything about it. I am very heartened by the comments that I have heard from both Opposition Parties and Members of my Party, that they want to form this all-Party committee and deal with this issue as soon as possible.

I would suggest that the use of that variance is probably the manner in which that can be done. Certainly, the one person-one vote idea is very basic to democracy. Nobody can argue any differently. The variance and the use of that variance would allow the rural and northern areas to have that representation they so dearly deserve and want.

I can tell you that my experience, after introducing this resolution in the House last year, was that people from all over Manitoba, including from the City of Winnipeg, phoned and wrote letters of support, that the Union of Manitoba Municipalities passed a resolution to that effect.

I hear the support now coming from the other two Parties, and I would hope that this all-Party committee can be called very soon and that the areas that have been identified can be dealt with, and that we do not have to wait 10 years to rectify what many people in rural and northern Manitoba see as a tremendous injustice. Many of them have gotten used to being able to locate their Member and there is going to be a tremendous amount of confusion with new boundaries, particularly in the southeastern part of the province where the map has been carved up in a rather disconcerting way, in a manner in which I think natural trading areas, school divisions, the historical boundaries have been done away with.

* (1540)

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair.)

I would hope that we can deal with that in this committee, that we can bring recommendations forward in a unanimous way and bring that legislation before the House in the next few months or the next year, and that we do not have to wait 10 years to try and rectify this.

I would simply close by again saying that I am pleased that there is the recognition of the merits in that resolution, and I would hope that all Members can co-operate. I realize that co-operation is not always easily attained in this Chamber, but it seems from the comments that have been made by the other Parties that we are on the verge of that co-operation and that we can bring this legislation forward and remedy this problem.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity of putting these thoughts on the record.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, my contribution to this Bill will not be lengthy but let me indicate that I too rise to express some concerns, I suppose in retrospect, looking and watching closely what has happened over the past two or three months, given the legislation that has been on the books, given the intentions, and I say the well-meaning intentions of the former Government, indeed ourselves in Opposition, indeed the MLA for River Heights, the now Leader of the Official Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs), as we have gone through this exercise over a period of not months but, I would say, years.

Mr. Speaker, one can always learn from the activities and I suppose what I have learned through this exercise is that best intentions captured by those that write laws, which we debate and ultimately pass or reject, still at times tend to be weak. When I make that statement, I reflect specifically on the area of variance. I know under the old legislation there were variance levels of 25 percent. At the time I was one, I guess, who thought that there was probably some good common sense, understanding the principle of representation by population that there should be some narrowing of those limits. I know that was the basis on which the former Government, when it brought forward its legislation, I believe in 1987—or was it '86, '87 I think—conceived and drafted its new legislation.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think what those of us forgot, even myself when I indicated, when I spoke to that Bill, that when one looked at the 10 lowest ranking in terms of population, constituencies through the province, they seem to gravitate into a regional area. I sensed that maybe there was some wisdom to narrow that variance by some degree. But, Mr. Speaker, I guess what I forgot to study, and I think my colleague, the MLA for Pembina (Mr. Orchard), will probably provide in some greater detail, is that there had been over many decades a reflection of the common desire of the legislators in the Province of Manitoba to allow certain degrees of variation and that to ratchet that back violently from 25 percent to 10 percent caused an incredible slippage in the representation of particularly rural seats.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I guess what I have learned through it, that moderation is still the best course of action because that ratcheting back of the loss of rural representation far outstripped the number of citizens, the change in the number of citizens living in rural Manitoba versus the City of Winnipeg over the last numbers of years. Again, I will defer to my colleague, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), to give greater clarity to that statement.

Mr. Speaker, if we were beginning the process all over again, I can indicate I, as one Member, would take a much different approach to the process. I sense what has happened here now, once we look at the variation factor and brought it from 25 percent to 10 percent, that it has allowed no sensitivity.

Municipal boundaries as indicated by my colleague, the MLA for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), have been horribly violated as was requested that not be done by the Union of Manitoba Municipalities. Those of us who understand what it means to cut across one municipality, those of us who have rural seats, understand the difficulty that causes. You can understand now where we have many seats, where they are cutting across in my riding, my existing riding, or under the terms of the next Morris riding, it cuts across, I think, about six or eight municipality boundaries. Mr. Speaker, I guess it is not for me to call into question the logic put into place by the people drawing the borders but, my goodness, I have to, because somebody was totally out of understanding of what is required as a common-sense approach to the drawing of these borders when one takes into account municipal boundaries and school boundaries, if no other reason, those two factors, let alone physical barriers that obviously are important also. Mr. Speaker, I have to stand and put that concern on the record because something has gone amok.

I say then that I support the all-Party committee. It is a good idea. I want to accept, sincerely, the comments made by Members of the Opposition Parties who say that they will come forward to that committee with the sincerest of intents, that they will look at not a 10-year time frame but one that is shorter than that, that they will look at variance, taking into account the history and the pure common sense of trying to service our rural areas, that they will take into account the make-up of the commissioners, those who sit in place and make these judgments outside of politics, and that they

will take into account the 60 seat versus 57, although to me that is a secondary issue to the other two.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I will sit here, ultimately, once a new Bill comes forward, sit in judgment as to how the all-Party committee, given the set of circumstances now where we have minority Government, sits and tries to reflect and tries to right some of the obvious misdoings. I say that not from bad intentions of the people who, ultimately, brought into place maps that I think could be better, but indeed in a sense of common sense of how our rural areas should be better reflected in standing, and indeed better reflected as to how the boundaries should exist around them.

I wish the all-Party committee well because I will be sitting in the House judging its activities in view of these three or four areas. I really believe that rural Manitoba has suffered badly as a result of the Bill that is being introduced today.

Mr. William Chornopyski (Burrows): I listened to most of the speakers here today speaking on this Bill dealing with the Boundaries Commission. I was convinced that perhaps I should stand up and make a few remarks and put them on record. I say that because if somebody should check Hansard, I want them to see that the results of problems created in this last redistribution in the City of Winnipeg, and I can appreciate that the rural problems are somewhat different than those that are in the City of Winnipeg, but nonetheless there are problems.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have lived in my riding, I think it is somewhere near 42 years. That riding has remained the same all those years as far as I can remember or as far back as I can remember. Basically, it remained the same because it had what may be considered natural boundaries, and I refer to specifically the boundary to the south of the riding. It was natural because it was a railway yard, and they dare not cross the railway yard because they would cross into Logan, and if they went far enough they would cross into Ellice. In this case, they did exactly that. They have totally overlooked the natural boundary that existed there for all these years and they crossed Logan riding, right into Ellice riding. They have gone as far as Notre Dame Avenue.

* (1550)

I am not complaining because the population is probably different and the community certainly is probably somewhat different, but I am complaining about this redistribution, Mr. Speaker. While they crossed the track and went into Logan and Ellice ridings, they took a chunk out of the old Burrows constituency and placed it into St. Johns, for whatever reason. I studied that map and I, for the life of me, could not understand why they would want to change that when it was actually unnecessary, it was very unnecessary. I know the personnel who served on this commission are very high-profile people, but they obviously looked at numbers instead of boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, I want to place this on record. I am very happy that there is going to be this three-Party

committee, and I am sure that they are going to look at Hansard and they are going to study what the speakers said on this Bill, how they felt about this particular Bill and how they felt about the redistribution and the boundaries of these ridings. It is for that reason that I want to put this on record.

There are other problems I think in the North End, north of Burrows constituency. They have totally eliminated one riding and I guess it is for that reason that they had to cut into Burrows, take a chunk of Burrows and put it into St. Johns. When they eliminated Seven Oaks riding, for example, they had to do something with that riding, so they have now made it St. Johns, totally eliminating one riding, totally disregarding the natural boundaries that existed there for many, many years. I just cannot see any purpose for it or any kind of reasoning for it.

I just wanted to place that on record, Mr. Speaker, as I said before and I am repeating myself, so that these people who are going to serve on this three-Party committee reviewing the boundaries, that will hopefully help them to see that there are also problems in the city as well as in rural Manitoba. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I will not be long on this. I think the remarks that have been put on the record already with respect to this legislation echo in many respects the sentiments that I had the opportunity to share with the Electoral Boundaries Commission when it appeared in Thompson back in the summer.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the constituency I represent is having its boundaries changed substantially, effectively tripling the area that the Flin Flon constituency would represent when this legislation is finally proclaimed. I do not think I have to tell Members of this House how difficult it is to serve a rural and particularly a rural northern riding. In my constituency, there are communities that are only accessible by air at certain times of the year. Of course, people in this Chamber will recognize that air transportation is, like few other forms of transportation, dependent upon the weather. Northern representatives from time to time have been weathered out and weathered in.

On top of that, the kinds of communications that people normally associate with fulfilling the responsibilities of a Member of the Legislative Assembly are ultimately more difficult to achieve in northern and rural areas.

In my constituency, there is at present no single vehicle for sharing information among the communities. Unlike the City of Winnipeg, which has a paper which is shared information among many constituencies, there is no vehicle for the MLA or other elected officials to share information among communities. In many communities, there is no newspaper. In most communities, there is no radio station and certainly no television station. In many communities, the normal communication links which people associate with the business of being a Member of the Assembly are not in existence. I have communities in my constituency where the majority of the residents do not even have telephones.

I made this case to the Electoral Boundaries Commission, as did other northern MLAs, other New Democrats in the North. We pleaded the case for maintaining the existing differential with respect to population, representation by population.

I am still of the belief that the Charter of Rights would not have been violated by following the 25 percent differentiation rule. I disagreed with the Chair of the commission when he proposed that as a principle upon which to base his ruling.

However, in the final analysis, although I regret the changes and I think they are not certainly from my perspective going to serve the interests of my constituents as well as I wish they would, we have to respect the independence of the commission, and we certainly want to avoid the perception even that boundaries, political boundaries, are going to be manipulated by the Legislative Assembly. That clearly would not be an acceptable alternative.

So although we in the New Democratic Party and I as an MLA attempted to influence the decision of the commission to impose upon them at least our perception of the difficulties that were being imposed upon Northerners and their representatives by these changes, we do not want to undermine for all intents and purposes the best, most impartial process that we have across the country. But I can assure you that we will continue through legitimate means to attempt to address what we see as some shortcomings in the proposal.

With that, I want to say that on behalf of my constituents, we and their representatives will deal with the new boundaries as best they can, continue to serve the people of northern Manitoba to the best of their ability. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a number of comments, because I think that genuinely this is one of the most important pieces of legislation that we will be dealing with this Session, because this piece of legislation sets the tone of Government for the next decade, for certain, and possibly for a lot greater period of time than that, than simply the next decade.

* (1600)

Many people in this Chamber, in all three political Parties, have expressed many similar concerns over this legislation. I say that I will be supporting this legislation because that is as is mandated by the Electoral Boundaries Commission that after reporting at the next Session this legislation must be brought in. I am bound to support that legislation, but I want to point out to my honourable friends some areas in which I am very uncomfortable with this legislation.

I liked when the previous speaker, the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), made these points at the Electoral Boundaries Review Commission meeting at Portage la Prairie. I want to share them with my honourable friends in the House and my honourable colleagues in the two Opposition Parties. This is a very sensitive issue because, any time you change electoral boundaries,

you change constituent ownership with what they have become comfortable with. That, in a democracy, is not done easily.

I want to assure you that in the 12 years that I have been here, and boundary changes have happened, that there have been very unhappy individuals because of those boundary changes. Some of the reasons have been brought to the record by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and others, and the Member for Burrows (Mr. Chornopyski), because people become accustomed to a constituency name and a representative and a natural constituency based on trading patterns, visiting patterns, catchment areas for school or hospital. Those things become comfortable boundaries that are often not reflected in the new boundaries when they are presented in the House, so that it is a very sensitive area.

I want to share with you the thoughts of the R.M. of Louise, which is in my constituency. In 1979, the R.M. of Louise was part of the Rock Lake constituency which, because of reorganization, was absorbed into several other constituencies. So the R.M. of Louise became an add-on to Pembina constituency. They felt genuinely disenfranchised. Now, after some 10 years and, I believe, three elections that they have been part of Pembina constituency, they are now again going to feel disenfranchised because they are, once again, shorn away from Pembina constituency and become part of Turtle Mountain constituency. In rural Manitoba, there is an ownership in constituency. I think that is what the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) was trying to indicate to the House.

I want to tell my honourable friends, particularly some of our new colleagues in the Legislature, that there is a growing feeling of alienation in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba as a result of constantly seeing the City of Winnipeg receive greater numbers of representation in this House. That is not an animosity towards the entity of Winnipeg. It is a natural feeling that is there once you go beyond the Perimeter Highway. It is reinforced when pieces of legislation come in, taking seats from rural and northern Manitoba and putting them in the City of Winnipeg. It is not an animosity, it is a feeling of alienation.

All of us can share in that because, I think, there is not a Member in this House who has not spoken negatively against Ottawa on the national context, that it is controlled by Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa. That feeling of western alienation that we all have experienced as expressed by our constituents, that feeling is part and parcel of rural and northern Manitoba feelings, as they feel disenfranchised by consecutive reorganizations of the constituency boundaries in this province.

Mr. Speaker, what makes it even more important to reflect in a very thoughtful way on what we are doing here is that there has not been the significant shift in population that has been alluded to. In the 1969 boundary reorganization, based on the 1966 census, 54 percent of the general population lived in Winnipeg and 46 percent outside. That today has changed to 56 percent in Winnipeg, 44 percent in the rest of Manitoba, only a 2 percent change in the population from rural

and northern Manitoba to Winnipeg. Yet, in that same period of time we have seen rural Manitoba in 1969 represented by 30 seats, now going down to 26 seats, a loss of some 15 percent of the seats, for a shift of 2 percent in the population, and that causes the kind of alienation. Mr. Speaker, the reason it happened is that the legislation that we acceded to in 1983 or '84 or '85, I cannot give the exact year, put rural Manitoba on a 10 percent variance in population and hence we lost—it was 1987, I am informed by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

That is the reason why we have a further disenfranchise when there has been no population shift from the 1976 census to the 1986 census on which the reorganizations have been based. The population breakout is exactly the same, '76 to '86, but we have changed the rules under which it operates. That was clearly pointed out to myself when I presented at the Boundaries Commission Hearing in Portage la Prairie.

Other jurisdictions have come to grips with this. The federal Government has come to grips with it, and Prince Edward Island will have four federal seats forever. That is not reflective of population because many seats in other provinces of Canada, one single seat has the entire population equivalent of Prince Edward Island. Other jurisdictions have said, including the federal Government, that we can reflect in this Legislature a common-sense approach to representation. I believe the opportunity is there for us to do that as well. I want to explain that later on because, Mr. Speaker, a number of things come up in rural constituencies and northern constituencies that do not affect an urban constituency and it involves just simple ability to represent.

No urban representative in this Legislature has to deal with issues in Agriculture. That is our major business in rural Manitoba, and we have all sorts of constituents' problems that emanate from Agriculture. Similarly, with Natural Resources, that is a major player of Government in rural constituencies and in northern constituencies. In Highways, similarly, there are problems that individual MLAs deal with.

In municipal Government, I want to share with my honourable friends who are new to the Legislature, in the Pembina constituency as it is now constituted, I deal with six municipal councils, six reeves and over 30 councillors. At the same time, I deal with five elected mayors and councillors, and over 25 town councillors in my constituency. Many of you in the City of Winnipeg deal probably with one and at most two city councillors who handle the street problems, business problems, natural resource equivalent problems, and certainly municipal Government problems.

So the issue of time consumption and the workload is certainly different. I am not down playing the workload that urban MLAs in the City of Winnipeg do. You do many things that we do not have to deal with as well, but those basic issues I think have to be repeated for the record because I have been highly involved in my 12 years in all of those issues that I have just laid out for my honourable friends.

We have made suggestions over the past number of years. The Member for Arthur (Mr. Downey) did, some

three or four years ago, by Private Members' resolution to put rural representation on the Electoral Boundaries Commission so that the insensitivity towards municipal boundaries would be recognized. The natural community would be recognized in reorganization. That Private Member's resolution was not acceded to by the Legislature of the Day because it was not supported by the Government.

Just last year my colleague, the MLA for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), made a Private Members' resolution to suggest to this House expansion to 60 seats with a 30 urban, 25 rural, 5 northern component in it, and to make that a workable solution to the issues that I have laid before the House. That was not dealt with, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased that we are going to have an all-Party committee to try and deal with this resolution. Let me tell you why I think there is urgency here. There is no better time for this Legislature to take ownership of the issue of representation in the Province of Manitoba because we are not a majority Government. We as Government cannot gerrymander, as the word has been used, the boundaries because we would surely be defeated by the combined Opposition Parties.

* (1610)

This is the time and it is probably the most opportune circumstance in which a Legislature represented by three political Parties can come to grips with this issue for the betterment of Manitoba in a co-operative fashion. No one can achieve something that is not reasonable and is common sense towards resolving the problem. We cannot ram a solution down Opposition's throat because we are a minority Government, and vice-versa.

I want to close, Mr. Speaker, by urging my honourable friends in the Liberal Party, in the New Democratic Party, to very seriously work with the all-Party committee over summer. I will issue this as an offer of a positive approach in this Legislative Assembly. Let us attempt to resolve this issue over summer. When we come back this fall, let us try to put new legislation on the books that reflects a more balanced representation in rural Manitoba. Let us attempt to pass that legislation this fall and supersede this Bill which we are required to bring in.

Let us do it, not because we are going to be partisan in what we do for political purposes, because we have a minority all-Party situation in this Legislature, but rather let us think about the province and the future of the province and the harmony we can create by getting together as three political Parties and making a decision that is positive for the future of this province.

I fear, Mr. Speaker, and I will be very open in my concern, once we have an election on these current boundaries, with 31 seats in the City of Winnipeg and 26 outside, I do not believe that this Legislature will have the courage to remove one seat from the City of Winnipeg under a proposal that may well come out of the all-Party committee similar to the resolution offered by the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) of 30, 25, and five.

I think there is an urgency to this situation, if indeed we are all serious. I genuinely believe that all of the Parties in this Legislature are serious about addressing this issue and the concerns they have expressed.

Mr. Speaker, let us do something for the future of this province that is positive because this is one of the most important pieces of legislation we have to deal with. Let us come to an agreement that we strike the all-Party committee and we make some decisions for the Province of Manitoba and its future, to allow the kind of representation that is balanced, fair and equitable for the future of this province. Let us emulate what has been done in other jurisdictions to create that kind of fairness of representation, like the federal Government has done in terms of recognition of Prince Edward Island with four MPs.

We have no better opportunity to do it than in this current Legislature where it is a minority Government. We can bring forward and express the will of the three major political Parties which have represented every single MLA at election time for the last 25 years in this House—no, I should not say 25 because there was a Social Credit Member in the early '70s, but certainly for the last 15 years these three political Parties that are currently in this Government—

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): You forgot about the Progressives.

Mr. Orchard: But they were never elected. I was very careful. My honourable friend from Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says I forgot about the Progressives. No, I did not. A Progressive Member has never been elected to the Legislature.

The people have elected Liberals, New Democrats and Progressive Conservatives over the last number of elections since 1973, and now in a minority Government situation those three political Parties can speak in unison, creating a solution for the betterment of Manitoba that we can all live with and that every Manitoba citizen will be proud of us for doing.

I urge my honourable friends in all Parties to join in this all-Party committee and create that solution for this Legislature this fall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mark Minenko (Seven Oaks): Mr. Speaker, it has been with much interest that I have listened to the debate on this Bill over the last period of time and considering the comments of all Honourable Members very carefully. I recognize the many concerns raised by Members of this Chamber, who represent ridings outside of the City of Winnipeg.

As I mentioned in my opening speech in the House last year, I have had an opportunity to travel many parts of this province. Again, I welcomed the opportunity where our caucus, in January, spent four chilly days on a bus in northern Manitoba, visiting a number of the communities and perhaps putting ourselves, as a caucus, in a better appreciation of the conditions and the situation of people living in northern Manitoba as well.

I recognize the difficulties that Honourable Members have about travelling longer distances, whereas the

Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) said that it takes him about the same time to travel by car from one end of his constituency to the other as perhaps a city Member to walk across his constituency. I would agree with him on that because indeed the constituency of Seven Oaks is a relatively small constituency in physical size compared to many of our rural and northern ridings. I can appreciate that difficulty because it probably would take me less time to walk from east to west, across my constituency, than for the Minister of Agriculture to travel by car across his.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that the commission was faced with an enormous task over the last year, or number of months, in drawing up the changes. I think many of the speakers before me have dealt with, skirted around the issue of the declining population outside of the City of Winnipeg. I believe that is a concern for all Honourable Members in this House because I believe that Manitoba is only as strong as the rural community remains strong, that the economy of Manitoba, as we have seen over the last year, is only as strong as the agricultural sector is strong.

I think this is the concern that this Government needs to address. Having had a brother who lived for some period of time outside of the City of Winnipeg, who has since moved back into Winnipeg, and who I had an opportunity to visit on a number of occasions and being able to listen to his friends, his colleagues, his fellow workers about some of the concerns, about the young people leaving many parts of Manitoba outside the borders of the City of Winnipeg to find work and employment in the City of Winnipeg and some of the other larger centres in this province.

This Boundaries Commission Report and the subsequent Bill resulting from that report is but a symptom of that deeper, more difficult, larger problem. I would certainly say that the steps taken by this Government in setting up a Department of Rural Development, which would hopefully co-ordinate many of the programs and initiatives available for people living outside the City of Winnipeg is a step in the right direction, because I believe that is the problem that has to be addressed.

We have seen recently images on television of towns, of people who have lived in those towns for many years and have said there are very few young people remaining in the town, that where there was some 20 to 30 years ago a vibrant and busy main street in that particular town, there remains perhaps only one store, one cafe.

* (1620)

This is a concern that certainly needs to be addressed directly. Yes, the all-Party committee is a step in the right direction. I presume that this all-Party committee will consider the resolution proposed by my colleague, the Honourable Member for Selkirk (Mrs. Charles), Resolution No. 27, a resolution that she introduced also in the last Session of this 34th Legislature, which attempts to address the concern about the composition of this commission. As we all know, the membership of this commission is the Chief Justice of Manitoba

who, I believe, is required by statute to reside in the Winnipeg judicial district; the President of the University of Manitoba, who may also reside in the City of Winnipeg; and the Chief Electoral Officer, again, perhaps in the same circumstance as the president of the University of Manitoba.

So her resolution is an attempt to address that particular issue. I am sure this all-Party committee will be reviewing a plethora of other issues that need to be addressed with respect to how the commission can do its work in the future. These are again, Mr. Speaker, but symptoms of the depopulation of rural Manitoba, and I think that is of concern to all Parties in this Legislature.

I certainly will look forward to listening to the initiatives of this First Minister and his Minister responsible for Rural Development (Mr. Penner), and I certainly would hope that the Minister of Rural Development would work in concert with the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey) to ensure that there is that co-ordination as well.

That is where, Mr. Speaker, when I have made my comments earlier in this Session with respect to the Throne Speech and also to the Budget, I had some concerns. I was hoping when the Minister of Industry and Trade (Mr. Ernst) spoke to me across the House and said, wait for my speech, that he would certainly address some of the concerns that I had with respect to the Government's initiatives.

I was certainly disappointed, when you consider that many Manitobans look forward to a new Government, some new initiatives, when it was very evident that the previous Government could not or chose not to address some of these issues and concerns. So with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to prompt this Government into saying, yes, we understand the concerns raised and appreciate the concerns raised by Members who represent constituencies much larger than my own, Seven Oaks, in physical size. But an important issue behind the size is the issue of rural development and off-farm income which, again a promise of this Conservative Government during the 1988 election, was absent in both the Throne Speech and the Budget. We will give perhaps some time for the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Penner) to be able to better get a feel of his department and how it operates, and perhaps some new initiatives over the summer and in the fall.

Mr. Speaker, I also stand today to speak to this Bill with deep regret in that upon the passing of this Bill, and after presumably the next election, the historic name of Seven Oaks will no longer appear as a name of a constituency in the Province of Manitoba. As I mentioned in my inaugural remarks in this House on July 28, 1988, where it is the custom of this House to allow Members to discuss and speak about and give a thumbnail sketch of their constituencies so that other Members of the House can appreciate various parts of Manitoba, I spoke that within the boundaries of Seven Oaks there are street names which reflect the history of the early settlement of Manitoba. Street names such as Rupertsland, a street which I presently reside at, which was the original name of the territory at the time

of the arrival of the first settlers; St. Anthony; street names like Kilbride, St. Johns, Inkster. All reflect either parishes or individuals which contributed to Manitoba's early history.

When you look to the name Seven Oaks and when I did some research in order to better understand where the name Seven Oaks came from, which is also a street in the area, we find that there was a lament just last summer in an article written by Mr. Vince Leah about a very historical event that happened on June 19, 1816. This was the date of the Seven Oaks massacre where the rivalry between the two companies involved in collection of fur-bearing animals in the continent of North America, and more particularly in this part of our continent, where their rivalry came to the fore to a certain degree, where the involvement of some of the first settlers in Manitoba was also involved, and they were led by a person after whom a street is presently named, Semple.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair.)

Semple, I understand, was one of the early Governors in the Province of Manitoba, when it was still but a little colony, just really a foothold, not even a foothold on this wide territory in which we have presently over one million people living. Mr. Leah said, "But like Winnipeg's many other memorials, the Seven Oaks monument does not get the attention it deserves, especially from our young people who generally remain ignorant of the community's past."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with this Act before us today, we find that the name Seven Oaks again disappears from the annals of the history of Manitoba, and but for the fact that the local hospital in North End Winnipeg, Seven Oaks Hospital, is named after Seven Oaks, this incredibly historical event, important historical event, could possibly disappear.

It is often up to us as Members of the Legislature when we meet with our constituents, to remind them of our historical past, of the importance of some of the place names, that these names of our constituencies are not simply dreamt up in the middle of the night but have a historical basis in this province, names like Inkster, named perhaps after Colin Inkster, the High Sheriff for Manitoba for 51 years who, as a Member of the original Upper House of the Manitoba Legislature, cast the deciding ballot and vote which abolished the two-House system in Manitoba. Names like St. Johns, names like Kildonan reflect parishes, old parishes in Manitoba, and are even now used in the Land Titles Office as part of the legal description to identify where a particular piece of property is located in the Province of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was with some deep regret that I rise today to participate in the debate on this Bill, not only to comment on generally perhaps some of the factors which caused the results that we see before us in this Act, based on the commission's report, but also to once again in debate in this House touch on the historical significance of the name Seven Oaks. Thank you.

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have listened attentively to the speeches that have

been made this afternoon and, I might add, with great interest. I certainly share the feelings and the comments of the Leader of my Party (Mrs. Carstairs) and in large part the comments of the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer). I also want to say that I share the feelings put forward by Members of the Government. I think that they have certainly spoken eloquently about the needs of rural Manitoba and I appreciate those comments.

* (1630)

They are comments in large part that I had heard before, in particular as we debated the resolution put forward by the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer). I have a lot of sympathy for the positions put forward. I think that we all in this House share a responsibility to ensure that the regions of Manitoba are adequately represented in this House which has so much influence and so much impact on the lives of people in rural and northern Manitoba.

I want to specifically talk about the commission that came up with the map which we are now proposing to adopt for the next election in Manitoba. That process is one which has come forward in most North American, and indeed most jurisdictions throughout the Western World as the new way to reflect population shifts in electoral jurisdictions.

That is a hard-won and hard-fought-for process which has taken the line-drawing out of the hands of politicians. The word "gerrymandering" came into the English language as a result of politicians drawing lines where they wanted them to be. The Government of the Day and the politicians of the day would simply sit down and divide up the lines that suited them best. Those days thankfully are gone and we have a process in place which respects the neutrality which is required in drawing electoral boundaries.

However, obviously this map and the map that we will be adopting today, while we respect the process—and I think we have all spoken in this House in favour of that neutral process, the particular map that has been drawn has obviously some serious flaws. I think many Members in this House have brought to light those flaws and I am not going to dispute those flaws. I think that clearly they impact more heavily on the rural Members. There is no question about that, in the loss of seats which has been suffered by rural Manitoba and indeed northern Manitoba under this new map.

That is why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very, very pleased to see the resolution put forward by the Member for Selkirk (Mrs. Charles) which proposes putting representation onto the committee, members from those regions of Manitoba. I think that clearly we need to have at the table in substantial numbers, the voice of people who live in those areas, who know those areas, and who know some of the natural boundaries.

Quite frankly, if you look at the Act, the commission, the committee is directed to take into account the natural boundaries in any community and to reflect those boundaries in the electoral boundaries insofar as is possible. Then on the population side, as we all know, there is a deviation factor which is provided for.

It was with great disappointment that I became aware that the commission was not inclined to use those deviations.

I have listened with some sympathy to the position put forward by the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) that perhaps there should be stronger wording to that committee to take those deviation factors into account. In any event, clearly they chose not to, in my view. Obviously as an elected politician, I want to echo the views that have been stated here today, but that was regrettable. However, as others have spoken, I speak firmly in favour of the neutral process, although I think surely in the next 10 years, and hopefully not waiting to the last moment, we can improve upon that process.

I welcome the suggestion that there be an all-Party committee that looks at this Bill, because I am sure there are ways that we can improve it. I, for one, would certainly look favourably upon any committee that sought to look at this Bill and improve it for the next time round and future times.

However, the way to deal with the problem is not for politicians to draw lines. Whether they draw 57 lines or three lines, that is not the way to deal with this problem. That was my opposition to the proposal put forward by the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer). In the particular situation in Manitoba, it would have been a very political drawing of lines, and it would have been a very political debate. It was bringing to the political forum exactly what we intended to take out when the legislators in this province saw fit to refer this matter to an independent commission.

I want to take issue with the allegation, albeit perhaps it was not specific, but I think it was clear in the remarks from the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) and also the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) that this responsiveness, this willingness to look at the needs of rural Manitoba is somehow new-found in the Opposition. That is absolutely incorrect from the very earliest debate on the work of this commission and on the proposals put forward by the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) and the Member for Selkirk (Mrs. Charles). This Party has been vocal in support of a review of the process and a renewal of the process with a view to making better accommodation for the real needs of representation in this House of rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba. We have always spoken in favour of that. We have been entirely consistent, and there has been absolutely no change in our enthusiasm for making accommodations and making changes because it has always been an enthusiastic approach.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to also say that I do not want to get into specific comments on the individuals who served on the commission. Clearly, I am not saying that they did not take their work seriously. I think they did. I think many of us here might have second-guessed them on their lines that they drew. However, I do not think they would, I would hope anyway that they would not object to inclusion on the committee, numbers of individuals from rural and northern Manitoba. I do not think that they would oppose that. I think that they would probably welcome that because the fact is none of them live in rural or northern Manitoba.

The fact is that in all likelihood none of the people on that committee ever would live in rural or northern Manitoba if we leave it the way it is because you have, as my colleague, the Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko) has said, the Chief Justice of the province, required by law in fact to live in the judicial centre of Winnipeg; you have the President of the University of Manitoba who obviously works in the City of Winnipeg, and in all likelihood is going to live in the City of Winnipeg; and you have the Chief Electoral Officer, who again in all likelihood is going to live in the City of Winnipeg. Clearly, that make-up of a committee does not do justice in any way, shape or form to the very legitimate need for adequate representation which has been so eloquently put forward by many of the Members in this debate.

The City of Winnipeg has also its own problems. We have heard Members speak about that. I am going to say quite clearly that those particular problems with lines that have been drawn, names that have been dropped are also things that we may regret. We want to get together, however, in the future to deal with the process and to deal with who is on this committee and how it is going to draw its maps. I think that we can make improvements. The key problem is clearly representation from rural and northern Manitoba.

Raising the number of seats to 60 seats certainly should be something that would be considered by that all-Party committee. As the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has said, it perhaps is a secondary issue but certainly this Chamber apparently can accommodate that and there is no reason why that would not be part of the considerations of that all-Party committee.

* (1640)

I want to close by saying that I think that we all share in this Chamber the feelings that I set forth at the opening of my remarks, which were that it is essential that we respect the neutrality of the commission, that we respect the process, and that we move forward from this day and this time to attempt to improve that, not in the context of actually drawing the lines, which is the context we are in now, but in the context of laying the groundwork for the future work of a commission which may more adequately provide for the representation needs of rural and northern Manitoba. With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will close my comments. I thank all Members for their time.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to put some remarks on the record with regard to the effects that the Boundaries Review and this Bill will have on my particular constituency, and more particularly on rural Manitoba.

Let me say at the outset that in principle I too agree with the process and will support this Bill, of course. It is important that all Members of this Chamber support the neutrality of this commission and the important work that it has done. Indeed, this is the only way that our democratic system can remain strong and intact.

However, this afternoon I would like to express some concerns that I have, and members of my constituency

and the people who I represent have, with regard to some of the effects that this Bill will have on that particular part of the province. I am encouraged by the comments that I have heard this afternoon from Members of all Parties with regard to the effects that this Bill will have on rural Manitoba and the action that is required following the passage of this Bill. It was indeed a pleasure to see that our Premier (Mr. Filmon) presented the fact that there is a way to encourage more representation for rural Manitoba and that is by ensuring that the population of rural Manitoba increases rather than decreases, as has been the trend in the past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some 10 years ago, Members in this Chamber rose to speak on a Bill of this nature. At that time, the area that I represent was affected in that one constituency was lost. Again, we see in this particular Bill that part of the province is again affected. Between the constituency of Virden and the constituency of Roblin-Russell, we again lose one constituency. This tears at the hearts of people who are habitants of that area because it is an emotional issue. They feel frustration, some anger, and perhaps feel alienated from the political process of this province.

When we take a look at the history of how representation has decreased in rural Manitoba, we see that since 1969 or '66 we have lost something like 15 percent of the seats in rural Manitoba. The population has not decreased by that amount. We see that population, as was alluded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), has dropped something like 2 percent. Certainly, the issue must be addressed, and I am encouraged by the all-Party committee that is going to take a serious look at this.

One of the things that I think rural Manitobans felt somewhat concerned about and angered about was the fact that in the commission there was not representation from rural Manitoba. Our Party, when we were in Opposition, brought this to the attention of the Government of the Day, that perhaps this was an oversight and that there needed to be representation from rural Manitoba. The Union of Manitoba Municipalities too indicated that they wanted to see representation from rural Manitoba so that rural Manitobans would have a voice in the drawing of boundaries.

When I take a look at northern Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know how it is physically possible for any one Member to represent the kind of area that we have drawn in this particular map. It is physically impossible for a Member of the Legislature to represent people from that area and to be able to visit them on any kind of a regular basis. I know the difficulty I face, even in the constituency I have, when we take a look at the size of the constituency itself. If I take a look at the distance from one end of my constituency to the other, it is equal or greater than the distance that I live from the Legislature. It takes me about three-and-a-half hours to drive from one end of my constituency to the other. That certainly carries with it some difficulties in representation.

As the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) pointed out, representation in the city is quite different than it is in

rural Manitoba. I have lived in rural Manitoba and I have lived in urban Manitoba, and I know the differences.

In rural Manitoba, a Member of the Legislature must represent people, whether it is with regard to agriculture which is the biggest industry in rural Manitoba, whether it is with regard to natural resource issues, business issues, education issues, we deal with a variety of councils. In my particular constituency, I think there are 13. We deal with school boards. There is the issue of roads. We deal with Chambers of Commerce. We have the issues of environment. We have the issues of tourism. All of these are important to those people. In order to be able to represent them adequately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important that we meet and we discuss these issues on a face-to-face basis.

In the last Session, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gillehammer) introduced a resolution, which I think made a lot of sense with regard to boundary redistribution. Certainly, that particular resolution would have taken into account the fact that rural Manitobans should have greater representation in this Legislature to enable representatives from those areas to better represent their people. Although I am saddened that the resolution did not pass, I am sure that in the future with the all-Party committee, something of that nature can be addressed and should be addressed. The timing is right, we are in a minority Government situation. We have representation from all three major Parties in Manitoba. This is the time, I think, when we should be able to get together to resolve this problem that certainly is very prominent in the minds of Manitobans today.

I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that one does not build a house by tearing someone else's down. It would be wrong for us to try and take seats from the City of Winnipeg and try to put them back into rural Manitoba. That is not how you address this problem whatsoever. I think we have to take a look at the need for better representation, both in the city and in rural Manitoba. That is the way to approach this problem.

Once again, I have to say that considerable harm has been done to rural Manitoba and it is certainly enlightening to see that Members from the Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party, have addressed this issue and have indicated their willingness to co-operate, to ensure that part of the province, that important part of the province is properly represented in this Legislature.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair.)

We have a diverse province, Mr. Speaker, a province that is rich in many resources, and it just does not focus on this particular city. We have seen the vast resources in northern Manitoba. We have seen the lack of development in northern Manitoba, whether it is in resources, whether it is in people. We know the cry from the Native people of Manitoba to have a better opportunity for education so that they can contribute to their communities in a better and a more productive way, so that they can become the leaders of those communities that they represent in the northern part of this province. That is important if this province is

going to prosper, if this province is going to grow and develop. Therefore, in order to be able to do that, we have to ensure that those parts of the province are represented adequately.

Mr. Speaker, I take a look at the specific constituency of Roblin-Russell and the boundaries that have been struck. I have to tell you that there are about 18 square miles of that constituency that are now going to be cut off from the rest of the constituency. As a matter of fact, one has to drive through another constituency to be able to get there.

There are problems in the way the boundaries were drawn. Municipalities have been split with this new boundaries map. Certainly, that is going to cause some concern to communities and to municipalities because, I guess, communities have become accustomed to the way that they have been represented to the jurisdictions that they live in, and the community that they live in. Certainly, now we are going to see some significant differences in that respect.

* (1650)

I guess I am saddened to know that I will not be representing the people of the Grandview-Gilbert Plains area as part of the Roblin-Russell constituency, because now they become part of the Dauphin constituency. I have just become accustomed to that part of the world, and certainly an interesting part. Those people have some concern because they began to feel a very important part of the constituency of Roblin-Russell and now they have some apprehension about becoming a part of a new constituency, and certainly how that is going to affect their everyday lives, and it does. Mr. Speaker, it does affect people in more ways than we realize sometimes.

So with those few remarks, I would just like to say that I am very encouraged by the all-Party committee that is going to be formed, more encouraged by the fact this Government is going to address it by ensuring that we have some decentralization of services in this province so that rural Manitobans do have an opportunity to prosper, those communities have an opportunity to prosper and grow, so that they can contribute properly to the economic growth and the social development of this province in the future.

I am certainly encouraged by the fact that the time frame that has been alluded to is one that is going to be shorter over the next 10 years. I am going to be looking forward to the results of this all-Party committee and certainly looking forward to greater and better representation for all rural Manitoba. Thank you very much.

Mr. Laurie Evans (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my comments will be relatively short, but I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak briefly on this issue. I certainly agree with the bulk of comments that have been made by colleagues on both sides of the House. I feel that there are many issues in rural Manitoba that have not been adequately considered by the commission, and certainly some of issues where municipalities have been split and where natural

boundaries have been ignored, these should have been more adequately addressed. I think that the move and the suggestions that have been made to have adequate rural representation on the commission is one that makes a lot of sense and certainly should be considered.

I had rather a unique opportunity myself, having lived in rural Manitoba for a little over a decade and having actually run in the constituency of Springfield in 1986. I think that we need to look at some of the factors that the commission is expected to consider when they take into consideration the establishment of new boundaries. Having had the opportunity to have run in the constituency of Springfield in 1986, Springfield is a rather unique constituency in that it has as its western boundary—(Interjection)—the boundaries I know, Mr. Speaker. The boundaries run from the Red River, which was the western boundary, right through to the Ontario border.

I think it is fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that we sometimes get hung up with this commonality of interest, and I know at that time when I was running in Springfield it did not matter really whether you were speaking to someone in West St. Paul, Birds Hill, Oakbank or whether you were out at the other end of the constituency talking to people in Elma, Whitemouth or even out as far as Hadashville and the Falcon Lake area, they had more in common in terms of their concerns than they had in differences. I think that when and if that new commission is struck, there would be some logic in them looking at trying to overcome the concept of perimeteritis.

I think that there is some merit in looking at the issue of particularly those ridings that are around the circumference or the periphery of the City of Winnipeg, looking in terms of having some of those constituencies, if not all of them, have a mixture between urban and rural constituents. I think the constituency of Springfield is one that, to me, indicates that there may be some merit in having a type of a pie-shaped distribution when you get to the circumference of the city where there is a movement out into those rural areas, particularly into those rural areas that have become essentially bedroom communities. I am talking about areas such as Oakbank and Dugald and Lorette and Ile des Chenes and even as far south as Morris, out as far as Carman, Elm Creek, as you go around the whole area, there are a lot of those areas that are now bedroom communities to a large extent. Many of those people living in those areas have as much interest in what is going on in the city as they do outside.

I think that if I was satisfied, Mr. Speaker, that we were going to be looking over a five- or ten-year period at a major redistribution of population with a lot more people moving into the rural areas, I would say that perhaps there is a way in which this can be solved, but I think that we are looking at a trend that is not going to change overnight and that is that within time the City of Winnipeg, if anything, is going to be a larger component of the population of Manitoba.—(Interjection)—The Minister says it has not changed in the last 10 years. The percentage is the same, but it is not going to improve in the other direction. If anything, it is going to get to a situation where Winnipeg is a

larger component of the total. As long as that is the trend we are looking at, then we have to think in terms of how do we counteract this in a manner that is going to have an effect over a longer period of time.

I am not suggesting that this is the answer, but I think it is something that should be written into the governing factors the commission would look at, that is, taking a look at the potential of having a mechanism in place there where there would be a split between the rural and the urban area as far as those areas around the city are concerned.

I think we have been accused, as urban Members, of having perimeteritis, in other words, not being aware of the concerns that are outside that perimeter. I think there are opportunities where some Members could have a constituency that is split between the urban and the rural areas, and that way get a much better understanding of what is going on, identify some interests that are far greater than those we currently think exist between the urban and the rural people. I think there is a lot more that they have in common than there are things that distinguish or differentiate them.

I am only throwing this out from my personal experience, having run in the constituency of Springfield. That is probably a unique constituency in the sense that it now makes up a lot of the so-called urban area in the northeast corner of Winnipeg but it does run out right to the Ontario boundary. This is one way I think we could overcome in part—it certainly is not the total answer—some of the problems that we currently have as far as the City of Winnipeg dominating the decision-making process.

While I agree with most of the comments that have been made this afternoon and I am concerned with the lack of representation from rural Manitoba, I think one has to bear in mind the concept of representation by population cannot be ignored. If the commission as it now exists had taken the opportunity that was before them to use the 25 percent differential, they could have overcome some of the problems that are inherent in the present boundary situation.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) says that it said 10 percent, but there is an option in there to use 25 percent in the northern areas. Even that, they did not utilize. They did not effectively utilize the 10 percent in many cases because the 10 percent differential means that you could have a 20 percent spread. You could have one that is 10 percent above and one that is 10 percent below. With the 25 percent differential, you are looking at a 50 percent spread being potentially there. That gives them a lot of leeway and they did not effectively use the leeway that was there, Mr. Speaker.

I am just putting this on the record as an issue where I think they need to look at the governing factors that are up for consideration when the commission meets and not be quite so hung up on some of the so-called commonality of interest that seems to be the major factor when they were making the decisions this time. Thank you.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I believe we have agreement among

Honourable Members that there will be no Private Members' Hour today, that the Honourable Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Pankratz) will speak, followed by the Honourable Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan), followed by the Premier (Mr. Filmon), who will wind up debate at second reading. I believe that is agreed by all Honourable Members.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to waive Private Members' Hour? (Agreed) The Honourable Member for La Verendrye.

Mr. Helmut Pankratz (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, I will just keep my comments short. I just want to put a few comments on the record in regard to the redistribution of boundaries.

I believe under the circumstances which we are faced in today, I think the Premier has the right recommendation that we form an all-Party committee, review the rural versus urban versus northern seats, and also review the variance that is allowed within these different boundaries.

* (1700)

I believe the previous administration made a grave mistake by proving the variance that it has to be only 10 percent, that it could not stay at the 25 percent as previously. I believe at the present time that has actually to some degree disrupted a lot of boundaries. I must say I must support the Member for Emerson (Mr. Albert Driedger) when he indicates that it has been chopped into all different kinds of different pieces, like his riding of Emerson. Naturally my riding of La Verendrye, I am losing by far the largest area of it.

I think by addressing some of the boundaries that we have in school divisions and municipal boundaries, some of these problems could be resolved.

Mr. Speaker, but one thing though that struck me by listening to the different comments from different people here today, the hypocrisy that has been shown here today, and that is in regard to the Liberal Party today all speaking against basically what has taken place by the rural representation dropping, and that still at the same time when the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) had a Private Members' Bill last year, they voted against it and spoke out against it. I believe, in my opinion, that is hypocrisy at its peak. Even the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) spoke now in favour of the rural, and voted against what the Member for Minnedosa was introducing.

I believe that going to the 60 seats is naturally a step in the right direction, because I believe just like we have allowed Members more access allowance—and why have we done that?—basically to give better representation to the general public. I think that must be, first and foremost, our aim in whatever we are doing when it comes to the redistribution. We want to have better representation from all regions and all areas, at the same time taking into consideration the different boundaries that are in place today.

I am looking forward to this all-Party committee, that they will review it in haste once that has been struck,

that it does not have to take 10 years. I believe, if it is the will of all Members in this Party, that consensus could be reached and a solution could be found for this dilemma that we are caught in at the present time.

The Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) had some statistics, which I think maybe most of us in this House were not even aware of, that basically in the last 15 years the population has not changed all that much, urban versus rural. I think that is quite striking, to me at least—it was striking to me. I believe that if we could agree to a formula based on better representation, and that is what it has to be I think, then I think we will all, in the rural area and the urban and the northern, get better representation. With those few comments, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): A very long time ago, Cicero, Mr. Speaker, in commenting on the value of friendship, said the following. He said, "A friend is, as it were, like a second self." I make note of that comment because I stand here today feeling somewhat like I am saying good-bye to a good friend, and that good friend is my constituency, the Churchill constituency. I believe that good friend of mine is also a good friend of all of us in this room.

The legislation that we have before us today, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Act, will significantly rearrange the electoral boundaries of most of the 57 constituencies that now send representatives to this Legislature. One of the most significant changes, at least in my mind, that will result from the passage of this Bill will be the elimination of the Churchill constituency. Put quite bluntly but accurately nonetheless, this legislation will wipe the Churchill constituency right off of the electoral map. It is for that reason that standing here today I truly do feel like I am losing a close and a valued friend. I stand here today with a deep sense of regret over losing that friend. I stand here today not only with regret but with anger. I am angry at the decision by the Electoral Boundaries Commission that resulted from, what I believe to be, their insensitivity to the special needs of northern constituencies.

I am perplexed at their decision to ignore the historical uniqueness of all northern constituencies that has so consistently guided the hand of so many of their predecessors who recognized the special needs of the North, when previous commissions and commissioners and individuals sat down to draw and redraw and redraw and redraw the electoral map over time.

I know my friends in this Chamber from rural constituencies, and indeed I think as legislators, we all share the sentiment, have expressed equally sincere and equally important concerns about their own situation. I stand here today with a bit of sadness, regret, anger and frustration. Frustration, Mr. Speaker, because I, like everyone else in this room, feel compelled to support a process that I believe is basically fair, even though I believe that process in at least one instance and probably more has resulted in a dreadfully unfair situation.

I will speak today about my concern, about how that unfair decision will mean less representation in the

Manitoba Legislature for my constituents, and those constituents in the new Rupertsland and Flin Flon constituencies and other northern areas.

Mr. Pankratz: Do you consider this your farewell speech?

Mr. Cowan: The Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Pankratz) asked me if I considered this my farewell speech. I want to comment on that point a bit later in my speech today.

I do consider it a speech of farewell to the Churchill constituency on the part of all of us. I know that he shares in that regret, that frustration and that anger I feel as the MLA for the area, because you do not have to be an elected official from a particular part of this province to sense and to know when an injustice is being done and to speak out against that injustice.

My concern is compounded by my belief that, because of historical circumstance and geographic realities, we should be trying to provide more representation and service to the North, which has been underserved rather than overserved throughout its history.

* (1710)

I am not certain I understand why, but I believe that this legislation takes us in the wrong direction. By passing it, which we will do, it will make us all partners, each and every one of us, to the disservice that will be done to so many Northerners when one of the five northern seats is eliminated by passing these recommendations of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Let there be no doubt about it in my mind and in the mind of so many of my constituents.

The decision by the three members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission to take away one of the northern constituencies was neither fair nor a just decision. Therefore, what we are doing today from that perspective is indeed an injustice. Beyond that, it does not even make sense.

Mr. Speaker, before I go further in my remarks, I want to indicate very clearly that my opposition to the elimination of the Churchill constituency is not predicated upon, nor is it motivated by, my own personal circumstances as Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Churchill constituency.

I have served for the past 12 years as MLA for Churchill, and I will continue to serve and to fight hard for those things and those issues which most concern my constituents until the next election is called.

Now, 12 years is a long time to serve as an MLA.

Mr. Orchard: It sure is, Jay.

Mr. Cowan: The Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) acknowledges and reinforces that, and indeed it is. I just hope that everybody has an opportunity to serve as long as they feel useful and as long as they believe they have a contribution to give in this Chamber. I honestly believe, in my own instance, that the next

election is probably a good time to voluntarily step aside, so that different people and new MLAs will also have the privilege of serving in this Chamber.

I believe that, because I believe and I hope that they will bring with them new ideas, new questions, new answers, new solutions that need to be reviewed and discussed in this forum. I believe that they will encourage innovative policies and programs, fueled by greater energy and enthusiasm that comes from that freshness of just coming to this Chamber.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I feel very comfortable with my own personal decision to seek out progressive change and our common goal of social justice, however we may define it in our own terms and visualize it in our own minds and feel it in our own hearts in other arenas and through other means.

This is not a personal matter. It is not a personal loss that I regret, but rather it is a sense of loss for my constituents, for my friends in the North who deserve the fullest possible representation they can obtain in this Chamber.

The elimination of one of the northern seats will significantly dampen their voice in the Manitoba Legislature but, more importantly, it will mean that they will also have less access to their MLA, whomever that person might be. One need only look at the new electoral map to immediately recognize the problem. With the elimination of the Churchill constituency and with the reduction of one northern seat, we now have a constituency in place, or will have one that extends from the Fort Alexander Reserve very close to the City of Winnipeg, right up to the Northwest Territories.

The Premier (Mr. Filmon), in his comments, commented upon the size of that constituency and the fact that how difficult it is now for northern and rural MLAs to get around. It is not always the distance that is the problem or the isolation that is the problem, in some rural constituencies, it is the number of communities that have to be visited that is the problem. So we all share, when we get outside the boundaries of this city or the City of Winnipeg or perhaps the City of Thompson and Dauphin, that problem.

It is worse in the North. Most of the communities in the new Rupertsland constituency are inaccessible by road and many are severely isolated during both the spring breakup and the winter freeze-up. Given the extreme distance and the lack of roads, and the resultant difficulties their MLA will experience in travelling to, from and between communities, those communities and other northern communities will be severely underserved when compared with other communities in any other part of the province.

Now, under these changes, all northern MLAs will have to serve more communities under more difficult circumstances. That is a difficulty for them and certainly we face those difficulties in our role as MLA from time to time. We do it because we believe we are here for a reason and for a cause, and we are prepared to experience difficulty in order to accomplish those things we wish to accomplish.

There is someone else who is a part of this equation and that is our constituents, who do not always send

us here to accomplish those greater things, but send us here to have representation in the Chamber, in the Government and in Opposition, as a part of the system that is meant to serve them, that they can call upon, that they can feel comfortable with, that they can have a personal relationship with, that they can be friends with.

Those constituents will not be able to receive the same level of service under these new boundaries that they received under the old boundaries. To be quite blunt, as you know, Mr. Speaker, because you share some of the difficulties being a rural MLA, to be quite blunt even under the old boundaries in the North, it was extremely difficult to serve that very large and spread-out northern seat.

I am going to be critical of the commission because I want my comments to be taken note of so that when further commissions, however they may be structured, take on this task, they know that there are concerns and people who have things to say that may help them, things to say not because they hold any exclusive position of influence or exclusive experience or exclusive knowledge, but because they have some down to earth common experience in doing the job which is affected so much by the commission.

What is happening is, in my mind, an all too obvious injustice that results from the work of a commission that appears to have been more interested in arithmetic niceties and equal pie cuts than they were interested in equal representation and the ability of the elected Members to effectively serve those who elect them. These are not new concerns and they are not new criticisms, and they should not come as any surprise to commission members or anyone else who has been following this debate because this debate is culminating in this House today, but this debate has been ongoing now in the communities for quite some time. So it is not a surprise. Every northern Member of this Legislature made these very same points to the commission after first suggesting the elimination of one of the northern seats. I think I speak for all my northern colleagues when I reiterate these specific points.

It is also important to note that it was not only elected officials who were expressing these concerns directly to the Electoral Boundaries Commission, but there were many other individuals out there in the communities, appearing before the commission, to reinforce our collective concerns and to ask the commissioners to rethink their decision that we felt would have such a profound impact on the North.

An article to confirm the fact, Mr. Speaker, from the Winnipeg Free Press, August 16, 1988, with a picture of the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) new and future, I would hope, saying that the redrawn ridings, the boundaries in the North, were going to have a profoundly negative impact on his constituents. He made an important point, which I think must be considered, and I quote from what he said that day. He said, the Member for Rupertsland, MLA Elijah Harper: "Already our people feel left out in the cold. Now this impact will be devastating." That is what we are talking about, a system that was not nearly good enough being made even worse so yet, and the impact will be devastating on those constituents in the North.

He was not alone. There were people who were not elected officials, although there were elected officials at that and other meetings, and I had presented a written brief to the commission making these very same points. But a citizen of Thompson said, and I quote, talking to the commission: "Your proposed boundary lines appear quite neat on the map and they have done an equitable job in balancing numbers. However, to serve the needs of the North, plans need to be bound to areas which take into account the present transportation links." There were other concerns about being able to serve constituents.

But those expressions of concern, whether they came from elected officials or came from individuals in the community, and those requests for reconsideration, because we followed the process carefully, had no effect whatsoever, at least no perceivable effect whatsoever on the commission. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we heard the chairperson of the commission say, and I quote, and I am reading from an article entitled "Doer attacks suggested shifts in electoral map," which was out of the Winnipeg Free Press June 28, 1988, and I will read verbatim from comments from that. "Doer noted most of the territory in Churchill constituency would be added to Rupertsland. He said he believes it would make Rupertsland the biggest geographical area represented by a single Member in any of Canada's provincial Legislatures, and would make travel and adequate representation extremely difficult," and indeed that is what has happened.

But when these comments were brought to the attention of the commissioner, what did he say? "Chief Justice Alfred Monnin, chairman of the commission, said he is willing to consider changes in cases where, for example, it has inadvertently split up a single municipality among two or more provincial seats. But he said the commission could not worry whether particular geographic areas lose political clout. 'That's no concern of mine. I'm not concerned with politics here, I'm dividing a piece of pie.'"

* (1720)

That is what it has come down to, a division of a piece of pie in nearly equal sizes that ignores the realities of trying to serve those who elect you and those who send you to this Chamber to speak out on their behalf and expect you not only to speak out on their behalf here, but to speak with them in their homes, and in their shops, and in their coffee shops, and in their factories, and in their mines, and in their reserves. It is not a "piece of pie." They are not ingredients in a recipe; they are human beings.

So the commission had a choice—I think that point has to be made—they could have chosen to do other than that which they did. They could have chosen to give more numerical differences between rural and city seats and more between rural and northern and city seats than they did. They could have done that. They made a decision not to do that, and that is why this speech is so important to me, because when I want to think about future Boundaries Commissions making those decisions, I do not want them thinking about political clout and I do not want them thinking about pieces of pie, I want them to think about human beings.

I am making a speech today, Mr. Speaker, for you and I, but I am making it to be read 10 years from now, or whatever, and that is the importance or at least what I believe to be the importance of what I am saying today. They had options, they chose not to use them.

By the way, it was not political clout that brought us as MLAs to the commission to speak before them. It is not political clout that brought citizens to the commission to speak before them. It was a sense of wanting to be a part of the system and having the system accessible to them and them being accessible to the system because, as the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) said, too many have been left out in the cold for too long. They wanted to come in out of that cold. Believe me, if we do not bring people of this province in out of that cold in every opportunity and every chance that we have, we do a disservice to them, we do a disservice to ourselves, but tragically, we do a disservice to this system that we all love so much. That is what is wrong with that decision that those commissioners made.

What have they done with their approach? They have virtually assured that Manitobans in the northern part of this province will see less of their MLAs. They have virtually assured that Northerners will have less contact with their MLAs than they did before. They have ensured that Northerners will not have the same level of service from their MLAs that other Manitobans expect, and that other Manitobans take for granted.

Finally, they made it virtually impossible for the MLA for Rupertsland, no matter who that individual may be in years to come, to provide the level of service and personal contact that he or she would like to provide to his or her constituents.

Obviously, by this point in my comments it is going to become fairly apparent that I am extremely critical of the decision by the Electoral Boundaries Commission to cut the number of seats in northern Manitoba from five to four, not a personal dilemma, not a personal problem, a problem for my constituents which I feel compelled to speak out on strongly. It is not a personal opinion alone. I believe that anger, that frustration, that regret, that sadness is an accurate reflection of my constituents, those people who elected me to speak on their behalf when their concerns should be voiced. My colleagues are equally upset with that decision and some other aspects of changes to the electoral boundaries that are included in this legislation.

Yet we, like many others, like I believe every Member of this Legislature, is caught up in a dilemma. Others outside of this Legislature are caught up in that dilemma. What is that dilemma? As we must do with so many other matters that come before us, we must balance competing needs. We must strike our own personal and philosophical responses to those needs so that we can hopefully formulate a balance. Our decisions are not always easy ones because, like the commissioners who had to make choices, we have to make choices and we have to try to come up with solutions.

Having spent 12 years in this Chamber, and those who have spent time in this Chamber with me as well can attest to, I believe that very, very infrequently do

we come up with any perfect solutions. We do not come up with perfect solutions to our problems. So we must weigh the imperfections and the flaws in any one approach, any one response, whether it be based on personal, political or philosophical needs, against the overall goals we seek to determine, we seek to effect. We must weigh the imperfections in our own minds, in our hearts, against the objective, the overall objective which we hope to accomplish. If that overall objective, on balance, is still worthwhile, despite the flaws and problems that invariably accompany change of any kind, then we must make our decisions accordingly.

In this case, the overall objective is the systematic mandatory fine tuning of our electoral boundaries in as non-partisan a way as we can develop. That overall objective, in this instance, has been judged to be more important and more socially worthwhile than has the need to maintain or even to enhance the present level of service that northern constituencies now receive under the present boundaries has been judged to be.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, the greater good must prevail. It has been determined, and we have made this decision and others have spoken to it today, that any attempt on our part as politicians, and all the taint that comes with being a political being, any attempt on our part to go back to the commissioners who made the very difficult decisions—and they were difficult decisions, and I do not question their sincerity, and I do not fault their intelligence, and I do not question their motivation. I just think they made a lousy decision. I think they should have listened to some people who could have helped them make a better decision.

The fact is, they have made that decision and any attempt by us to go back and ask them to reshape the electoral map or to ask them to rethink what they are doing to the North and other areas of the province would violate the integrity of the system, as imperfect as that system may be. It would do damage to the basic principle, the overall objective of an impartial and independent and a timely systematic review of our electoral boundaries from time to time.

* (1730)

The Premier (Mr. Filmon), in his comments, commented about this process being above and beyond the reach of day-to-day politics, as if there might be something dirty about day-to-day politics. We are all politicians. We are here to do political things, but we are politicians here to do political things because we believe in change for the better good. We do not always agree on what that change should be. We seldom agree even within caucuses as to how that change should be effected, but we carry in our hearts, our minds, our souls and our bodies a desire to make things happen differently because we believe by making things happen differently we will make a better world.

I believe that by making The Electoral Boundaries Commission Act differently, we will better serve northern constituents, rural constituents and others, because if we do an injustice to the North, if we do an injustice to rural communities, we have done an injustice to ourselves—all of us. We share all the blame; we assume

all responsibility. I do not really think I am standing here alone speaking as the MLA for Churchill. I hope I am standing here speaking on behalf of all of my colleagues in this House, and saying the things that they would say and repeating some of the things that they have already said. I really do not think it would be so wrong to go back and say, hey, think about it, think of what you have done.

To back up for a moment, I do not think it would be having the commission tainted by, to use the Premier's comments, day-to-day politics. I think there are occasions in this House when we use day-to-day politics very effectively to make change happen in a positive fashion. I think that there are days in this House when we rise above any politics whatsoever, day to day, long-term, partisan, non-partisan, to make things happen in a positive way. I think we have that within us as a body of men and women who would like to see a better world. The fact is, to even mention or to even suggest such an approach conjures up charges of gerrymandering and interference of the worst sort.

So I make this speech considering that our hands are tied, Mr. Speaker. Even if our hands are tied, our voices need not be still, nor should it mean that in our quest for equal representation we should ignore our quest for fair representation. We have a responsibility as well—and I made this point earlier and I want to do it again—to point out where we believe the commission has overlooked fairness and made decisions that are perceived or can be perceived to be unfair, because there will be other commissions. I want them to understand that their decisions do have impact, that their decisions do mean something, and that there are people who can provide them with advice that may help them make those better decisions and mean something as well. There will be those other commissions in years to come. I hope that perhaps they will be guided at least in part by what is being said and done here today.

If we feel strongly about fairness, if we feel as strong about fairness as we do about the quality of numbers, then we must use this opportunity to speak, to speak to future Electoral Boundaries' Commissions, to speak to future commissioners. In using this opportunity, we must speak today in the strongest terms so that our willingness to support the process is not mistaken or purposely or inadvertently misinterpreted as support for the elimination of the Churchill constituency or other seats. We must speak out so that our support for the process is not taken for granted, when the process results in such unfairness.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left?

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. Cowan: Maybe, Mr. Speaker, I will use those 10 minutes then to talk on a more personal note, if I can. I think within the context of this debate it is important as well. It is important for me to say and I hope it is important to be heard.

It has been an honour to serve as MLA for the Churchill constituency for the past 12 years. I have

learned over those 12 years much from my constituents, and I have learned much from my colleagues. I hope I have picked up a few tricks here and there, and I hope I have been able to serve my constituents well.

I have seen a lot of change during that time. I like to think that in at least some of the instances of that change, I have been a part of it, at least in those instances where it has been positive and good or perceived to be positive and good. I have seen some very good constituency MLAs in this Legislature during that time, and I have tried to emulate them to the extent that I could.

I will tell you quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, although I do not want you to tell this to my constituents, at least not yet, that there were many and indeed I think there still are many far better constituency MLAs in this House than I was or will ever be. I want to believe that I did that part of my job well, even if I did not excel at it. I want to believe that I served my constituents at the grass-roots level with the problems that they had, the day-to-day problems as a day-to-day politician, just as I want to believe that when we discussed some of the more philosophical and theoretical and principled issues in this House, I did that well, as well.

I make these comments because I know that each and every one of us when we seek electoral office, when we put our name forward, no matter what our profession might be at that time, no matter what our political persuasion may be at that time or over time, no matter what our philosophical approach may be at that time or over time, we do so because we care about the people who elect us. We want to be able to serve our constituents well and to the best of our ability. We may not always be the best constituency MLA in the House or in the province—I know I was not—but we want to be the best constituency MLA that we can be. In order to do that, we must serve our constituents.

Passing this legislation and the elimination of a northern seat—now this is spoken to rural and other concerns—but most particularly the incredible expansion of the Rupertsland seat and the expansion of the other northern seats, including Flin Flon, that will result from passing this legislation will not take away that desire from future northern MLAs.

They will still want to serve their constituents well. They will want to serve their constituents as well as the MLA for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus) serves his constituents, as well as the Leader of the New Democratic Party, the MLA for Concordia (Mr. Doer), serves his constituents, as well as the Member for Arthur (Mr. Downey) serves his constituents well, as well as the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Pankratz). I leave out no names, I mention them all, in generic terms, because we all want to serve our constituents well.

Because of this legislation, they will not be able to. The Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) will not be able to. This legislation will make it incredibly difficult if not impossible for them to do that constituency part of their job as well as they would want to do it. If they cannot do their job well, not because of their own lack of commitment or their own inability, but because of the legislation we are debating here today systematically

guarantees they will not be able to do their job as well, that is an injustice to that individual, that is unfair to that individual, and it is an injustice and unfair to that individual's constituents.

* (1740)

Having tried to be a good constituency MLA, I feel badly for the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper), the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) and some of the Members of the other northern seats that are going to be expanded, because I know they are going to have that same motivation and same desire, and they are not going to be able to accomplish it.

That inherent unfairness in what we are doing today must not go unacknowledged or be so totally subsumed by our search for the greater good that it is ignored in future endeavours of this sort. That unfairness must not be so consumed by the overall objective that it passes without comment or that it proceeds without protest.

I started my comments today talking how the Churchill constituency has come to be like a close friend, and I want to close on that note. One famous politician once said upon the passing of one of his close friends, he said that he had lost more than a friend, he had lost an inspiration. I think this is the case with my friend, the Churchill constituency. I believe that all of us today in this Chamber are not only losing a friend, but we are losing an inspiration.

I wish those MLAs who are going to follow me in the North, just as I tried to do when following other MLAs in the North, in whatever the constituency name might

be, find the resources to help them do the type of job that this commission has made it more difficult for them to do. I hope that we put our minds to that as to how we can make certain this does not happen again, because it should not have happened now. That is a mistake. If it happens again, that is a tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your attention. I thank MLAs and my colleagues for their attention. I think that when we pass this Bill today, when we pass this overall objective, when we implement this greater good, we must also take careful note of the impact in certain areas and the unfairness that we all must seek to rectify in the future.

* (1750)

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable First Minister will be closing debate.

Mr. Filmon: . . . Bill No. 11, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act . . . ask that it now be referred to Committee of the Whole, I believe, to be dealt with- (inaudible)-

QUESTION put, MOTION carried.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, shall we call it six o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock?

The hour being 6 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).