

Wednesday, October 4, 1989.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of parents of the children who attend the Halcrow Lake Day Care Centre in the Pas, Barb Henderson, Audrey Prouse, Wayne Jackson, and others strongly urging the Government to reconsider increasing the maintenance grants and staff salaries of child care workers in the Province of Manitoba.

As a parent of a preschool child, I would like to take this opportunity to express my support for the child care workers that care for my children while I work.

They provide a very valuable service to the community at large and to me and my family directly. The care they provide is of the highest quality. They combine the special traits of sincerity, interest and concern for my child's well-being physically, emotionally and intellectually. Without their commitment to quality care I would be unable to leave my child on a daily basis with the assurance I now have that my child is well cared for.

I strongly urge this Government to reconsider their attitudes toward the child care profession by increasing the maintenance grants and staff salaries to justly reflect the worth of their services. Without adequate salaries it will be hard to keep these caring and dedicated individuals within the child care field. Our children are worth the investment in a well-maintained child care system.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the First Report of the Committee on Economic Development.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Your Standing Committee on Economic Development presents the following as their First Report.

Your committee met on Tuesday, October 3, 1989, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider the Annual Reports for Manitoba Mineral Resources Ltd. for the fiscal years ended December 31, 1987 and 1988. At this meeting, an alleged matter of contempt was brought to the attention of the committee.

Prior to consideration of the Annual Reports, the Honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) sought the floor to discuss matters pertaining to a meeting of the Standing Committee on Economic Development

held on May 1, 1989. The Honourable Member for Wolseley stated:

"The Government Members on the committee, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey), the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), and the Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer, immediately following an adjournment motion, which was defeated, simply rose and left the committee room. Shortly thereafter, the then chairperson of the committee, the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), despite clear advice from the committee, recessed the committee and left the room. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), by walking out of the committee, aware as he was that a motion to adjourn had been defeated, acted to obstruct and impede the committee in the discharge of its duty. The chairperson, at the time this contempt occurred, did not act to protect the rights of the Members of the committee who remained. The committee was properly constituted, called by the Government at the request of the Minister of Finance and proceeding according to the accepted practice. A motion to adjourn was put and was defeated; in defiance of this the Government walked out. A quorum remained and, despite its clear intention of a desire to discuss the matter, the chairperson walked out."

Following his remarks, the Honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) moved the following motion, which was subsequently passed:

- (1) THAT the events which occurred during, subsequent to, and related to the May 1, 1989, meeting of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections; and
- (2) THAT this committee strongly urge that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections be instructed to meet within 10 days of the acceptance of this motion and as frequently thereafter as the committee may decide, in order to review the matter and to report to the House as soon as possible.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

* (1335)

Mr. Speaker: I believe a few words about the process would be helpful to all Honourable Members.

An alleged matter of contempt is afforded the same priority as a matter of privilege and is considered in the same manner. In this particular case, the report from the committee takes the place of the more usual raising of the matter in the House by an Honourable

Member. No motion that the report be received is required in this case, just as a report respecting grave disorder in a Committee of the Whole House does not require a motion that it be received.

The Chair will entertain brief and relevant comments by a spokesperson from each of the Parties respecting whether or not the conditions of contempt or privilege have been met before either taking the matter under advisement or ruling on it. The Honourable Member for Wolseley.

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, as you yourself have stated, concerns which are being brought to the House today are very serious ones. They involve questions of privilege and of contempt for this House. While the circumstances which led to this coming before the House are familiar to you, I would like to briefly review the events and outline why we feel this motion is warranted.

On the 1st of May, 1989, during a meeting of the Standing Committee of Economic Development, the Government Members on the committee: the Member for Morris, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness); the Member for Arthur, the Minister of Northern Affairs, and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey); the Member for Lakeside, the new Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns); the Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), immediately following an adjournment motion, which was proposed by the Minister of Finance and which was defeated, simply rose and left the committee room. In so doing, Mr. Speaker, I believe they acted in contempt of the committee and this House.

Very shortly thereafter, the chairperson of the committee, the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), despite clear advice from the committee, of which a quorum was still present, recessed the committee and left the room. While it is common practice for a chairperson to recess a committee to receive advice, it is extremely unusual for such a recess to continue beyond a few minutes without seeking additional advice from the committee, or taking the matter under advisement and continue the meeting itself.

In acting in the manner that he did, the chairperson aided and abetted those Members who I have already indicated acted in contempt of the committee. Mr. Speaker, this has raised serious questions about his ability to act as an impartial Chair of a committee.

On the first opportunity, the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus) raised this matter to your attention as a matter of privilege. In doing so, he stated that normally an alleged breach of privilege, which occurs in committee, would come to the floor of the House in the form of a report from the chairperson of the committee. However, as the chairperson of this committee is himself the subject of the allegations of contempt of the committee, I feel that I must appeal to you, Sir, in your capacity as Speaker of this Assembly, to ask that you ensure that my rights as a Member are protected and that the Rules of the House are upheld.

At that time, Mr. Speaker, you referred it back to the committee and stated, and I quote: "... there

is no doubt that the charges which have been brought before the House are very serious ones." Then you went on to state that this issue would have to be brought to the attention of this House by a report considered and agreed upon by the Standing Committee on Economic Development and presented to the House.

Mr. Speaker, you went on to say, "The Standing Committee is now able to meet and could be called, at which time it could consider the matter" You concluded by saying, quote: "This does not preclude the matter from being raised in another manner." You made that ruling on Friday, June 2 of this year.

* (1340)

We have tried repeatedly since that time to have a meeting of that committee in order to deal with this very serious matter. The Government has frustrated all of our attempts to have the matter raised and delayed the calling of the committee until this past Tuesday, yesterday, at which time the meeting was held and the motion now before us was considered and passed.

Mr. Speaker, simply stated, the questions before us are three. Did the Government Members of the committee act in contempt of the committee by instructing or impeding the committee in the performance of its functions; did the chairperson of the committee breach the privilege of the Members of the committee by also absenting himself from the meeting; and three, is the chairperson in contempt of the committee when he left the committee despite a clear indication by a quorum present that they wished to continue?

Mr. Speaker, you are charged with the duty of determining whether or not a prima facie case of privilege exists in order that debate on a motion which must accompany such a matter by giving precedence. According to the Beausnes's Parliamentary Rules and Forms 6th Edition, Citation No. 117. (1) in doing so you must: "be satisfied, both that privilege appears to be sufficiently involved to justify giving such precedence; and also that the matter is being raised at the earliest opportunity."

On the question of time limits, I believe that in keeping with the practice of the House, I am well within the definition of "earliest opportunity."

The salient question then is: is privilege sufficiently involved? Considering this question I would ask that you review the definition of privilege as set out in (a) the appendices of our own rule book which state that insults and obstructions during debate are breaches of the privilege of the House; (b) Beausnes's 6th Edition Citation first 24., "Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively . . . and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions" and 26.(2) "A question of privilege, . . . is a question partly of fact and partly of law—the law of contempt of Parliament"

Mr. Speaker, while contempt is admittedly difficult to define, I believe that the general definition provided on page 196 of Mr. Joseph Maingot's book on

parliamentary privilege in Canada is widely accepted. Mr. Maingot defines contempt generally as: "any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his parliamentary duty."

Mr. Speaker, the committee was properly constituted, called by the Government at the request of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and proceeding according to accepted practice. A motion to adjourn was put and was defeated. In defiance of this, the Government walked out. A quorum remained, and despite their clear indication of a desire to discuss the matter, the chairperson walked out. That is why this matter is before the House at this time.

We cannot let these actions on the part of the Government, and of the Chair, remain as a precedence. That is why this motion is before us. The House must deal with the issue and the proper forum, I believe, is a Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. We must review the incident, hear all sides and decide upon how such disputes will be resolved in the future. Mr. Speaker, I urge you, and all Members of my caucus urge you, to allow this debate to proceed.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader):

I believe it is quite clear that this matter has been dealt with in the most appropriate manner. Beauchesne's Citation 107. indicates clearly that breaches of privilege in committee may be dealt with only by the House itself on report of the committee. I believe that what is taking place today really is the first opportunity that we have had to deal with this in the appropriate fashion.

The Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) has outlined the circumstances that took place and I think really the important thing to emphasize is that the circumstances were unprecedented, and I think if they are allowed to stand as a precedent, are a dangerous precedent, not just for this Legislature but for Legislatures in the parliamentary system anywhere, because what we saw was not only contempt by the Minister and a number of other Members of the committee walking out to try and frustrate the business of that committee, but when the chairperson of the committee as well walked out, leaving a quorum of the committee, which intended to continue to do business, in a position of being paralyzed, being unable to perform its duties. That is something that I have never seen in the eight years I have been here, and it is something that I have not been able to find in any other Legislature or Parliament. It is quite unprecedented, Mr. Speaker.

* (1345)

I think some of the points have been raised about the definition of privilege, the definition of contempt. What I want to do is just cite perhaps the foremost principles of parliamentary law, and just cite a few of them to show why this matter is of such serious concern. I am referring to Beauchesne Citation 1, in particular a number of the citations in No. 1 which refer to the need to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner, to enable every Member to express opinions within limits necessary to preserve decorum

and prevent an unnecessary waste of time, to give abundant opportunity for the consideration of every measure; and it continues, Mr. Speaker.

I think what occurred that night frustrated each and every Member of the committee in each and every one of those citations I have mentioned. How can you maintain quorum when Members of the committee, including the Minister and the Chairperson, walk out of a committee leaving it paralyzed? How can you consider a matter when the committee no longer has a functioning Chair, and because of that fact is unable to elect a new Chair, as we later found out?

In fact, Members of the Opposition went so far as to call a meeting of the committee, with the quorum of the Members of the committee. The problem, Mr. Speaker, once again was whether it was a duly constituted meeting of the committee or whether it was just a meeting of committee Members. I think one can see how bad this precedent is. I really feel that what happened that night may have been something that was spontaneous. I think it was irresponsible on behalf of the Members of Government, but I do not believe that they thought through the consequences that took place. That is why we need to deal with this as a matter of privilege. It is a very serious matter. That is why we need to send it to committee. We need to do that to ensure that this action that took place in that committee that evening is not a precedent either in this House or any other House, because if that does happen, as I said, the fundamental principles of parliamentary law will be violated.

I think each and every Member of this Legislature, in dealing with matters as serious as this, should ask themselves what the public of Manitoba, who perhaps do not really have much interest in the Rules of this House, would say about what happened. I think it is quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that the members of the public of Manitoba would be amazed to learn that Members of the Government and the Chair of the committee walked out because they did not like the fact that they just introduced a motion to adjourn, and it was defeated. I think that would be something that members of the public in Manitoba would consider to be absolutely irresponsible. That really is what we are dealing with in this case, our Rules, but our Rules in many cases are based on common sense.

Common sense has been developed over hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition, but common sense that is supported by many people in this province. That is why I believe that according to our Rules and according to common sense, what happened that night was irresponsible, unacceptable, should not be allowed to be a precedent in this House, and needs to be referred to the committee so that it is dealt with, and dealt with as soon as possible.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):

Mr. Speaker, I submit that what we have before us today in this Chamber is a combined majority Opposition which has no control over itself. We have an Opposition that has lost sight of any realistic objectives for the people of Manitoba, and an Opposition which has clearly no agenda for this Legislature.

Above all, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that there is no question of privilege before this Assembly. The report by the Standing Committee on Economic Development does not state that a question of privilege was raised by the Honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor). The report indicates that a certain motion was moved by the Honourable Member regarding an incident which took place in a past meeting of that committee. Nowhere in the report do you find that the Chairman of the committee ruled that there was or was not a question of privilege before the committee. In that regard, Citation 821 of Beauchesne says that all rulings of the Chairman may be appealed to the committee.

* (1350)

What is before the House, in my opinion, is a report from a committee which expresses a concern about a particular deliberation and offers to the House an opinion that there might have been a deviation from the normal procedures of the House. The report does not indicate what occurred, or did not occur, on May 1. The report does not inform the House as to which Member action should be taken against, Mr. Speaker. Further, the report does not outline what breach of the Rules has taken place. I therefore submit that the report presented to the Assembly is an opinion which is not in the mandate of the Standing Committee on Economic Development.

The committee was called together to consider the Annual Reports of the Manitoba Mineral Resources Corporation for the fiscal years 1987 and 1988. That was, until they finish their deliberations on those matters, still their mandate. Nowhere in their mandate did this House give that committee the power to bring forth an opinion regarding their proceedings held some time ago, or in a previous Session, or relating to another Annual Report, that of Manfor.

In support of my argument, I draw your attention to a ruling brought down by Mr. Speaker Murray on June 21, 1883, found on pages 65 and 66 of the Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, where he states in part, a committee has no power to report an opinion without permission from the House. Mr. Speaker, I make this point only because the Honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) did not raise this matter as a question of privilege during the deliberations of the committee on Tuesday.

Prior to the summer adjournment you ruled, Sir, on a matter raised by the Honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus) regarding the events of the same standing committee on May 1, again dealing with Manfor. In that ruling you stated, "... it is my opinion that to be handled in accordance with long-established practices and procedures, this issue would have to be brought to the attention of the House by a report considered and agreed upon by the Standing Committee on Economic Development and presented to the House." You further stated, "The standing committee is now able to meet and could be called, at which time it could consider the matter raised by the Honourable Member for St. Norbert and could decide whether or not to report the matter to the House."

Mr. Speaker, your very sound ruling indicated to Honourable Members Opposite the procedure which should be followed if they felt that their privileges had been violated. I want to submit that the failure of the Honourable Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) to rise on a question of privilege in the standing committee negates the ability of the committee to bring this matter to the floor of the House under the guise of a question of privilege.

In my submission to you on May 19, I drew the attention of the House to Beauchesne's Citation 822, which states, "Procedural difficulties which arise in committees ought to be settled in the committee and not in the House." I suggest that the report of the committee tabled in the House today is an attempt to do indirectly what cannot be done directly.

The body of the committee's report recommends that the unspecified matters of alleged breaches in procedure be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections of this House. This, Sir, is in violation of Beauchesne's Citation 824, which states, "As the committee has no power to censor nor to refer matters to other committees, a motion to report alleged improper conduct should state that the matter be referred to the House for its action." I will not argue that the Honourable Member for Wolseley has attempted to use the provisions of Beauchesne's Citation 823, which allows a committee to report a wide variety of disorderly matters, but the Honourable Member has failed through his motion in the committee to leave the matter in the hands of the House. Instead he has asked for another committee to look into this matter, which as I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, is procedurally incorrect.

I draw your attention to the ruling made in the House of Commons of Canada by Mr. Speaker Lamoureux on December 4, 1973, when he stated on pages 83 and 84 of the House of Commons Debate that there were doubts as to the advisability of having proceedings of one committee investigated by another committee of the House. Indeed, Mr. Speaker Jerome on May 26, 1975, ruled on pages 609, 7 and 8 of the House of Commons Debate that the Committee on Privileges and Elections should not be allowed to become a court of appeal for the proceedings in other standing committees. These precedents are a clear indication, Mr. Speaker, that matters of alleged breaches of order and privilege once raised in a committee should be dealt with by that committee or submitted by way of report with specific allegations to the House. This, Sir, has not been done in this instance.

* (1355)

I therefore suggest that the report of the Standing Committee on Economic Development presented to the House today does not contain in it sufficient grounds for a question of privilege and that consideration of this report under the guise of a question of privilege should not be given precedence over other business in this House, other important business.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank all Honourable Members for their advice. As I have stated previously,

this is indeed a very serious matter. I will be reviewing Hansard on this because there has been some very detailed information brought forward. So I will be taking this matter under advisement and will report back to the House at a later date.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BILL NO. 49—THE DOWER AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General) introduced, by leave, Bill No. 49, The Dower Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le douaire.

BILL NO. 50—THE WILLS AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General) introduced, by leave, Bill No. 50, The Wills Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les testaments.

* (1400)

BILL NO. 54—THE HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (5)

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation) introduced, by leave, Bill No. 54, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (5); Loi no 5 modifiant le Code de la route.

BILL NO. 53—THE ENERGY RATE STABILIZATION AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General) introduced, on behalf of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), by leave, Bill No. 53, The Energy Rate Stabilization Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la stabilisation des emprunts d'Hydro-Manitoba à l'étranger. (Recommended by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor)

Mr. Speaker, at this time as well, table the message from His Honour.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I have a ruling for the House.

On Tuesday, September 26, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). In raising his point of order, the Honourable Member questioned whether it was in order for Ministers to rise at a subsequent day when they did not take a question as notice.

I have carefully examined the First Minister's (Mr. Filmon), response respecting rural economic development infrastructure costs as recorded in Hansard for September 22 and 26. I note that the First Minister did not indicate on the 22nd any intention to take the question or any part of it under advisement. In responding on the 26th, he did refer to the question

asked on the 22nd by the Honourable Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), suggesting in my opinion that he was responding to a question taken as notice.

The authorities contain many references relating to brevity, relevance and the avoidance of repetition of questions during Question Period.

As stated by the Speaker of the House of Commons, "Time is scarce and therefore should be used as profitably as possible by as many as possible." I am therefore ruling that the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) was out of order by responding further at a subsequent sitting to a question which had previously been asked apparently in full.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, certainly at all times I endeavour to be as open and as forthright and as complete in bringing information to the House, but I respect your ruling and will certainly attempt to follow it in future.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

VIA Rail Cutbacks Government Position

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, when we raised the issue of VIA Rail cuts one week ago, the Minister and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) indicated that they did not particularly want to respond to rumours. Today we know that they are no longer rumours. We have heard that the cuts will be dealt with in spades by the federal Government and that we have in essence cut in half the national dream of Canada. The result in Manitoba will be three trains through Winnipeg per week, a drop from 14, 224 Manitobans to lose their jobs, some 37 percent of the VIA employees and some 16 percent of all rail employees. We know that 8.2 percent of all cuts for Canada will take place in this province, and I want to know what the Minister is going to do today in terms of policy announcements, in terms of efforts that he is going to make for the retention that differ from his answers of one week ago.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, based on the announcement made by the federal Minister, today is not a happy day for Manitobans or Canadians. I have to indicate that I am disappointed in the decision that has come forward from the federal Minister. As the Leader of the Opposition indicated, 224 people will be losing their jobs in Manitoba and we do not know to what extent the economic impact on other jobs that we have lost in the support sectors. Mr. Speaker, the Member asked what our position has been at this stage of the game. It has not changed from the day that we started writing and lobbying on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

What has happened after the ruling that came down today, Mr. Speaker, I have again written to the federal Minister indicating our concern, the fact that at the

time of the announcements being made, a royal commission is being established to look at the transportation sector for Canada as a whole. The fact that this is done at a time—it is almost like viewing the corpse—the decision has been made. I have written to the federal Minister indicating to him that a moratorium be put on the implementation of the decision made until this royal commission will be coming back and making a report.

Further to that, I have also indicated to the federal Minister that an emergency meeting should be called of all the Ministers of Transportation to consult and see whether we can arrive at some kind of a moratorium. I would like to table the letter that I have sent to the federal Minister at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Cutbacks Prevention Campaign

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, words, words, words, Manitobans are sick of words. When we get the words, we get a word like "disappointed." Well, Manitobans are horrified, they are furious, and they want the Minister to be furious, and they want the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) to be furious, and they want us to launch a national campaign. Will this Minister launch a national campaign today to involve not only Ministers across this nation, but the peoples across this nation, to prevent this abuse of our nation?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I have indicated time and time again our concern. The fact that we lobbied extensively for the retention of the northern routes for Manitoba I think is indicative that we made our point at that stage of the game. We are continuing to try and use that approach, together with my colleagues. I have also sent copies of the letter that is sent to the federal Minister to all the provincial Ministers, and hope to get a response. We are trying to see whether we can build up momentum and, Mr. Speaker, I repeat, I have asked for an emergency meeting with the federal Minister, together with my provincial colleagues across the country, to see whether we can ask the federal Minister to get him to put a moratorium on the decision that was announced today until the royal commission will be reporting.

VIA Rail Cutbacks Impact Study

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, since the federal budget was announced in April of 1989, this province has lost 1,865 jobs, federal jobs, in this province. What does it take to make this Government angry with their federal cousins? Can the Minister tell us today what impact studies and what analysis of impact studies has he got for us today so that he can build a case with the federal Government, so that he can lay before them not only the impact of these cuts, but the impact of job losses of 1,865 people?

* (1410)

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, it would be very difficult for us to analyze what the impact of today's announcement would be because the announcement just came down a few hours ago. But, Mr. Speaker, because we did not—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Minister.

Mr. Albert Driedger: Until we had the definitive information of the announcement, we could not really assess the economic impact. Mr. Speaker, we have instructed my staff to look at the impact of the layoffs, economic impact, and we have stressed that in the letter that I have sent to the federal Minister that he should consider, for example, the various aspects, the loss of employment, the retraining, relocation and costly severance packages, as well as losses to be incurred in tourism and CN and CP earnings.

Mr. Speaker, we have stressed to the federal Minister the impact, whether all these things have been considered in making that decision. We will try and assess that from our point of view.

Mrs. Carstairs: It is quite obvious that Benoit Bouchard does not care about the impact on this particular province and unless this Minister makes the case it is not going to have any effect.

Will the Minister tell us when, if ever, he is going to have some definitive information, since this thing has been leaked for months and months and months.

Mr. Albert Driedger: I think it would be irresponsible for me to start taking and doing an assessment before we have a decision. Based on rumours, I would have my department working 24 hours a day to try and assess these things. Mr. Speaker, we had to wait until we knew what the announcement was. We did not get it any sooner than anybody else. We are doing that assessment at the present time and have indicated the impacts to the federal Minister. All these things we are considering in terms of making this decision because it is my view that there will be a net loss out of this thing, not the billion dollars that the federal Government is hoping to save on subsidies to VIA Rail.

Mrs. Carstairs: We had an announcement today of \$1 billion worth of cuts. If you would just take our 8.2 percent, that amounts to \$80 million in the Province of Manitoba.

What other figures can this Minister give us today as to the impact here in this province?

Mr. Albert Driedger: I have been trying to indicate that we are working on those figures. We got the information a few hours ago. We did not know how many jobs would be affected. We know now how many jobs will be affected. We are also trying to establish from the service industry exactly how much business will be lost to Manitoba when we service VIA Rail as it goes through here by the cutting back of twice-a-

day service to three times a week. There are many of these things that we now know. We are working on trying to establish what the economic impact would be on jobs and on the economy in Manitoba.

Mrs. Carstairs: It is irresponsible. This Minister and this Government has known that these cuts were coming. Surely the minimum they could have done was to establish computer models which then could have been fitted with the correct numbers this morning and the numbers would have been out by this afternoon.

Why was that advance planning not done in his ministry?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Albert Driedger: Mr. Speaker, we realize full well that there is an economic impact on jobs and on Manitoba generally. Whether it is going to be a million or \$2 million, regardless what the figures are, we have raised our concerns and do not agree with the decision and the position that the federal Government has taken. We are doing, jointly in consultation with my Premier, as well as my colleagues, we are moving and raising our concerns with the federal Government in the best way we know how as the other provinces are doing, and I am asking again for the support of the other provinces, my colleagues, to raise this case with the federal Government.

Maintenance Centre

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, regardless of what the figures are—I mean, \$1 million, \$10 million, \$50 million, \$250 million—is this supposed to be a Government that prides itself on management?

My final question to the Minister responsible for Transportation is this: can he tell the House today if he has any knowledge of the impact on the maintenance centre, which was to be built in this province as a result of the cuts?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister for Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, not at the present time.

VIA Rail Cutbacks Premier's Intervention

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in terms of our national public railway system, I think the national dream over the last 15 years has become a national disgrace. First of all, we established a public railway system and the obligations that the CPR had, and the billions of dollars worth of land that they were given by the taxpayers of this country in exchange for a public transportation system, were given away 15 years ago when VIA Rail was created. We saw the 25 percent cut by Trudeau's Government in VIA Rail and today again we see other nails in the coffin of our national dreams.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). Rather than leaving this issue with his Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) and dealing with the federal Minister of Transportation, who has shown absolutely no vision of this country and particularly in its regions, would the First Minister please call upon the Prime Minister to have an emergency meeting of all First Ministers in this country to talk about our national dream rather than leaving it with the Transport Ministers who cannot get very far with the federal Minister of Transport.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, I regret that the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) finds this funny, but I can tell you that this is a serious issue. We have grave concerns about the long-term effects of cuts in VIA Rail on all of the regional areas of our country. It is a major impact on every region. This is not a particular measure that impacts only on Winnipeg or only on Manitoba. The Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) I think quoted 38 percent losses in Manitoba. The news release indicates 46 percent losses in Montreal.

Mr. Speaker, this is a major impact right across the country. I believe that if it is going to be adequately and properly fought, this decision ought to be pursued by all Governments right across the country, every single province. That is why I raised it at the First Ministers' Meeting in Quebec City. That is why our Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) has been dealing with it and raising it with Transportation Ministers. That is why our Minister of Tourism (Mr. Ernst) has raised it at a Tourism Ministers' meeting. It is going to require all provincial Governments to indicate that we are concerned about the offloading on our road system, the extra costs that we, as a Province, will have to absorb. The impacts on tourism, one of our more buoyant industries in terms of growth, will be adversely affected by this.

Mr. Speaker, we are not happy with it. We will raise it at every possible opportunity with our federal Government, because we believe that they ought to review and rescind this decision. That is why the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) has called for a moratorium on these cuts.

First Ministers' Meeting

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish the Premier (Mr. Filmon) today would call the Prime Minister who was not at the Quebec City meeting and demand a First Ministers' meeting with the Prime Minister of this country who is the one who is executing VIA Rail and a national public transportation system in this country.

We did not get anywhere with the meeting that the Transportation Ministers have held. We did not get anywhere with the First Ministers' Meeting. Why would the Premier (Mr. Filmon) not call upon the Prime Minister to have an emergency First Ministers' meeting? Mr. Speaker, why would the First Minister not be aware that the cutbacks in Manitoba when you go from 40 trains a week in Winnipeg down to 12 is a 70 percent

cut in passenger transportation? When you cut through the public relation news releases of the federal Government, it is a 70 percent cut in Manitoba, and that should warrant a call to the Prime Minister today for a First Ministers' meeting.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we will put in the strongest possible terms our concerns before the federal Government. We will do it through all avenues available to us, through the Transportation Ministers, through the Tourism Ministers, through the First Ministers of this country, the fact that we believe that this is a decision that has not given consideration to the regional concerns and interests right across this country, that we are concerned about the offloading of other costs onto our province, as well as, of course, the very serious job loss. It is the people and the jobs that we are concerned about, Mr. Speaker, and we will make those concerns known in the strongest possible terms.

* (1420)

Premier's Intervention

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of jobs being lost in this country. There are thousands of rights of passengers being lost in this country. We have tried to stop this cutback, this proposed cutback, for the last six months, using all the press releases, letters, leaks, Ministers' conferences, First Ministers' conferences. In light of the fact that nobody is speaking out for a national vision that includes a western Canadian vision, no one is speaking out for it, why would the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) not call upon his federal counterpart and talk about the 250 businesses that do business with VIA Rail in Manitoba and the impact of the tourism industry with the cutback in the Rocky Mountain route coming to Winnipeg, and the devastating effect this will have on our western and Manitoba economy? Why would the First Minister of this province not call upon the Prime Minister to talk about the effects on businesses, on passengers, and the quality of life of western Canada and Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, that was a rather lengthy preamble for a third question, but I will just simply say that indeed I have raised those points, that the First Ministers, in a communique, indicated those concerns to the Prime Minister, and that is precisely what the Tourism Ministers and the Transportation Ministers have been laying before their federal counterparts.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the First Minister (Mr. Filmon), again I cannot understand why he will not call upon the Prime Minister for an emergency meeting of First Ministers. Surely this is a national issue; surely this is an emergency issue; surely this is an issue of national vision; surely this is an issue that the First Ministers and the Prime Minister should take direct responsibility.

Northern Route Protection

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question to the First Minister is: would he get longer than a one-year guarantee for the route to Churchill—the same person that has devastated western Canada, as the Transport Minister, in terms of the routes in western Canada has said that the Churchill route has a one-year period under which they will evaluate it using the same criteria as they cut the other routes. Would the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) also use the route to Churchill as another reason to call for an emergency meeting of First Ministers with the Prime Minister in this country?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as we indicated before, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger) has made his case on behalf of Churchill, and that case has obviously been accepted by Mr. Bouchard as having merit. We will continue to work with the federal Minister, to work on him to ensure that he knows that the rail line to Churchill is absolutely essential to the people of Manitoba, to the Province of Manitoba, and we will do everything we can to protect the continued use and the continued service on that line.

Winnipeg Water Protection Group Funding

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, the Water Protection Group has proven to be a strong and competent advocate in defending the interests of residents of the City of Winnipeg and was instrumental in convincing the Government of Ontario of the need for a full environmental review on the impact of the Consolidated Professor Mine in the middle of Shoal Lake. Mr. Speaker, the City of Winnipeg has given the Water Protection Group \$10,000 and up to a further \$90,000 upon dollar matching from this provincial Government. The question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings), is the Minister of Environment prepared to recommend to Treasury Board the provision of such a grant to the Water Protection Group and, if not, why not?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I have answered that question several times, several different ways in this House, all with the same conclusion, that we believe the people of this province and the people of Winnipeg are not asking to have the same work done three different ways. We have a competent Department of Environment with a competent group of officials who have an expertise in water quality and the other impacts that go with environmental assessment. We will be doing that work, and we will not be funding a third party.

Canadian Wildlife Federation Rafferty-Alameda Dam Project

Mr. Harold Taylor (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, well, it is interesting to note in a communique this morning that the Canadian Wildlife Federation is taking back to court

Mr. Lucien Bouchard, the federal Environment Minister. The question to this Environment Minister is: will this Government be a party? Will they be a co-intervener? According to their policy on Rafferty-Alameda, I am asking for a full environmental impact assessment. Will they be going back to the federal court with the Canadian Wildlife Federation?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, we were not a co-intervener previously. We asked for a full environmental impact study. When the licence was issued, we were faced with the reality of the impacts of changing of flows, and how that could be managed within the Souris River Basin. In the licence, we received the assurance that we will have an opportunity to partake in the setting of the water regime that flows through that Souris River Basin. That is the impact that will ultimately come to the Province of Manitoba. That is where we will be able to protect the quantity and the quality of the water that we need in this province.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, this Government and this province gets no protection under that licence. This Minister grandstanded in Melita in June. What are they doing to protect Manitoba's interests? Nothing, you are just rolling over and dying. Let us hear your answers, Glen.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, obviously the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Taylor) does not understand his question. He does not understand the reality of how the water regimes will be regulated and the expectation that we will have an input into that, and we have never eliminated our right to resume -(interjection)- If you are so smart in asking the question, maybe you would like to hear the answer.

Mr. Speaker, we have never waived our responsibility to make sure that we get the requirements that we have asked for in this water basin, and we will continue to make sure that we have those options kept open to us.

Public Utilities Board Jurisdiction - Manitoba Hydro

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, the Court of Appeal yesterday handed down a decision that, amongst other things, pointed out ill-conceived and poorly-drafted legislation and is seemingly bad news for consumers. The very board that was established to protect the interest of consumers has been told that it has no say over increases passed on to consumers to help pay for mega projects and, unfortunately, the mega project can be initiated by the Government, conceived, and built before the impact is found out by the Public Utilities Board.

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that major capital expenditures and investments can result in significant increases to consumers. My question is: how does the Minister plan to protect the interests of consumers now that the Court of Appeal has ruled that the Public Utilities Board has no jurisdiction over the mega projects?

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, the Public Utilities Board has the final authority on the rates that are going to be set by Manitoba Hydro. The Public Utilities Board will be the one that will rule on the rates that are going to be set. So they have the very final authority, and they will be protecting the consumers of Manitoba.

Crown Corporation Public Review Act Amendments

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, the Public Utilities Board can only deal with the investments after the fact, and I would hope that—well, let me ask specifically. Will the Minister support legislation committing that any major capital construction programs undertaken by Manitoba Hydro will be submitted for cost-benefit justifications, plans, estimates, and schedules for development to the Public Utilities Board for its examination and for review, and that the Public Utilities Board shall report its findings, comments, and recommendations to the Minister responsible for Hydro (Mr. Neufeld) and through to the Legislature?

* (1430)

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus) will see the folly in his suggestion. Supposing that Manitoba Hydro has a large sale which requires the construction of another generating station, it must then go to the Public Utilities Board and have the hearings which might take a year. How can Manitoba Hydro negotiate a large hydro sale if they are going to have to go and have approval from the Public Utilities Board before they can start the construction of the generating station that will in the end supply the power for that sale.

Manitoba Hydro Project Information Release

Mr. John Angus (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, is this Minister condoning the hiding of information and not allowing -(interjection)- the question is this: is this Minister not prepared to share with the public of Manitoba the details, the cost benefit projections of a mega project as a commitment that was made by the Chairman of Hydro to the Public Utilities Board?

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, in the end the Government takes the responsibility for its decisions. If those decisions are to build another generating station, it will take the responsibility for it; but I think you can see, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot allow a one- or two-year delay in the construction of a project that is going to be required for the generation, not only perhaps of a hydro sale, but for the use of Manitoba consumers. We cannot wait a year sometimes, or two years, for the Public Utilities Board to reach a decision on the need for a station when Hydro officials have already indicated that a new station will have to be built. We must build a station at the time that it is required and not after the people of Manitoba, or the Public Utilities Board, has finished its deliberations.

Churchill River Dam Environmental Impact Study

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of the Environment. This Minister continues to profess to have a great concern for the environment, and yesterday during Question Period he said specifically we have been aware of the situation, referring to the building of the dam at Island Falls, and we have not received information that we are able to deal with and what some of the impacts may be, but that does not mean we are not concerned.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister is: given the indication from the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) that the province would join, or use the courts to prevent the deterioration of water quality in Manitoba and deterioration of water quality to communities in northern Manitoba, will the Minister today indicate whether he is prepared to act with the community to do the necessary environmental impact assessments, to stop the project until they have been done to assure the quality of water to communities on the Churchill River?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, that is what I was referring to yesterday when I said that we would provide technical backup and information. The impact of the water on the Brochet and Pukatawagan areas, as I understand the situation, is directly related to the operation of the power plant, and the present situation needs a great deal of study in order to obtain an agreement on the operation of that plant.

Mr. Speaker, unless the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) wants to let on that he suddenly has a new-found interest in this issue, I would refer him to a letter back in 1987 that was written to the previous administration asking what was going on with the Manitoba Water Commission hearings and where they were headed. Back in 1987 nothing was happening.

Mr. Storie: Well, Mr. Speaker —

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

PCB Spill

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

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): My second question is to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings) is. The Water Commission was asked to investigate this matter, as the Minister has indicated, unfortunately the Saskatchewan Government nor Saskatchewan Power would come to the table. They have an incentive now because they are building a project worth \$200 million and the Minister has an opportunity to protect them.

My question to the Minister is: if he is concerned about the environment, could he tell this House whether he was informed at any stage, whether by Saskatchewan Power or the Saskatchewan Government, as reported in the April 22 issue of the Regina Leader-Post, that

there was a 250-gallon spill of PCB-laden oil at the site in question, can he indicate whether anyone in his department was informed, whether anyone in the communities of Pukatawagan, whose water is taken directly from the Churchill River, was informed? Can he tell the community that he will now stand up and protect their quality of water? We were interested, we would have stopped it too.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I will take the information that he is giving as notice and reference it to the department to see if we were contacted, but I would also want to know at that time if the spill was contained and what the risks were that were involved.

Mr. Storie: The Mayor of the community, downstream in a flight, saw the oil spill in the river, landed and shut off the drinking water access to his own community. So I can tell you that it was not contained.

Environmental Impact Study

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): My question is: we have seen this Minister back away from his obligation in Rafferty-Alameda and now in this situation, will he please commit to joining with the community of Pukatawagan in undertaking the necessary environmental studies to protect the environment in that region, and will he act to stop the Saskatchewan project until such time as those assessments have been undertaken?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I gave commitment yesterday, and I reiterate today, that I would be working to make sure that the technical information was available.

Also, I think it needs to be made abundantly clear that neither I nor the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) or this Government is waiving any opportunity that we would have to work on behalf of these communities. When the Member for Flin Flon wants to stand up and grandstand, he needs to remember that he neglected those communities when he was in Government.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Flin Flon, on a point of order.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, the Member has certainly cast aspersions on my fulfilling my responsibility as an MLA, suggesting that somehow I had not acted as an individual MLA to protect the interests of my constituents. I was the Member for the first time in history who ordered, and my colleague for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) will join me in this, in getting the water commission into those communities—

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

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): Thank you, Mr. Speaker—(interjection)—

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order.

Mr. Speaker: I have ruled that there is no point of order.

Community Investment Fund Volunteer Board Announcement

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): My question is to the Premier. The Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation (Mrs. Mitchelson) seems only to excel in her ability to mismanage her department. On May 16 a new Community Investment Fund was announced which was to be administered by a volunteer board to fund social and community projects and special events. Can the Premier once again cover for his Minister and explain to this House why no such volunteer board has, as yet, been announced?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I certainly do not need to cover for my Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation (Mrs. Mitchelson) or any other Minister. I will be glad to take that question as notice, Mr. Speaker.

Morris Conservative Association

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): Will the Premier (Mr. Filmon) then explain why the first vice-president of the Morris Conservative Association seems to have complete control over the allocation of these funds having been named the sole contact person according to representatives from Red River Exhibition, Blue Bombers, Festival du Voyageur and others?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable First Minister.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I will take that question as notice, Mr. Speaker.

Independent Board

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, this Government continues to blatantly politicize this department. Will the First Minister withdraw Bob Swain, another Tory friend, and put in place an independent board as promised?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, ignoring all of the false and spurious allegations contained in that preamble, I will take that question as notice as well.

Western Sun Vacations Closure

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Connerly). Yesterday, Western Sun Vacations of Calgary, Alberta, one of western Canada's largest tour operators, declared bankruptcy leaving scores of passengers

stranded in Honolulu and Las Vegas. Can the Minister tell this House how many Manitobans have been left stranded?

* (1440)

Hon. Edward Connerly (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have not been informed of the number of Manitobans stranded.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Speaker, to the same Minister, can the Minister tell us how many people have lost deposits on future travel with this company?

Mr. Connerly: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had questions in this House from the same Member. Three times he brought inaccurate information and allegations to this House. Mr. Speaker, I will take that question under advisement.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

Travel Industry Act Support

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Since the president of the Travel Agents Association of Alberta, Brian Symic, has asked that the Alberta Government bring in a travel Act to protect the public, will the Minister support The Travel Industry Act, Bill No. 44, that was introduced in the House last Friday?

Hon. Edward Connerly (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I can inform the House that we are undertaking negotiations and discussions with the travel industry. Our department is reviewing legislation in other jurisdictions. If and when we feel it is appropriate we will be bringing that forward.

Omand's Creek Development Green Space Protection

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): My question is for the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings). Yesterday the Minister indicated that if the province received a proposal for development over Omand's Creek in my constituency that would require an environmental impact assessment, he would be more than happy to have one done.

As the Minister knows, the City of Winnipeg has now formally requested the province to do such a study. I can tell this Minister that the proposal is to build an office tower and a car wash over Omand's Creek along the north side of Portage Avenue which would divide the green belt which is now Omand's Creek and Blue Stem Park.

Mr. Speaker, given that the Government has already spent over 1 million on the development of this green space, will the Minister commit today to protecting that investment and this green space in this part of the city,

a part of the city that has less green space than any other part of the city, and guarantee that an environmental impact assessment will be done?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the answer is that we will be doing a study when we receive the proposal. We have seen via media coverage that the City of Winnipeg will be asking for an impact study and frankly it is a matter of semantics. I expect that it will be done as soon as we have the proposal.

Environmental Impact Study

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): To clarify, is the Minister saying that if the proposal is indeed a car wash and an office tower, straddling a stream in this city, that there will be an environmental impact assessment done. Is that what he is saying? I would like the confirmation.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): It is a hypothetical question, Mr. Speaker, but I think the question is if it is a proposal that would be deemed a development then there would be a hearing.

Mr. Edwards: This is hypothetical, like the VIA cuts have been hypothetical. This has been around for years.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. Will the Honourable Member for St. James kindly put his question now.

Mr. Edwards: This proposal is not hypothetical. This proposal has -(interjection)- been—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question is?

City of Winnipeg Act Amendments

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, finally for the same Minister, if this Minister will not indeed commit to an environmental impact assessment, will he commit to an amendment brought forward by this caucus to The City of Winnipeg Act which would ban construction of commercial entities like this over rivers and streams, our precious rivers and streams in this city.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, obviously not having seen his amendment, I am not going to respond to that statement. The Member for St. James need not worry about whether or not there will be a study done. If the city requests it and we receive a copy of a proposal, then I will order one.

Forest Fires Public Inquiry

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Disaster Assistance. During last summer's fires there was a lot of concern expressed over the priorities of

the Government when it came to firefighting. There was concern expressed over the lack of communication and the lack of consultation with the responsible people. During that time the Minister promised there would be a public inquiry dealing with the fires. When will the process begin, and who will be involved with this process when it does begin?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Speaker, first of all let me indicate that I have never made a commitment to a public inquiry. However, I want to take this opportunity to indicate to all Manitobans the tremendous job that EMO and the Manitoba Disaster Assistance Program have done. During the extreme disaster that we suffered here in this province, Mr. Speaker, we have been able to deal with the evacuation as well as the people that have suffered the consequences of the fires. We have dealt with them and I am very proud of the staff that has been working with that.

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

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENTS

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, may I have leave to make a non-political statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge have leave to make a non-political statement? (Agreed) The Honourable Member for Fort Rouge.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, tonight, at a gala celebration, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary. Members will know that the Royal Winnipeg Ballet has been a flagship cultural institution for Manitoba for these 50 years and provides for us a reputation for artistic excellence which extends beyond this continent, and indeed around the world. In spite of the fact that there has been particular tragedy for the company this year, they have responded as true artists and the show has gone on.

I know that all Members of this Assembly would join us on this side of the House wishing the Royal Winnipeg Ballet a very happy anniversary and for at least 50 more years of providing first-rate cultural opportunities for Winnipeggers, Manitobans, and indeed for those who enjoy dance throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable First Minister have leave to make a non-political statement? (Agreed) The Honourable First Minister.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to endorse the comments of the Member for Fort Rouge and say that I will be very pleased this evening to represent the Government at that gala, along with the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation (Mrs. Mitchelson), and to express the strongest best wishes of the Government of Manitoba to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet as they embark upon their 50th Anniversary season, a season that promises to be the most exciting and eventful in the history of the ballet company.

It has indeed had a colourful and exciting history that has drawn rave reviews throughout the world. It is a world-class institution, it is a ballet company that has made Winnipeg famous everywhere on this continent, and indeed throughout the world. It will have a tour this coming year that will take it through Europe and many other places worldwide. At every stop of the way I know that they will be lauded for the quality of their performance. They are indeed the finest ambassadors that we could have. We as a province have utilized the Royal Winnipeg Ballet as an attraction for trade missions and other events that we have held outside our province and our city. At every opportunity I can say that we have been proud of the efforts and the performances of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. We have drawn nothing but compliments by virtue of what the ballet does for the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba. I certainly commend them and extend them all the very best wishes of the Government of Manitoba as they embark upon their 50th year.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for Flin Flon have leave to make a non-political statement? (Agreed) The Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to join with the Premier and the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Carr) in congratulating the Royal Winnipeg Ballet on the beginning of their 50th Anniversary season. I think both of the previous speakers have noted that the Royal Winnipeg Ballet has a reputation which extends around the globe. The fact is, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet is not only a remarkable artistic company, they are also tremendous ambassadors for the Province of Manitoba.

Anyone who knows of the reception that the Royal Winnipeg Ballet received on its recent tour, the tour to Japan, and its tour to London, knows that they are spreading the name of Winnipeg and Manitoba around the world. They are doing so in a highly creative and a very successful way.

* (1450)

The Royal Winnipeg Ballet has enjoyed the support of successive Governments and the continuing support of the people of Winnipeg and the people of Manitoba. There is a very good reason for that, Mr. Speaker, and that is, as artistic companies go, they are one of this nation's best and perhaps the world's best.

In addition to the performances, Mr. Speaker, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet also operates one of the most successful schools in the country as well. Their willingness to nurture the talent of Manitobans, Canadians, others, is well recognized as well. So their contribution has been manifold to this province and we, in the New Democratic Party, would also like to join in congratulating them and join with other Manitobans in helping them to celebrate their 50th anniversary season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for Selkirk (Mrs. Charles) have leave to make a non-political statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to acknowledge the declaration of Mental Illness Awareness Week. This week has been recognized and set aside by the Government to recognize the stigma attached to mental illness, an illness which we are told will touch one out of four families in this country.

Mental illness can range from a severe depression to severe states of various manic states of paranoia and goes on to the extremes, but it also is insidious and will appear in families where no one has ever known or recognized it to be before.

Mental illness deprives us of very many working people in our community. It can hold us up just from day to day or can take lives away for years. It is a deeper prison than any prison that we can dream of to have someone locked up within their own mind and not be able to function as we, healthy people, can.

I support the Government in declaring this week, and hope that we all will work towards making this an illness we can talk about and take the stigma away from those who are suffering under this disease. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister of Health have leave to make a non-political statement?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my honourable friend from Selkirk for her gracious endorsement of our sponsorship of Mental Health Awareness Week.

Let me assure you that was not unique of this Government, nor representative of Government side of the House. That is representative of all Members of this Chamber and is indicative of the campaign that the Canadian Mental Health Association is primarily sponsoring in theming this week, that is of course to remove the stigma surrounding mental illness because no longer is it an issue that the public is unwilling to discuss, afraid of, or wants to keep somewhere out of sight, out of mind. Very much volunteers, throughout the length and breadth of this province, this week, will join in community and family efforts to increase awareness, to remove the stigma of mental health and mental illness, Mr. Speaker, more importantly, to join together with Government, as partners, in bringing mental health services, mental health care, to the forefront of the Government's initiatives to address this most serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, this week is one of much activity. I had the opportunity yesterday to attend Mount Carmel Clinic where they, as an event for Mental Health Awareness Week, are formally offering their support to volunteers in the Spanish-speaking community of Winnipeg who are providing 10 to 15 hours of counselling per week on a volunteer basis to those newcomers to Manitoba from Central America and South America who are facing the shock of cultural adjustment and leaving their homeland under less than friendly circumstances. That is exemplary of the kind of community and volunteer

effort that is adding daily to the strengths of our support systems in Manitoba to the community, to those individuals who need help to overcome mental health problems.

Last night I attended a reception of a number of distinguished individuals highly involved in the mental health system of the Province of Manitoba, and very much it was part of the kind of growing public involvement, public awareness of mental health as an issue facing all Manitobans.

I did have the honour and the pleasure of joining with Mr. Harvey Miller as President of the Manitoba Division, Canadian Mental Health Association in signing that proclamation last week. It is our pleasure on behalf of all Members of Government and indeed all Members of the Legislature to sign that proclamation of Mental Health Awareness Week for Manitobans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call the Bills in the following order: Bill No. 46, Bill No. 42, Bill No. 27. If we get beyond that I will get back to you.

SECOND READINGS

BILL NO. 46—THE WORKERS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. Speaker: Second Reading, Bill No. 46—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail. The Honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), that Bill No. 46, The Workers Compensation Act, now be read a second time, and be referred to a committee of this House.

MOTION presented.

Mr. Connery: I do not want to take many minutes in speaking on this Bill. It is self-explanatory Mr. Speaker, originally it was going to be part of a larger package of legislative amendments to be brought to the Legislature, but when I realized the time frame that it would take to have the discussions and to bring it forth, I thought it was important that those injured workers who were waiting for the increased salary they would be getting through the indexing of the pensions, that we bring it forth very quickly.

I have talked to both Opposition Parties and they have agreed today to move it through to where we could have third reading today and have it proclaimed so hopefully this month—I was told by the staff at Workers Comp that if we got it through today we could likely have those increases in their October paycheque. I think it is important, in the fall and at this time of the year when the extra money is welcomed by people, that we can do it.

I thank the Opposition for that agreement and accommodation on behalf of the injured workers. As far as legislating indexing of pensions, that will come forward at a later time, long before we would have to do this by legislation again, so that Members of the Opposition will have an opportunity to discuss it.

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Opposition will also have an opportunity to make all of their comments known on Workers Compensation when we bring forward a second package of amendments which is a little larger, a lot of housekeeping amendments and so forth. They will have an opportunity to speak on it.

* (1500)

The Bill basically is to index the pensions of injured workers. It is to the full CPI of 8.6 percent for the last two years. It is at 100 percent of the CPI, so in essence that is it. There are a couple of date changes but it is identical legislation that has been brought forth for a number of years, every two years by the fact of doing it, not by legislation. To give the Opposition Members their opportunity to express their sentiments and feelings, I would move that they have that opportunity now. Thank you.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Before we proceed to debate, I wonder if the Minister might permit one small question.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow the Member for Osborne? (Agreed)

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister could tell us how long he has known of the need to bring this Bill before the House.

Mr. Connery: Mr. Speaker, the House recessed in June and it is retroactive from July 1. It was not ready in June, as the Member well knows. It was not ready to bring forward and it takes translation. We had to have the indexing, the amount of indexing had to be discussed, and so when all of those clearances were made—

The Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) said to me, it takes a long time to get things done. He had a Bill that he brought forward to Legislative Counsel in June and just got it ready to introduce to the House last week. So this process does take time, but when I saw that we were going to—the bigger package would take some time and to give people the opportunity to discuss it at length, I felt that this was the appropriate thing to do and I thank Members opposite for accommodating that.

Mr. Allan Patterson (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise on discussion of this Bill. I should point out that we did raise this matter in Question Period in June, on June 19, and at that time the Minister had stated that the matter was under discussion with WCB officials for finalization of this indexing. We might raise the question, Mr. Speaker, as to why after June, July, August, some almost three months of recess, that this Bill was not ready to be presented when the House sat again on September 18?

However, the Bill itself, as the Minister has pointed out, is straightforward. It is a matter of continuing practice, not a legislative one, but a practice that has been in existence for some number of years, I understand, whereby these pensions to permanently disabled workers are brought up to date, so far as indexing is concerned, every two years on July 1. So therefore, July 1 of this year would be when it was due, and there is certainly plenty of time to prepare and to have legislation ready back at that time.

Nevertheless we are pleased to see that it finally has come forward, because we have received several inquiries about it from pensioners over the past several months. Indeed last week in Brandon when our Leader was on an open radio show, phone-in show, the question was raised with her at the time. To that extent, Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased to see this legislation and, of course, certainly, support it.

However, Mr. Speaker, as we well know from what has taken place in this House over the past year or so, the Workers Compensation Board has been somewhat of a thorn in the side, we might say, of many of our Members and I am sure of the third Party Members, and indeed possibly even of many Government MLAs who have constituents or claimants who might or might not be constituents calling about their problems with the Workers Compensation Board. It is still an ongoing one and something we are going to want to address at quite some length when the full legislation comes forth, which I understand will be in the not to distant future.

More specifically, the Members on this side of the House time and time again have had Workers Compensation clients calling about the undue delay, the unacceptable delay, in the appeal process, at times months and months and even approaching almost a year in some cases from the initial filing of the final appeal until the final decision has been rendered. This of course, the Government has admitted is totally unacceptable. We do recognize that the board is and has been taking steps to try to overcome some of these problems, and for that we do commend them, but nevertheless many of these problems are still ongoing. Furthermore, the time frame from the initial filing of a claim until the first decision either to accept or reject on that claim at times is unduly long. Again, we would like to see some progress in the alleviation of these various problems.

We also received many—and I must say they are allegations, Mr. Speaker, but sometimes we might say that when there is smoke there is fire. We get many calls from Workers Compensation Board clients who feel that—how can I put it?—they have been more or less run over roughshod, so to speak, that Workers Compensation Board in many situations that the Compensation Board's physicians will ignore the advice or recommendations or diagnosis of outside physicians, some of whom might be well-known specialists. These are allegations—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Minister responsible for The Workers Compensation Act.

Mr. Connelly: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I do take exception to the Member's comment. I know he

made it accidentally, but the staff running roughshod over—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Connelly: —clients is not accurate. He may quarrel—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Minister does not have a point of order. A dispute over a fact is not a point of order. The Honourable Member for Radisson has the floor.

Mr. Patterson: I said these are, I did not—

An Honourable Member: They did worse under the previous Government.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Patterson: I said these are allegations, Mr. Speaker. I did not say they were being run over roughshod. I said that clients allege that they have been, which is not a statement that in fact they were. Some further examples of more or less heavy-handedness, and to some extent what is felt to be on the part of clients some rudeness in the handling of their complaints.

These I say, Mr. Speaker, are allegations that we received and I am not putting any, say, value judgments as to whether they might or might not be true. That would take some investigation. But, nevertheless, these are the types of things that are of great concern to us on this side of the House, on the part of all Manitobans, and particularly of injured workers. We do want to see some significant improvement made in the legislation and also in the procedures and policies of the board itself, many of which do not have to come forth in legislation but which are under the authority of the board itself to implement and which admittedly the board is attempting now to do.

At any rate, this particular Bill, we are very pleased to see it, but we will want to in future be raising many questions as to how all these various problems that we are being made aware of are being addressed and resolved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (1510)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put on the record before we begin the process that has been followed in this Bill, so there can be no doubt in the mind of the public of Manitoba which Parties in this Legislature are facilitating the passage of this particular Bill. Let there be no confusion about this. We, in the Opposition, were approached on this matter last week by the Minister, told that if this Bill was not passed in one day, which is highly unusual in this Legislature, that it would affect the processing of this particular item for the people who are on Workers Compensation and prevent them from receiving the money, which put us in a very difficult situation, I might say, Mr. Speaker, because I do not feel any Bill, under normal circumstances, should be discussed and passed through all three readings in one day.

But I want to say, and clearly for the record, that is only because of the agreement of the Opposition that this is taking place. In doing so, I also want to indicate that I do not consider it acceptable that the Minister responsible for Workers Compensation brought in a Bill, brought it in today officially, but raised it with the Opposition less than a week ago, when this matter could have been dealt with in May and in June of this year when we were sitting. We all know that it takes time to draft Bills, but why was the Minister not dealing with this Bill well in advance as he should? This is standard practice to index the pensions, in this case, effective July 1 of this year. Why did this Minister wait until October to bring it in and then only through the support of the Opposition do we have this put in place? I would say that is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to say, on a second level, that it is unacceptable. What we are dealing with in this particular case is an indexation for a set period of time. That has been the standard practice, but there has been a significant change in the interim. In May of 1987, the Report of the Workers Compensation Review Committee was released, and one of the major recommendations of this report that was supported, I might add, by the industry representative, by the labour representative, by the chairperson of the committee, was the fact that this should be indexed on a regular basis. I believe that is important to note for the record as well.

What we should be dealing with today is not a partial indexation, but we should be dealing with a permanent indexation. It is fine for the Minister to say that he will be bringing in an Act. He has been saying that and delaying it as soon as he makes the statement, saying that, well, they might not be brought in. I know in the last part of the Session he said it might not be brought in for two years. That is unacceptable. This is a very simple amendment to draft. I cannot speak for the Liberal Party, but I would assume that they would support permanent indexation. I know the New Democratic Party would support the permanent indexation. So why would the Minister last week come to us with an ad hoc, a partial indexation? Why did he not come last week and say, with support from the Opposition, you can have this permanent indexation passed? How about if we pass it in one day? I can say that on behalf of our caucus, as I said, I am sure the Liberal Caucus would take the same position. We would have supported that, Mr. Speaker.

So why did the Minister come in with this indexation which, in my mind, is too little too late? It is too little in the sense that it is not on a regular basis.

An Honourable Member: See what happens, Jerry.

Mr. Storie: It is fine for the Minister to say, see what happens. Well, Mr. Speaker, in May of 1987 this report was released and we are now into October of 1989. There is clear consensus on the area of pensions. Why is this Minister not bringing in the section that will index it? The Minister should be aware, of course, that if the Opposition Parties were to introduce a Bill of this type, it would be discussed in Private Members' Hour. We have seen, because of the limited time we have available

in Private Members' Hour, there is very little opportunity for us to pass any legislation in this Legislature, particularly when the Government is unwilling to sponsor that Bill, as is their right. They can take over the sponsorship of a particular Bill, give it support, declare it as Government business.

I would suggest to the Minister he should be talking very clearly about what the intention of the Government is in regard to the area of pensions. But you know, Mr. Speaker, it is not just in the area of pensions, we all know there are serious problems with the Workers Compensation Board. In fact, not a day goes by when I, as Workers Compensation Critic for the New Democratic Party, does not receive some sort of a complaint either from a constituent or from people from across the province. I know other MLAs spend a considerable period of time dealing with Workers Compensation claimants.

Mr. Speaker, the clear message from claimants is that the situation at the board has not been getting better, but that it has been getting worse. The delays have been getting longer. The frustration level has been growing and all this time this Government has not moved with a badly needed reform that was outlined by the task force, as I said, once again, May of 1987. Most of the recommendations, and there are a total of 178 recommendations, were unanimous. They were supported by all three members of the committee. It was an excellent report. I would give credit to the participants on that: Brian King, the former chairperson of the Workers Compensation Board, who this Government, once again, have seen fit to push aside, take him out of that position; Lisa Donner, the Labour representative that this Government fired; and Tom Farrell, one of my constituents who did an excellent job in putting this report together.

Let us not take this matter lightly, Mr. Speaker, let us look at exactly what has happened. The only thing that this Government has done in terms of this report is there have been some administrative proposals put forward, but in fact not only have they not moved with the vast majority of changes outlined, particularly the legislative changes, they have worked against the report.

For example, Recommendation 101 in this report recommends there be no merit rating system. We all know, Mr. Speaker, that one of the first things that this Government did when it had the opportunity was to bring in the merit rating system in Manitoba, through pressure on the Workers Compensation Board, and following pressure from the Chamber of Commerce, from big business, that had been pushing them.

Let there be no doubt what this will result in. If one wants to see the type of results you have to expect from this system, one only has to look at companies such as CN and CP where they are on essentially that system. They essentially pay to the Workers Compensation Board an amount that reflects how much is paid out in claims in that period. I can tell you that the highest percentage of complaints I get in regards to Workers Compensation is from people working in CN and CP. I have a file that thick of people working in the shops in Transcona who are facing continuous harassment, not even actually so much directly from

the Compensation Board, but from their own employer, because it is in the direct interest of their own employer to keep them off Workers Compensation. Let us not ignore the fact that that will happen. It will happen and it is happening now.

There are people already who are being sent into work who should not be working. They are disabled, they are injured, and yet they are being taken into work, forced into work by their employers, so as not to have that injury recorded, and so as not to have the company subject to higher Workers Compensation premiums.

Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely unacceptable. I know there are Members of this House who can talk from personal experience about the way that system works. The Member for The Pas (Mr. Harapiak), I know, from personal experience from when he worked with Inco in Sudbury, and I have had many friends of mine in Thompson who have gone through that experience. Members of my own family have gone through the experience of being forced back to work before they are ready. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) says, name them. What is his intent by saying that? To have them subjected to further harassment? I am sure there will be many people that would like to know the names of those people, including the friends of the Minister of Northern Affairs, some of the people that have been responsible for harassing those people back to work at a time when they should not have been going back to work.

That is the one thing the Government has done. Who is it in favour of, Mr. Speaker? It is in favour of the Chamber of Commerce and big business. It is not in favour of the workers of this province.

You know many of the recommendations in this report would, Mr. Speaker, have assisted the workers of this province. There are many key sections in here. I just want to cite Recommendation 1, which talks about rewriting the Act to make it more accessible to injured workers.

I want to talk about Recommendation 6 and Recommendation 9, which talk about the pensions and allowing workers to have the choice of their own doctor, something they do not have at the present time in terms of the Workers Compensation Board. Recommendation 13, which talks about the need for a speedy decision, that is a crying need because there have been increasing delays within Workers Compensation—increasing delays on even the most routine of cases.

I would point to Recommendation 41, the onus of proof. The onus of proof has to be clearly placed on the Workers Compensation Board to indicate that a person should not be eligible for compensation. That is the way the Act reads at the present time, but in practice it is the opposite. In practice often the injured worker has to prove that he or she was injured at work and they should be eligible for compensation. That is a key recommendation.

I mentioned Recommendation 101. I could recommend that Members look at 135, which talks about The Employment Standards Act being amended to ensure

that workers do not lose their jobs if they are injured in the workplace. Right now there are people that have lost their jobs because they have been injured. They have lost their jobs for no other reason than the fact that they have been injured. That is totally unacceptable.

I could talk, Mr. Speaker, about 136, which talks about the onus being placed on the employer to rehire injured workers. Right now that is one of the most frustrating things, to see someone who has been injured, someone who was a contributing member to that company, of the work force for many years. I have seen people with 10 and 20 years work experience with a particular company—they are injured and they are out of work. It is terrible to see the impact that has on those people in terms of their own personal situation, their family, their financial situation. I do not want to see it happen to anyone else.

Recommendation 154 is a key recommendation in terms of ensuring that claimants have the right to initiate a medical review panel without the recommendation of the Workers Compensation Board's doctors. I could continue, Mr. Speaker, but the real question that has to be asked today is why is this Minister not bringing in a comprehensive Act to reform the Workers Compensation Board? Why is he bringing in something that he should have brought in three months ago? Why is he only talking in the most obscure terms about housekeeping amendments to the Workers Compensation Board when the system is in need of major reform?

* (1520)

Mr. Speaker, that is why this report was brought forward, the Review Committee. It held public hearings throughout the province. It was brought forward because the previous Government recognized that despite the changes that have taken place in the Workers Compensation Board that there needed to be a major overhaul of the structure. Let Members be aware of the history of this because I think, in a way, history is repeating itself. In 1981, the previous Conservative Government brought in the Lampe Report, and you know how many recommendations they instituted. I believe the number was three out of more than a hundred recommendations, and of those three, one of them was putting in a toll-free telephone service.

Well, Mr. Speaker, history is repeating itself because the one thing that I can say the Government has done is it has put in new telephones into the Workers Compensation Board and actually they are needed. I am not criticizing that, I think that was a wise move on the part of the board because people are very frustrated by the inability to get through on basic inquiries, waiting as long as half an hour or longer just to get through to the Workers Compensation Board.

(Mr. Mark Minenko, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

But that was what the previous Conservative Government did in the four years they were in. When the New Democratic Party came into Government, most, if not all of the Lampe Report recommendations were implemented. There was also the Coopers Report that was released in June of 1982, and once again the vast

majority of those recommendations were implemented. There is the Cerico Report and the Section 100 Rehabilitation Report which were introduced in 1982, in 1983, respectively. Of those three—incidentally, I would like to stress the fact that the Lampe Report, the Section 100 Report and the review committee were all committees that held public hearings, so they were the result of the concerns of injured workers throughout this province.

Well, that is what happened. As I said, in 1987 this document was released. I think it is clear from what has happened since this Government has come into office what their true agenda is in regard to workers compensation. Their true agenda is not to listen to the injured workers of this province, the concerns that were expressed by hundreds, literally hundreds, of injured workers throughout the process of consultation of this document. I hope the Minister for the Workers Compensation Board (Mr. Connery) will listen because this is a key matter, a key matter, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The Government is not listening to the daily complaints from injured workers that have happened since they have been in Government. As I said before, we are deluged with complaints, and I know in some cases they have tried to get through to the Minister and they have been unable to get assistance, unable to get answers to their questions, and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Minenko): The Honourable Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Act, on a point of order.

Mr. Connery: Yes, the Member says that people cannot get through to the Minister's office and get a return on it. That is erroneous. All calls either by telephone or by letter are replied to and information obtained and forwarded on, so the Member is erroneous in his statements.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Minenko): I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for that matter, although a dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

Mr. Ashton: It is not only not a point of order, but not accurate. The Minister should talk to some of the injured workers and some of the difficulties they have had in getting a response from this Minister, in fact, people in his own constituency, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I think that is important—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Minenko): The Honourable Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Act, on a point of order.

Mr. Connery: Yes, on a point of order. Let it be known that by far the vast majority of complaints that I received emanate from the time when they were in Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Minenko): The Honourable Minister does not have a point of order. A dispute over the facts is not a point of order.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Speaker, I do believe that the Minister has had the opportunity to put his comments

forward on second reading. He will have plenty of opportunity later on second reading and third reading. He should allow other Members of this Legislature to speak, and he should also start listening to the injured workers of this province because what I am repeating in this House, Mr. Acting Speaker, is based on what has happened to the injured workers of this province. The Minister, instead of getting up on phoney points of order, should be dealing with those concerns, because they are not being dealt with by this Government and not being dealt with by the Minister and his office. They are sloughing off the very real concerns of injured workers in this province.

As I said, Mr. Acting Speaker, for the Minister now to get up after nearly a year and a half in Government with the agenda drafted by this task force report, Mr. Acting Speaker, this review committee report. The agenda for reforming the Workers Compensation with the public hearings already completed, with an implementation committee that was already in place when the Minister took office. I had the opportunity to be part of many of the discussions that went on in terms of putting this into place.

I would like to know why the Minister still has not implemented some of the most basic recommendations of this report. I mentioned some before, I could get into the need for decentralization of the Workers Compensation Board. There is no reason that the Government can not implement what is recommended in this report, what was clearly needed, and that is moving the Workers Compensation Board into the role of northern communities, communities such as Thompson and The Pas, to make sure that the Workers Compensation Board is more accessible, Mr. Acting Speaker. There is no reason not to do this and no reason, given particularly the talk by the provincial Government, of decentralization. They talk about, as an overall policy—here is a clear case where they can do it. They can move Workers Compensation Board employees to communities like The Pas, to communities like Thompson, to communities like Dauphin and better serve injured workers, but they have not done it.

Well, I am not sure why this Government, when this agenda is so clearly drafted for them, has not proceeded with any of the legislative recommendations in this report whatsoever. Not a single legislative recommendation in this report has been brought forward to this House by this Minister. In fact, the legislative action we are seeing today, Mr. Acting Speaker, flies in the face of this report because it does not bring in the permanent indexing that the report recommends. I suspect what has happened is that this Government now that it is in office has started listening to those—and I do not believe that it is the majority of the business community, but the minority of the business community, that have said what they want is a workers compensation system that is more restricted. They want to take away the rights of injured workers. Mr. Acting Speaker, they are quite happy with a Government that balances the books, and yes, they have had a surplus of Workers Compensation since they have been in office, but that is what they had when they were in Government between 1977 and 1981. There were hundreds and hundreds of complaints from injured

workers who were not treated fairly because of that. So that is what has happened.

This Minister had a hit list. That is his agenda. His hit list was to move Brian King from the chairpersonship of the Workers Compensation Board, and he did. It was to fire Lissa Donner, and he did. His hit list was to bring in the merit-rating system, and he did. Where is the action for injured workers? All they are getting is this Bill today, which I say is unacceptable.

If they are going to be dealing with indexation of Workers Compensation Board pensions, it should be permanent indexation. Injured workers should not have to go to the Minister every two years as they have had to do in this particular case and ask for it.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister says, why did we not do it. It is right here in the report, we were committed to bring in the recommendations of this report and what has happened is the Conservative Government, over the last one and a half years, has tried to scuttle this report, tried to gut it of its recommendations and is listening only to its Chamber of Commerce.

I said the minority of the business community because I believe many in the business community such as Tom Farrell would like to see a more humane, a fairer system, but there are a minority in the business community who have said, we want a restricted Workers Compensation Board and what has the Minister said? He has said, me too, and that is what he has done. For the Minister to talk earlier in this Bill about how concerned he is about injured workers, I think is reprehensible. He should talk to the injured workers.

I had a news conference a few months ago and I was deluged with people who were saying the workers compensation system needs major reform, and I asked them for the details. The sad part is many of the cases were rejected because the implementations of this report have not been put into place. Many of the people that came down—and the Minister should listen to this—and raised concerns in the meantime would have been helped by this report. They would have received their claims instead of having their lives ruined, losing their houses, their families, losing their self-respect in many cases, spending 18 months, two years, two and a half years trying to fight the case.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I am waiting for this Government to bring in the results of this report. Why have they not acted on the results of this report? Why has this Minister done nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, to assist the injured workers of this province? Why has he only listened to his friends in the business community? Those are questions that I am going to be asking throughout this Session, and we are going to expect results from this Government.

* (1530)

Perhaps we are not surprised so much when they bring in Bills on final offer selection, labour legislation. We know they are trying to roll back labour legislation in this province. Those are issues where you expect some disagreement, but this report was agreed to, most cases unanimously, by all Members of this panel. It

represents a consensus. The sad part is this will bring in a fairer system, a reform system, but this Government is not interested in that. I believe this Government is not interested in bringing in a fairer system for injured workers.

I know the Minister today said he will be bringing in a Bill to reform Workers Compensation. I want to make a prediction today, Mr. Acting Speaker, that that Bill will not include the vast majority of the key recommendations in this report; that Bill will not, in any way, show any recognition of the situation facing injured workers. I want to predict that it will be nothing more than the same sort of minor changes we have seen, the administrative changes we have seen at the board, that are not leading to a fairer system for injured workers.

I do not know what it is going to take to get the message through to this Government. I do not know what it is going to take. On this particular occasion I suppose we, all of us, I know in our caucus and I am sure in the other Opposition Party's caucus, could have spoken on the need for reform in the Workers Compensation Board. We could have spent considerably more than the one day in which we are going to pass this Bill, but two hours, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I wonder if the real reason why the Minister has brought this in, in this form, is to avoid committee hearings. I know if there are committee hearings at Workers Compensation Board, the Minister is going to hear not from myself, not from the other Members of the Legislature, but direct from injured workers. Many participants in the hearings on the review committee who gave their presentations and saw their presentations reflect in the recommendations are now saying, why is this Government sitting on this report? Why is this Government after a year and half not introducing it? The Minister talks at length from his seat, gets off on phony points of order, and he does nothing. The best way to allay the concerns that I am expressing is not to yell as he does from his seat, but it is to bring in a major Bill to reform the Workers Compensation Board.

I want to indicate, Mr. Acting Speaker, that if he brings in a Bill that reflects the review committee's recommendations, if he brings in a Bill that reflects those recommendations, I think he will get unanimous support in this House on virtually all the recommendations.

So it is not like on other Bills where the Government is saying, well, we will not bring this in unless the Opposition supports it. We all know municipal assessment area. The Government seems to be selective. On some Bills they want unanimous support or else they will not bring in a Bill; on other Bills they have unanimous support, but they will not bring it in anyway. So where is the consistency in that? There is none. The only explanation is that this Government does not want to offend those in the business community. They want to see major cutbacks in Workers Compensation.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would suggest that the system they put in place now, especially the merit-rating system,

will lead to a major cut in the type of claims that are going to be processed by the Workers Compensation Board. They may be able to get the Workers Compensation processing claims more quickly. I think they will through some of the administrative changes that, once again, were recommended in the Review Committee Report, some that have been put into place, but it is no good to deal with the problem of delays by having more injured workers get rejected when it comes to the dealing with their claims. That is not fair and that is not acceptable. I think that is what is happening.

I have spoken to many injured workers who have told me the same thing. They have said it is fine for the Minister for Workers Compensation to get up and say, we have a surplus in the Workers Compensation system. The question they ask, Mr. Acting Speaker, and the question I ask is at whose expense? I know after the one-and-a-half years we have seen this Government in operation with Workers Compensation, it is not at the expense of their friends in the big business community. It is going to be, and it is at the current time, at the expense of the injured workers, and that is unacceptable. We are going to support the passage of this Bill today not because it reflects anything on the part of the wishes of this Government. It reflects nothing more than their incompetence in bringing this in two months late in a partial form instead of a complete form. It reflects their incompetence. It also reflects their insensitivity. The fact that we have a Bill to reform the Workers Compensation Act today, and we have here an agenda from two and a half years ago, Mr. Acting Speaker, that could really provide reform, today what we are saying is nothing more than Tory—they view it as Tory charity. How generous they are. They are going to pass this through and they are going to increase the pensions over the Christmastime.

I would like to say we in the Opposition said yes, and I indicated when this was raised that I felt it was unacceptable on the part of the Government to expect us to bail them out in this particular case, but we have because we are concerned about the injured workers. We have bailed out this Government from their incompetence in bringing this Bill in today, a Bill that is really not what should be before us. We should be dealing with permanent indexation. While we have done it on this particular occasion, I think the message has to go to this Government that they have to bring in needed reform in the Workers Compensation Board, real reform based on the recommendations of the review committee, and there are many other areas of consensus.

If they do not, Mr. Acting Speaker, I really believe in the long run that is going to be one of the clearest evidence to the people of Manitoba as to where they actually stand. Whose side are they on? It is not on the side of injured workers and their families, that is clear from the year and a half that they have been. They cannot even bring in proposals that are supported by all sides. That is unacceptable on the part of this Government.

While we will not hold up this Bill today to hold them to account, I will tell them and I will tell them right now

that when they bring in any kind of changes on the Workers Compensation Board, we will fight for a comprehensive Bill. If they do not bring in changes for the Workers Compensation Board, we will raise it. We will raise it in the Question Period. We will raise it during the Estimates discussion.

I could say to the Minister, and I am disappointed that the Minister, shall we say, is not listening to my comments at this point in time. It is not unusual for that Minister. He does not listen to the comments of injured workers and I think given the courtesy of the Opposition, as shown in this particular case, the Minister could show a bit of courtesy in return in terms of listening to the comments, Mr. Acting Speaker, because we in the Opposition have bailed out this Minister for the incompetence of this Government on Workers Compensation.

I want to say we are going to fight for the injured workers, and I will continue to speak up on their behalf, as I am sure that my colleague in the other Opposition Party will speak out as a compensation Critic in his Party.

You know the real message is coming from the Workers Compensation claimants themselves. I look forward to hearing, for example, the comments of the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond), who was at a forum in the inner-city the other week when a number of people said, what is going on with Workers Compensation? Why has this Government not reformed the system? What is the problem with the system?

What was interesting was the fact that more and more injured workers are saying, do not blame me because I am an injured worker, do not blame me because I cannot work, do not blame me because I have to apply for Workers Compensation and then fight through a byzantine system that could result in months of delays on the most routine claims. They are saying, who really is to blame? That is the real question. I believe it is the system that is to blame for many of the problems that are existing, not the staff at the Workers Compensation Board. They only administer the Act that we, in this Legislature, have passed in previous years.

They are dependent on what this Minister will do in terms of bringing in changes. I know, I have talked to people in the Workers Compensation Board who have said that this whole system could be reformed in a way which would be fair to injured workers. That is the point. It is not the Workers Compensation Board that is at fault in this particular area. It is not the injured workers. The bottom line is, the problem is with the system and I think there is consent to deal with the kind of reforms we need, Mr. Acting Speaker, from all Members of certainly the Opposition.

I ask the question: when will the Minister bring in comprehensive changes to the Workers Compensation Board? If he is not going to bring them in, why not?

I ask that question and I realize in debate that you cannot ask that directly to the Minister, but I hope he will answer it at some point in time because if he does not, I can say certainly from the New Democratic Party

we are going to be fighting him and fight him all the way on his insensitivity to the injured workers and their families. That is the bottom line, Mr. Acting Speaker. It is not anything else other than the fact that we have a system today that is unfair to injured workers and their families. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Roch (Springfield): Mr. Acting Speaker, I, too, and my colleagues in this caucus have some concerns about the way this Bill was introduced. It appears that the Minister is running roughshod over this Legislature the same way as the Workers Compensation Board is running roughshod over a lot of their claimants.

* (1540)

Mr. Acting Speaker, as the Liberal Critic for Workers Compensation stated earlier, this matter was raised in June and was not acted upon. There was plenty of time for this Government to have a Bill ready. If they could not have it ready for June, to have it ready for September 18; they chose not to. They chose to come in the last minute and tell the Members of the Opposition that this Bill must be passed now, today, otherwise it will not go into effect and we will blame you. That is essentially the message that was given to us.

The introduction of this Bill was largely piecemeal. As has been stated by other speakers prior to myself a new Bill, a new Act, a comprehensive Act is what is needed so the Workers Compensation Board can be completely overhauled. After not just a few years, after eight long years of neglect and mismanagement, it is interesting that the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) expressed a lot of concerns that were being expressed to myself during his term of Government and indeed that workers had been complaining about prior to that.—(interjection)—

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Pankratz) makes some comments from his seat. They are laughing about the injured workers—

An Honourable Member: No, no, no.

Mr. Roch: Maybe he feels like an injured worker after the number the Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger) did to him, but in any case, it is not relevant to this Bill.

We all know that improvements are drastically needed and needed now to improve the whole system of Workers Compensation. Workers, claimants find it tough enough to get responses from the Workers Compensation Board the way things are now. It has been a year and a half now that improvements were supposed to have been made. Granted, this Government inherited a mess. I think most Members acknowledge that —(interjection)— but the Minister says to go after the third Party.

The Minister has had a year and a half, the Minister and his department, his agency and his staff, to clean up the mess. Still workers complain, still claims are delayed, still not much has happened. If this process is allowed to continue, Mr. Acting Speaker, many people

out there, some already in that position, but many more will be in a position where they will indeed have to look to other sources for income if they can be eligible for them. Some have exhausted benefits from Unemployment Insurance. Some are forced to turn to Social Assistance against their will, but they have no choice especially in the case of individuals who have families to support. They have to put bread on the table, they need to have milk for the children. The claimants are complaining because of the process. Sometimes they eventually win, but it is such a lengthy process that although they eventually win at the end, the fact remains that they are without income for that period of time where an appeal is being heard.

The Minister said earlier that he returns all calls, all letters. Well, possibly some slip by his desk, he does not notice them because amongst the many concerns that are received by several Members including myself and it seems that one of the more frequently occurring complaints is in regard to Workers Compensation, but several claimants, several people claim that they do not get a response from the Minister's office and often it takes a long time before they get responses from the Workers Compensation Board in itself.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there are several problems which exist and I realize that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mark Minenko): Order, please. I would just like—order. Order, please.

Mr. Roch: He has not got a point of order, Mr. Acting Speaker, you know that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mark Minenko): I would just like to remind all Honourable Members that points of order should be used to call the attention of the House to any departure from the Rules or the customary Orders of Proceedings as stated in Beauchesne's Chapter 317 (1).

The Honourable Minister responsible for the Workmens Compensation Board.

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister responsible for Workers Compensation): If the Member would give me a list of those people who have not received a return, I would be pleased to deal with it.

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Minenko): The Honourable Minister did not have a point of order. The Honourable Member for Springfield.

Mr. Gilles Roch (Springfield): Mr. Acting Speaker, Members opposite are sure anxious to get names, why? Do they want to add more names to their hit list? Do they want to get even with them? Do they want to harrow the workers? Just go to the Workers Compensation Board office, have you ever been there? There are files and files, and lists and lists, the names are there. Go through most of those names, the unsettled claims, and you will have your names. I have specific names with me, but without their permission

will not release those names. Many people are concerned about complaining to the Minister directly because they are concerned and worried and scared of harassment. The Minister knows it and this Government knows it.

I will state some of the problems, at least as briefly as I can within the time constraints that we have. Some of the problems, some of the concerns, some of the many concerns that claimants, injured workers have, they claim the insensitivity of Workers Compensation staff, particularly the adjudicators. There is a recurring complaint of unnecessary delays in the initial adjudication, never mind the subsequent ones.

Mr. Acting Speaker, complex injuries are often the result of lengthy adjudications. Another reoccurring concern is the complex claims which are shifted to senior adjudicators, but then when these things finally reach the people which they are supposed to reach it causes delays. These transfers always cause delays. Again, when a person is without income, when a person is in need of dollars and cents to be able to buy groceries, these delays cost them, over the long term, not only in terms of money, but also as was mentioned by a previous speaker, in terms of dignity. It gets to a point where they have used up their savings; they have to borrow money. It gets to a point where they have to lean on friends. It gets to a point where their whole way of life is being disrupted. It gets to a point, Mr. Acting Speaker, where they stand to lose their desire to even face their neighbours.

Mr. Acting Speaker, adjudicators often terminate claimants based on incomplete information and the claimant's only recourse is to appeal. That is not a simple and easy procedure, again, a time consuming one which hurts them for all the reasons I have already stated.

Mr. Acting Speaker, insufficient weight is often given to the medical opinion of specialists. Very often claimants, injured workers, are asked to bring in certificates, bring in letters from various medical doctors, various specialists, but sometimes, just based on one opinion, from one recommendation of a doctor, chosen by the Workers Compensation Board, the whole claim is rejected. I find it blatantly unfair that one medical practitioner's opinion will carry more weight than that of several others, but that seems to be happening in several cases.

It has been brought to the attention of the Workers Compensation Board. It has been brought to the attention of the Minister. We were promised that we need time in order to clear up the mess which has been created by the previous administration. They have had a year and a half, Mr. Acting Speaker, and still not much is happening.

Mr. Acting Speaker, another common concern, a common complaint is appeal to the Review Committee, and to the Board of Commissioners itself, still takes a very lengthy amount of time. Again, it causes several problems, many of which I have already stated on the record.

Another common concern, the board does not explain adequately its rationale for the decisions it makes. Many

people get the results of an appeal and still do not understand, sometimes are not told why. They attempt to find out why, the lines are busy, responses are not forthcoming. There is a lot of work to be done.

The board is unable to produce a complete set of its policies and procedures, another common complaint which is often made to various Members. Those are the very policies and procedures which dictate, according to WCB staff, which dictate how decisions are made. Mr. Acting Speaker, the Vocational Rehabilitation Department appears it seems to be inadequate. Claimants are often not trained when they want to be. Others are not encouraged to be trained when they should be.

* (1550)

Another complaint in the area of training is that training programs often do not take into account the limitations of injured workers. Injured workers, contrary to what some people would like to try and attempt to paint them as, do want to work. They do want to get out there and go back to work. They may not be able to do the job that they once did. They would like to be trained in something else, but it is not happening. Some try to go back to their original job, their employers, their fellow employees, they all can realize, they all can see that they cannot go back to work.

Without stating names, although I do have the names, a few of them in my hands, but I will not put them on the record, to protect their privacy, I will cite a few examples.

One particular worker who was injured in the early part of this year has had prior claims. It is unfortunate that the Minister is not paying attention to the comments being made because this is a Bill which he introduced today that he wants to have speedy passage today but he does not even have the courtesy to stay around and listen to the comments being made on the Bill. Nevertheless, they will be on the record. This particular injured worker, as I said, has had prior claims. The person has had numerous medical problems, including, and I quote, "carpal tunnel syndrome and mild facial pain" as a result of the injuries. Several doctors reports have been submitted but yet a decision has not been made in regard to this particular case. Although all of the necessary investigations have been completed, no decision is forthcoming at this point. What more is needed for the Workers Compensation Board to act? Why has this thing not been settled expediently and efficiently? We are not getting answers.

Another case, given the fact it is a large employer I will mention the employer because he will not be able to identify the employee. In this case it was a CN worker who was having difficulty obtaining physiotherapy coverage for a reoccurring injury. The Workers Compensation Board said that physiotherapy was maintenance. That person's claim for physiotherapy has actually been turned down. The adjudicator has said he is re-evaluating. Why re-evaluate when the problem is obvious and the proof and the evidence is there?

Again, a third example, an injured worker received about three weeks of coverage for sickness resulting

from exposure to paint fumes. That worker worked at a factory which did not follow proper safety procedures until a complaint was made to Workplace Safety and Health. There were problems with that company forwarding the employee's report. Overall, the delay was not unduly unreasonable but still the case has not been dealt with.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair.)

A fourth example, Mr. Speaker, of an injured worker. This problem was with a chemical reaction. Again this was at CN. They did not comply with The Workers Compensation Act and report the sickness as an occupational sickness within the required three days. Due to that reason there was a significant delay, several months actually, in the adjudication. I will not go through all the examples I have because there are several, but to get back to this last one which I pointed out, was this delay on the employer's part an excuse used by the Workers Compensation Board to delay adjudication? It seems that this is an excuse often used.

I realize that nobody in this Chamber actually would want to see legitimate claims of workers delayed or not settled; in the meantime, the facts are that it is happening. I am sure the Government MLAs as much as Opposition MLAs have got a litany, a host of different concerns and complaints from constituents having to do with Workers Compensation, I think that we on this side have given them ample time, a year-and-a-half, possibly more than a year-and-a-half now to deal with it. We gave them the benefit of the doubt. We knew there was a mess to be cleaned up but nothing has happened.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my opening remarks, despite the way that this Bill was introduced, despite this I would suggest incompetent way that this Government is mismanaging the Workers Compensation Board, despite the inefficient way that the piecemeal legislation is being introduced, we will support this Bill because it benefits the people who need it.

Given the problems that exist, the numerous and several problems that exist in the field of Workers Compensation, I would sincerely hope, recommend and suggest that this Minister, this Government, introduce legislation soon and act quickly to clean up the inconsistencies, indeed the horrendous mess that exists right now at Workers Compensation, and that workers and legitimate claimants can receive the compensation to which they are entitled and not have to suffer undue delays, loss of income, and indeed loss of dignity. With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I intend to support this Bill.

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): It is not surprising to me that this Bill has been brought in the manner it has been because as the Government bungles Workers Compensation, it has bungled bringing in this Bill as well. We have been shown speaker after speaker that this Bill was known to be presented, and yet no action was taken until this late date. This Government seems to want to continually say, well, you better pass this today because we need it. If you do not, we will be blaming you for holding up the business of the

Legislature. I do not find that satisfactory and I do not find it good management to act in that behalf. This Government also wants to blame everyone else that has gone before it. Personally I am getting tired of the whining going on. It seems like a bunch of four-year-olds over there. If they would quit whimpering and act then perhaps we could get some business going on in this Government.

I suppose that this Government sat in Opposition not knowing that there was a mess in Workers Compensation, at least that seems to be the action that we see, because it was not that they came into Government knowing any direction about where they wish to go with Workers Compensation. Here it is 17 months later and they put phones in, and that is just about it, replaced a few people on boards and they are working on it. They keep telling us, and reassuring they are working on it. We believe that. We gave them that time for a while to work on it. I also find that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable Member for Selkirk.

Mrs. Charles: This is an emotional issue and I do not blame the Government for being upset for their lack of action and heckling my speech.

I am quite upset that the one mistake I really feel I have made as a legislator since my election has been very shortly after my election when a person in Selkirk came to me and told me their problems with Workers Compensation. Quite frankly, at the time, although I was not doubting the person's truth to what he was saying, I thought, he must have been the exception to the case that nobody could have such a foul-up in any department. That this must be that one outstanding case, indeed it has turned out not to be the exception but the rule of what happens.

* (1600)

I have seen person after person come through my door, practically one every day—our office is open five days a week. If I spoke one minute on each casefile I would be here for the next two hours just to speak on them. That is without a word of a lie, the truth to the matter that this Government has been incompetent with its running of Workers Compensation. It makes me extremely angry that when we see an Act come forward, all it is is a housecleaning Act that they knew they had to do and they could not even do that right or on time.

I think that indicates exactly the competence of this Minister. I am very upset and emotional about this issue. I think because mostly I have found through the vulnerability of the people coming into my office the fact that each of us is so vulnerable to our wages and to our job. I suppose in the past, where we only had one wage earner in our family, that this could never happen to us, that somehow if my husband were injured on the job we would survive, we would have support. But I see people with very legitimate complaints, with very legitimate injuries, with very legitimate jobs and

backgrounds that come into my office and have to go on welfare because they cannot get the process which is due to them.

If we are here for anything it is to make sure that everybody receives fair and due process. When that is taken away from any one constituent, any one Manitoban, any one Canadian, or anyone in the world, we should be upset about it.

I see people in this House across the room sit back, put their feet up and say, we are working on it Gwen, do not worry about it. Working on it is not good enough when these people are having mental breakdowns, when their families are falling apart and when we have to worry about them, whether they are going to commit suicide or not. We have referred four cases to Workers Compensation saying, please act on these, we feel their mental health is in jeopardy.

As much as we spend money on supporting mental illness and mental health, we are also not supporting the workers who are being forced into stress situations where their families and their own lives are at jeopardy. So the cost to us and the cost to them continues and continues and continues and it is a waste.

We see many, many things wrong with workers compensation and there is no one quick fix, but there are many areas that we could improve. The Members have spoken on the task force that has taken place and it was in total agreement. I find it somewhat unusual when the Minister for Culture, Heritage and Recreation (Mrs. Mitchelson) acts on a task force report that did not even receive unanimous decisions, and you will not enact any of the task force reports, even the ones that received unanimous decisions. The Workers Compensation is just sitting there going stagnant, going nowhere. It seems as if when they want to do something there is an excuse for it, but when they do not want to do something they are just working on it.

The Minister laughs, and I hope he is not laughing at the workers of the situation.

Mr. Connery: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Minister responsible for The Workers Compensation Act.

Mr. Connery: Mr. Speaker, we are not laughing at Workers Compensation. The Member who was speaking is now laughing; is not laughing, also, at Workers Comp. Somebody made a comment and there is a smile and those things happen in this House, and that should not

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

Mrs. Charles: I will take the Minister's word he is not laughing as I had said. I had hoped he was not laughing at the injured workers.

Now the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is making mockery, but I will ignore him as I try to do most often.

I think the Minister of Health should be concerned about what goes on in workers compensation because the costs that our facilities have to hold, because of what goes on in workers compensation I dare say, would help support many other areas of the health field.

I have had workers who have been turned down with legitimate claims after they have gone to two or three specialists and have a general practitioner from the Workers Compensation, who does not even look at their injury, decide that their injury is not worth pursuing and they are turned down and have to start into the long and drawn-out appeal process.

I have many workers who have gone to doctor after doctor after doctor, and one person said 40 doctors, hoping to find one doctor that Workers Compensation would believe, but no, they have their one general practitioner and that one voice will outweigh all the rest. I find that a shame because the costs of the system that we have to bear of a person going, even for checkups, to 40 doctors, and this is just one person. If we have hundreds of people doing that the cost is overwhelming, and that is not factored into the cost of workers compensation.

An Honourable Member: That is not good management.

Mrs. Charles: No, it is not good management, it is not even caring people. If you want to support and reduce your deficit, as you say, then organize and manage and put it back into a working relationship with the people.- (interjection)- Yes, it is indeed crisis mismanagement by this Government and this is the one department that is outstanding in that—others come close, but this is outstanding in mismanagement.

We have found from the merit system put in place that workers cannot be rehired once injured. I have one particular case which has been in the newspapers several times, where a truck driver had a back injury caused by his profession. He went on workers compensation and managed to get some support out of them. When he went back to be rehired by companies, he had found out he had been blackballed by the system, that no one would hire him because he had been an injured worker. Now he could not get support because he was an injured worker, but he could not get employment because he was an injured worker.

So where are we caught in this policy mess? We brought this to the attention of the Workers Compensation Board for almost four months now, and we have not yet had this policy answer made. I have had good help from the Ombudsman put in place, Alan Scramstead. He seems to be concerned about the policy issues. I certainly appreciate that as do the clients I have, but the fact is, this policy goes on and on and on, and this fellow is running out of money. He is on welfare. He is trying to get jobs and almost moonlighting at times. His marriage is under stress. His family is under stress. He is suffering mental illness I think, to a degree now, because we have not put a policy in place that will deal with him.

I have another self-employed worker—and his claim has gone on since 1981—who was injured and they

supported that injury. Yes indeed, he was injured, but because he was not retrainable and there is no policy on retraining, he was back in his own business again, and because of the weakness in his arm that the injury has caused, suffered a re-injury, and because no one at Workers Compensation helped him understand the difference between an injury and a re-injury—in fact, we have witnesses that will say that they said, do not worry, it does not make any difference—he was listed as a new injury, and because of one simple statement on his form, one misstatement, that he was told by advice from the Workers Compensation to put down, he is still unable to get full compensation. Yet his income, because he is self-employed, has been drastically cut back, and again I say, he is under mental stress and probably will have more health problems because of what has gone on at Workers Compensation.

I have one claimant who cannot even get an answer out of his files. We have pushed, and pushed, and pushed, and finally have found out that one letter was sent in saying that this person was abusing the system, with no witnesses, no proof, but that one letter has held up his claim for eight months now, I believe it is. Eight months, he has been suffering through this. Now if it is the truth, then it should be sought out, but if it is not the truth, then he deserves to know what is going on in his file, and he deserves some action on it.

I held a news conference out in Selkirk last winter in which I had 17 claimants in. I was surprised as the word got out about the news conference. I had physiotherapists phoning up, and calling, and dropping by, and saying: go for it, Gwen, this is a mess. It is getting worse. I had doctors phoning and saying: we cannot believe what we have to go through trying to get these people on Workers Compensation.

* (1610)

So it is not just the workers, it is not, as some suppose, people who are trying to rip off the system. They are not trying to rip off the system. They want to work. They beg to work, but even Brian King admitted, there is no policy for retraining in Workers Compensation. It happens sometimes. Some are considered, from time to time, for retraining programs, but others have to go begging. I think it is worthwhile knowing the extremes of people that come in with claims to Workers Compensation. I think we all here can assume that these are all literate people, the people that understand systems and know the paperwork. Well, they are not.

It is surprising to me sometimes how vulnerable people are to paperwork and to bureaucracy. They go into Workers Compensation with legitimate claims, believing what they are told, thinking that this will be processed to the best of the ability of the worker involved, and because of the system, because I do not blame the staff at Workers Compensation not knowing the working conditions they are under. So I cannot blame them and will not blame them, but because of the system allowed to be in place by this Government, they are not knowing what their rights are, what the process is.

We have seen a nice new pamphlet come out, but you have to have a certain degree of education to

understand that pamphlet, even, to go through it. So, we are getting more and more claimants coming in our office, just to help them go through the process.

In looking at the system we find, well, there is a Workers Advisory council. We could go to them. They would help the workers. It sounds as if Workers Advisory council would help workers with the advice, but in a phone call to the Workers Advisory board produced last week a tirade by the person involved, the new manager, that MLAs should not get involved in the business of advising claimants, that they should not become entwined in the problems of Workers Compensation. Now I am sure this person was pushed by stress to say this because I do not believe that he is trying to have the people involved, the claimants involved, have any less than all that they can get from every person involved.

In fact, he said that one Conservative MLA was going to appear before the board to help fight through a claimant, a claim through the board. Now that is shameful when we have to go to that extent that we as MLAs have to interfere in any system. The Minister quite often points out to me, well, you can bring it to my attention but I will not interfere in the claims. I understand where he is coming from because he should not have to be involved. It should not look as if because someone came to us, they get treatment, special treatment. We know it is not special treatment because we will have anyone who comes through our door. I have had them from Gimli, Stonewall, Beausejour, I have had them from all over the province come through my office. I will treat them each with the same rights and privileges as they each deserve and that is equal rights and privileges.

But, when we have to as MLAs appear before boards, or seem to have to appear before boards, when we have to do the phone calls, when we have to map out the strategy how to fight Workers Compensation, then this is a disgrace. I think it calls for a new Act coming forward that if this is the extremes we have to go to even by Government Members, or backbenchers of the Government, even by their own Members admitting that the system is awful, it could not be worse. Then it calls for action. We are waiting a new Act to come forward in the very near future because even then it is too late for some.

There are many actions that can be taken by this Government. I just have to point out one because I have had some businesses that seem to have more than their fair share of claims going through, and I have asked the past directors of Workers Compensation whether there is any connection between Workers Compensation and Workplace Safety and Health because it seems to me that there should be some way that Workers Compensation can keep a listing of where the claims are coming from and particularly in the businesses. The Minister is indicating that it is. But, why is not that information handed over to Workplace Safety and Health so that they can follow up on it? If it is being done, I congratulate them because that has to be done. There is a couple of areas in my own home town where I hope that they will be investigating just to check up and see for the sake of the worker that every thing is as safe as it can possibly be.

There continues and it seems to be not letting up, in fact, we have had person after person tell us in branches we phone a Government that is getting worse in Workers Compensation. I hope it is the calm before the storm or vice versa, the calm after the storm, I guess it would be, that we are looking forward to that.

We can see that there will be some action taken, but in the meantime to have this brief Bill, this housekeeping Bill brought before us almost in the blackmail situation that we have to pass it quickly or else we will look as if we are not supporting workers, then I have large objections to it. I feel that this is indicative of the attitude of the Minister involved that we can do small things quickly but large things slowly. Well, it is to the point where if we do not improve the system, we are losing lives of people if not in fact certainly in the short term. I cannot believe how many tears I have seen shed in my office by people under stress caused by Workers Compensation. For many people to have to resort to the social assistance program, and I think we understand it here, is the largest insult to their dignity they can have, and it almost is more than some will bear.

I had one family where we had to plead for them to apply to social assistance because we knew they were going hungry, and that was only because the file was lost. I cannot tell you how many times files get lost in Workers Compensation. Indeed, the phone calls are getting better. We do get through on some regularity, and our phone calls are being returned much better. The workers that we report to are very helpful, but the mess is just utterly impossible to understand.

We had one person who came in with a broken ankle, and in his report it was a ruptured appendix. I do not even know why that would be a Workers Compensation claim, but that was what was in the file. I mean, the files are not accurate, and if you can find a file you are lucky, because most often they are lost. You go for payment and the file is somewhere in somebody's desk but nobody knows where. It is two days before they can even call you back on a file to be found, and then you find out that you have interrupted the system and caused a further delay. It is most imperative that work be done in revising Workers Compensation. These are not just pieces of paper we are fiddling with, these are people's lives. I hope tomorrow that I will never have to see another claim come through my office that cannot be dealt with in a most expedient manner by the person themselves.

We have to make sure the system works for the people in a tone that they understand, descriptions they understand, being given their full rights and privileges, that it is accessible, and that it is working on a day-to-day basis so that there is not a month-to-month delay, a questioning every day of shall I live comfortably with some support, or shall I be on social assistance. It is a sad, sad situation, and this Government should hold itself accountable to what it has put in place and continues to support.

Mr. Harry Harapiak (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and participate in this debate on Bill No. 46. I think it is unfortunate the way it is being

brought about. We have this Bill brought before us today and we are told that we have to pass it today, otherwise it will be seen as us not supporting injured workers, and then we will have to bear the responsibility of delaying the cheques that the injured workers will be getting and which are coming to them.

I think that the Minister should have been able to bring forward a Bill that should have been prepared before the Legislature was put into place. He knew that when the Legislature would be coming in that should have been one of the first orders of business that we had, as a Government, to deal with this, and to pass it at that time so there could have been an opportunity to have the appropriate amount of debate dealing with this issue. I think it is important that we do pass it because injured workers are in need of this increase in their pensions, but I guess it is just unfortunate that the Minister is not bringing forward the legislation dealing with the entire Workers Compensation Act, because I know that when I left the portfolio the implementation team was in place, and they were preparing the legislation and the package would have been brought in last fall.

* (1620)

The Minister always says, sure, sure, you would have brought it in last fall, that you are always famous for saying that we were going to do it in the next little while. Well, the implementation team was in place and the legislation was being drafted, and we were bringing it in that year. Unfortunately, the Minister did not like the way the implementation team brought forward the recommendations. He has shelved it, and we do not know when that legislation will now be brought forward so we can deal with it in the House. I think that is unfortunate because there were many recommendations that were coming forward.

I know some of the recommendations that were brought forward by the review committee are being implemented because some of them were started when we were still in Government, that there were some of the administration processes that were there that we were moving on them and putting into place the people who would make those changes.

I know those people are still in place and they are making some improvements in the process. There is still a long way to go and many of the recommendations that were made by that committee are in need of legislation to put them in place.

Dealing with the review committee -(interjection)- unfortunately the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Pankratz) figures that everything has to be dealt with on a bottom positive line. I think some of the decisions that are being made now are being made with that in mind. There are many, many cases where the people are being denied a claim just so that bottom line can be satisfied.

We recognize that is the process that was used in British Columbia where many of the supports that were out there for the injured workers throughout the province of satellite offices were all shut down and this review process became much more stretched out.

Where it was taking people previously six months to have their cases dealt with, now it takes three years. Sure they turned that around from having a deficit to turning it around to having one of the few Workers Compensation in Canada that are in the black. I do not think that is the direction we want to go in.

So I would caution the Minister that, although he may be setting up a corporate style of Workers Compensation system, that he not follow the example of British Columbia, because I know that is one example of where the injured workers are not receiving their just due. So that would be a very poor example to follow.

One of the areas that I am disappointed the Minister did not bring forward—even though it is a short Bill, I think one of the areas that he should have been bringing forward is dealing with a part-time chairperson. The way it is set up right now the Minister is breaking the Act because the Act very clearly calls for a full-time chairperson, and we have a part-time chairperson in there.

I know they are changing the responsibilities of the Act where they are not having the responsibility of the day-to-day hearings of appeals. I still think that is one of the areas that should have been addressed because as it stands right now he is breaking the Act the way it is set up.

One of the areas that I would like to say a few words about as well, Mr. Speaker, is the experience rating that was brought in by this Government since they have taken over. That is one of the areas that was addressed by the review committee, and they did not recommend experience rating in their recommendation. I think it is unfortunate that they chose to go in that direction.

It is unfortunate because I have had some personal experience in experience rating. As a teenager I was employed as a miner in Sudbury, Ontario. I was involved in a cave-in and was trapped underground for a period of time, and when I was finally taken out they took me into Inco's medical clinic. They told me there was nothing wrong with me.

The next day I was not able to come in, so the safety engineer came to my home and drove me in. He had to do this for three days. He came every morning and picked me up, drove me in, and said just make yourself comfortable and we will deal with you later.

An Honourable Member: You got paid for doing nothing.

Mr. Harapiak: The Minister responsible for Workers Compensation (Mr. Connery) said I got paid for doing nothing. I guess, in essence, I got paid for enjoying the pain that I was in because as it turned out I went out and got paid for doing nothing all summer. They sent me out and had me look after their gardens in the outdoors. So I enjoyed the summer because I was not working underground.

But in later years, when I worked for the railway then, I once again hurt my knee, the area that was hurt when I was involved in that mining accident. The doctor X-

rayed it and said do you know that you had an old break there. I said no, I was not aware of that and they told me that the break—the only other time I was injured was the time of the cave-in.

So there is an example of where they had a safety record going where they did not want to jeopardize their record. Otherwise, it would be increasing their Workers Compensation rates. They brought me in and I really think that was an abuse on the part of the safety engineer for International Nickel at that time. That knee to this day is a bother to me and I think that is an example of where experience rating comes in, merit rating. They were looking after their own record and they did not care what happened.

Of course, maybe there were some other benefits to myself. I guess it would have showed that when you exercised that injury I probably recovered a lot sooner than I would have if I would have been in a cast for several months. So I guess although it was painful at that time, maybe there was some good come out of it.

The experience rating is something that can be abused and I know that people will be intimidated when they have an injury, especially for firms that are self-insured like the Canadian National Railways and the CNR. They will do the utmost to keep the people working and not reporting their injuries.

There is several examples that have come to me recently of where people are discouraged from putting in a Workers Compensation claim.—(interjection)—the Minister who is responsible for Workers Compensation says they were doing it when I was responsible. I do not doubt that there were people who were discouraging, but I think the fact that the experience rating is in now makes it much more easy to intimidate the people.

One of the areas that I think I would like the Minister to look seriously at when he is looking at the recommendation of the review committee is the establishment of a satellite office. I think it is not fair for the injured workers to have to come into Winnipeg to have their cases heard. I believe that it is not fair to have the injured workers coming into the City of Winnipeg and that is the only place to have the hearing.

I think there are different ways of handling the hearings. We could have a committee go into northern Manitoba on a rotating basis and deal with the hearings in that way. I think it is important that we look at establishing a satellite office. I guess I have my biases but I think that The Pas would be a logical place to have a satellite office because we have all the support systems in there, we have Keewatin Community College we can use for training, and Thompson, I think it is logical to have an office in Thompson as well, but I think The Pas would be a central location where you could serve Swan River, Flin Flon, Snow Lake area which is a very heavily industrialized area, mining in the North and also Manfor in The Pas. I think that would be a logical place to hold that.

* (1630)

I know there are others who want to put some comments on the record, but I think it is unfortunate

that the Minister has not brought forward the legislation dealing with the entire package. It is imperative that he move on that as quickly as possible because there are several changes recommended by that review committee that we should be debating here in the House. I hope that he would bring it forward in this Session, and I hope that he would follow the recommendations unanimously that were brought forward by that committee. I think Brian King, Lisa Donner and Tom Farrell did an excellent job on the recommendations. I would hope that he would bring that forward and make this on an ongoing basis so it is not necessary to have a Bill brought forward in order to bring these increases forward. I think it should be on a permanent basis so it is not necessary to bring a Bill every two years to have these increases brought forward. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): Mr. Speaker, I think it is unfortunate that many of us are going to have to curtail the length of our discussion in debate today because we do believe in workers, and we do want to see that they receive what is rightfully theirs. However, in our own caucus, of all the Bills where our Whip requested speakers, this is the one where I think the majority of the caucus members stepped forward and said, we want to speak about this Bill because this has been a real problem in the 17.5 months that we have been here.

I can tell you that Workers Compensation problems have been presented to me in a far greater number than any other problem that I have had to look at. I was going to go through a list of several concerns, things like some of the other Members have mentioned like being placed on hold for 20 minutes to half an hour while somebody did whatever at the other end of the line from the Workers Compensation. There has been some improvement there but because I have to curtail the length of discussion, I am just going to refer to one particular incident, not the multitude of others that have come across my plate.

A number of months ago, I believe the first time that I met this gentleman to whom I refer was in June of 1988. He is a 74-year-old fellow and old Fred came on the bus to my constituency office because he is no longer able to drive a car. It seems very fitting that he is the one to whom I should refer today because he happened to be a chef on a dining car in what is now VIA Rail, what is becoming our national nightmare, instead of our national dream.

Fred was injured in two train crashes, one in July of 1948 and at that time he had to have a right meniscectomy. He was in another train crash in 1951 and at that time he had his left knee removed. He was off for a period of time and did receive some compensation during those periods of time. However, he has had lingering problems with both knees, understandably, and he has had difficulty with Workers Compensation ever since. They have helped him with some medication expenses, they have assisted him periodically. Now he needed two knee braces and he was told by a physician that he needed these knee braces and the physician in his letter, and I can quote said, "There appears no question that his arthritis is

a consequence of his tear of his medial meniscus and subsequently meniscectomies."

So there is no doubt in the opinion of this particular physician and in fact two other physicians that Fred has had to see because he has been told by the Workers Compensation Board, well, you can appeal the decision. You can, as is demonstrated by the package that we received, there are all kinds of bureaucratic red tape set up so that they can have a review and an appeal and all kinds of things, but this gentleman still to this day has not received compensation from the Workers Compensation Board.

His physiotherapist has not been paid for the services that he has provided to this gentleman. This gentleman who is not able to afford a taxi and who takes, with great difficulty I might add, the city transit to the various appointments that he has. This gentleman who absolutely amazes me by his good humour, his good nature, despite his disability, yet this afternoon when I spoke with him because I speak with him a couple of times a week, he sounded almost tearful and he said, you know, I do not know when they are really going to listen to me.

The former Chairperson of the Workers Compensation, when I had written about my 10th letter to him and said that I was appalled at the runaround that this gentleman was getting, wrote me back and said, I do not understand how you can possibly call it a runaround that this gentleman was getting, wrote me back and said, I do not understand how you can possibly call it a runaround.

For years and years this very kind and sensitive individual has been very patient and has been feeling very frustrated because his physiotherapy services have not yet been paid and because he has tried to dip into his meagre savings. He lives in a very small home in certainly not one of the more affluent areas of St. James. He and his wife live on a very meagre pension. He has had to dip into his own savings to try and provide knee braces so that he can move around albeit with a great deal of difficulty and a great deal of discomfort. I have tremendous admiration for this old gentleman and nothing but sorrow for the attitude of the Workers Compensation Board to his difficulties. He has had several medical examinations. He has had several series of X-rays, all that show that he is having increasing disability, increasing deterioration of his knees, with no subsequent compensation from the Compensation Board.

We were told we have to speedily put this Bill through so that in fact people can receive what is rightfully theirs. What is rightfully Fred Kostyk's is not coming towards him, so I would plead for this one individual along with the multitude of other Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill No. 46. I think it is imperative that on behalf of my constituents that I put some comments on the record in regard to Workers Compensation.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is intolerable that over the last 17 months that this Government has been in power that

this one organization, Workers Compensation, has not been dealt with in regard to dealing with the administrative and bureaucratic mess that now exists. I know that there have been many problems with Workers Compensation and problems that did not start when this Government took power. When this Government took over the reins, surely it is their responsibility to very quickly look at the Workers Compensation Board and try to determine the specific issues that need to be addressed so that people, because we are talking about human beings, human beings who are my constituents. I get more calls on people concerned about Workers Compensation than any other singular issue with the possible exception of day care—any other issue in my constituency.

* (1640)

We are dealing with people who are under stress as families because the breadwinners, whether that be the wife and/or the husband, find themselves not knowing where they stand with Workers Compensation in terms of the appeal, appeal situations which are taking months and months and months to assess. Meanwhile these families are at home not having an income and some of them must resort to selling off their vehicles, taking out second mortgages if they feel they can get them from the banks on their houses and in some cases, Mr. Speaker, people are forced to go on social assistance. We are talking about families and individuals who find themselves not knowing where they stand with Workers Compensation and having to resort to actually going down to the social assistance office to ask for money because they know not where they stand.

We get call after call after call about the Workers Compensation. People are concerned that their cases are in limbo, they feel they do not get direct answers back from the staff. I think it is incumbent upon this Government to quit standing up day after day, as the Minister responsible for Workers Compensation (Mr. Connery), does and say we are working on the problem. That is not good enough when we do not have any solutions or any measure to indicate that there has been one improvement in the last 17 months. So I say that it is imperative that this Government act today to clear up the mess in Workers Compensation so that families and individuals and people in my constituency and across the province are dealt fair treatment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. John Plohan (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to just add a couple of words on this subject at this particular time. I know a number of MLAs have referred to individual cases and concerns that they have with regard to the Workers Compensation system at this time.

I want to just add that I have not experienced in my eight years in the Legislature the kinds of concerns being raised by my constituents over the last year in the area of Workers Compensation. It certainly seems that this Government is swinging the pendulum far too far away from the workers and the concerns for those workers and their families to ensure that those people who are legitimately in need of Workers Compensation, who qualify, who have been injured on the job and for

all intents and purposes qualify for Workers Compensation are facing unprecedented delays, red tape and bureaucracy in an effort to try to gain that support that they need for their families and themselves.

I think that is unconscionable and I think this Government has to review the way that it is handling these cases, because I see far too many people who are desperate, who are in many cases emotionally distraught, who have gone through so much in an effort to gain what they believe is coming to them, and which I believe is coming to them, and yet all in vain. In many cases, the answer continues to be negative at the very end.

That is something that must be changed by this Government. We will be addressing that and my colleagues will be addressing that. I will be addressing that in the months ahead as well because we want justice for injured workers, justice for injured workers.

The Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko) should realize that when we were in Government we ensured that the workers got the primary consideration certainly. That is something that is missing at the present time, woefully absent by this Government, and I hope that the Member for Seven Oaks is in no way supporting that position that these workers should be out of the benefits that they should be coming to them, that they qualify for and that in all ways have met the criteria for. They certainly should be receiving the primary attention that this Government is not giving them at the present time. I hope that that will be something the Government will take note of in the remainder of its probably very short mandate.

QUESTION put, MOTION carried.

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister responsible for The Workers Compensation Act): I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways, that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider and report of Bill 46, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail), for third reading.

MOTION presented and carried and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider and report of Bill No. 46, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail, for third reading.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE BILL NO. 46—THE WORKERS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. Deputy Chairman (Harold Gilleshammer): I will call this committee to order. The Committee of the Whole will come to order to consider Bill No. 46, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

Does the Honourable Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Mr. Connery) have an opening statement? Does the critic from the Official Opposition, the Honourable Member for Radisson (Mr. Patterson), have a statement?

We shall proceed to consider Bill No. 46, clause by clause. Clause 1—pass; Clause 2—pass; Clause 3—pass; Clause 4—pass; Clause 5—pass; Clause 6—pass; Clause 7—pass; Clause 8—pass; Clause 9—pass; Clause 10—pass; Clause 11—pass; Clause 12—pass; Preamble—pass; Title—pass. Bill be reported.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Deputy Chairman of Committees): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 46, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, and has agreed to report the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik), that the report of the committee be received.

MOTION presented and carried.

* (1650)

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister responsible for The Workers Compensation Act): I move, seconded by the Minister for Rural Development (Mr. Penner), that, by leave, Bill No. 46, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act) Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail, be reported from the Committee of the Whole to be concurred.

MOTION presented and carried.

THIRD READINGS BILL NO. 46—THE WORKERS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT ACT

Bill No. 46 was read a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: I am advised that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is about to enter the Chamber to give Royal Assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Cliff Morrissey): His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

His Honour George Johnson, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the Throne, Mr. Speaker addressed His Honour in the following words:

Mr. Speaker: May it please your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly, at its present Session, passed a Bill, which in the name of the Assembly, I present to Your Honour and to which Bill I respectfully request Your Honour's Assent:

Bill No. 46—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor doth assent to this Bill.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

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

* (1700)

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

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m.—the Honourable Member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I have a committee change. I have been informed that I have to formalize yesterday's committee change, so I will do that first. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Selkirk (Mrs. Charles), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: the Member for Fort Garry (Mr. Laurie Evans) for the Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus).

I also move, seconded by the Member for Selkirk (Mrs. Charles), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: the Honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Angus) for the Honourable Member for Selkirk (Mrs. Charles); the Honourable Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Mینenko) for the Honourable Member for Fort Garry (Mr. Laurie Evans).

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) for the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

ORDERS FOR RETURN, ADDRESSES FOR PAPERS REFERRED FOR DEBATE

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Churchill. Stand?

An Honourable Member: What are we dealing with, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Orders for return, addresses for papers referred for debate. Addresses for papers from the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan). Stand? Agreed? By leave? (Agreed)

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS
RES. NO. 6—PUBLIC HEALTH
FACILITY IN DAUPHIN

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed resolution of the Honourable Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), Resolution No. 6, Public Health Facility in Dauphin, The Honourable Member for Dauphin.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), that

WHEREAS the present provincial Government has removed the \$4.25 million public health facility in Dauphin from the '88-89 budget; and

WHEREAS the present Minister of Health has stated this facility is a low priority; and

WHEREAS the public health facility would greatly enhance the delivery of public health and community services in the Parklands Region; and

WHEREAS an emphasis on public health and preventative health measures is necessary in order to reduce the high cost of institutional care; and

WHEREAS the present public health building has been declared unfit for staff by the Department of Environment, Workplace Safety and Health; and

WHEREAS public health and community services offices are scattered throughout Dauphin in rental properties, thus increasing cost and inconveniencing the public; and

WHEREAS a building permit for a new facility had been obtained by the Dauphin Hospital board, with construction scheduled to begin in June, 1988; and

WHEREAS architectural and program planning had already been completed by the previous Government at a cost in excess of \$200,000;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health and his Government consider reinstating the public health facility in Dauphin in the Health Services Commission budget, with construction to begin in the 1989-90 fiscal year.

MOTION presented.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, I am not pleased with the issue that I have to raise it in the Legislature, but I am pleased to bring this forward in light of the decision that has been taken by this Government. It is an important issue for the Dauphin constituency. It is an important issue related to health care. Members will recall that health care issues have been important for us in the past. As a representative of the Dauphin constituency, I brought forward just one year ago Bill No. 24, which dealt with the establishment of the

Dauphin Hospital Foundation. That foundation is now a reality, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank all Members of the Assembly for their support of that important measure, and hope that they will be able to see their way to provide the same kind of support for this resolution and this facility in the Town of Dauphin.

The Town of Dauphin and the surrounding area have been particularly sensitized to issues relating to health care for a number of reasons which I want to outline here in the short time that I have, Mr. Speaker. I bring forward this important health matter, following on the Dauphin Hospital Foundation that I mentioned earlier, on behalf of my constituents, because I believe that it is extremely important for our community. Before I address the specific reasons why this is an important issue, an important facility for my constituents, I want to place the origin of this facility in the proper perspective.

In the early '70s it was determined that a major upgrading of the Dauphin Hospital complex and public health facilities was necessary. Equipment and facilities were grossly inadequate and the public health facilities attached to the hospital were similarly decrepit and far below standard, so they did not meet the needs of the surrounding areas, a regional centre which Dauphin is and serves, a regional health facility.

After much deliberation, it was determined to reconstruct the former Dauphin Hospital as the first priority with the new public health facility to follow, in that order. At the same time, there was a great need for nursing beds, for personal care beds in the Dauphin area. People will know that there is a very high percentage of elderly population in my constituency, particularly in the Town of Dauphin, and there was a desperate need for additional personal care beds.

(Mr. Mark Minenko, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

So that was being planned, the Dauphin Personal Care Home was being planned in concert with major hospital reconstruction to take place in Dauphin. Unfortunately, in 1977 an election intervened and the Conservative Government that was elected at that time under Premier Sterling Lyon cancelled all Manitoba Health Services Commission projects that were not actually under construction at that time. That was the infamous construction freeze.

The Dauphin Personal Care Home was under construction at that time and it was completed by the Lyon Government because they really had no choice at that time, it was under construction. However, corners were cut. For example, a tunnel that was to connect it with the Dauphin Hospital was not undertaken and was actually eliminated from the construction program. The \$11 million hospital project which was in the final stages of planning was frozen, the planning was frozen, and then it was cancelled by the Government at that time, by the Lyon Government, hence the sensitivity and nervousness of the people of Dauphin about health care facilities, particularly by Conservative Governments, as a result of what Lyon did in Dauphin after the 1977 election.

Realizing by 1979 that the cancellation of that facility in Dauphin had done tremendous political damage to

Having wasted thousands of dollars in architectural planning costs, since so much time had elapsed, the Government had to start over. The process started all over from scratch again and consequently, try as they might, because of the time that it takes to go through the planning of the program, the Government, the Conservative Government at that time under Sterling Lyon and Health Minister Sherman, were not able to get a shovel in the ground before the October election call in 1981. They tried, they tried.

They did begin, Mr. Acting Speaker, construction of some temporary facilities and they said see, we are building, we are building. Of course, the Member at that time, Mr. Galbraith, was quite proud that those temporary facilities were going ahead, but there was no hospital. Four long, dark years of Sterling Lyon rule and there was no hospital. So the construction of the hospital did not take place during that period of time.

Plans at that time, Mr. Acting Speaker, included consideration of the need to replace the public health facilities as well, and they did not get to the stage of construction, but they were under way also during the final stages of planning for the construction of the hospital. It was determined to proceed with the first priority, the hospital, now at an estimated cost of \$22 million and growing, 22 million being of course twice the original cost, of the estimated cost, of the Dauphin facility of the Dauphin Hospital in early 1977.

Meanwhile the '81 election resulted in a new Government and without missing a step, and the Members opposite ask me what happened in the succeeding years to the Lyon Government, that planning was completed and the facility actually was built. Construction took place during the years of '84, '85, '86 and was completed, I believe, in late 1986, as I said at a cost of some \$22 million.

At the same time plans were being completed for a major new public health facility at that time. That would combine preventative health measures, functions, services to families, the AFM; all in one location on the Dauphin Hospital grounds and this was urgently needed in the town of Dauphin because Government offices were spread throughout Dauphin, and still are. The old public health facility had been condemned by Workplace Safety and Health as unfit for use by staff. They now had to occupy the temporary facilities that had been built beginning at the 1981 election to house the various services that had to be removed from the hospital while construction was taking place. They now were serving the public health facilities, that is public health facilities.

So the public health facility now became the top priority for construction as part of the overall building program on the hospital grounds. By April of '88, by election time, a building permit had been issued, had been acquired by the hospital board with construction start up at that time for June of 1988.

In the meantime, plans continued for a 25-bed extension to the personal care home. This extension, Mr. Acting Speaker, being necessary of course since the high percentage of the population in the Dauphin area are senior citizens, as I mentioned earlier, and there was a much lower number of personal care beds

to serve that high population. On a per-thousand basis, the quota was not being met in that area as it was in many areas of the province.

* (1710)

So following the tabling of the Manitoba Health Services Commission budget by the Minister of Health in 1988 in this House in which the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) made no mention of the public health facility, there was some mention of the 25-bed, planning for the 25-beds extension for the personal care home—the community began to worry about the future of this project. Was it going to go ahead, or was it going to go the way of the Dauphin hospital in 1977, when Sterling Lyon, as I indicated earlier, put a freeze on all of these construction projects, cancelled the planning and then had to restart it a couple of years later?

So now over a year later the Government seems content to continue its low priority on preventative and public health. It seems that the Minister does not believe that this is a high priority; that providing a high profile facility, accessible facilities, for the people of the area is a high priority, because he does not seem to understand that it will prevent the high costs of institutional care by having an emphasis on preventative health as we had undertaken at that particular time.

It seems that this languishes further, and we do not have any 1989-90 Capital budget tabled in this House. We had asked the Minister for such a tabling, an undertaking to table, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) to table that capital program last June. He did not do so. We still do not know what projects or programs are taking place and in essence, Mr. Acting Speaker, we have a construction freeze at this time. The program is not made public and of course they can be holding back on any projects and construction may not be taking place.

I know this Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is going to talk out of context about construction freezes and informal construction freezes that took place under the previous Government, but he will—and the reason I know he will say that and I think it is important for the Minister of Finance because he has written letters to that effect to the hospital board, so he will make the case, oh, this was all being held up by the previous Government.

The facts are that was going ahead for construction in June of 1988 and it was being done, Mr. Acting Speaker, at a time that the provincial Government did not know their mandate was going to be ending. In other words it was not being done because there was an election coming, it was being done because we felt it was important. This Minister should be aware of that and he has no excuse for holding up a very important facility for the people of the Dauphin constituency.

Last spring I had an opportunity to conduct a survey in the constituency and I did find that over 90 percent of the people who responded felt that preventative health measures were important to reduce the high cost of institutional care. They felt that it was important to put emphasis on preventative health, and public health is very much a part of that. I believe the Minister

should take that into consideration when he plans facilities in the future. The fact is it is there, it was ready to go.

Now after a delay I believe this Minister is going to cause a complete stopping of the program which means at some point the architectural plans would have to be started all over again as they had to with the Dauphin Hospital. There would be a tremendous waste of taxpayers' dollars because in fact those dollars have already flowed for architectural fees. Well, they may be in the neighbourhood of 100,000 to \$200,000, they may be higher than that. The Minister says they are around 150,000.00. Frankly, they are considerable. The Minister of Health should not make light of very high costs of architectural fees that have been charged in planning for this facility already in the past.

I ask this House, and Members of the governing party as well, to support this facility in the Town of Dauphin. It is important. The 25 personal care beds are also important. Well, the Member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) says Roblin. The fact is, in Dauphin there is a condemned facility. There are scattered facilities all over and it is important to put the priority on constructing a public health facility that can serve the needs of all of the people there. Yes, it will result in the loss for some owners of buildings and their tenants. They may have to find new tenants but that should not be the primary concern, Mr. Acting Speaker. I thank the Members for considering this issue and I would ask that all of the Members of this House look at supporting a very important facility for my constituency.

Mrs. Gwen Charles (Selkirk): Mr. Acting Speaker, I have great sympathy for the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) on the need and requirements for adequate -(interjection)- I support the need for public health facilities that are accessible to the public.

In Selkirk we have had an expansion of our public service industries within the provincial building in the Town of Selkirk, and the people in there are working under conditions that I do not think anyone in this House would put up with very long, especially when you take into the many, many times that confidential information is being given or exchanged. They literally are on top of each other in the computer banks where they are bumping into each other and little screens are put up around. If they have nine square feet I would be surprised, quite often, with the workers in there.

The building, as has been pointed out time after time, is not handicap accessible therefore limiting, in this day and age, so many people that are available and need the services. It is a provincial building. It is a Liquor Commission building as I understand and would hope this Government would look at perhaps expanding the facilities for public health and the other community service industries with the services within that building.

I would suggest that with all the profits made on the Liquor Commission facility that perhaps they would be easily moved into a new building themselves, and Family Services, social services and all the agencies in this building be able to expand as the space is needed.

So there are many areas, and not just the Dauphin area, that have inadequate public health facilities. Public

health is so necessary in our day and age where we have to be able to be up to the services available within our communities. Not all people can access all agencies at one time, and public health is often there to give that helping hand under times where parents, children or families cannot access other agencies.

Certainly the experience I have had through my role as an MLA, as well as a mother and parent, has been that they have been most helpful in wanting to bring the questions you have into a perspective that you can deal with.

I think this cost is well worth it, because they put it on a personal level where often you have questions of family styles, lifestyles and health problems that you do not know how to approach the professionals with. You are much more willing to have someone come to your home, or you to go to the office, and talk to somebody in layman's terms, so that you are able to understand the issues and have it dealt with in a very easy and proper manner.

Certainly Dauphin is not the only health area that is under limited services by the Public Health Commission. Certainly here in the City of Winnipeg, I am told there are many areas that are not complying with the Workplace Safety and Health Standards; and that if they were really to come up to par that perhaps we would have some facilities in the City of Winnipeg closing as well. It is not just the Dauphin area, and that makes it even more unfortunate when it is more common than we would like to think.

All areas need regional public health facilities. I think that is what the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) is probably seeing as his facility and the major town within the district, that it will be a large service industry that will reach out to the public and let them know that the facilities, that many of us will not need in our lifetime, are available to those who need it and when they need it.

We have been very pleased this last Session to support this Bill having the hospital foundation come into being, and will hope that through bringing this matter forward to the House that we can consider it and give it the merit of looking at what the regional needs are in the area.

If this public health facility is a need, I think it should be considered by the Health Minister (Mr. Orchard), because I have heard this Government speak of regionalization and bringing the health care system out of just the City of Winnipeg and into the rural areas. Each area in our province is so unique, and I cannot, being an Interlaker and a southern Interlaker, even understand what the western needs would be any more than City of Winnipeg people would understand necessarily what somebody in the North would need, and so forth. I think that what we all bring in representing our various areas to the House is the fact that we understand and have some understanding of what our residents are requiring.

* (1720)

So I am sure the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) is looking at what is necessary for his area. Although

I do not think it can be weighed in more necessary than other needs, I think it should be weighed on its own merits, and if that is required then consideration should be given for it.

There are many people in the public health industry serving us and they certainly are not known for their outstanding wages nor their lack of stress in their business and certainly to have a facility that they can provide the best service possible as to the well-being of all people.

I would hope that the Government, considering this resolution, will have consideration for the people's needs and not just strictly the budget needs.

There is a sense for this Government to hoard its money and put it away for future considerations and I do not know when the future is going to occur. It perhaps is going to be another decade for this Government, that they think the future will occur. We like to see that the future is today and tomorrow, that the needs of people, the health care needs, will be required on a daily basis and that anybody under stress deserves the care today and it should not have to wait just for consideration, strictly financial consideration, without regard to the services required and there is an expense to be put forward at times, in order to save money. Perhaps, public health is the one area, one of many areas that we consider how much we can save by providing help and care before major calamities and health situations occur.

So I would ask this House to consider the Member's resolution and I think we all should look to our own areas and look to the needs of our public health and support any region in its needs. I certainly have brought to this House many unique situations in Selkirk, as is my duty representing the area.

I continually say we have no mental health worker in the Town of Selkirk, which is quite startling considering that we have one of two psychiatric services facilities in the province, and yet we have no mental health workers. I know that the community can be under stress by what it lacks and there is quite a need and a lobby group coming forward to demand that we get a mental health worker so that people in our area can attain the same services as other districts attain. I think that is what we all want. We do not want any one district having more than the others. We all want them to have what they duly require and need and should not have to, necessarily, be the biggest projects that be considered nor the smallest projects that be considered, but that they all be considered on their merit.

I would encourage the Member that this resolution has true merit and that we should all consider it in support for public health in the regions in this province.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): I thought that there would be, Mr. Acting Speaker, more New Democrats defending the Member for Dauphin's (Mr. Plohman) resolution. None of them, obviously, want him to have his public health building. None of them are defending it. None of them are here to defend it.—(interjection)— Oh, I apologize, that was just totally against the Rules to reflect on the absence of any Member who is not here.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I know why Members of the New Democratic Caucus are not supporting the Member for Dauphin in this resolution, because they did not support it in the past. I wish to refresh my honourable friend, the Member for Dauphin's memory, because my honourable friend has—what is that parliamentary saying that is from time to time used that he has played dangerously with the truth? I think that has been used, has it not, or he has a selective memory lapse for honest statements, or that he speaks with forked tongue, or—I mean there are a number of them you could use on the Member for Dauphin.

On this issue, you cannot use too many, because I want to share with my honourable friend some obvious inaccuracies in his presentation today and, indeed, in his press release of February 2, 1989.

The Leader of the third Party of the House here, who could have been a Member of Government, had he not made the wrong decision on which Party he ran for in 1986, he may not have been just, simply, a Leader of a rump Party in the Legislature, ought to understand the genesis behind this issue.

Mr. Acting Speaker, my honourable friend, the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) put out a press release February 2, 1989. I want to just share with you some of the inaccuracies in that press release. I shared these inaccuracies with the chairman of the board of the Dauphin Hospital Board who I met with shortly thereafter, and indeed, who I met with on one of my swings into Dauphin and tour of the hospital.

My honourable friend, the Member for Dauphin, first of all indicated that we cancelled the health care facility in Dauphin and he goes into some diatribe, as he did here this afternoon, about some cancellation of the hospital in Dauphin in 1978. Again, not truthful at all, but it is my honourable friend's prerogative, in this House, to not always deal with fact, to not always present fact, and that is I suppose the way he may choose to get elected and re-elected in Dauphin.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, the Member for Dauphin alleges we cancelled a meeting with the Dauphin Hospital board on February 3, dealing with the public health building. That is not factual. The meeting was to be held with the Dauphin Hospital board, the commission and the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation to discuss the chemotherapy program that is now being offered in Dauphin Hospital.

The board did not ask the meeting to discuss the public health building. They asked for the meeting to discuss the chemotherapy program at the hospital, but my honourable friend from Dauphin did not have his facts straight. The meeting was delayed, because the representative of the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation simply could not attend on February 3, but the meeting was subsequently held.

* (1730)

My honourable friend, the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), wants to know what happened. I met with the chairman of the board and members of the hospital board from Dauphin and they indicated to me that their

priority for construction was personal care home beds in their community.

Well, my honourable friends from the New Democratic Party say it is not either/or, it has to be both, but, Mr. Acting Speaker, let me share with my honourable friend, because my honourable friend from Dauphin is wont not to tell the whole truth all the time.

On June 11, 1984, that is over five years ago, there was a letter to the chairman of the board of the Dauphin General Hospital. The Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) was not simply the MLA for the area, but indeed he was a Cabinet Minister theoretically able to carry out decisions of Government. Over five years ago there was a letter to the chairman of the Dauphin Hospital board saying, I am pleased to advise you that Government has approved this project for construction, and that is the new public health building in Dauphin, June 11, 1984.

Was Sterling Lyon the Premier on June 11, 1984? Was Jim Galbraith the Member for Dauphin in 1984? Was the Member for Dauphin in Cabinet in 1984 on Government side? Yes. Did he have any influence in Government? No, he did not, because he could not deliver on a 1984 commitment by Howard Pawley and the New Democratic Government to build the new public health building in Dauphin five years ago, but this Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman)—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Minenko): Order. The Honourable Member for Dauphin.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Acting Speaker, I would ask the Member to table the letter he is quoting from in this House. If he is going to use that in his speech, he should be tabling that in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Minenko): Pursuant to Beauchesne's 495, I would ask the Honourable Minister to table the document that he referred to.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Speaker, it would be my pleasure to table this to refresh the memory of the Honourable Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) that in 1984 they promised to construct this public health building. I will table it after I finish my remarks because I may have to refer to it again.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, whilst this urgent need for the Dauphin public health building, which my honourable friend is now bringing to the House from Opposition, from Opposition, when he did not deliver it while he was in Government, whilst this was going on, what was the Howard Pawley gang of New Democrats doing for the people of Manitoba? They were building a \$30 million-plus bridge to nowhere north of Selkirk on the Red River.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker, who was the Highways Minister when that was going on? It was the MLA for Dauphin. All of the concerns about health care in Dauphin and the public health building were spent in over \$30 million on a bridge to nowhere sponsored, pushed, driven, by the MLA for Dauphin as the Minister of Highways.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), on a point of order.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, I have discussed this with the Minister's colleague, the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger), who acknowledges that is not factual. The cost was \$11 million less than—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member is quite aware that a dispute over the facts is not a point of order. Order. Order. The Honourable Minister of Health.

Mr. Orchard: Now, Mr. Speaker, if we had probably done the honourable thing with those 19 piers in the bridge to nowhere north of Selkirk, built by the MLA for Dauphin and Howard Pawley, we would have created a large bronze plaque, one for each Member of the NDP Cabinet who approved that infamous waste of taxpayer dollars, pinned it on each one of those piers individually with the centre pier being dedicated to the Premier, Howard Pawley, MLA for Selkirk, and called it Manitoba's stonehenge and used it as a tourist attraction.

That would have been an appropriate tourist attraction, although I would admit, Mr. Speaker, many people from all across the length and breadth of this province have visited the bridge to nowhere north of Selkirk. They are absolutely shocked at a Government that would waste that kind of taxpayer dollars while health care needs allegedly were left un serviced by an NDP Government that cared for the people—1984, Mr. Speaker, the MLA for Dauphin, Minister of Highways, squandered \$30 million on a bridge to nowhere and left a public health building in Dauphin unbuilt after being promised by the New Democratic Government it would be built.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to say that my honourable friend, the MLA for Dauphin, is being hypocritical in this resolution, because I cannot do that. It breaks the parliamentary Rules. I will leave the people to judge whether that is an accurate statement or not, because you cannot fool the people, you cannot fool the people.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing my honourable friend, in his news release of February 2, 1989, alleges is that we have cancelled the public health building. That is not true. That is not true. Now I believe from time to time it is incumbent on the MLA for Dauphin to share with his constituents the truth. If he was to tell the truth to his constituents, he would tell them that in the fall of 1987, under a New Democratic Party Government, of which he was a Cabinet Minister, they froze every capital project in the Department of Health because they would not spend the money on needed health care facilities. For 10 months, until they were booted unceremoniously from office by the people of Manitoba, they froze capital construction in the Province of Manitoba, including the Dauphin public health building. Now is that not a shameful act for a caring MLA, but that is what the MLAs in the New Democratic Party

Government of Howard Pawley did from the fall of 1987 until May of 1988, when they were removed from office as they rightfully deserved to be. That, Mr. Speaker, is the absolute facts, facts that my honourable friend, the MLA for Dauphin, will not tell his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend has failed, and failed miserably, as the MLA for Dauphin in bringing needed personal care homes to the citizens of Dauphin. Mr. Speaker, I toured the hospital. I toured one of the very finest personal care home facilities that I have been in in Dauphin, run by the Sisters in Dauphin, an excellent facility, very capably managed. People are cared for in that facility par excellence, no question. They need 25 additional personal care home beds to serve, not civil servants in Dauphin, but to serve people in their very last years of life. That is a priority of this Government and we have fast-tracked the development of the personal care home project in Dauphin. We believe on this side of the House that senior citizens in their latter years deserve to have accommodation and personal care home beds for their use. That was not a priority of the MLA for Dauphin for his constituency while he was Government—1984, and I will now table this letter, Mr. Speaker, 1984, June 11, the priority of the MLA for Dauphin was a public health building to house staff of the Departments of Health, and Community Services.

* (1740)

We are putting priority on people and caring for people. Twenty-five personal care home beds juxtaposed to the Dauphin General Hospital are a priority of this Government. We have fast-tracked that development project. That is the priority that we will take to the people of Manitoba. I will debate that issue any time in Dauphin with the MLA from that area, and I will win the public opinion because the citizens of Dauphin want to care for their senior citizens. This Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) chose to neglect them from 1984 on. It is the intention of this Government to serve the people of Dauphin in an equitable fashion. We intend to do that, and we will do that with the people of Dauphin fully in mind.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): The Member for Pembina is so interested in debates he should have been at the last debate that took place in the last election in Dauphin where his Conservative candidate admitted it was the Member for Pembina who got the whole province into Saudi Arabia. It is right on the record.

An Honourable Member: You have been trying to sell that lie for six years . . .

Mr. Doer: Well, I do not think you should call your own candidate a liar, Mr. Speaker. I think it is very - (interjection)- oh, no, it is on the public record.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) in the history of the province whose greatest contribution to any debate is foaming at the mouth, filibustering the issues and not talking about the health care priorities in a very direct and honest way in dealing with the resolution before us.

Oh, yes, he is a great debater, Mr. Speaker. He is a great debater and he loves to wile away on issues of the past and twist away on the facts and the figures in a very, very selective way. But we have had a tradition in this province, a good one I might add, of Ministers of Health who have come before this Chamber and have more time and effort being honest with the people of Manitoba and dealing with the health care priorities of the province in a realistic and fair way and not spend their time in simplistic and argumentative foaming at the mouth, as the Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard).

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that even though it was a one-term Government under the Lyon regime, the former Minister of Health, the Honourable Bud Sherman, had a much more appropriate and sensitive approach to our health care priorities in the province than the Member for Pembina who looks like he is a cross between Jack Nicholson in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and God knows what other character that we see in some of the entertainment movies.

Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the Minister of Health through his tirade address the specific motion about whether in fact this Legislative Assembly would support the Government and the Minister of Health in developing the health facility in Dauphin and deal with it in the '89-90 fiscal year. He did not answer that question. I think it is a legitimate question for the people of Dauphin to have to the Minister. Now, yes, we can debate, we can counterpoint and counterpunch, but the question is: is this facility going to be in the '89-90 fiscal budget of the Health Services Commission or is it not?

I gather from the speech of the Minister of Health, the Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard), that it is not.

I am pleased to hear we are getting quicker action on the personal care homes. I think a great deal of the credit—I would like to read the letter, Mr. Speaker. It has been tabled. A great deal of the credit I think goes to the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), who has been raising this issue, and raising this issue, and raising this issue, and raising this issue, and finally, after 18 months, we have gone from a frozen-footed Minister of Health on this issue, and we have got action from the Minister of Health. It has taken 18 months, but I give the Member for Dauphin full credit for standing up for the people of Dauphin and getting that facility on a quicker track. We will have to see how it fares in relative terms with the rest of the health care facilities in the province, but we will have to see where that fits.

I also find, Mr. Speaker, a great deal of contradictions for the Minister of Health. He stands in this House every day and will not tell the people working with Clinic, or he will not tell the people with Concordia Hospital, he will not tell the people in municipal hospitals where their capital programs stand, but only when he wants to try to make a few cheap political points in a debate do we find out where the Minister of Health stands on his capital programs. These are the kind of things we have to do with a Minister of Health like this, who is afraid to come forward with his capital budget.

The Opposition Parties offered him the opportunity two weeks ago to come forward with a capital project, and we have to sort of pry out the capital project from

this Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). It is not a very appropriate way to do business, Mr. Speaker.

We often wonder what is the Minister of Health hiding from the people of Manitoba that he is not willing to table in late June the capital projects, or again a week or a week and a half ago when we had an opportunity to substitute the Health budgets, similar to the Member for Pembina.

Mr. Speaker, our record on health care and health care development is second to none and the people of Manitoba know that. We believe that a facility such as has been described in this motion is not an either/or resolution. The Minister of Health has a tendency to say either it is the personal care home beds, which we applaud and which we have acted for, or it may not go with the Health Services Commission proposal and the health facility in Dauphin.

Mr. Speaker, we think that both facilities are important for the people of Dauphin and the Parklands Region. We think the Minister of Health should have given us an answer today about the specific motion. He is giving us an answer today on something that is not even part of the motion, so the people of Dauphin—(interjection)—well, the people of our Party are having a great family conference, talking about working people and families. They are talking about the priorities of Manitoba families right now, but they are three minutes away if you would like them to come here for a vote.

I note from the letter, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Selectivity is at it again. Mr. Never Give Us Everything has done it again. He is a wily little character, he is a wily little fox sometimes, but you know you have to go the second part of the sentence to really find out where the Minister of Health is at. I do not think being wily and secretive is very helpful for the people of Manitoba, but we are very comfortable, the people of Manitoba, making that judgment when it is necessary, following completion of the necessary planning stages.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the two and three years that it took leading up to this facility were part of the planning stages. Our documentation shows clearly that the planning stages took place. I know and I have a document that says that the planning stages had been completed, the approval had been made and the project was going to go forward as the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) had said. Only the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has frozen this project and he should be honest enough to tell that to the people of Manitoba.

We have the capital projects. We have the five-year plan. Just like Klinik was frozen by this Minister who did not have the gall and still does not have the gall to tell the people at Klinik where it stands, just like the municipal hospitals were frozen by this Minister, just like the Minister has frozen the Dauphin facility, the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) has again been vindicated in terms of the position he took.

Mr. Speaker—(interjection)—oh, oh, the unguided missile has taken the sock out of his mouth again. I know the damage-control people. Where are they now? Where are they now? They will be sending down the notes, Ed. The Member for Portage (Mr. Connery) will get his notes soon.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

* (1750)

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

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Flat Earth Society has just spoken again. They are going to spend a million dollars, and the Flat Earth Society then talks about the deficit. Now, I think over a matter of time that finally the people are going to realize the Flat Earth Society is a dead entity, because you cannot—and I will not say it—do two things at the same time. You know the saying.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

An Honourable Member: Identify whose Party it is, please.

Mr. Doer: Well, there is only one Party that takes two different positions on the same issue, Mr. Speaker, and it is the Liberal Party, the Liberal Party of Manitoba.

There is some \$200 million now put aside in a rainy day fund. That rainy day fund is something that we do not believe should be defeated because we believe it is raining now on the people of Manitoba. We believe that there are a number of very necessary capital projects in the Province of Manitoba, and we believe that this is one of them.

Mr. Speaker, I was very disappointed with the rainy day fund available to this Government, with the projects and priorities of our health care system available to make the good decisions on behalf of our health care system, the project such as the Dauphin facility which has been planned and approved and frozen by this Minister, facilities such as Klinik, facilities such as municipal hospitals.

The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) has probably the worst record of any MLA in the province. Nobody has been devastated in their constituency like the Member for Portage la Prairie. They must just cringe every time he walks out the door. There must be a black cloud over his head everywhere he goes because something else closes down.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the strategy of keeping the sock in the mouth should prevail with the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) on behalf of his constituents. I would recommend strongly that this Legislature go ahead with its fundamental and solid proposal to fulfill the authorization for the Dauphin health facility. This legislation requests the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) to go ahead with this facility and, with the personal care home announcement the Minister has made today, contrary to his predictions on the Capital budgets, that and the personal care announcement today will be very, very positive steps forward for the health care of the Parklands Region and the health care for the people of Dauphin.

I thank the Minister of Health for confirming our request on the personal care homes. I would really like him to go the extra mile with this resolution request

and announce finally his position and the Government's position on the authorized health care facility in Dauphin. Let us go forward on behalf of Manitobans, not on behalf of any political Party. Thank you very, very much.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, in view of the time and that there is a very worthwhile reception of international co-operation going on not too far away in the building, maybe we should call it six o'clock and show our support

to that organization who are doing such a good job throughout the world.

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

Some Honourable Members: Six o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Six o'clock. The hour being 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).