



Second Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

40 Elizabeth II

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

LIB - Liberal; ND - New Democrat; PC - Progressive Conservative

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	LIB
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	ND
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	ND
CARR, James	Crescentwood	LIB
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	LIB
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	ND
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	LIB
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	ND
CONNERY, Edward	Portage la Prairie	PC
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	ND
DOER, Gary	Concordia	ND
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	LIB
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	ND
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	ND
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	ND
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	LIB
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	ND
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	ND
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	LIB
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	ND
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	ND
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	ND
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold, Hon.	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	ND
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	ND
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	ND
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	ND
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	ND
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	ND

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 15, 1991

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, a matter of privilege is a very serious occasion, and I believe this is my first opportunity, given some information which came to light this morning, to raise this matter.

Mr. Speaker, over the past number of weeks at least, the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst), in responding to questions about the approval of an application under the RentalStart program for a seniors project at the Rotary Pines, has been, to say the least, contradictory and on many occasions, I believe, deliberately misleading.

The claims of the Minister of Housing have been contradicted by numerous groups who have made applications under this program. They have now been contradicted by the minister's own staff, and I believe that it is a matter of privilege that members of this Chamber deserve to be told in a straightforward fashion the facts. That has clearly not happened.

Mr. Speaker, the minister on May 2 acknowledged providing misleading information to this House. Today we learned that the allegations that have been made by my colleague for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), by my colleague for Transcona (Mr. Reid), by members of the public were, in fact, true, that this minister deliberately cleared the decks of the RentalStart program to give preferential treatment to a political friend of this government.

Mr. Speaker, that in itself is a serious breach of the integrity of this government, but the way in which misleading and false information has been provided publicly on the record to members of this side is, I believe, a breach of our privileges and my privileges as a member.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter, and I believe it is time that this Chamber looked into the awarding of this contract and the minister's conduct in

awarding this contract in the interest of fairness to the groups who have been left in the cold, in the interest of the groups who have done their homework and applied in good faith to a government program they believed they were eligible for. They have been undermined intentionally and deliberately for political motives by this minister.

* (1335)

I therefore move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that the awarding of the contract of Rotary Pines under the Seniors RentalStart program and the matter of the minister's conduct in awarding that contract be referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections so that committee may report back to this Chamber at the earliest opportunity.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious allegation, and as soon as I attempt to see the motion—I do not know whether there is a printed copy coming to me or not. I refer you to Beauchesne Section 31 (1) where it says: "A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege."

Mr. Speaker, in my view, you have to make your ruling on the basis of that historic precedent of the rules with respect to a matter of privilege. Nowhere in the member's allegations, in the member's introduction of his privilege, does he bring forward one shred of evidence, one fact. He is indulging in pure political innuendo, and I say to him that it is a most unfortunate way to conduct his own affairs and, I would say, it puts into question his own integrity.

Mr. Speaker, the member, our Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst), as he has said many times in my presence, has stated over and over again that he fully welcomes a discussion on this matter once his Estimates come forward. I am led to believe that could occur as early again as Thursday this week. This whole issue needs a full airing, and certainly one will be given during the Estimates, and the minister wants to do that.

For the member to rise in his place today without any evidence and call, as he says in his motion, that the contract be referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections and that the committee report back to the Chamber at the earliest opportunity, in my view, does a disservice to himself and does a disservice to the House.

I ask you to rule his motion out of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): A matter of privilege of this nature is a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest to you that there is importance for government ministers to bring facts to the Chamber so that the members in opposition are better able to represent their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, there are guidelines through different programs that allow members to advise their constituents in terms of what programs governments have to offer. What the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) has brought up is an issue in which there are guidelines that are in place on the service. Through the minister's own comments, it appears that those guidelines have been violated. Those very same guidelines were not violated for other members of this Chamber's constituencies, in particular the member for Flin Flon. I think what the member for Flin Flon is recommending, an independent inquiry, if you will, into the whole affair, would be a just solution to ratify the problem.

* (1340)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, a matter of privilege is indeed a serious matter, and this is a serious matter. We repeatedly, over the last several weeks, have seen examples where misleading information has been brought to this House. It is not a question of a dispute over the facts. The minister, himself, rose on a matter that was indeed raised in a subsequent matter of privilege by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and indicated that he had brought forward misleading information to the House.

This is not a dispute over the facts. The facts are clear. We have had one project that has received favoured treatment. We have had various projects that had been told that money was not available when indeed it was. We have asked questions repeatedly in this House as to the background of the awarding of that particular contract on a favoured basis and the information that was given to the other groups, and we have been told, as members of the Legislature, information that has been misleading

and was indicated as being misleading as late as today.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the fact it is misleading and the fact that the information that we have received, as opposition members, just today satisfies our condition of a matter of privilege, that it be raised at the first opportunity. The key question has to be whether it is a contempt, which indeed is considered a matter of privilege, and for it to be a matter of contempt, the ruling has to be based on whether there was a deliberate attempt to mislead.

Were this the first incident where there was a misleading statement made, we might perhaps, Mr. Speaker, accept that there was an error made on behalf of this minister and this government, but it is not the first time that we have been misled as members of this House. That is why I would ask you to take that into account and take into account the fact that essentially you are dealing, as Speaker, as to whether there is a prima facie case.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to put yourself in the position of people watching what has been happening with this matter over the last several weeks. I think every member of the public in Manitoba would support what this motion would do, which is point to the misleading information, and point to a remedy, a referral to the Committee on Privileges and Elections that will ensure a full and open hearing.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to stress that it is not a dispute over the facts. The facts are clear. This government has been misleading the opposition and members of the House about the Rotary Pines project, and the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) and all members of the opposition want that cleared, and the only way to do that is to accept this matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: A matter of privilege is indeed a very important matter, and I would like to thank all honourable members for their comments. I will take this matter under advisement and will report back to the House.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition, and it conforms with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): To the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba

The petition of the undersigned residents of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the provincial government has removed the indexing provision from the Seniors 55-Plus program; and

WHEREAS 55-Plus is an income support program aimed at seniors suffering the greatest economic hardships; and

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, we do not want to dispense. We would like to hear the petition.

Mr. Speaker: The Clerk will continue.

Mr. Clerk: WHEREAS the Filmon government is unfairly placing the burden of economic hard times upon seniors below or near the poverty line by deindexing 55-Plus;

WHEREFORE these petitioners request that the government of Manitoba consider reinstating the indexing of the 55-Plus program.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairman of Committees): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted a certain resolution, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table copies of the 1991 Report of the Western Finance Ministers as presented to the Western Premiers' Conference in Nipawin, Saskatchewan, yesterday. I also have copies of the communiques which were issued at that conference.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to table the Annual Report for 1989-90 for the Department of Northern Affairs.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 42—The Public Schools Finance Board Amendment Act

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Derkach), I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. McCrae), that Bill 42, The Public Schools Finance Board Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Commission des finances des écoles publiques, be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time. (Recommended by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.)

Mr. Speaker, I also table that message of the Lieutenant-Governor.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 19—The Local Authorities Election Amendment Act

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), that Bill 19, The Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. At Introduction of Bills, we generally introduce bills for first reading. The honourable minister inadvertently introduced a bill for second reading.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, as has long been the practice of this Assembly, I used the document that was on my desk. If it would be the desire of the House that I should do it through another system, I would hold the bill until it has the other process.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable minister.

* (1350)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon from the Warren Collegiate fifty Grade 11 students. They are under the direction of Mr. Jake Wiebe and Mr. John Smith. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Seniors RentalStart Program Pines Project Application

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, day after day and piece after painful piece, the public's perception of fairness of this government in dealing with the Rotary Pines is coming into disrepute.

Mr. Speaker, the government has approved a program for one developer and one project after it suspended the same project and program for a number of other developers and community-based groups that had applied for it in October of 1990. Then the government received an application from the one same developer, the Rotary Pines, reported by the staff of the minister's department, on February 11, 1991, one day after the minister was sworn in as Minister of Housing.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Housing is: Who informed the developer, the one developer, that this project was now not suspended anymore? Who made the decision not to inform other community-based groups that this project was now available? Why did this group apply on February 11, one day after the minister was sworn in, on this project?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I was sworn in on the 11th of February at about three o'clock or thereabouts in the afternoon of that day. Prior to that time, I was away, out of the country on a vacation for the week prior to that.

Mr. Speaker, as well, what is in error is the fact that the program was not, as quoted in the recent newspaper article today, reactivated. It was never deactivated. I am advised by the staff of the department, because these things predated my becoming the Minister of Housing on February 11, that the budget for the department was approved in December by this House and following that, the program was available within the department.

Pines Project Funding Suspension

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): The question, Mr. Speaker, that I asked the minister is, why did this one project reapply whether it was reactivated or suspended or not suspended or in a state of suspended animation? Why did the one project reapply, the Rotary Pines project? Why

were the other community-based groups not told that this thing was—and the minister said it was not reactivated but back on status where the government could approve it.

My question to the Premier is: Given the fact that public fairness dictates that all people are treated in the same way by their own provincial government and given that this project clearly knew that the funding was available again and nobody else knew, will this Premier (Mr. Filmon) now suspend the decision to publicly fund the Rotary Pines project and have all the groups reapply in a fair and equitable way, so that merit can be the determining factor for the projects that will go forward on community nonprofit projects for Seniors RentalStart, so every project in Manitoba can be treated fairly as opposed to the situation we have now where only one project knew about the re-entry application, only one project applied and all the others did not because they did not know about it?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, one of the quotations that was not used in the newspaper article today, quoted by the member of the staff of the Department of Housing, was the fact, given all of the projects that have been raised in the public mind over the past while, which one was the best?

That staff member said clearly the Pines was the best project, best from a wide variety of perspectives in terms of need, in terms of ability to meet seniors demand and so on. From an underwriting perspective, it was the best project. I think, from that point of view, we should have all the facts on the record and all the quotes on the record before the member for Concordia decides to quote selectively from individual situations.

* (1355)

Mr. Doer: There is no doubt that this project would be the best. It was the only one that reapplied and the only one considered. It is one out of one, Mr. Speaker.

Given the fact that his own Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) has been opposed to this project, the Chamber of Commerce has been opposed to it, the federal ministers of transportation have been opposed to it, many other community-based groups are opposed to it, how can the minister now say it is the best? How can the Premier (Mr. Filmon) stand by and allow a system of fairness to go on in this province that people in Manitoba believe is unfair?

Would the Premier now suspend all of the funding to the Rotary Pines project and have every other project apply in the same way at the same time and be considered on the same merit base that the Rotary Pines project was considered, because the Premier then knows that transportation considerations would then mean that other projects would move ahead of the Rotary Pines and this insane project could be cancelled by the government?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition did not listen to my first answer. The question was asked of the staffperson in the Department of Housing: Of all the projects that have been raised in the public mind in the past while, of all of those projects, including the Pines, which was the best?

He clearly said, from an underwriting perspective, from a risk perspective, from a needs perspective, all of those perspectives, that clearly—and I did not say that; it was done by a member of the staff—indicated that it was the Pines that was the best project, and for that reason it was approved.

**Pines Project
Site Usage**

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, there are so many problems with Rotary Pines that it is absolutely scandalous that it was approved. They were the only applicant invited to apply in February 1991. Four applicants were diverted to another program in 1990. They were not incorporated at the time of application. They have no registered interest in the land on the title. It is opposed by the provincial minister of transport. It is opposed by two federal Ministers of Transport. It is opposed by Winnipeg International Airport. It is opposed by the Chamber of Commerce.

Why is this minister approving this development when everyone knows that it only occupies 13 percent of the site, evidence of which I will table, and that the real reason for the rezoning was to permit luxury condominiums and 35,000 square feet of strip mall on the other 87 percent of the site?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing here with a Housing department program, Seniors RentalStart program. It has to do with 86 units in a nine-storey building on a site on Portage Avenue. That is what we are dealing with. Whatever else happens on adjacent lands is not of particular interest, nor do we have any

involvement in those particular events. With regard to all of the allegations, however spurious they are, I would be pleased to go into it in detail, all of those things, when we get to the Department of Housing Estimates.

**Housing Projects
Minister's Approval**

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Will the minister tell the House if there is a new policy in his department or a new policy of his government that because of the Rotary Pines precedent that, in future, their Tory developer friends need not apply for program approval to Manitoba Housing but directly to the minister?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, I am shocked, quite frankly, that the member for Burrows, a man allegedly of the cloth, would make statements like that in a public forum, but let me say this. Interest in the Seniors RentalStart program was initiated by the Rotary Club of Assiniboia in February of 1989. That is fully almost two years before I became the minister of the department.

Mr. Speaker, from a wide variety of perspectives, these programs and projects under these programs are going ahead, fall back, go forth with the department on a wide variety of issues. Some proceed; some never do. It is a question of dealing with those individual applications and dealing with them on an appropriate basis until they reach a point where they can proceed to construction. Until all the criteria are met, until all of the i's are dotted and t's crossed, no funds flow.

* (1400)

**Minister of Housing
Apology Request**

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, applications go back and forth, and there are four applications that should have come forward in February of this year and they did not. Will the Minister of Housing apologize to this House, since he has repeatedly claimed, including on Thursday, May 9, that the Rotary Pines has 104 expressions of interest whereas an applicant was told on Friday last by Mr. Roy Lev that there are 88 expressions of interest—since this is the second time that the minister has misled the House?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, I have not misled the House. When the

application form was filed for PDF funding, they provided evidence to the Department of Housing.

There were, in fact, 104 paid deposits for that project, but I am not surprised that because of what has gone on over the past two or three weeks and allegations made by members opposite over a whole variety of things, that, in fact, people have withdrawn their applications from that project. That does not surprise me in the least.

Pines Project Public Inquiry

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) earlier called from his seat today for evidence of wrongdoing on this project. Well, that evidence comes now from two ministers in his very own cabinet.

The evidence continues to mount about the favouritism involved in approving \$4.7 million in grants and loans to the Pines project in St. James. In a burst of openness yesterday, which we applaud, the Minister of Housing said he, too, is concerned about the application process in his department, and he agrees it is in need of review. Mr. Speaker, we agree, but we would go further than that.

My question for the Premier: Will he now order a public independent inquiry into the Pines affair, so that public confidence can be restored, as he alleges it should be, in this government's ability to deal fairly and openly with applicants under this program and any other program that this government cares to run?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Yes, indeed, I did say that procedures that had occurred in the department were not the best quality. That is something that I will be looking into as minister of that department, so that - (interjection) - Mr. Speaker, the Rotary Pines project, as I indicated earlier is the best project that the department had before it, and it had more than one at the time that the Pines project was brought forward. There were two projects before the department at the time, so clearly the Pines was the best project.

It meets the needs of the people of St. James-Assiniboia, who incidentally have the third lowest seniors to seniors housing ratio in the city of Winnipeg—the other two areas, one is Tuxedo and the other is Old Kildonan. Clearly the St. James community is in need of seniors housing. This project met the maximum in terms of underwriting

requirements. It is clearly the best project and, Mr. Speaker, for that reason it was approved.

Seniors RentalStart Program Applicants List

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, again the minister has relied exclusively, as this government has in its defence of this project, on the alleged large number of paid-up subscribers to the project.

Will the Premier (Mr. Filmon), who has yelled consistently from his seat in defence of this project, stand up today and give this House what proof his government has of who signed up for this project, how much money they put down and when? That is their defence. Will they have the courage to show us the evidence of that defence?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, at the time the application for PDF funding—the first phase of the funding in Seniors RentalStart, the first of three phases—at that time the department was provided with evidence of 104 signed applications and deposits paid.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing conflicting numbers but we never, ever see proof. We never see that proof. The public demands it. The members of this House demand it.

Pines Project Public Inquiry

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, finally for the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

The Minister of Housing, given his admissions yesterday that the whole process was not very good in this case—both the federal Minister of Transport and the provincial minister of transport have publicly condemned the project—how many more cabinet ministers are going to have to turn on this project? How many other more deserving projects are going to have to come forward? How many more failings of this applicant are going to have to be exposed before the Premier—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, I think it has been made amply clear in answers earlier today that from an underwriting perspective, from a needs perspective, the Pines

project in St. James-Assiniboia meets the test in those particular qualifications.

This is an excellent project. It will meet a demand, Mr. Speaker, of the seniors community in St. James-Assiniboia. For that reason, the project was approved and should go forward.

Health Care System - National Western Premiers' Communique

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, the Premier has some fine words when it comes to national programs, calling them the cornerstones of our Confederation and absolutely key to national unity.

We appreciate those words, Mr. Speaker, but actions speak louder than words, and the actions of this Premier and this government are the opposite of those fine words. Why does this Premier say one thing one day and then sign a communique, Communique No. 3 to be precise, from the western Premiers instructing their Finance ministers to examine the additional transfer of tax points to finance health and higher education when that measure will indeed end our finest national program, medicare?

Will the Premier square his actions with his words?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I noted in my absence, while I was at the Western Premiers' Conference, that the member for St. Johns called a news conference to announce for the fifth time in the last year the demise of medicare.

I think, like Chicken Little, the media are finally going to get a little tired of coming forward and going into those kinds of statements, Mr. Speaker.

This is what the Communique 3 says. After lamenting the fact that the federal government has consistently now since 1982 reduced its transfer payments to the provinces for health and post-secondary education, the communique says, and I quote: Premiers stress that as a result of these reductions, provinces find it increasingly difficult to finance adequately health, education, social programs. Premiers reaffirm their support for comprehensive and accessible health care and quality education.

Mr. Speaker, that is the whole rationale behind it. This province has made its commitment to health care and post-secondary education. Despite a reduction of \$32 million in EPF cash transfers to

Manitoba this year, we are raising our spending in health care by \$90 million. What we are saying is that the federal government cannot be left off the hook, cannot be left to starve the provinces for the programs in health care and post-secondary education that are the most important and vital programs to the people of Manitoba. We are out there making sure that the federal government's feet are held to the fire, that we can get the funding that we need for health and post-secondary education.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I would rather be raising the sound bells every time this government does something to erode medicare than sitting back and letting our most treasured national program die.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier, on the basis of his response to my question because what they are, in fact, doing with the proposal to study further transfer points is sitting back and letting the federal government decide the agenda, is letting our national program, medicare, die, how does the Premier square this statement, this communique from the Western Premiers' Conference with his commitment to the House of December 5 that this government was not, clearly not, looking at a further transfer of tax points in lieu of federal transfer payments?

* (1410)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I want to quote again from a communique of the Western Premiers' Conference. "For this reason, the four western Premiers believed a new financing system should be sought, and they feel that among other alternatives, consideration should be given to a mechanism under which the federal government would transfer corresponding equalized income tax points to the provinces in exchange for the provinces' assuming full responsibility for program financing. They believe that this could be done in a way which is consistent with the maintenance of national standards and ready access to services."

An Honourable Member: What date was that?

Mr. Filmon: Now that, Mr. Speaker, was a communique of the Western Premiers' Conference of April 29, 1976.

The person who signed that communique was the Honourable Edward Schreyer. Mr. Speaker, as a result of that communique and that decision, in fact, EPF program became a transference of tax points to the provinces as of the 1st of January 1977, resulting from that communique, advocated by New Democratic Premier Edward Schreyer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that this cheap political gamesmanship that is being played by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and his colleague, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) is not becoming to New Democrats or anybody in this House.

I knew Ed Schreyer. I know that Ed Schreyer was a man of integrity, and I tell you there is no integrity across the way when we play this cheap politics—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns, with her final supplementary question.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about former governments. We are talking about a current—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: —and a Premier who when asked on December 5 if this government was considering the further transfer of tax points, he said, and I quote: No, Mr. Speaker—and he signs a document that looks at only one option, the transfer of tax points.

I want to ask the Premier: Where is the communique calling on the federal government to restore EPF financing? Where is the option of a renegotiated transfer payment system? How can this government negotiate with only one option that happens to fit the federal agenda?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, let me quote again from a communique of the western Premiers, April 29, 1976: "The four western Premiers share the view that provincial governments should be permitted greater flexibility to alter their income tax structures under the national income tax collection system in line with their responsibilities and priorities in this field. They feel greater flexibility could preserve, rather than detract from basic uniformity in the national income tax structure in that it would encourage provinces to remain in this national collection system."

They referred to new more flexible financing arrangements which recognized differing provincial priorities and regional requirements. They referred to greater flexibility in health insurance financing, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Have you got any answers?

Mr. Filmon: That is the answer that Ed Schreyer came up with, so, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about

honesty. We are talking about integrity, and we are talking about protection of the medicare system in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I believe, just as Ed Schreyer concluded, that when you have federal governments—Liberal, Conservative or New Democrat—attempting to offload funding costs onto the provinces, that you have to examine all reasonable alternatives to protect health care for the people of Manitoba. That is precisely what Ed Schreyer said, and that is precisely what New Democrats would do in the same position.

An Honourable Member: Here comes Mr. Sleaze.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) from his seat said, here comes Mr. Sleaze. It is the second time he has used that term today. He used it previously in reference to the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) rising on a matter of privilege.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to have that member withdraw that unparliamentary statement from his seat.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I sit as close to the Minister of Health as the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). I certainly heard no comments in the House.

Beyond that, just because the Leader of the opposition party (Mr. Doer) has taken a tremendous bruising, a verbal bruising, over the last three answers, it does not give him any rise or licence to stand in his place and try and detract from the answer given to his

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Speaker did not hear the remarks as alleged by the honourable opposition House leader. Therefore, I cannot rule on the matter. Therefore, the honourable member does not have a point of order.

Northern Health Care System User Fees

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, this First Minister (Mr. Filmon) is gaining a reputation of not having his actions match his words. It is no more the case than with reference to health care. A few moments ago, he was belittling my colleague the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) and the

critic of Health for being concerned about the demise of our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) are in possession of two letters, one from the City of Flin Flon, the other from the Town of Snow Lake, who both urged this government to abandon the introduction of a \$50 user fee, the first user fee of its kind certainly of that magnitude in the medicare system, urging them to abandon the introduction of this user fee so that Northerners will have access to the same kind of health care without exorbitant charges as other Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, will the First Minister now stand up and make his actions meet his rhetoric and suspend the introduction of this \$50 user fee for the people of northern Manitoba?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the ambulance service is not an insured service under the Canada Health Act. Manitobans throughout the length and breadth of this province pay for their ambulance costs either out of their pockets or through insurance purchased from such organizations as Blue Cross.

There is one exception to that, Mr. Speaker, in that the Northern Patient Transportation Program has provided something that no other Manitobans have and that is absolutely free access to medical services via Northern Patient Transportation warrants, air ambulance, which is entirely paid for by the Province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, what we are introducing is a modest contribution like all other Manitobans are making towards their ambulance service. It applies to no emergency service because the air ambulance will still be provided absolutely free to Manitobans living in northern Manitoba, and all Northern Patient Transportation warrants will be provided absolutely free for chemotherapy and for other essential services. We are talking elective procedures only, the same status that every other Manitoban must face.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Health really believes those remarks about absolutely no cost, then he does not deserve to be Minister of Health because it is absolutely and totally misleading and untrue—totally.

My further question is to the First Minister, if he has the intestinal fortitude to answer, or the Minister of Health.

I have a constituent by the name of Cindy Jorgensen—

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, this is the member's second question. He is not supposed to have any preamble. He has already provided a postamble to the answer. Now he is wanting to have a new supplementary question. I say call the member to order, please, and ask him to put his question immediately.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that if members of the government, particularly the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), would not engage in debate and would answer questions directly, the government House leader would not have this problem in terms of follow-up questions.

The member was only clearing up the record from statements made in debate by this Minister of Health—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate. The honourable member for Flin Flon, kindly put your question now, please.

* * *

Mr. Storle: Mr. Speaker, will this minister tell this House and the people of northern Manitoba how he expects a woman by the name of Cindy Jorgensen, who lives in my constituency, who is required to see a specialist on a once-a-month basis, can afford the extra \$600 in user fees she is going to pay because of this government?

* (1420)

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, if that individual lived in my honourable friend's home town where he grew up, that individual would pay the entire transportation cost to see that specialist if that specialist was in the city of Winnipeg, as would that individual pay the entire cost if they lived in Swan River and came to a specialist in the city of Winnipeg.

That is why, for instance, the Standing Committee on Medical Manpower has been actively working with communities in northern Manitoba for the recruitment of specialists to northern hospital service. That has had some success, particularly in the city of Thompson where a number of specialists are now in practice and there is no need for any transportation other than to the hospital in

Thompson or the clinics in Thompson from whence those individuals practise.

That is the overall goal of providing equitable access closer to home that this government has successfully engaged in, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health then explain to the people who live in Brochet, who can only get into and out of the community on a three-day basis, how they are expected to cover their hotel and their accommodations and this \$50 user fee every time they have to see a doctor for post-cancer treatment, for leukemia, all of which examples I have today?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in earlier answers, any patient coming from northern Manitoba for the receipt of chemotherapy in the treatment of the disease cancer is not subject to this fee, period and paragraph.

This is for elective procedures for which there is a choice. Anyone who is receiving chemotherapy treatment will not be subject to any assessment, and my honourable friend ought to know that, should know that and, in fact, does know that.

Health Care System - National Western Premiers' Communiqué

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, the communiqué the Premier has quoted coming out of the Western Premiers' Conference, does not ease the fears of those who are worried about the demise—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. James has the floor.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, that communiqué does not ease the fears of those who are concerned about the demise of a universal health care system. Quoting from that communiqué, it is indicated that Premiers reaffirmed their support for comprehensive and accessible health care. The Canada Health Act has five, not just two, five principles. One of them is universality. Universality was conspicuously absent from this communiqué.

Can the minister tell the House whether or not this was an intentional oversight to not cite all five of the principles of medicare as set out in the Canada Health Act which includes universality?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the intent of the western Premiers was to ensure that we called attention to the

successive offloading of support for health care that has been going on since 1982 when the Trudeau government began reducing transfer and equalization payments to the provinces so that we had less fiscal capacity to pay for our health care needs.

The intent was to put, in very simple language, our committed support for the highest standards of health care that this country needs and wants, Mr. Speaker. In so doing, we identified, over a space of a decade, how that offloading has taken place to the extent that this year Manitoba will have a reduction of cash transfers under EPF of \$32 million.

Despite that, we, in Manitoba, are spending \$90 million more for health care. That is our commitment and that commitment remains strong, remains the strongest commitment in this entire country despite any of the kinds of obfuscations that may be put forward by members opposite.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, I am simply quoting the same document the minister quoted and the document the ministers signed. The federal Minister of Health today was quoted as saying Ottawa must have the guts to seek changes, and he is going to be summoning provincial ministers to Ottawa in June of this year. We know this government knows the intentions of the federal government with respect to universal health care.

Mr. Speaker, why did the western Premiers not have the foresight, the conviction to include universality as one of the principles they ascribe to in this document? They selected two out of five of the principles. They left out universality. Why?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we have said that our intention is to fund medicare to the fullest extent that we can possibly fund it, and in so doing, we do not just talk empty words like members of the Liberal Party. It was the Trudeau administration, the Liberal administration, that began the offloading, the successive offloading in terms of hundreds of millions of dollars of reduced transfer payments from Ottawa to the provinces for health care.

They can talk all the sloganeering, all the empty sloganeering they want, Mr. Speaker. What we are doing is putting \$90 million more in Manitoba than we did last year into health care, despite having \$32 million less transferred to us from Ottawa by way of EPF cash transfers. That is our commitment, and we are committing to these standards of health care, to this high quality health care system because we

believe it is essential to the people of Manitoba and the people of Canada.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has just called universality "sloganeering." He has called it an empty word which did not deserve to be put in this communique.

Will the Premier tell us whether or not the universality aspect of our medicare system, which is critical to it in the eyes of all Manitobans, whether or not it was discussed, why it was not included, why they selected two of the five words out of the Canada Health Act—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Mr. Filmon: Very simply, because universality is a part of our health care, our medicare act, and we do not intend to diminish it. It is not part of our agenda whatsoever, and there is no sense in even talking about it because it is there. As far as we are concerned, it will remain there, Mr. Speaker.

Income Tax Regional Collection System

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance.

After a year's study, along with the other western provinces, Manitoba is seriously considering entering into a western provincial income tax collection system. Establishing an independent system would be a drastic move for a have-not province such as Manitoba. In fact, it verges on insanity.

The government has no idea of the extent of increased costs of administration. It has no idea of the possible loss of hundreds of federal jobs related to regional income tax service. It has no idea of the amount of federal transfer payments that would be lost.

Can the Minister of Finance tell this House what possible advantage is there to the Province of Manitoba, a have-not province, in collecting its own income taxes?

*(1430)

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am going to relish giving a response to this question.

In 1976, I believe the member for Brandon East was in the cabinet at that time with Mr. Schreyer, and Mr. Schreyer said this on tax collection agreements, or at least was part of a joint statement

of western Premiers: "The four western Premiers share the view that provincial governments should be permitted greater flexibility to alter their income tax structures under the national income tax collection system in line with their responsibility and priorities in this field. They feel greater flexibility could preserve rather than detract from basic uniformity in the national income tax structure, in that it would encourage provinces to remain in this national collection system."

The member was there then. He knows what the issue was at that time. He knows what the issue is today. It is greater flexibility. That was Manitoba's preference then; it is Manitoba's preference today.

An Honourable Member: He had a 50-50

An Honourable Member: That is not what he said. He said an independent system. The honourable member said he was there. Yes, I was there. We did not say we would set up an independent

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

An Honourable Member: We are not that crazy. We had 50-50 funding and that was the 1970s. This is the 1990s. They are silly, absolutely silly.

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

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, has this minister or has the government really any study on the negative impact of going into an independent income tax collection system on the number of federal jobs in the regional income tax service?

In other words, does this Minister of Finance have any idea of the hundreds of jobs that may be lost by closing down a regional income tax system in Manitoba?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, in the member's tirade just a few moments ago, it is obvious that he feels something has gone wrong, there has been a problem and that there should be a villain sought, and he admitted he was there, so ergo he must be the villain.

Mr. Speaker, that analysis has not been done because this government will attempt, as it has over a period of years—as a matter of fact my predecessor, a colleague again of the Treasury bench of the member opposite who asked the question, would be fully aware that the former Minister of Finance also sought greater flexibility in the joint federal-provincial tax collection system, i.e., particularly tax on taxable income.

Nothing has changed. Western provinces have not seen the federal government being prepared to

move very quickly in that area and so have held this out as an option. If the federal government is not going to provide the increase, as was requested in 1976 by the Schreyer government of the day and, indeed, as was requested by his colleague Mr. Kostyra, Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed. All we have said is we put the same words to print, indeed, as Premier Schreyer did years previous.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, the minister is playing around with words. There are two issues and he has them in his speech. One issue is flexibility, but the other is investigating the feasibility of alternative tax collection arrangements including separate provincial administration. That is the issue and that is idiocy on the part of this government.

My question to the minister is: Has this minister, has this government any study or any estimates of the negative impact on future revenue transfers from the federal government resulting from going into an independent income tax system of collection by the Province of Manitoba? In other words, does this minister have any idea—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, obviously the member is not happy with my response, but I tell him, as he fully knows, Quebec administers its own personal income tax system and, of course, it gives far more flexibility to implement tax changes. That is exactly what not only western provinces, but all provinces in Canada have sought, greater flexibility under the existing provincial national tax collection system.

Failing the provision of that greater flexibility by the federal government, there is some desire to study whether or not in a regional context there were any economics behind setting up a single tax authority. I want to indicate to the member opposite that is not Manitoba's preferred route. I want to indicate to the member opposite that we are—after the 1991 federal budget release, there is some recognition of the problem in Ottawa. They indicated that they are prepared to dialogue in a greater fashion to provide that greater flexibility, and that is what Manitoba will hold the federal government to the course of over the next number of months.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you call the bills in the following order, please: second readings, 36, 19, 38, 43, 44, 45. Time permitting, we will then go into debate on second readings, and I would ask you to call the bills in the order 5, 6, 8, 12 and 20.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 36—The Legal Aid Services Society of Manitoba Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), that Bill 36, The Legal Aid Services Society of Manitoba Amendment Act; (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'aide juridique du Manitoba), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, Bill 36, The Legal Aid Services Society of Manitoba Amendment Act is essentially a technical bill to establish the legal basis to permit the society to make certain changes that the society's board of directors has recommended to the government. These changes will streamline and enhance services provided by Legal Aid to those Manitobans who are not in a position to retain private counsel.

Since this is a technical bill, I will make my remarks very brief and indicate the main thrust of the changes. A complete explanation of the provisions of the bill in the form of a comparison of the existing provisions with the provisions as they will read should this bill be passed and an explanation of the reasons for the changes has been prepared by department officials. I will provide that spreadsheet to the opposition Justice critics.

The most significant change proposed in this bill is an expansion of the circumstances in which Legal Aid can be provided. At present, Legal Aid is restricted from recovering its full costs even in circumstances where the society is aware that the client will be able to meet those costs eventually. For example, a person may be simultaneously faced with a break-up of a marriage and the loss of a job. Equity in the family home, while it is sufficient to meet the total legal bill that will be incurred, is not readily transferable into cash that the person can use to pay private counsel. Legal Aid regulations

require that this kind of equity can and should be taken into account in the furnishing of Legal Aid and setting the recovery period.

The bill makes two major changes to the policy currently in place. The first is to eliminate the requirement that Legal Aid can only have a partial recovery in order to permit a full recovery. The second is to introduce a streamlined procedure allowing Legal Aid to register a lien against property to secure the recovery of its fees.

The government believes that these two provisions balance the commitment to provide affordable legal services with our responsibility to the taxpayers of Manitoba to ensure that their tax dollars are used wisely and efficiently.

In recent years the Legal Aid board has faced a small number of cases in which the current right of an applicant to choose his or her counsel has created difficulties. This occurs primarily where the parents of a young offender refuse to provide their child with legal counsel even if they have the means to retain private counsel. In these circumstances the board has adopted a policy of using a staff lawyer specializing in youth work because that lawyer can usually provide the same services for the young offender at a lower cost to the society.

To eliminate all doubts that the society's policy is appropriate, a limited right to assign counsel is being given to the society. There have also been cases of Legal Aid lawyers being provided where no application for Legal Aid has ever been made. This occurs primarily where a judge feels that separate representation of a young person is essential to deal with the entire court case because there is some conflict in the interests of the parents and the young person.

Recently at the request of the government, Legal Aid has been providing certain services that simply were not contemplated at the time the act was originally drafted. For example, Legal Aid now acts as trustee of the funds for Foster Parents' Association and provides counsel for foster parents charged with offences.

When this bill gets to committee stage, of course, members will receive full explanations of how the provisions of the bill meet these changed circumstances and permit the board to provide Legal Aid in these extended circumstances. At this stage I trust honourable members will agree with the principle that the Legal Aid Services Society, which operates essentially at arm's length from the

government, is the appropriate body to provide representation in these cases, and we should make the necessary adjustments in the governing legislation so that no one can question Legal Aid's authority in these matters.

Finally, I draw the attention of honourable members to one final matter of principle that they should consider. At present The Legal Aid Services Society Act provides no restriction on the number of applications that can be made for the same circumstances nor on the number of appeals that there can be when a person is denied Legal Aid. A person whose application for Legal Aid has been turned down is entitled to a full review by the area director, then by the executive director and finally by the entire board. Nevertheless, there have been cases where the unsuccessful applicant has simply filled out another application without any change in facts or circumstances. At present, such an application must be dealt with in the normal way. The entire process must be repeated in some cases on several occasions. At the request of the board, the government is introducing a provision that will allow these matters to be dealt with more expeditiously and avoid the time and expense involved in dealing with applications that have no merit.

Mr. Speaker, the rest of the items in the bill are of a technical nature and I look forward to explaining them to members when the bill goes to committee.

I commend this bill to honourable members. Thank you.

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that debate on Bill 36 be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* (1440)

Bill 19—The Local Authorities Election Amendment Act

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Rural Development): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Bill 19, The Local Authorities Election Amendment Act; (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'élection des autorités locales), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Downey: Bill 19 proposes a number of amendments to The Local Authorities Election Act pursuant to a request received from elected and appointed municipal officials and from members of the general public.

General municipal elections are held every three years in Manitoba and, with the next general election scheduled for October 1992, now is an appropriate time to make the desired amendments to legislation which specifically governs those municipal elections.

Some of the amendments, such as those governing the preparation and revision of electors' roles, the filing of nomination papers and the handling of ballot boxes will simply streamline the election process and remove annoyances to voters, candidates and election officials.

Other amendments, such as the establishment of hospital polls and moving polls, are intended to improve ease of access for voters and bring The Local Authorities Election Act in line with the provincial Elections Act.

The bill also proposes some new legislation governing political activities on voting days, which has been requested by the municipal associations and is consistent with the provincial Elections Act.

In addition to the amendments providing for streamlining of the election process, ease of access to polls and consistency with the provincial Elections Act, Bill 19 proposes a number of amendments to delete references and language found to be offensive to members of the disabled community in Manitoba.

As a result of concerns raised through the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, we have undertaken to delete all such offensive language and references prior to the 1992 general municipal election.

I am pleased to bring forward these amendments, not only to improve electoral procedures at the local government level, but also to recognize concerns raised by elected and appointed officials as well as by members of the general public.

Mr. Speaker, I commend this bill to the Legislature and would ask for the support of all members of the Assembly in this important electors act, which I think will assist the people of rural Manitoba and throughout all of Manitoba in greater access in the election process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I move, seconded by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), that debate on Bill 19 now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 38—The Wildlife Amendment Act

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): I am pleased to move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), that Bill 38, The Wildlife Amendment Act; (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la conservation de la faune), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, in moving second reading of the amendments to The Wildlife Act at this time, let me say at the outset that all of the honourable members—perhaps some of them, not all of them—may consider this to be an act of some significance. It is, of course, merely housekeeping changes to the act.

Mr. Speaker, The Wildlife Act is a very much used act. It is up for amendment, firstly, every session. I had amendments to it last session. It is much like my colleague, the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) with his Highway Traffic Act. It is a living act. It governs a great deal of activity of what happens throughout the landscape of Manitoba having to do with wildlife matters. Changes to the regulations occur quite frequently.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could deal with the sections of the act—and I appreciate that at second reading we deal in principle in the act—with those items that I know that honourable members will be wanting to support enthusiastically. I deal with the item that is contained in the bill that, for instance, provides more formal protection to the polar bear.

Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba we have some 1600 of these beautiful and noble animals in the region of Churchill and surrounding area, and although the polar bear has been on the protected list for a number of years, that is that we issue no permits for the hunting of the polar bear, the act does require that it be formally named in The Wildlife Act to provide that protection.

That is what we are doing in this act and just for good measure and to give, perhaps, the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) something to get her teeth into, we also put on that same list the plains

spadefoot toad that we list in that formal recognition for protection. The plains spadefoot toad—*Scaphiopus bombifrons* is, I think, the Latin name for it. Mr. Speaker, that, I am sure, will meet with the general approval of honourable members.

Another section of the act deals with—members will recall last summer that there was considerable concern expressed by, I think, all of us and certainly by my department and this minister, about the plans that came forward out of my region of the province, the Interlake, of what was called the Big Buck Hunt and what I considered, and certainly from the letters that I got from the expressions of concern that I received from wildlife interested groups, that the amount of cash prizes offered for the winning team in this hunting derby were excessive.

They were in the range of \$20,000 and we just felt within the branch that was not the kind of hunting that we wished to introduce in Manitoba. It was not—in fact could lead to poor conservation practices inasmuch as that hunters with that kind of a cash prize in the offing, you know, would be tempted to keep on hunting until he thought he had the best rack or the trophy head that he was hunting for.

* (1450)

I found, to my concern, that nothing in the current regulations enabled a Minister of Natural Resources to prevent that from taking place. So, Mr. Speaker, there is a small measure in this act that simply makes that possible in the future for the ministry of Natural Resources to intervene when in their judgment they believe something that is not desirable is taking place in this area of concern.

Members will note that it is general, because the department does not wish to interfere in the many different fish derbies and other, you know, events that take place in the province that are well within the realm of practice, tradition and acceptability.

So, those two items that are in the act, I think, honourable members will be pleased to see as further measures for the protection of our wildlife throughout the province, and indeed, that the recreational hunting be carried out in a manner that is by and large acceptable to most Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, for some time the department has been involved with an activity that also is not specifically covered by regulation, and that is in the sale of animal parts. The honourable members will note that the bill has a section that deals specifically with the selling, the buying, the trading or barter of

wild animals or the parts of wild animals. Again, there is nothing specific in the current regulations and in The Wildlife Act that enables the Ministry of Natural Resources to exercise some degree of control or prohibition. It requires, you know, the permitting of any of this kind of activity, and the intent here being simply to enable the department staff (a) to get a better understanding of the extent of this activity that is perhaps taking place in the province, and I want to make it very plain, to intervene, if need be, and to prohibit, if need be, any kind of activity that from time to time the minister is advised ought not to take place in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the first amendment in the act, and that has received some attention by honourable members opposite. That is in respect to the greater definition of what constitutes the wildlife management areas, indeed what can take place in wildlife management areas. Also it provides, I think, an opportunity, a needed opportunity, because there is a misunderstanding of what constitutes a wildlife management area of the different kinds of land designations that the department from time to time feels necessary to place on certain lands for better conservation, for the better management of our wildlife resources.

Honourable members will note that we speak about the capacity of designating registered trapline districts, of special trapping areas or animal control areas, game bird refuges, managed hunting areas, wildlife refuges. There is a host of different designations.

That is not new to the practice of the department, and the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), who is a former minister of the department, the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), who is a former minister of the department, knows that there is a host of different designations the department applies based on sound biological advice as to the kind of hunting activity that can or cannot be permitted within a designated area.

We have an area just to the west of the city, the Grants Lake marsh, where there is a very controlled managed hunt available. Nobody can hunt unless they check in and the numbers are controlled, stations are controlled. This is done in co-operation with the local landowners, adjacent and surrounding landowners. That works well for that particular area of the province.

We have other areas. I might cite my farm, for example, which some prudent government many years ago placed in an upland game bird refuge, where absolutely no hunting of game birds are allowed, ducks, geese, pheasants or grouse, but where, because of the population and because of the feeling of the surrounding area where we do allow deer hunting, for instance, big game hunting in that portion of the Interlake.

What I am trying to demonstrate, Mr. Speaker, is that the designations that are available to the department vary. A wildlife management area is one of the more inclusive designations which takes in, in some cases, very substantial acreages. As a matter of fact, we have in Manitoba set aside some 7.5 million acres. That is a sizable proportion of our landscape, in what we call wildlife management areas. They range in size from relatively small areas, a few thousand acres, to many tens, twenties, thirties and hundreds of thousands of acres.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that we have some very large wildlife management areas in the North, in the Churchill region, that encompass such places as the rocket site, as part of the town site of the proposed hydro-electric dam at Conawapa. We have management areas, in other words, of many different sizes and descriptions.

I want to reiterate, it has always been the understanding and the practice that a range of different activities can take place in wildlife management areas. A wildlife management area is not to be confused with a no-hunting wildlife bird refuge, for instance, where absolutely no activity can take place. It is not to be confused with those lands that we set aside. We are accumulating increased acreages of areas in this province that we set aside under The Ecological Reserves Act, for instance, where for specific reasons of the ecology of the land or some other unique features of the land very stringent controls are placed in these areas.

That legislation is now a little older than a decade, but it is growing. I do not have the exact acreage at my fingertips, but I know that several hundreds of thousands of acres have been so designated, Mr. Speaker.

In the wildlife management areas, by their very nature we have to—ministers and governments preceding me have made and used the authority granted to them under regulation to provide for certain activities to take place. Mr. Speaker, I simply want to have this clearly and fully understood

by honourable members and to put it on the record that, for instance, back in 1982 my friend the current sitting member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) passed a regulation that is worded very much the same as the amendment to the act that I am now proposing.

He passed a regulation on February 13, 1982, a regulation under The Wildlife Act that says, notwithstanding subsection 1, which is the section that deals with the wildlife conservation aspect of our wildlife management area, the minister may grant, subject to such terms and conditions as he may prescribe, a permit to undertake certain activities or things, across, within, or into any wildlife management area, Mr. Speaker, clearly giving the minister total and full responsibility for approving measures that he deems are acceptable. That is what Mr. Evans had to say, and his signature is on that regulation on February 13, 1982.

A little later on, on December 17, under the signature of one Mr. Mackling, who was also a Minister of Natural Resources under the New Democratic Party government, he passed another regulation.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

You see, I suppose there was always some concern about when the government was—and this very often happened when a new wildlife management area was created. I had the privilege of creating a new wildlife management area very recently, the last month or two in the constituency of my deskmate and good and honourable friend the young, brilliant Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) of this province, which we called the Mars Hill Wildlife Management Area.

His constituents wanted that wildlife management area created. His municipalities wanted that wildlife management area created. His wildlife interest groups wanted that wildlife management area created and, most importantly, he wanted that wildlife management area created. He only wanted it created, they all collectively only wanted it created if we would continue to allow a private company to continue extracting gravel from that wildlife management area until that gravel pit had been cleaned up or mined out, and then the permit, in this case the permit that I am providing, that the minister of the day, in this case Mr. Mackling, gave him said that when the last of the gravel is gone, then we in fact had conditions attached to it that they had to

clean up the site, do some reclamation of the mined out gravel pits, but in the meantime my officials at the department could better manage the wildlife in that multithousand-acre site.

* (1500)

Mr. Acting Speaker, for that reason this troubled ministers in the past as it is troubling me today, that they successively passed regulations to authorize their exemptions of these kinds of activities in wildlife management areas, so that on December 17, the then Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Mackling, amends the regulation once again just a year after the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) had amended this regulation by stating that notwithstanding anything contained in this regulation, the minister may grant, subject to such terms and conditions as he may prescribe, a permit to undertake certain activities across, within or into a wildlife management area.

Again, specifically for the purpose to authorize the minister of the day to authorize those things that he found necessary to take place within a wildlife management area.

Well, then, Mr. Acting Speaker, we come a little further along with the progression of events and we find that on—here we have—well, pardon me, I missed one. I missed an earlier one here. By Mr. Evans again, the then Minister of Natural Resources in '82. It says that the minister may grant authorization for the grading, clearing of roads and trails, gravelling, clearing, bulldozing, draining, blocking of man-made or natural waterways, bridging, haying, grazing, construction or burning. All in a wildlife management area, the minister of the day can do that. Now, all of these things are necessary from time to time.

I am prepared to concede that the former ministers, whether it is the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) today, whether it is the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) today, even though, for instance, they do not have a great agricultural background, but they responded in times of drought to open up management areas to allow farmers to get some badly needed fodder out of the wildlife management, which otherwise are not permitted in wildlife management areas.

They recognized that only was common sense, that was only prudent good public policy, and so they authorized, under their signature, activities to take place in a wildlife management area that some

are suggesting today should never be allowed, can never be allowed.

Some are even suggesting, Mr. Acting Speaker, that this little minister, this little modest, Mennonite minister is somehow assuming unto him the kind of powers, authority that are untoward or that have never been exercised or practised by other Ministers of Natural Resources.

Well, now, I see the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) comes in. I do not want to leave him out of my presentation on second reading because by the time—A few years went by and then we come to—This is an updated one. This is in November of '88. Hey, that is pretty close, is it not? November '88. This is what the then Minister of Natural Resources asked this Legislature to approve November of '88.

An Honourable Member: No, no. November it was us.

Mr. Enns: What is that date? My eyesight fails me. I am but weak. See if you can help me with that.

An Honourable Member: January.

Mr. Enns: January. Okay. I am sorry. Mr. Acting Speaker, even with the aid of these glasses, I—but it was January, and the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) will surely acknowledge he was still the minister at that time. He again felt the need—Now I do not know, and again I am not making any suggestions. I want you to know that I am citing former Ministers of Natural Resources simply to indicate and to put to rest the idea that honourable members are propagating that I am assuming unto myself some authorization or some powers that have not in fact been the practice of at least three successive NDP Ministers of Natural Resources that I am now citing and putting on the record.

Mr. Plohman, pardon me, the member for Dauphin on January of '88, not in the far distant future, put this further amendment to The Wildlife Act that said: Notwithstanding anything contained in this regulation, the minister—the minister, nobody else—may grant, subject to such terms and conditions as the minister may prescribe, a permit to undertake certain activities across, within or into any wildlife management area.

In other words clearly establishing now for the third time by a New Democratic Party government that they believed it was necessary for the minister to have the authority from time to time to grant a permit to do certain things.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, whether that permit—I do not know why this minister required a still further renewal of this regulation. Maybe it was because they had received an application from an oil company to enter a wildlife management area to drill and construct oil wells in the Pierson Wildlife Management Area.

It is interesting because the Pierson Wildlife Management Area was established about the same time that the Oak Hammock Marsh Wildlife Management Area was established back in the early 1970s, 1972 or '73. I have the correspondence that just prior to the minister bringing in this regulation, a letter from the Home Oil Company came to the Minister of Natural Resources' desk, or office—I should be fair, to his department—to his department asking permission for them to enter onto a well-established wildlife management area to explore and to drill oil wells.

Well, I note that in a relatively short period of time -(interjection)- I can give you the—here is the progression. Let us do this proper, just for the record. On December 15, 1987, a Mr. Scott A. Reed, land agent for the Home Oil Company writes a letter to one Paula Eyer—

An Honourable Member: Ah, I remember that name.

Mr. Enns: You remember that name. Her husband used to sit in this House—who is in my Lands branch, writes a letter to Madam Paula Eyer. Dear Madam: Home Oil Company Ltd. hereby requests that your office consent to conditions to construct and drill the above-captioned well-site. In this regard we ask that your office issue a surface lease covering the described land, Section EE 8-2-29W West. Your prompt attention to this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Now then, that was on December 15.

An Honourable Member: Was there a copy to the minister or not?

Mr. Enns: Now on—here is an internal copy of a memorandum from Mr. Bowles, a resource planner, Habitat Management to a Mr. Degner, to the Crown Lands branch that acknowledges that the land in question is situated within the Pierson Wildlife Management Area. The memo goes on to say, the Wildlife branch will permit Home Oil to enter, construct, and drill on the above site, providing an agent of the company contacts our wildlife resource person, Mr. Bidlake, who by the way is still there in the southwestern part of the province, now the

southwestern regional wildlife specialist in Brandon, and agrees to habitat disturbance limitations and mitigation for any undue habitat destruction.

* (1510)

Well, then, Mr. Acting Speaker, a little later, on January 5, '88, the Home Oil Company gets a letter from the department that says, your Crown land permit application has been approved for the purpose of oil well drilling and construction. Then it gives some following conditions.

Mr. Acting Speaker, just four days before that on January 1, 1988 this minister, the then Minister of Natural Resources, refurbishes the regulation that makes it very clear—

An Honourable Member: On New Year's Day?

Mr. Enns: Tell me again, is that New Year's Day, January 1?

An Honourable Member: January 1 is New Year's Day.

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, the 30th of January. Anyway, maybe because he just wanted to make it very clear or perhaps, although I listened, maybe because he got a great deal of opposition at that time, maybe the Manitoba Naturalists Society were threatening him with court action or something like that, he felt moved to bring in this regulation that again emphasizes the minister's right to authorize and to provide a permit for this kind of activity.

In any event, I think that I have tried to make the point that -(interjection)- Well, no, the issue is here. I am asking the Legislature so the future Minister of Natural Resources and so the intent of the legislation is clear, that that same wording essentially will be embodied into The Wildlife Act. That is the nature of the act, what in fact has been the practice, as I have demonstrated, by three previous ministers and by a previous administration, that that be embodied in the act. That makes it clearer and unequivocal, because I do not wish to unnecessarily cause other interest groups to expend their time and energy and money in court cases and court challenges.

I think it is a responsibility of government, at least I accept that responsibility, to make it very clear what the government's intentions are. That does not preclude anybody from raising their objections, anybody from raising court challenges to any undertaking of this government or any other government.

Mr. Acting Speaker, what I think is important, and my responsibility, is that the legislative intent and the Legislature be clear and not be ambivalent, not be ambiguous, not be lacking in clarity so that particularly nonprofit, well-intentioned organizations such as the Naturalists Society expend a great deal of time and effort and costs in court trying to make clear what the legislation says or what it does not say.

I am doing it very openly, very publicly, making it clear what the intent of this government is with this respect. I have also demonstrated what in fact the practice, the tradition has been by the former New Democratic Party Ministers of Natural Resources. It is that position that I am putting forward to honourable members of the Legislature to consider. I would ask them to give it their consideration. I think the bill is worthy of relatively speedy passage, and I would ask their co-operation in having this bill come before committee at the earliest time possible. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): I wonder if the minister would agree to a question.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow the honourable member for Dauphin to ask a question?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, I will not get into the paper trail and issues that the minister referred to regarding previous amendments to the act. I will certainly attempt to find all of that in my records to determine exactly the time line for that. The minister knows that amendments take many times months and even years to generate within the department, and the coincidence of two days is rather unlikely insofar as initiating or being the cause of an amendment that was brought in.

I would like to ask the minister a question regarding the sale of wild animal parts, or export. The minister is mentioning that in this act, Mr. Speaker, he is for the first time putting in a provision that would require a licence for that purpose, in other words, make it illegal if it was done without a licence.

I will recall, and the minister probably does, the program that was done on television, a major investigative report, and I believe one Mike Bessey was a key person in providing some information and some testimony on that issue.

I ask the minister whether in fact at that time there was no provision to penalize wide scale if there was—and it was deemed that it was not wide scale in Manitoba, it was in Ontario and other provinces—but there would not be any recourse of the province up to this point to deal with this issue? Is that what the minister is saying or is he simply saying that it is under federal acts, such as the Criminal Code, and perhaps export licences and so on that would have been violated perhaps by these people who are engaged in this practice as opposed to a provincial act? Is that what the minister is remedying here?

Mr. Enns: The paper trail of amendments by previous ministers that I was referring to were changes in regulations not amendments to the act. It is just a matter of clarity there. The real change is that I am taking those regulations and putting it into the act. That is the amendment to the act.

On the member's more serious question, the simple fact of the matter is the answer is no. Neither Canada nor the province had specific regulations and provisions that could effectively police and stop that. Since that point of time, Canada—in fact, this was a subject of some discussion at a Wildlife Ministers' conference that I attended nationally—has acted under their federal licensing capacity to prohibit the exporting out of Canada of some of the exotic parts that people trade in. Again, specifically, one sometimes assumes that there should be or ought to be regulations or a law against something but there simply is not. This really is the first introduction of giving the capacity under The Wildlife Act to make such provisions of control of licensing and, indeed, I do not hesitate to use the words "outright prohibition" of certain of these activities.

Mr. Plohman: Am I permitted one other question?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Dauphin have leave to ask the honourable Minister of Natural Resources another question? (Agreed) The honourable minister still has seven minutes remaining.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, the minister is saying, then, that no licences would, in fact, be granted under this section by the province. So, in other words, it would be prohibited, the sale of certain parts would be prohibited. Is that what the minister is saying, because that is what I gathered from his last comment, prohibition of this practice.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, it simply means that the trading, selling, buying of animal parts will become regulated and controlled by the department requiring the permitting or licensing. When you institute the capacity to control, that, in my estimation, also means you have the capacity to prohibit if it should become desirable.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) that debate on this bill now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* (1520)

Bill 43—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (2)

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for and charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move, seconded by my very learned colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) that Bill 43, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (2); (Loi No. 2 modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce for second reading Bill 43, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (2). These amendments provide for increases for those receiving long-term statutory benefits under the act. They are established according to the full amount of change in the consumer price index.

The people entitled to these particular increases include approximately 4,000 pensioners who have been permanently or physically disabled, as well as approximately 500 widows or widowers and dependent children of workers who have died in workplace accidents in Manitoba over the years.

Under the provisions of these amendments, pensioners who had an accident prior to January 1, 1988, will receive an increase to their pension of approximately 9.5 percent, while those whose accidents occurred after January 1, 1988, but before January 1, 1989 receive increases of approximately 5.4 percent. A number of other benefits under the act, such as the minimum pensions and allowances for dependent children and surviving spouses are also increased by the full 9.5 percent.

It is my hope that this particular legislation will be able to pass the House quickly and become effective for July 1 of 1991.

I would indicate to members of this Assembly that this particular amendment bill is usual in this Chamber approximately every two years to increase the statutory amounts of pensions for those pensioners that I have described. This particular piece of legislation, The Workers Compensation Act, in general was initially passed by the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in 1916, long before it became normal in practice to index benefits. Consequently, over the last two decades the Legislature has had to review benefit entitlements under this act on a biannual basis and update them by way of statute.

In the recommendations for legislative change coming from the steering committee on legislative change, one of their recommendations is to move towards an annual indexation of Workers Compensation benefits. I am pleased to inform the House that some time in the very near future I will be bringing forward that particular reform package to this House, which if passed by this Legislative Assembly will make this type of biannual amendment bill redundant and, of course, no longer necessary.

I would hope that this Assembly will give consideration to this bill in a speedy process and allow it to pass through in such time as to have those increases for WCB pensioners in place for July 1 of this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I move, seconded by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill No. 44—The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), that Bill 44, The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act; (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Régie des services publics), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present for the consideration of this House Bill 44, The

Public Utilities Board Amendment Act, which grants authority to natural gas utilities operating in Manitoba to discontinue service to delinquent commercial and residential customers.

Prior to 1987, Mr. Speaker, gas utilities in Manitoba had the ability to disconnect a customer's supply if that customer failed to meet obligations to pay the utility for services rendered. In April of 1987 the Manitoba Court of Appeal ruled that in the absence of specific statutory provisions, gas utilities could not disconnect service for nonpayment.

After the court decision in 1987 the arrears of Centra Gas, which had been identified as being \$700,000 in March 1986, grew to over \$19.5 million in March 1991. That is almost \$20 million. To date, these arrears represent approximately an additional \$29 per year on each customer's gas bill.

It has been suggested by members opposite that this legislation is to help our corporate friends. Mr. Speaker, I can tell the members of this Chamber that it was not our corporate friends who appeared before Public Utilities Board of Manitoba hearings and supported this legislative amendment. It was not our corporate friends who have called my office and consistently recommended to me that legislation of this nature be amended.

Mr. Speaker, it has been for Manitobans who work hard to meet their financial commitments that I have heard. These Manitobans do not feel it is right for them to carry the burden of debt created by customers who have not paid their bills.

As I have noted before in Question Period, this is not exclusively a residential customer issue. Of the 48,000 customers in arrears at the present time, some 6,000 are commercial customers.

This legislation is right and it is proper. With the introduction of this legislation, Manitoba natural gas consumers will no longer be asked to carry the financial burden of customers who have not paid their bills. We feel this legislation strikes a balance in providing fairness to consumers who dutifully pay their bills and providing protection for those who legitimately cannot afford to pay.

This legislation is not, and I wish to emphasize, not an unconditional right to disconnect service for nonpayment. Given Manitoba's climate, an unconditional right would be, to say the least, overly permissive.

So we have provided safeguards for customers who are genuinely unable to pay their bills. We

have required that gas utilities obtain the Public Utilities Board's approval prior to implementing a disconnect policy and procedure. The Public Utilities Board will have direct supervisory powers over the company's actions, including the power to negate a disconnection in process or to order the restoration of service if, in the view of the board, such restoration is in the public interest.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, in every case where there is doubt as to an individual's safety the gas service will be turned back on, and the Public Utilities Board, which will be kept apprised of the status of disconnected premises, has the authority to order the utility to reconnect. Furthermore, all disconnection policies or procedures must meet the conditions set out in the legislation, including that there will be no disconnection of residential properties from October 1 to May 14 of each year. All customers must receive proper notice before disconnection occurs. All customers will be advised of social agencies that may be able to provide them with assistance as they work out suitable payment arrangements with the gas utility.

Prior to the start of each heating season, the gas utilities must provide an extensive report to the board stating what actions have been taken with the customer or by the customer, and the board will take this information under consideration in determining whether or not to make an order to reconnect supply.

The steps to be taken prior to determining whether or not to reconnect the gas in October if the bill has not been paid by that time are tightly detailed and extensive and include provisions for the customer to be referred to appropriate social agencies, if required, for assistance, and, where necessary, as far as the public trustee through those social agency referrals, if such action is deemed to be appropriate.

* (1530)

Natural gas will not be turned off to tenants of apartments where the landlord has not paid the gas bill. The gas utility will notify the Landlord and Tenant Affairs, who will subsequently take in and take over rent collection. In fact, an actual disconnection will not occur. In our view, Mr. Speaker, the process envisaged in this legislation is paramount and exceeds anything done in other jurisdictions to protect the public interest.

I have today received from the Public Utilities Board of Manitoba a copy of a draft disconnect

policy and procedure. I have copies for the critics of the two opposition parties, if they wish them, which I would be pleased to share with them. The details outlined in there, I think, will address some of the concerns that have already been raised by the member of the official opposition as to one particular section regarding tenants and landlords.

The procedures in this section outline the reference to The Residential Tenancies Act, which was introduced and passed in January of this year. It is The Residential Tenancies Act that will permit the Rentalsman to step in and collect the rent from tenants in order to obtain the outstanding account from the gas bill.

Mr. Speaker, there were many people involved in the preparation of the draft for the policy. Consultations were held with a number of interest groups, including the City of Winnipeg, the City of Brandon, the Department of Family Services, the Income Security Division of that department, the Manitoba Society of Seniors, the Consumers' Association of Canada, the Landlord and Tenant Affairs, Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. and a vast number of other groups who responded in writing as to their concerns and offered valuable input into the preparation of this legislation and the subsequent policy prepared by the PUB. The board has attempted to ensure that the conditions of these groups have been incorporated in their final draft.

Mr. Speaker, we will have opportunity for debate on the details of this bill, and I look forward to them in the days ahead. I would urge all members of this House to allow early passage of this bill to provide sufficient time for the legislation to work while in the nonheating season. To do otherwise would only compound the problem and increase the financial burden currently being carried by the good, paying customer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 45—The Securities Amendment Act

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), that Bill 45, The Securities Amendment Act; (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières),

be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill has three purposes. Firstly, this bill amends The Securities Act by increasing the number of members appointed to the Manitoba Securities Commission from five to seven. Except for the full-time chairman, the commission members are all part time. Problems can arise in ensuring that a quorum is always available to hold a hearing, particularly in light of the trend toward more challenges of commission's authority and impartiality in securities matters.

Secondly, The Securities Act will be amended to remove one part of the exemption from registration for trading in securities that has been available to banks, trust companies and insurance companies. These financial institutions will hereafter be required to be registered in Manitoba for securities activities such as marketing their in-house mutual funds.

This amendment will place all persons and companies in the same position relative to trading in securities in Manitoba. This bill will bring our province in line with the other Canadian jurisdictions that have required these financial institutions to be registered.

The registration of the companies and their employees is an effective way to ensure that persons dealing with the public are meeting the proficiency standards established for trading in securities, including the completion of the educational requirements.

The national firms doing business in Manitoba recognize this firm is also in the broader interest of uniformity among provinces.

The third purpose of the bill, Mr. Speaker, is to amend two incorrect references that occurred when the act was re-enacted in 1988.

Any technical issues requiring further elaboration can be fully discussed in committee. I call upon the members opposite for their assistance in bringing this bill into force and for their comments during the upcoming debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), that Bill 45 be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Mental Health Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), Bill 5, The Mental Health Amendment Act; (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis). Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave. Agreed.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to enter into the debate on Bill 5, The Mental Health Amendment Act, a very important piece of legislation, introduced earlier this session by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). There are a number of comments to be made on this particular bill. The attention is certainly good, and as I read through the minister's speech it would seem to me that he is quite satisfied that this is a move in the right direction.

Having said that, there are members in this Legislature who have some concerns about the legislation. Indeed, these concerns have been expressed through various individuals outside of the Chamber who are concerned about mental health in the province of Manitoba.

I am pleased to see that there are some fundamental—there are some basic changes being made but there are also a series of miscellaneous amendments. There are 58 amendments in all. Many of them are housekeeping of course, but there are some which have more substance to them and have a bearing on the rights of patients in terms of involuntary admission to mental health facilities.

*(1540)

As I understand it, to put this into some historical context, the existing Mental Health Act which we have been working with was amended and received Royal Assent on July 17, 1987. There were some difficulties with certain provisions of that act around the rights of patients with regard to involuntary admission. These were challenged, as I understand, and indeed found to be unconstitutional.

At any rate, there has been a great deal of discussion in the mental health community. The minister has discussed this with various people. There have been various committees, and I understand there is more than one committee working on this suggesting various ways by which the legislation on mental health could be improved.

There were two committees specifically. Two committees were established, one dealing with the miscellaneous inadequacies of the 1987 act. This was referred to as the Minor Amendments Committee chaired by the Chief Provincial Psychiatrist, Dr. Dan Rodgers. This was a committee dealing with minor and technical amendments, but it did not change the intent or philosophy of the legislation, the minister advises us. What it did do was, through better legal wording, reinforce some of the provisions of the legislation.

These amendments from the Minor Amendments Committee were proclaimed on December 20, 1988. There has been discussion in this House about these amendments since that time. The debate, I believe, primarily dealt with the role of the Public Trustee in terms of the Public Trustee's ability to help people who suffer from mental disease or who are mentally ill and incapable of looking after themselves, particularly their financial and their personal affairs.

The second committee was set up in 1988, referred to as the Major Amendments Committee. It dealt with some of the other inadequacies, one of which was to do with external representation. It was assigned to recommend on some of the more significant changes that could be brought forward. Mr. Speaker, it did hear from a number of individuals who represented a fair cross section in the mental health community, and I would congratulate the government for consulting with many of organizations.

For instance, I understand the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties was one of the interest groups who became involved in the major amendments committee. There were others. The Manic Depression Society had some impact. There was representation from the Canadian Mental Health Association, Manitoba division and representation through Dr. Pat Whiteman of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine Department of Psychiatry. Concerns and views of various community hospitals were brought forward by Dr. Dane Hershberg, because some of these community hospitals do have the capacity to deal with people who are suffering from mental disorders. Then there was the Manitoba Schizophrenia Association represented, I understand, by Mr. Verne McComas. The involvement of the department was through Dr. Dan Rodgers, who is the Chief Provincial Psychiatrist.

So the committee, as I understand, received a number of representations from the various groups and individuals, and this legislation is supposed to represent some of these ideas and some of the concerns.

I guess the critical area has to do—certainly one of the most important areas has to do with the principle of patients rights, the rights of the individual who is suffering from mental illness, on the one hand, and the obligation, on the other hand, of society to ensure that those individuals, because of their mental disorders or mental illness, the society who has to take responsibility to care for them and ensure that they are treated.

It is a compromise solution that one must seek. Questions have to be raised with regard to the possibility of the personal physical well-being of the mental patient. We have to be concerned whether the mentally ill person may in fact endanger his or her own personal physical well-being. We have to ensure, of course, that we provide some protection for members of society at large but, nevertheless, we have to in the process place a lot of trust in individual professionals who have decisions to make in the system.

Mr. Speaker, what I understand then is, the amendments being proposed will try to provide the balance of enhancing the individual rights on the one hand under The Mental Health Act so that that individual has some opportunity to question why he is being given a certain treatment and why he is being retained in a particular institutional setting. Therefore, I appreciate what the minister is trying to do, enhancing the individual rights but, at the same time, ensuring that the interests of society at large and the interests of the individual, who may not be able to judge for himself or herself, are also protected.

As I believe people in our province would support, there is provision for more family involvement than under previous legislation, so that the family could be involved in providing consent or not providing consent in the treatment of a mentally ill family member. There are questions as to how this exactly will be able to be put into implementation, particularly when you consider that some relatives of the mentally ill person may not be available. There are other questions with regard to exactly which relative should be sought after, who is the nearest relative who is in a position to enter into

some kind of decision-making, to either give his or her consent or to deny that consent.

There are other pieces of the existing legislation where the patient is on a certificate of leave from the facility and where the attending physician may cancel the certificate if the patient has failed to report as was required. Oftentimes, the mentally ill person may not show up back at the institution on schedule, not because of a problem with his or her mental illness, but rather because of some extraneous situation, some situation that prevented him from getting back, say, missing a bus, missing transportation connections, being ill with some other kind of disease, maybe having the flu or something.

As I understand it, the bill gives the patient more ability to have some freedom here in that he or she would not be penalized because of not coming back within the scheduled time due to no fault of their own, virtually.

I see there is another part of the legislation where some attempt is being made to improve the appeal process where an individual, a mentally ill person, can appeal his or her detention to a review board. The remedy that is being proposed is to make this board more functional by allowing for a roster system whereby people can come and go from this particular board. Again, the process can be speeded up and virtually enhanced.

*(1550)

Generally speaking, Mr. Speaker, these are admirable amendments. These are admirable objectives. Nevertheless, I believe that there are flaws in this particular legislation, flaws that have been pointed out by the Canadian Mental Health Association. That association appreciates the fact that this bill is aimed at strengthening the rights of the mentally ill. At the same time, they are concerned that some patients may still be committed without the right of appeal. The legislation may give patients no way of challenging an involuntary committal in cases where the province's Public Trustee has been appointed to look after the patient's affairs. Under this legislation, as I understand it, the Public Trustee would be put in the position to make decisions about committal and treatment in cases where no family member was available to make decisions on the patient's behalf. Of course, that occurs in many instances, because we live in a very mobile society.

We live in a situation where some mentally ill are here in Manitoba hundreds, if not thousands, of

miles away from their family. They have come to Manitoba to work or for whatever reason moved into our province and simply do not have a family member present. There are other cases, I know, at the Brandon Mental Health Centre, where you have some psychogeriatric patients, people who are aged and who, indeed, may have outlived all of their close relatives. As such, they too are in a position where a family member is not available to make a decision on their behalf. So, I think, the Manitoba division of the Canadian Mental Health Association may have a point that the provincial Public Trustee may still have more power than he should.

The bottom line, I guess, is this legislation should be at the committee stage, should be presented so that members of CMHA, the Canadian Mental Health Association, would have an opportunity to bring forward their views. In fact, it would even be preferable, Mr. Speaker, if the CMHA would be able to provide their views even before it goes to the legislative committee. In fact, they are on public record as saying that they want more consultation before the bill goes to the legislative committee for clause-by-clause review.

This concern over the right of appeal in cases involving the Public Trustee is only one of several concerns that the CMHA has. They have other questions. For example, they have concerns about a provision allowing a patient to be detained for up to 72 hours before a psychiatrist confirms his commitment. This is another major concern that they have. The legislation, Mr. Speaker, does continue to ban doctors involved in the patient's treatment from considering a patient's appeal against a psychiatrist's decision. The association is concerned here because the association wants to ban doctors who work in the same institution. Of course, that may not be a problem, unfortunately, in some of our institutions such as the Brandon Mental Health Centre which has difficulty in obtaining psychiatrists.

I know the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) at one point said he was going to do great things and bring psychiatrists into the Brandon Mental Health Centre because that institution has been short for many a year. I do not think the situation has substantially improved whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. For whatever reason, we still do not have sufficient psychiatric talent and services available at BMHC.

At any rate, the Canadian Mental Health Association is concerned that a patient could be

detained and treated for up to 21 days before his appeal is heard. At the present time there is no time limit, but the new legislation would provide a limit, which is fine. I believe they are concerned that this time period is simply too long. Twenty-one days is too long to detain a patient for reasons of mental illness or would-be mental illness without an appeal.

At any rate, we believe that it would be in the public interest not to proceed quickly with the legislation, but to give various groups such as the Canadian Mental Health Association time for further consultation with the government. Certainly we would look forward then to the minister bringing specific amendments to this legislation. Mind you, he could withdraw the legislation and bring it back again in an amended form. Failing that, we would expect the minister to present amendments in the committee. Indeed, if that does not happen, there is a possibility that our Health critic, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), would be prepared to introduce these required amendments.

Mr. Speaker, regrettably, mental health problems are with us in a very serious degree. Unfortunately, mental illness is an illness that is not disappearing. It is an illness, in fact, that may be growing. If you look at some of the statistics available in the minister's own Annual Report of the Department of Health, you see where there does not seem to be any let-up, for instance, in the number of admissions to some of the mental health centres.

For example, I look at the Brandon Mental Health Centre, where the admissions went up quite sharply. In fact, the admissions in 1984 were shown to be 382 people. They have gone up steadily; '85-86, 379; and 1986-87, 486; '87-88, 523; and '88-89, which are the latest figures we have, up to 584. That is a substantial increase in the number of admissions at the Brandon Mental Health Centre. The same is true for the city of Selkirk, Mr. Speaker. The mental health institution in the town of Selkirk, you see the admissions going up in the same period every year. They seem to be increasing. In 1984, admissions were 145, and by 1988-89, the admissions were 272. Again, if you look at other statistics, it would seem that we have a growing number of people who seem to require the services of these institutions.

The one point that one might say, though, is that patients in the major centres such as Brandon and Selkirk who require care less than a year, we see that the average length of stay has been declining.

This is a good sign. In 1984, the average length of stay in Brandon Mental Health Centre was 70.8 days. This has come down, not regularly, not every year, but it has come down so that by 1988-89 the average length of stay was down to 57.0. Similarly, in Selkirk there has been a dramatic drop in the average length from 83.0 days in 1984 to 48.2 days in 1988-89. Of course, these figures do not tell the whole story. We are only talking about two mental health centres. The fact is that there are all kinds of activities going on in the community.

Community mental health indeed probably carries on the greatest amount of service. Community mental health is recording cases at year-end of 1988, '89 of 4,068. So in comparison with the mental health centres, perhaps they are dealing with more patients. On the other hand, I have to point out that the mental health centres at Brandon and Selkirk do deal with a lot of outpatients. In fact, the total outpatients in these two centres in '88, '89 were over 2,100. Indeed, if you take other contacts, total contacts, you are dealing with approximately 16,500 contacts. So there is a great deal of outpatient activity that is provided by the two centres.

The point is that there is still a great deal of mental illness with us. The question arises, Mr. Speaker, what can be done by way of more prevention? Maybe some members of the Legislature might not agree with this, but I would suggest that if we did more to alleviate unemployment in this province, we could help reduce the amount of mental illness.

* (1600)

There is no question about it that unemployment is a very sad experience, a very frightening experience for a lot of people. It leads to a lack of self-esteem, particularly if the unemployment is chronic. Unfortunately, we have too many people unemployed in this province. We have too many instances of people who have had good jobs, safe jobs presumably, steady jobs presumably, who have seen their companies close or their operations go out of business or even small-business people, small-business persons, having to close up shop and end up being unemployed.

This phenomenon of unemployment which I believe now is approximately at the 53,000 level—I believe for the month of April of this year, there are approximately 53,000 people who are unemployed. I dare say that many of those people are among the mentally ill in this province.

So one way to help prevent mental illness is to have a positive economic policy aimed at creating jobs rather than creating more unemployment as the present budget that we have from this government is wont to do.

Along with that, we have the problem of farm failures. We have the rural economic crisis. There have been many stories in the newspapers, magazines about farm families, after a lifetime of effort, having lost their farms, many of whom suffer from mental illness or suffered from mental illness even before they lose the farms, with the amount of stress that is involved. Again, progressive, positive farm policies at the federal and provincial level would go a long way towards alleviating the rural farm crisis and a long way therefore, Mr. Speaker, in alleviating mental illness that can be forthcoming from that type of economic disaster.

Another way we can alleviate mental illness in this province, Mr. Speaker, is through better social support systems. The various programs that we have in the social service field can be much enhanced, in our opinion. We do not believe that Manitobans are being cared for adequately in the Child and Family Services area. There are still so many difficulties. When you hear of cutbacks or freezes in funding, when you hear of various Child and Family Services agencies having to curtail their services, again, I think we are paving the way for more mental illness so that we find we have other problems, other costs to society, costs involved in looking after these people in an institution or, indeed, through a community psychiatric health program. Nevertheless, there is a cost. There are other costs, of course, that occur as well, costs which may result from the person having broken some law being required to go to jail. So there is a real cost to society as well.

I say that governments can do a lot to prevent mental illness by having a better set of economic policies both for industrial workers and also for farmers, and by having the proper social support services to assist children, to assist families, to assist adults, to ensure that we provide the necessary supports, so that they do not slip into a state where they are considered to be mentally ill.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot help remark, in discussing this legislation, about the Pine Ridge School problem. We had the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) very arbitrarily cut the funding at Brandon Mental Health Centre for the Pine Ridge School.

The minister is on record as saying that this was being done because it was the minister's opinion, the deputy minister's opinion that it was not necessary for these young people involved to be at BMHC, that they should be mainstreamed into the school system.

I raised a number of questions about these and, indeed, I raised them on behalf of the Brandon community. I raised them on behalf of the former chief psychiatrist, Dr. Parker, of the Brandon Mental Health Centre. I raised them on behalf of the regional committee on mental health, the advisory committee that the minister himself established. Incidentally, that committee which was meant to be an advisory committee was not even consulted about the closure of the Pine Ridge School—so much for regional advisory committees.

It makes you think that the minister is really engaged in an exercise of window-dressing, an exercise of PR, setting up committees for advice and yet when one—and the committee was not set up that long ago—critical decision is to be made in the Westman area, absolutely no consultation. Of course, that committee went on record as being opposed to the closure of the Pine Ridge School program. The Pine Ridge School, Mr. Speaker, although it offers instruction in various courses, in various grade levels, nevertheless is part of a treatment program at BMHC, and it has the support of a team of psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, social workers. They are there to provide a treatment program. Part of the treatment program is to have the young people involved, when they are able to, to take courses and receive instruction. To mainstream these people was just unthinkable. Yet, after I raised the question with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), he continued to maintain not whether or not this was a good idea, but he continued to maintain that his staff were going to go out there to see how they could implement this.

So it was not a matter of listening to reason, listening to all the affected parties. He was not ready to listen to the chairperson of the Brandon School Division who wrote a letter to the Minister of Health pointing out that it was totally unthinkable, totally unacceptable, for the Minister of Health to expect the Brandon School Division and, indeed, other school divisions in the Westman area, to take the youngsters who required the treatment available at BMHC in the so-called Pine Ridge School setting.

In fact, the school division does have a psychologist. It does have programs to deal with difficult cases, students who may have some emotional problems, some behavioural problems. They do cope, and they do a fairly good job. There is a category that is beyond the ability of school divisions, and this is where facilities such as the Pine Ridge School at the Brandon Mental Health Centre come into play.

I was predicting to my colleagues that the government would have to back off on this one because they had made the wrong decision. Of course, sure enough, the government is backing off. It has had to back off because there is no way you can "mainstream" the individuals involved. They are at the Pine Ridge school because the school system could not cope with them, the mainstream could not cope with them, and they were referred to BMHC for assistance. So, Mr. Speaker, the minister, who was adamant that this was going to happen, of course, has now been required to backtrack.

Mr. Speaker, I have touched on the purpose of this legislation, admirable as some of the objectives are, but I have also noted that the Canadian Mental Health Association, Manitoba Division, has some serious criticisms and that they should be addressed. I also pointed out that mental illness is with us and, from some statistics, you would think is growing. As I also indicated, there may be some very fundamental reasons for the growth of mental illness, such as rising unemployment, the farm crisis leading to mental illness and lack of social support systems.

I want to touch upon, for a moment, the whole question of community versus institutional care because there are those who say we should close down our Brandon Mental Health Centre and our Selkirk Mental Health Centre and indeed all mental institutions because total treatment should be provided for in the community.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that these institutions have played a very critical role over the years. While everyone can agree that there is a need for a community mental health approach, the fact is that there is an absolute necessity for institutional treatment as well. The fact is that both Selkirk and Brandon Mental Health Centres have provided an excellent service in the field of mental health for many years and, indeed, they have also participated in an outreach program.

* (1610)

The Brandon Mental Health Centre is very foremost, very front and centre in terms of community health programming and involves itself with various professionals in the community and provides a back-up to community resources. The problem I have with the community approach to mental health is not the approach itself, but the fact that after giving lip service to community mental health services governments do not follow through with providing adequate resources. This is true, I would suggest, in many countries, certainly throughout North America where, over the last decade or so, people have been deinstitutionalized, quite simply thrown to the wolves, so to speak, on the street.

I dare say, Mr. Speaker, they make up a great percentage of the homeless numbers of people whom we find in this country but, more particularly, in the United States where you see from time to time on television very sad cases of people who are homeless or who get into trouble with the law. Many of these people are mentally ill. They have been deinstitutionalized, but they have not been given the support, whether it be proper housing supports or whether they be the support of social workers or psychologists or whoever in the community who can work with them.

At any rate, Mr. Speaker, I am not against community mental health delivery, I simply say there is a need for both the institutional care, which this bill has reference to, because it makes reference to the retaining of people in institutions and circumstances surrounding that detention, as well as communities. So there is need for both the institutional and the community approach.

The province of Manitoba has an array of community residential resources. Talking about community service, we do have an array of resources that are available in the province. I do not know whether they are adequate or not. I think that we could go a long way to improving them but, at the present time, we have roughly 8,000 Manitobans with chronic psychiatric disabilities. Due to the lack of agreement on the definition of the term "chronic" you get this rough estimate. So we say it is a rough estimate of 8,000 because there is some difficulty with the experts as to what is deemed to be chronic.

From all the information we have, only a small portion of the people in need live in mental residential centres. I am talking not about the

Brandon or the Selkirk centres, but smaller residential centres. So while we have them, we still have the majority, the great majority of the 8,000 who live with families, who live with friends, who probably live in their own homes, their own apartments or live in a single room occupancy such as hotels, who may live in crisis shelters, and indeed there are others who live in government-funded residential resources, such as senior citizens housing.

I might add that I had occasion once to run into someone who was mentally ill living in his own home. It was some many years ago when I was campaigning in my constituency. I ran across this individual who said he wanted to speak to me. Well, it was a rather funny incident where he was telling me he needed an electronic wheelchair to get around and he could hardly walk. He indeed was at that point in the house, because he invited me in for a minute.

He was sort of hobbling around, and so I dutifully reported this to the proper provincial government office in the city of Brandon. Here is an older gentleman who had some need for an electronic wheelchair, would they at least look into it. I was not sure whether—I was not the professional, I was not the expert—at least they would look into it.

I might add that when I talked to him in the kitchen he had all the elements burning on the electric stove. I could not quite figure that out. He said he was playing a game with the gas company, so I began to wonder a bit. At any rate when I left I eventually did report this person's problem of wanting to have an electronic wheelchair to the provincial official and they took the information down.

They phoned me back the next day. They said when they sent the civil servant over to interview him, the elderly gentleman in question said, "There is nothing wrong with me." He jumped up on the table and jumped down and said, "I am quite okay" and was sort of obnoxious in protesting his great state. He also had those electric elements still on.

As it turned out, it was deemed that he was a very dangerous case. He could have burned the house down, and he ended up going back to the Brandon Mental Health Centre.

At any rate I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, again I have so much to say. I have all these documents and the story of improving mental health services over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I have been given the sign that it is time to wrap it up, so I would simply say again that we should not rush with this legislation. I think we should listen to the various organizations, including the Canadian Mental Health Association, and see whether we can still make this legislation even better than it is. It is a step in the right direction, but there are some flaws. There are some things that could be improved, and I think we should take a rational approach to amending this legislation even further. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis).

Bill 6—The Mines and Minerals and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld), Bill 6, The Mines and Minerals and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur les mines et les minéraux et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives, standing in the name of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand. Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave. Agreed.

* (1620)

Bill 8—The Vital Statistics Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), Bill 8, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil, standing in the name of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand. Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave. Agreed.

Also standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) who has 28 minutes remaining.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, when we left off discussion and debate on this bill, I was attempting to draw the links between the importance of this legislation and amendments to this legislation, The Vital Statistics Act and prevention of deaths. The single most important reason for having legislation of this kind and for

making some positive amendments to this legislation is precisely for identifying deaths that can be prevented.

There is no doubt in the minds of, I am sure, everyone in this House on the basis of the statistics that we have before us that just about every death can be prevented. Obviously, there are deaths by natural causes that cannot be prevented: death as a result of old age, death as a result of a genetic disease that is incurable, death as a result of ill health that could not have been foreseen and dealt with.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Acting Speaker, the number of deaths that could not have been prevented are miniscule in terms of the overall picture and in terms of the significant number of deaths that happen on an annual basis in Manitoba. Prevention is the goal of all of us and should be the primary goal of the government of the day. That kind of preventative action to prevent deaths takes commitment. It takes resources. It takes regulation. It takes legislation.

It is regrettable, Mr. Acting Speaker, that in many of these areas of preventable deaths, the government of the day is not taking serious steps to prevent deaths. When I left off my discussion, I was talking about the number of deaths that had come to us through the media and through reports from Statistics Canada of children who have been murdered at the hands of their parents, death as a result of family violence.

Those deaths are preventable, but it takes action on the part of government to ensure that the stresses on families today are alleviated, to ensure that economic security is guaranteed, so that families are not constantly worrying about how to juggle their responsibilities, juggle the pocketbook, juggle the bills, juggle their children's needs, constantly adding to stress and worry and anxiety which, as we all know, Mr. Acting Speaker, leads to family violence, and the ultimate act of family violence is death.

The figures are very clear, and they are shocking. As I reported at the last sitting on this debate, the fact is that 26 children in Manitoba in the last decade died as a result of being murdered by one of their parents. This kind of statistic should do nothing but make the government of the day stand up, take notice and take action. There are many more

examples that can be given, Mr. Acting Speaker, of preventable deaths.

I was at a symposium on health care, the same symposium that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) attended about a week ago, where the author of the book, *Second Opinion*, Michael Rachlis was here in Winnipeg and spoke about health care reform. He talked about how deaths can be prevented through health care reform. He made an analogy to a situation that actually happened in Toronto where there was a railway crossing and for a decade there was a death a year as a result of that crossing and accidents of cars, of course, colliding with trains. Mr. Acting Speaker, at the end of that decade it was finally determined that action would be taken. An overpass was built and miraculously the number of deaths dropped off.

Now I am not so naive as to suggest that all those deaths were accidents. Some may have been suicides. The fact that the statistics dropped off so sharply tells me, and I am sure sends a message to everyone, that when actions are taken, when resources are expended to provide safety for passengers, for vehicles, then deaths can be prevented.

The unfortunate thing is, Mr. Acting Speaker, that so many of those preventative measures cost money. They cost a lot of money, millions of dollars to build overpasses or underpasses. The question we all have to ask day in and day out is, what is the value of human life? What do we trade off, the costs of building an overpass versus 10 human lives.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think if we search deeply into our souls, we will conclude that despite the difficult economic times that we are in, it is still more important to work to ensure the lives and safety of our individual citizens, and to prioritize our government expenditures accordingly.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I was reminded of the significance of this Vital Statistics Act just listening last night to the news, and I am sure otherstook note of this as well. There were a couple of stories in the news last night and today pertaining to preventable deaths. One story had to do with a couple of car accidents where death, it appeared, was a result of seat belts not being worn or child seats not being used. That is why legislation was introduced a number of years ago, because the statistics were clear. The statistics demonstrated that use of seat belts saves lives.

So that one example alone points to the need for use of an act like this to firm the resolve of all members in this House to find prevention measures to ensure that a small child does not die because he or she was not placed in the child car seat.

Also in the news this morning was a report on the number of head injuries in Manitoba. Two thousand a year, that is the number we are dealing with, 2,000 Manitobans a year have accidents that result in very serious head injuries, and a significant number of those accidents actually result in death. Of course, this is a perfect example of where prevention can ensure that death does not occur. Head injuries are a result of the inadequacy of workplace regulations, carelessness on the job, children riding on bicycles without helmets, people riding in cars without seat belts, and the list goes on and on.

In every single case those deaths are preventable but they take leadership, legislation and commitment on the part of government. There is no evidence to date, Mr. Acting Speaker, that this government is taking very seriously those particular issues pertaining to head injuries.

Where is the public campaign and the teeth in a program to ensure that children do not ride bicycles without helmets? Why is our Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) not leading the charge and ensuring that a program is developed and required in all of our schools? Why is some arrangement not made to ensure that there is a depot for parents to purchase helmets at a reasonable cost?

Where is the teeth in our legislation to ensure deaths that happen in the workplace are avoided? Where are the officers? Why is this government cutting in the very area that we need added emphasis and added resources?

Mr. Acting Speaker, one of the parts of this bill, the Vital Statistics bill is very progressive and very important. It extends the time that the medical examiner has to issue the burial permit from 48 hours to 14 days. That is a very important step because it ensures that there is more time for precise examination, less chance of error.

* (1630)

If one thinks through that amendment, then I think one has to come to the conclusion that there is something very important missing from these amendments to The Vital Statistics Act. That is a requirement calling on our Chief Medical Examiner to report secondary causes of death. It is important to have a full documentation and statistical listing of

primary causes of death but many times accidents occur, traffic accidents, what have you and that death is listed in terms of it being an accident though that person also may have been dying from cancer, been a candidate for a heart attack or suffering from some other illness, an illness that could very well be related to our environment, to chemicals and problems in terms of our environment, or hazards in the workplace.

Without ensuring that the Chief Medical Examiner must report both primary and secondary causes of death, we will never have a clear picture of the factors that are causing sickness and disease and death in our society today.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think that it is incumbent upon this government to consider ways of ensuring that we have an accurate reporting of secondary causes of death. We need to know if there are chemicals in the workplace that have contributed to a disease that someone has acquired but never fully documented. We need to know precisely in this day and age how to address some very serious workplace health and safety issues.

We are reminded of that daily but, most particularly, we were reminded of that on April 28, the official day of mourning which drew our attention to the number of deaths in Canada and in Manitoba as a result of an injury on the job or a work-related illness. The statistics are very shocking. The Manitoba Workers Compensation Board shows a total of 51,029 deaths reported for 1989 and 51,379 for 1990. There were 34 fatalities reported to the board in 1990, 34 deaths as a result of injuries on the job or work-related illness.

Surely those statistics are enough to cause the government of the day to put in place a plan of action to address the serious death rate in our workplaces. Mr. Acting Speaker, we do not have any indication that those deaths are being treated seriously and that measures are being taken to prevent those deaths. Let us start at least with some requirement to ensure that secondary causes of death are reported, are listed, are documented.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we are in the throes these days of a very serious debate and discussion around our medicare system. I raise that in the context of this debate on amendments to The Vital Statistics Act because there is clear documentation between access to medical services and rate of child morbidity and mortality.

I want to spend a couple of minutes on that very point. It is tied directly to The Vital Statistics Act and it is an issue of utmost importance before us today, because we are once again in the midst of a debate on what medicare will look like in this country and for this province in the future.

There is a clear divergence of views. We on this side of the house believe very strongly in maintaining our medicare system with a set of national standards based on the principles of comprehensiveness, portability, accessibility, nonprofit administration, not the principles that are now being enunciated by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and Ministers of Finance and Premiers from all western provinces, principles that appear to be more related to the market, to the economic climate, to what the market will bear, to the debt positions of the governments of the day, to the bottom line, not out of fundamental and primary concern for the patient and for the people who either need health care now, or will need it in the future.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, the statistics collected, as a result of this Vital Statistics Act, give us the kind of information we need to determine what kind of health care system we want to see for the future. I want to give this House, and my colleagues in this House, some very useful information that appeared in a journal entitled, Manitoba Medicine, an article by Barbara Starfield, entitled "The Benefits of Medical Care" with particular reference to childhood morbidity and mortality.

Let me read some excerpts from that article because it is put very succinctly. I quote: Although it is almost self-evident that health care is very important, not everyone regards it in this way. In fact, some analyses suggests that medical care may not make much difference in long-term trends in mortality rates. For example, the predominant decline in death rates from major communicable diseases occurred before the invention of definitive therapy to treat or prevent the diseases. These findings have led many people to suggest that the impact of medical care is only marginal and that attention is better placed on overall social improvements than on the health system.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, that is an important point in terms of what the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has been suggesting to this House over a period of time, and that is we must focus on healthy public policy.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): What bill is this, Mr. Acting Speaker?

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: The Minister of Health is asking what bill this is. I think he will be interested to know that we are debating The Vital Statistics Act which has to do with an amendment specifically which has to do with the documentation of deaths in our society, most of which are preventable and most of which should be dealt with by the Minister of Health in his department and with his policies.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the quotation that I just read is important because if we look at the death statistics in Manitoba we know that the deaths of many, particularly in our northern communities, on reserves, in remote communities, are a result of inadequate water supply, poor quality of food, terrible housing conditions and no access to health care.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, it is important to always remember that healthy public policy indeed is necessary to prevent deaths so that we can reduce the number of statistics that our Vital Statistics Act is so important in terms of collecting.

Now let me get back to some of the categories that these amendments to this act will now specifically single out in terms of deaths and thereby helping us with preventative measures. This act adds to the number of categories for investigation. That is an important step in the right direction. It now specifies all children's deaths, deaths by poisoning, contagious diseases, employment, pregnancy and so on, and that is an important move, but it is only important insofar as this government takes those statistics seriously and acts on them.

Now, as I said, we are in the middle of a serious debate that will have impact on whether or not we are able to reduce the number of deaths in Manitoba or, conversely, prevent a significant increase in the number of deaths because of inadequate access to our health care system.

Let me quote again from this article by Barbara Starfield who writes: A review of data on many aspects of health suggests that access to medical care is an important contributor to declining mortality and morbidity, especially for the socially disadvantaged segments of the population. This review is based primarily on data from the United States, but the principles are equally applicable elsewhere.

* (1640)

Here is an important point: After the passage of the legislation that gave health insurance to the elderly, the incidence of poverty among the elderly dropped while it rose among children. When the 1982 data are adjusted to take into account the value of noncash transfers, such as governmental medicare payments on behalf of the elderly, the differences between children and the elderly are even more striking with the percent of children who are now poor being much greater than is the case among the elderly. That is, a system of universal payment for health services helped to lift most of the elderly out of the poverty.

Furthermore, the author of this article goes on to say: The benefits of access to medical care are also evident in the case of infant mortality.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I was just mentioning the positive aspect of the amendments to this legislation whereby all children's deaths must be reported, so we can work to prevent deaths among children. I want members in this House to hear the statistics in terms of how access to medicare, to a medical health system, actually reduces deaths among children.

I quote: Trends in neonatal mortality, that is deaths in the first month of life, have been rather steadily down reflecting the benefits of technological advances in the management of problems surrounding the birth process.

I wanted to mention that, Mr. Acting Speaker, because we cannot account for all reductions in mortality among children as a result of access to medicare. I am the first one to admit that there are many factors in terms of preventing deaths, and certainly technology is very important.

Even for neonatal mortality, which is so responsive to these technological advances, there are periods of more rapid declines superimposed on the gradual decline. This happened in the early 1960s when family planning services became widely available in society. Family planning is associated with a decrease in the proportion of unwanted children. Unwanted children are at high risk of a variety of threats to life, including low birth weight and infant death.

Between 1968 and 1972 an increasing number of states passed laws legalizing abortions, thus making it easier to reduce the proportion of children who are unwanted. At this time, the death rate in the first month of life took a nose dive downward and only began to level off in the 1980s when reductions

in access to various aspects of medical care including abortions occurred.

Mr. Acting Speaker, many more examples are provided of the links between access to medical care of a full range of services and reduced mortality rates.

I want to conclude this aspect of my remarks on The Vital Statistics Act by giving the final concluding concerns of this author Barbara Starfield, who says the biggest difference between the two countries, that is Canada and the United States, is in the financial access to care for all citizens.

In the United States insurance is mostly private. What is covered by insurance varies markedly from place to place and individual to individual, precisely the kind of system that this government is now considering adopting through its pursuit of this notion of transfer of tax points to the provinces so that the federal government is fully out of the picture, so that national standards cannot be enforced, and so that we end up with a patchwork of health care systems that are different from province to province and that do not ensure the same standards for all people in this country and do not guarantee portability.

This author also goes on to say that in Canada all citizens have—and I should maybe have used the word “had”—similar coverage from government. It is likely that the differences in health of children are in large measure a result in this difference in access to medical care. When a substantial proportion of the population lacks access to medical care because it cannot pay for it and there is no insurance to pay for it, there are higher rates of death and disability.

Even those who do have access to doctors make on average a greater number of visits. Canadians should not become too complacent, however. The low birth rates among infants in Canada are still higher than among other countries.

She concludes by saying, and I am taking up a considerable amount of time in this House—(interjection)—oh, thank you. The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) is finding this interesting, so I will continue. She goes on to say that Canadians should be wary of any attempts to reduce access to medical care, especially for populations in greatest need of it.

Perhaps the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) would be interested in this statement: Impending cutbacks in a variety of social and medical programs

suggest that Canada might well institute a system of monitoring, an early warning detection system to expose problems that are likely to occur consequent to reductions in access to services.

The author also states: We still have a long way to go in developing methods to assess the specific benefits of medical care. I certainly concur with that, Mr. Acting Speaker. We do not have all the answers on this side of the House. We only want to preserve a medical system, a health care system that provides equal access to all individuals on a universal and portable basis.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we are very worried that the discussions and deliberations of this government in terms of the future of medicare will reduce access to our citizens and as a result contribute to certainly not an effort to prevent further deaths, but in fact may result in an increased number of deaths that are actually preventable.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the example we have before us today in the House with respect to the user fee for northern patients is a prime example of the kind of very serious situation we could be facing. If citizens of a significant part of this province are denied access to medical services because of cost, because of financial difficulties, and thereby reduce the number of their visits to either hospitals in Winnipeg or hospitals in their region and avoid dealing with an illness at an early stage, thereby reducing the chance of catching and curing that problem, that illness, that disease before it leads inevitably to death. Mr. Acting Speaker, those possibilities are real. They are not fictitious. They are real, they are based on fact, and I urge all members to use The Vital Statistics Act, the benefit of the knowledge gained through this act to prevent deaths in our society today.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise to take part in this discussion respecting Bill 8 as before us in this Chamber today. Rarely do members have the opportunity of touching on matters as they affect life and death but, in a literal sense, we are having this opportunity in this debate to touch upon matters of life and matters of death as they relate to The Vital Statistics Amendment Act.

I am diverging in the initial portion of my speech from my prepared comment sheet that I have prepared diligently in order to take part in this discussion to comment about some of the very, very

valid and very important points raised by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) in the context of this discussion. I wish to deal with those matters because I believe that some of the very excellent points raised by the member for St. Johns bear repeating in this Chamber as they relate to this particular amendment of The Vital Statistics Act.

I am thinking specifically, Mr. Acting Speaker, about the comments of medicare and the universal application of medicare, the preventative nature of that system as it relates to the recording of information and data and how we can best judge ourselves.

I believe the member for St. Johns made some excellent points which the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is continuing to comment on as it relates to the medicare system as pioneered in this country by New Democratic governments and which is in somewhat of a very serious danger of perhaps collapsing under the weight of both federal Liberal governments, federal Conservative governments and provincial Conservative governments as they slowly chip away at that medicare system.

The points made by the minister and by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) are very applicable in the context of her discussion of The Vital Statistics Act and the information provided in that act, the relevance to determining how we are proceeding as a society to deal with all members of society in terms of their health, their life and their death literally.

I note with a good deal of attention the comments of the member for St. Johns as she relates to the article by, I believe, Madam or Ms. Starfield relating to the statistical data and its relationship to prevention in the context of our medical care system. I cannot help but be alarmed by the statistical data that is provided for us by the department of Vital Statistics as it relates to prevention.

* (1650)

In particular I am very pleased, as the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) has indicated, that this particular amendment requires for mandatory examination and, specifically, the section I am referring to is subsection (d) of 14(6) of The Vital Statistics Act, and its reference to—

Point of Order

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Speaker, I wish you would provide a caution to my honourable friend that in debate on second reading we debate the principles of a bill and we do not refer to specific sections. Trained legal minds would frown on my honourable friend's presentation which refers to specific clauses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): I would like to thank the honourable member. I would like to remind the honourable member that we do not refer to specific clauses within the—

* * *

Mr. Chomlak: I appreciate the comments, although I would have to suggest, Mr. Acting Speaker, that educated people would frown at the member's reference to grammar as it relates to minds frowning.

I will continue in the context of my discussion of this rather relevant and important act. My reference to the particular subsection was only in the context that the reporting of child in the context of this act is of a significant nature, and I am very pleased that we have had the opportunity to discuss it in this particular assembly.

Mr. Acting Speaker, clearly the act has been amended on several occasions and requires additional amendments largely, and to a certain part, because of the complexity and the diversity of our lives in a modern post-industrial society in the 20th Century. Clearly, the act no longer dealt with all of the situations affecting Manitobans and affecting Manitoba society and, I am certain, affecting society in general in our Canadian way of life in the latter part of the 20th Century—the complexity of life, the complexities and different kinds of debts that are being encountered.

Indeed, the advances of medical science and technology relating to those activities has, of course, necessitated an amendment and a look at this particular act and how we approach questions in matters of death, the recording of death, and the statistical basis in nature upon which this kind of information is gathered. Clearly, the act has gone through a very long period of evolution and development in terms of our approach to statistical information and data of this kind.

Quite clearly, originally most of the information was contained in local parishes, be they in Europe

or be they in North America today. Certainly, there was a tradition of recording this kind of information specifically in baptismal certificates and in references to death within the parishes of our nation and, indeed, our predecessors in terms of Europe and Asia and other places from which people emigrated to Canada.

The process, of course, in the 1880s was taken on by the government. Government assumed the responsibility of recording this kind of information, studying it, codifying it, classifying it, putting in a statistical basis which would allow us as citizens to have an understanding of these very important and fundamental issues in our society. I note that the kind of data that is provided by Vital Statistics is, indeed, very relevant and very important in terms of determining where we as a society proceed and where a government proceeds, be it in the area of health care, which was very eloquently referred to and very eloquently—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that we are dealing with the amendment to The Vital Statistics Act which happens to be on death certificates. -(interjection)-

Mr. Chomlak: Pardon me, I missed your comments, Mr. Acting Speaker, because of the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): I would like to remind the honourable member that we are dealing with the bill on The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, and it is dealing with death certificates.

Mr. Chomlak: I was turning to the question of deaths as provided by Vital Statistics obviously garnered from these very death certificates that we are indeed discussing in the context of this debate.

I note that in 1989, as the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) referred to, we dealt with the statistical nature of death by children specifically, a topic referred to by the member for St. Johns. We looked at matters of respiratory distress syndrome, immaturity, injury at birth. The other factors, as garnered by Vital Statistics, provide a very relevant and very useful purpose not only for members of the medical profession but for us as legislators in order to carry out our duties, which is why amendments to an act of this kind must be kept up to date, must be kept relevant, must be kept current, in order to allow us to do our activities and our job, which is why we, of course, welcome amendments to this particular act to allow us to have the kind of information and

the kind of statistical basis upon which we make our decisions in this Legislature.

Every day, Mr. Acting Speaker, even though at times the decisions may not appear to relate to matters of that kind, in most cases, if one were to trace them back to their very root cause, they do come back to questions of life and death in an ultimate sense. On that basis, I believe that the amendments as proposed are very useful and are a step forward in the development of our data base and in the development of legislation in this province.

I have had the opportunity to do some research into this particular matter as it relates to death certificates, specifically of Vital Statistics, and I heard some of the comments of the member for St. Johns dealing with fatalities of children and infants in particular and her reference to the fact that prevention must become a key. That illustrates a point of the importance of these matters in the context of this act, because if we did not have these statistics we would not know what kind of legislation, what kind of acts were necessary by members of this Chamber to deal with the complex matters affecting society.

How do we know, unless we have these statistics in front of us, where we should move in terms of preventative health care, where we should move in terms of the education system in order to prevent these kinds of occurrences from happening? Indeed, Mr. Acting Speaker, if we did not have these statistics before us, if the bill was not updated on a regular basis as it is being done before us today, if this was not done, we would not have opportunity to fully carry out our activities as legislators in this province and in this Chamber.

There was a time, as I indicated earlier, Mr. Acting Speaker, when the statistics of this kind were kept in the parishes around the province of Manitoba and that was where it was kept. One need only walk or wander through an old cemetery, such as St. Andrews on the Red, and have a look at the gravestones in order to get an inkling of what was the infant mortality rate at that time, what were the factors affecting the health of Manitobans and what activities would have to be reviewed by governments of the day in order to prevent these kinds of activities. At that time the record was contained upon the tombstones, row by row, along the St. Andrews on the Red, and in other parishes of that kind, and was recorded within those parishes.

Now, we have taken the activity upon us, although I dare mention, Mr. Acting Speaker, that these matters are still recorded in the parishes and, in fact, there is reference to that within the original act. I now note that we have taken on these activities. Indeed, we have expanded them in the context of this particular bill in order to take into consideration many different kinds of approaches and many different kinds of deaths that were not previously referred to in the original bill, which was last amended, I believe, several years ago. Indeed, it was last amended, I believe, in 1982, although I could be corrected on that. Since then we have progressed and, indeed, amendments go back in this bill to 1880.

* (1700)

So as we progress as a society, as we approach life differently and, obviously, death, it takes on a different meaning and is seen in a different context. As we do that, Mr. Acting Speaker, we, of course, are—it is necessitated that we have to amend bills of this kind in order to take into account the different nature of our society, the different approach to a society, be it at work or be it through our leisure and our regular activities.

So it is interesting, and it is very noteworthy, that this act does take into consideration many of these aspects and will continue to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. I am interrupting the proceedings of the House for private members' hour. When we next review this bill, the honourable member for Kildonan will have 25 minutes.

The hour being 5 p.m., it is now private members' hour.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 15—Labour Adjustment Strategy for Manitoba Workers

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Acting Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that

WHEREAS approximately 13,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since the Filmon government took power; and

WHEREAS at least 17 plants in Manitoba have closed since the signing of the Mulroney-Reagan Free Trade Agreement; and

WHEREAS this government has demonstrated its lack of commitment to retraining by reducing funding to Job Training For Tomorrow by 52 percent by cutting the Labour Market Policy and Skills Development Program by almost 27 percent and by slashing almost \$1 million from Department of Education programs for job creation and training; and

WHEREAS this government did not undertake an analysis of the potential impacts of free trade before lending its support for the deal nor has it studied the impacts since the agreement was concluded and therefore no action plan to provide assistance to businesses threatened by free trade or workers facing layoffs exists; and

WHEREAS no joint labour force strategy exists between the two levels of government; and

WHEREAS the draft report of the Skills Training Advisory Committee was a scathing indictment of the lack of action by this government and the Pawley administration in the area of job retraining.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) to consider undertaking an in-depth analysis of the effects of free trade on the labour force in Manitoba and co-ordinate a preventative approach by working with industries in jeopardy to reduce business closures and the resulting job losses; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly recommend that the Minister of Labour consider establishing a system to track industries in order to predict those that may face a shortage of qualified workers and use that information in planning for retraining programs.

Motion presented.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Acting Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today on this very important resolution which I have brought to the House for members' attention.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I solicit all members' approval and support of this resolution.

It is particularly important, as we slide into this Conservative recession in this country, that we recognize the needs of the labour force in this province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it was with some great disappointment that I read in the Estimates as they came forward in this budget that the Labour Adjustment branch of the Department of Labour was

receiving less than they received last year. To say that they are receiving less than last year is to say that they are receiving less than 10 cents per worker in the province of Manitoba in new funds. That, in the face of thousands and thousands of job losses, and thousands and thousands of people forced out of this province because there was no adjustment strategy. There was no ability to bridge people in a period of time that was required for them to find alternate work that paid them more than the minimum wage and gave them more than a minimum job.

New funds being less than 10 cents a worker, Mr. Acting Speaker, I calculate, based on the workforce in this province, to work out to somewhere around 2 cents per worker this time around.

Mr. Acting Speaker, can you imagine a graver slap in the face to those who are actually suffering in the throes of this recession, in no small part exacerbated by a free trade arrangement which has put on the chopping block the industrial and manufacturing sectors, not just of this province but of the entire nation?

Mr. Acting Speaker, I used at the outset the word, conservative. That is not a conclusion which is hard to draw when you look at the government in action both at the federal and provincial level in this province in the last number of years and in the free trade era since the 1988 election.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I have spoken before and I want to bring to members' attention again in the short time that I have the report of their own experts. The de Grandpre Report was a report by council, the advisory council on adjustment, appointed by the

Conservative government. These are their choices.

Mr. de Grandpre was the chairperson; Jalyrn Bennett, James McCambly, Norman Wagner and Gordon Cummings were the members, and they wrote a book. I brought it with me. It is quite a large book. It is called *Adjusting to Win*. Now the key word there is "adjusting." Win? Win is possible. That is what it says. That was the conclusion.

I may disagree with that conclusion, but I am just talking about the report now. It does say, win; it does say you can win, but first and foremost it says, Canadians must adjust. It talks about that specifically in respect of the labour market in this country. I want to quote not at length but some quotes for the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) as he

considers the slap in the face he has just given to all Manitoba workers in his two cents per worker increase in funds to the Labour Adjustment branch.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this quote says: The challenges that lie ahead in the next 10 years are as great as any faced by previous generations, and these challenges are urgent.

It then goes on to say: If workers are to adapt to the new environment they must share that training culture. The council wishes to repeat that action by business must be immediate. The urgency relates in part to the possible downside effects of the Free Trade Agreement. The magnitude of these effects will depend directly on the extent to which Canadians benefit from the upside.

This council appointed in the immediate aftermath of the Free Trade Agreement knew full well of the potential downside of the Free Trade Agreement. They talked of the magnitude of the downside. They talked of the urgency to react immediately in a Free Trade environment. We are witnessing the downside contemplated by the government's own experts because there has been an inability and an unwillingness to adjust. Government must lead.

Let me just quote what the de Grandpre Report said about the need for the government to lead. It said: The government should facilitate co-operation between business and labour and help the private sector undertake its responsibilities effectively. Canada must urgently meet the challenges presented by this situation if—and the word is "if"—it is to adjust to win. This report by no means indicated that winning was an absolute, that winning was going to be necessarily a result of the Free Trade Agreement. It used the word "if." It was contingent upon the ability of our economy to adjust. Governments must lead on that front.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we know from bitter experience in this province the downside of free trade that was contemplated by the de Grandpre Report. We know first-hand of the need to bring real help to those in need of bridging between jobs. We know that the average Canadian worker will now go through four or five different jobs in a lifetime.

The days of doing the same thing throughout a whole career are gone, and that is probably good, because people should probably have the opportunity if they wish to retrain and to get into a new field, but the fact is that we have to be there to help them if we want to keep them in this province.

One of the ways to hold down the unemployment statistics is to make sure that people leave the province, that when they lose a job they are not here to become an unemployment statistic. One has to assume that this government is willing to turn a blind eye to those who cannot find alternative work at the same rate of pay, and they do leave the province, then they are not on the unemployment rolls; they are not a statistic for us to bear, but the fact is they have left this province. They left the province with their families, their children who populate our schools. They have left this province with all of the accoutrements that come with a thriving province that can hold its population and increase its population.

We are on the opposite end of the stick, we are increasing our descent in this country into oblivion, Mr. Acting Speaker. The fact is we are and have been eclipsed in terms of our role, even in this nation, as a province. Losing our young people, losing our trained workers at the alarming rate that we have been, will only speed up that process.

*(1710)

I do not call for this government to spend massive amounts of money. That is not what is being called for. What is being called for is for this government to take an interest in keeping people in this province who want to stay. That is what is being called for, and that is not there. We see this government consistently turn a blind eye to the needs of workers in dire straits. Those people inevitably do end up on the unemployment rolls, and they find no comfort from this government.

I learned in the Estimates process last year, when we were going through the Labour Adjustment branch, that not only are they massively underfunded for the task that their title would imply they have, they are not even studying free trade. Is there any more significant economic alteration that our country has gone through in its history, Mr. Acting Speaker? Our Labour Adjustment branch, our Research and Planning branch of the Department of Labour is not even looking at free trade, not even looking at the need to adjust to the new reality of free trade.

I want to quote from the draft report of the Skills Training Advisory Committee, which is mentioned in this resolution. That report concludes that since the beginning of the decade, the early 1980s, long-term unemployment, unemployment of six months or more, in Manitoba has increased by 125 percent.

That is why the Pawley administration is mentioned in this as well. No one is clean on this in the last decade. The fact is a 125 percent increase in those unemployed for six months or more since 1980. In addition, there has been an overall increase of 32 percent in unemployment and municipal welfare payments. In an era of declining labour supply, it is truly ironic that such conditions exist.

We hear often of businesses that have training needs, employment needs, and they cannot find the people to do the jobs. Yet, we know of other people who have certain skills and are unemployed and unemployable and end up leaving the province or remaining on the unemployment list indefinitely.

Surely there is a need for this government to start co-ordinating some kind of skills training advisory work. We have the Skills Training Advisory Committee report, which says: Far from doing something positive, nothing that has happened has given any significant ray of hope to those facing redundancy in the workplace, unemployment in the workplace.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that committee called for the Filmon government to narrow the gap between labour supply and demand by expanding current training efforts and improving basic education, labour market planning and training quality.

Well, let us take labour market planning. There is nothing being done, we know that. I know that from last year. We went through the Department of Labour. Shamelessly the minister, not the present minister, the former minister, defended an administration which did not commit one staffperson, not one iota of energy to actually predicting, attempting to predict, attempting to analyze the effects of free trade on Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the committee made six recommendations for action. -(interjection)- Well, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery), a former cabinet minister himself, does indicate that other departments are doing it. If he is relying on his colleague the Minister for Education (Mr. Derkach), he is going to be sorely disappointed, as we know he has in the past about the Minister of Education. This will be another example, I am afraid, of the Minister of Education letting down the member for Portage la Prairie, because he is doing nothing.

There is nothing going on in this province which can give anyone any help that they will be able to bridge the gaps in their employment history as they move their way through the economy and stay in

Manitoba. The end result is that they will not, and they do not, stay in Manitoba. Mr. Acting Speaker, one has to wonder whether that is not the real agenda, that is that you get people off the unemployment lines when you get them out of the province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the federal government has recently made some efforts in the area of provision for older workers, and I was pleased to see that the provincial government participated in that under the former Minister of Labour—the provision for older workers—but that does not get people back into the economy. That deals with workers over a certain age, I believe it is 55, and it gives him the ability to in effect go through early retirement.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we should be cognizant of our labour force, which is a good labour force, which is respected around the world, but the fact is this government is turning a blind eye, not just to the reality of the international marketplace, but turning a blind eye to their own experts. I solicit and I ask all members to support this resolution, because it is high time we did something for the workers of this province and this nation.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Acting Speaker, I wish to speak on this rather interesting resolution. When I first read the title “Labour Adjustment Strategy for Manitoba Workers,” and I saw it moved by the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), I was hoping for some change on the part of the Liberal Party. I was hoping for some conversion, some miraculous conversion, to some level of sanity in terms of matters related to workers in this province, because the record of the Liberal Party in the last number of years on issues affecting Manitoba workers has not been a particularly good one.

I need not remind many members of this House about the debate on final offer selection, Mr. Acting Speaker, in which the Liberal Party at first aligned itself with the Conservative Party on final offer selection, then thought it would move this brilliant amendment through a brilliant strategy, and tactics, would then somehow box in the NDP and the Conservatives and found itself holding the can about three in the morning as the session wound up, found with no thanks to the efforts of the Liberal Party, that it was the NDP that saved final offer selection for Manitoba workers. We saw on that issue where they stood on issues affecting working people.

I do believe that the member who has moved this resolution was a key—in fact, I know he was a key player during that whole episode. He directed the strategy, and I will never forget the looks on the faces of the Liberals as they watched superior strategy and tactics. Because of principle, Mr. Acting Speaker, the NDP with only 12 members salvaged final offer selection for a longer period for Manitoba workers, no thanks to the Liberal Party.

I said I was looking for conversion, because this is one area where the Liberal Party, once again, has been hand in hand with the Conservative Party in matters dealing with final closures. This talks of labour adjustment strategy for Manitoba workers. Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I was amazed when I read in this particular resolution when they talked about there being no action plan to provide assistance to businesses threatened by free trade or workers facing layoffs—no action plan.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Liberals have an interesting action plan of their own. We have seen by their statements on bills introduced in this Legislature related to plant closures where they stand. I point to bills that I have introduced in this Legislature. I have introduced bills in 1988, in 1989 as well, 1990 was on the Order Paper. I will be introducing a bill again in this session which calls for improved protection for workers affected by layoffs and plant closures, increased notice and a number of other provisions that would give job search leave, in particular, that would improve the threshold limits and reduce it so that people affected by plant closures of smaller numbers would be protected.

* (1720)

Mr. Acting Speaker, what happened when I introduced that bill initially? The minister at the time initially was the member for Portage, a former member of this House, Gerrie Hammond, the Minister of Labour from the Conservative side. One would think that on matters affecting working people, the Conservatives would indeed have difficulties with legislation proposed by the New Democratic Party. That is understandable. They have their philosophy and ideology, and we all know what it stands for.

Was it the Conservatives that came out and said, no, this bill is too Draconian on business? Was it the Conservative party that said, no, we will not support this legislation? This was a time when we were in a minority position where any two parties

could have seen such a bill passed in the Legislature.

Mr. Acting Speaker, was it the Conservatives who led the charge? No, it was the Liberal Party led by the Leader of the Liberal Party, the then Leader of the Opposition who came out even before the bill had received any discussion in the House and said, this would be too Draconian on business. Now, today, I read a resolution being introduced by the Liberal Party that talks about action, an action plan for workers facing layoffs. When we proposed an action plan in this House, by legislation, they said no. They have no credibility standing here today with crocodile tears talking about this government, this Conservative government, having no action plan. Yes, they have no action plan, they are Conservatives. The Liberals have no action plan either when they could have affected the difference. They are in the same bed with the Conservatives on this issue, so let them not protest too much.

Well, that is what is sad about this particular resolution. That is what is sad, because if you look at the proposals that I had the privilege to bring in on behalf of our caucus—I am pleased that if the Conservatives, through their ideology, have rejected some of the more significant ones, they have at least followed through on a proposal that was initially tabled in the final budget of the New Democratic Party government. That is in terms of a worker investment fund that is currently being developed, which can have a role in terms of potentially salvaging plants affected potentially by closure. That was one of the components of our strategy, our action plan as outlined when we were in government and when we were in opposition—consistent. I am pleased with that.

I have not seen, however, any shift in other areas, and that is unfortunate, because for that plan to work, Mr. Acting Speaker, you need the increased notice. You need more people to be protected. You need to have the whole system developed so that people have a real honest opportunity to be able to save the plant. I look at the Paulin situation in Winnipeg, a classic case, and you look at the employees, they wanted to buy the plant. They could have received the funding for it, but the company refused to do so. One of the aspects of the action plan we had proposed was to give them the right of first refusal. That was part of the legislative package we had introduced and we will introduce on a subsequent basis.

At least, I will give the Conservatives credit on one score, and that is in bringing in something that we had already proposed and initiated in terms of our budget. You know, that is where the Liberals are particularly I think at fault in bringing forward this resolution. This may look great—

An Honourable Member: They will mail it out to them.

Mr. Ashton: They will mail it out. The title sounds great, Mr. Acting Speaker, and indeed if they are criticizing the Conservative government's record on the economy and on layoffs, well, certainly that is not very difficult to do. They are talking about doing an in-depth analysis of the effects of free trade on the labour force.

Well, I agree, this government should be doing an impact study, but that is not what the workers being laid off want. They do not want an impact study. They want an action plan. They want reality. They want some real changes that are going to improve the rights of laid-off workers.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

When they talk about—here, I love this part of the resolution. It talks about the Assembly recommending the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) consider establishing a system to track industries in order to protect those that may face a shortage of qualified workers and use that information in planning for retraining programs.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, they are chasing after the horse after the barn door has been closed, has been closed behind. They are not living in the reality of the current situation in the 1990s. I mean, that is what we said to the Liberals. That is what we said to this government in 1988 when we saw the Free Trade Agreement coming in. We said it would dislocate workers. It would lead to layoffs. It would lead to plant closures, and indeed it has. We said, and I remember specifically in this Legislature when we spoke in favour of the bill we had introduced on behalf of laid-off workers, we said that there would be an impact because of the worsening situation in the economy, because of high interest rates. Indeed, it happened. We did not need a system to track. We knew the reality, and it took the Conservatives—in fact, they still have not realized what is going on out there.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) keeps trying to put a glossy picture on an economy that is 10th out of 10, and now the Liberals say they want

to track the system, Madam Deputy Speaker. They want to track what is going on. They want to monitor it. They want to study. It is fine for them to criticize, but where were they when they had an opportunity to stand up for workers who were affected by plant closures and layoffs? They were there, side by side with the Conservative Party saying that it was too Draconian on business. They were not with the working people of Manitoba. They had their chance. I believe one of the factors in 1990 with the results in the election, and particularly for the Liberals, was the fact that they did not listen in 1988. They did not listen in 1989 and 1990. If people wanted real Conservatives, they voted for them. Boy, did they get them. We have seen that in the budget, Rotary Pines -(interjection)- Well, we will not discuss that at this particular point. They got, what I suppose, was to be expected.

On the other hand, they had the choice of a party that all throughout had stood for working people and raised those issues, not just in this Legislature but in the election, with our Leader at each debate speaking up for the working people, speaking out on such issues as plant closures. They had the choice, and then they had the Liberals. Where were the Liberals on these issues? Where were the Liberals, Madam Deputy Speaker? Well, they had final offer selection to decide on. They had plant closure to decide on. They had the words and the inactions, as well as the actions, of the Liberals to decide on. What was the decision?

In many constituencies the decision was clear. The people of this province elected, in many constituencies, either the real Conservatives, not the liberal Conservative Party we had seen in this Legislature or the New Democratic party that was fighting for working people.

They rejected the Liberals, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I would say, if they were to read this now, they would only read it with disdain because the Liberal Party has lost all credibility on issues affecting working people by what they have done, by what they did when they had the chance to influence. When we could have passed legislation, the two parties divided. Where were the Liberals? Where were they when they had a chance to make a stand? Where was the action plan? Where was the action on final offer selection? Where was the action on plant closures and layoffs, Madam Deputy Speaker?

There was no action. They attempted to outbid the Conservatives at the Chamber of Commerce and what happened, Madam Deputy Speaker? They were rejected by both sides on this whole question. That is why I have such difficulty on this resolution. Indeed, we will be debating it. Indeed, if necessary, we will move amendments that will force the Liberals, once again, to take a stand. Let them not hide behind these vague words, fine-sounding words, when the reality of where they have stood in the Legislature speaks volumes.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Thompson has certainly in his remarks pointed out many of the inadequacies of the comments of the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) and I am sure all members on this side quite enjoyed his comments. I, too, would like to just add an observation or a memory to the record.

* (1730)

One of the reasons I am on this side of the House today and a member of the Conservative Party—and I remember how the Liberal party dealt in fairness with important issues.

I remember growing up near the town of Selkirk, in which the fish processing industry had once been a major, major economic part of that particular community. I remember in the late '60s, early '70s, when the federal government of the day decided to consolidate that industry into the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation and to build a large, new processing plant, and did they choose to locate that plant in the community of Selkirk? No, they did not. The Liberal government of the day built that processing plant, Madam Deputy Speaker, in Transcona. One should remember that Transcona in those days was represented in Parliament by one Joseph Guay, a Liberal member.

There we saw the way that they handled the relocation and industry, tore it out of the town of Selkirk, destroyed Selkirk as a centre of fish processing and moved it to Transcona at greater cost to the fishermen who were serviced by the water routes of Lake Winnipeg and Red River to Selkirk. I remember that kind of injustice that they imposed on Manitobans who did not support them in federal elections, and the community in which I grew up was certainly a victim of that. The Liberal record is certainly clear on that count.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I enjoyed very much the comments of the member for St. James (Mr.

Edwards), because he raised an overall issue that all members of this Assembly should not forget, and that is, the key to keeping people in this province is to have a province in which they want to stay, in which there are opportunities, in which they are not taxed to death, in which they are not bridled with a host of problems that have plagued our province over the last decade because of governments, particularly the government of Howard Pawley, who did so little to ensure that this province would be on a sound financial footing. Very regrettably for this nation, we see that very large province of Ontario moving very quickly to becoming not the industrial heart of Canada, but indeed the rust bucket of Canada, as it follows that same path of Mr. Pawley.

When I listened to the comments of the member for St. James about strategies to deal with laid-off workers, it occurred to me that the member for St. James really has put very little thought into what is going on. When I read his amendment and the work that he expects of the Department of Labour, it showed first of all a lack of insight into the operations of the Department of Labour.

Labour Adjustment Strategies, dealing with training and those issues, have been a part of the operations of the Department of Labour, but certainly have been a major part of the operations of the Department of Education in terms of identifying industries which are in trouble and in need of assistance to get on a firm footing. That has been in the purview of the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Really our three departments have and continue to work very closely on developing the kind of action that we want to take to provide the kind of support that Manitobans are expecting and want to see of government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Department of Labour our Labour Adjustment unit provides, I think, excellent service. It is a small unit. It certainly does not have vast amounts of funding, but it is not money in those cases which is the operative part of assisting laid-off workers. It is having good staff who get in early with a situation where you have a layoff or an impending layoff, working with the employees and their representatives, working with the employers in those situations, having the right mix of people, having the right people to convene that kind of labour adjustment committee and get that committee working and functioning. It is not the dollars—you can pour lots of money on it. The member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) made reference

in the last Legislature to the Liberal solution, driving the Brink's truck up and pouring money on problems, shovelling money on problems. That is what I gather the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) is suggesting, that we do the same thing.

What is critical, absolutely critical, is the people that we have working in those labour adjustment situations, those real situations where you are not dealing with statistics. You are dealing with people who are laid off or about to be and are trying to assess their possibilities and trying to be steered on courses of action, either for retraining or education, furthering their education, or to other job prospects, to have very strong, hardworking, dedicated individuals.

I am pleased to say that in my brief experience as Minister of Labour, in working with the labour adjustment unit, that the people in there, although a small unit, give 150 percent service all of the time to cases and situations where they are called in.

I am also pleased to say that under our particular legislation, the creation of labour adjustment committees—which have proven time and time again to have a very high success rate in getting people on track again in their working lives, either in education or to other job opportunities—that our labour adjustment legislation does not make it mandatory. The minister does have the power to appoint, but in very rare circumstances. I have never had to exercise that right or obligation to create a labour adjustment committee. We have had tremendous success in getting these things together. Most important of all, as I have said, we have had tremendous success through that process of getting people on track.

I want to deal a little bit for a moment with that track, what options are available to people when they are laid off, and how that ties into government strategy. Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) said there is no action plan, there is no plan. Well, there is a plan, and it is a plan involving a number of departments, a number of strategies and co-ordinating that.

I can tell you, as the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has pointed out, the Workers Investment Fund, which we are in the process of establishing now again with consultations with the Manitoba Federation of Labour and others, is a key component of that strategy because as in the case of a Paulin's, where we had a viable business in Manitoba that was closed because of a larger

corporate strategy or decision-making process—it was a perfect target for this kind of fund—where the employees with their severance packages, et cetera, that were available to them could have invested that inequity and, with some assistance from a Workers Investment Fund, could have put the deal together that would have allowed that operation, a viable operation, to continue in this province and continue to produce the products that many of us buy, products in a profitable basis.

So again, very important, the Rural Development Bond Program that was announced in the throne speech, again another component, another investment vehicle, particularly in our smaller communities, to raise those kinds of funds, to start new opportunities, take advantage of new opportunities to create new jobs—very, very important.

Workforce 2000, in training, is another important area. I share this with members of the House since I became Minister of Labour with responsibility for Apprenticeship and Training, but when I sat down over the last number of months with industry groups, with labour groups and we talked, sometimes formally, sometimes informally, about apprenticeship and training and the kind of direction that we should be taking there—

An Honourable Member: It was a mess when we took over, I will tell you. Archaic, obsolete.

Mr. Praznlk:—what I found is a branch, as my colleague the former Minister of Labour points out, which was really in chaos, really had lost to a large degree its sense of mandate and where it should have been going. Not putting together courses that were relevant, not providing the kind of opportunities, providing courses where the updated curriculum was so out of date that our graduates were in need of retraining when they hit their first job.

Madam Deputy Speaker, an absolute mess. When you met with the unions that were representing people in those trades, they were saying the same thing. We had a major problem in curriculum. We had 43 or 46 trades advisory committees that had not met, some of them, for years. These were the committees that were charged with establishing curriculum and updating curriculum. They have not met for large periods of time.

* (1740)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not saying apprenticeship and training is perfect today, but we have certainly come a fair distance and we still a long way to go. I think one of the key principles that the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) and I are working towards is an educational system in this province that is not a dead end system; that allows people throughout their whole life to get credit, meaningful credit, for the study they have accomplished to date; that allows them to switch streams that if a person takes a certain type of training in high school—I should tell you currently if you take a trades program in high school, you do not get credit for it when you go to apply for an apprenticeship program. You can study a trade in a secondary school and get zero credit for that when you go to take that trade in a formal apprenticeship program. That is wrong. One of the reasons that is wrong is because there has not been co-ordination between the Department of Education and Apprenticeship and Training in ensuring our curriculums are the same.

An Honourable Member: It borders on being criminal.

Mr. Praznlk: It is criminal. It is criminal that we were putting people in our schools into those programs. I graduated out of the Lord Selkirk School in Selkirk, where they have extensive trades programs. The students I graduated with took those courses thinking they could come out and be on their way to learning a trade and they could not. What was worse was that they were often discouraged from taking their 300 Math because they were in the trades program. That was wrong.

Our two departments are now talking and trying to address that. We have a lot of work to do there. If a person goes into the apprenticeship program and gains an apprenticeship and after a period of time decides that they want to upgrade and take more of the technology, they should be able to do that through our community college system and get credit for what they already know. If some day they are in a field that they decide that they want to become an engineer and take the appropriate engineering, they should have credit I believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, for what they have already done in their life and the training they have.

Currently, we have a public education system, we have an apprenticeship and training branch, we have a community college system, we have a university system where we do not have those

streams of education easily overlapping. Once you get into a stream, to leave it and move to another one that has a better chance of employment or better employment opportunities, better income opportunities, better challenges for our labour force, you find you are dead-ended because you have to start again, you have to go back to the beginning and you get no credit for what you already know.

That simple amalgamation, what appears to be simple amalgamation, of our streams to allow for that cross-over, to allow for education for life and people upgrading their skills is absolutely critical. It is going to take a lot of work. We have a long way to go. We are just starting on that path, but very little if any work was done by the previous government.

I do not think the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) is at all aware of the real issues that are there. He uses rhetoric, he says we need a strategy. He does not know the groundwork that is going on, and I do not think he has bothered to get out there and do the in-depth kind of discussions with the real players, the real people who are affected by this, that is necessary and that is now being done by myself, by the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology (Mr. Stefanson).

Madam Deputy Speaker, the resolution that the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) puts forward talks about the need for adjustment, for training, for a strategy that is already underway. I think in the interest of fairness to this House and fairness to the debate it only appropriate that his resolution be amended to more accurately reflect the fact and carry forward with the intent of having that kind of strategy that is so important for our work force in Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to move, seconded by my colleague, the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard),

THAT the resolution be amended by striking all the words following the first WHEREAS and replacing them with the following:

Manitoba Labour, through its Labour Adjustment Unit, assists companies, unions and employees with re-employment and retraining of workers affected by labour market adjustment and structural change; and

WHEREAS Industry, Trade and Tourism provides ongoing assistance to industry to expand job opportunities through trade and business

development and to assist firms experiencing difficulties; and

WHEREAS Manitoba Education and Training currently has a system in place to monitor the labour force and forecast the demand for qualified workers in industry; and

WHEREAS Education and Training, in conjunction with Employment and Immigration Canada, prepares forecasts on the supply and demand of skilled workers; and

WHEREAS Workforce 2000, a major new initiative of the Manitoba government, is designed to promote human resource planning and training in the private sector through government-business-education partnerships.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba congratulate the government of Manitoba for its foresight in dealing with labour market demands; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly do congratulate this government for establishing the Workforce 2000 program, which will promote human resource planning and training in the private sector through government-business-education partnerships.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order. The amendment has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), seconded by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), that the resolution be amended by striking all the words falling -(interjection)-

Point of Order

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) will have an opportunity to respond, I am sure—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Edward Connery (Portage la Prairie): Madam Deputy Speaker, we did not agree to dispense with the reading.

* * *

Madam Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), seconded by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard),

THAT the resolution be amended by striking all the words following the first WHEREAS and replacing them with the following:

Manitoba Labour, through its Labour Adjustment Unit, assists companies, unions and employees with re-employment and retraining of workers affected by labour market adjustment and structural change; and

WHEREAS Industry, Trade and Tourism provides ongoing assistance to industry to expand job opportunities through trade and business development and to assist firms experiencing difficulties; and

WHEREAS Manitoba Education and Training currently has a system in place to monitor the labour force and forecast the demand for qualified workers in industry; and

WHEREAS Education and Training, in conjunction with Employment and Immigration Canada, prepares forecasts on the supply and demand of skilled workers; and

WHEREAS Workforce 2000, a major new initiative of the Manitoba government, is designed to promote human resource planning and training in the private sector through government-business-education partnerships.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba congratulate the government of Manitoba for its foresight in dealing with labour market demands; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly do congratulate this government for establishing the Workforce 2000 program, which will promote human resource planning and training in the private sector through government-business-education partnerships.

Mr. Storle: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) chose to amend this particular resolution. It is perhaps a resolution that needs to be debated and the intent, I suppose, was laudable. Unfortunately, it comes from a political party in this Legislature which has very little credibility left amongst working people or, in fact, amongst many other groups, including the Chamber of Commerce.

I want to take some time talking about the original motion and its intent, but I also want to say at the outset that I am disappointed that the minister chose to amend the resolution with some self-serving rhetoric that does not really reflect the record of this government either.

I want to begin by saying that the jeers that the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) perhaps heard

when he introduced this resolution, I think, were quite justified. In the last two and a half years since the Liberal Party has come into flower, so to speak—well, it bloomed suddenly, but it seems that the petals somewhat fell off in the last election—we have gotten but a hint of what it means to be a Liberal in the province of Manitoba. What it means to be a Liberal in Manitoba appears to mean that you say one thing and you do completely the other.

That brings us today to the resolution introduced by the member for St. James who today appears to have some concern, if you read this resolution, for the many thousands of people who have lost their jobs in Manitoba as a result of the Free Trade Agreement.

* (1750)

The fact of the matter is that the Free Trade Agreement was supported by half, certainly, of the Liberals in Canada, many Liberals in Manitoba. In fact, many people blamed the McDonald Commission for the federal government's final decision to enter the Free Trade Agreement. It was a Liberal Trudeau hack who laid the groundwork for the decision on the part of the Mulroney government to enter the Free Trade Agreement.

It is also interesting and instructive, Madam Deputy Speaker, to look across the country at the other provincial governments that supported free trade and, of course, they did include the Liberal government of Quebec. So like most issues, the Liberals were with their friends. They were as opportunistic in this debate as they have been in every other debate in Canadian history, choosing to put the finger to the wind and decide on the spur of the moment how they were going to deal with a particular issue.

I would have to say, I would hazard a guess that, in fact, the Liberal caucus in 1988 and 1989 when this issue was being debated, many of the Liberal members in that caucus supported free trade. I know personally that the then member for Fort Garry, Dr. Evans, supported the Free Trade Agreement. I know that Mr. Angus supported the Free Trade Agreement. The fact is that the Liberals now are pretending that they are the big defenders of Canada.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, it goes beyond that. Many of us in this Chamber recall the Liberal position on final offer selection. There is no better example of Liberal philosophy than their positions—plural—on final offer selection. We had

the spectacle, and indeed it was a spectacle, of the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) attending a Manitoba Chamber of Commerce do and promising that the Liberal Party would see the end of final offer selection. She made the commitment to the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, a commitment, a sacred trust, if you will, from the Liberal Party.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, what did we see only a few months later? We saw an attempt by the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) to save some face with the Manitoba Federation of Labour, to the thousands of workers in Manitoba who supported final offer selection. So then we had, while this debate was circulating in the Legislature and outside the Legislature, we had the additional spectacle of the member for St. Vital, attending a meeting with the Manitoba Federation of Labour, saying, look, if we were just sure that all labour unions were on side on final offer solution, we would withdraw our opposition. Oh, for sure, this was a secret meeting. So the Manitoba Liberal Leader was telling the Chamber of Commerce one thing, the member for St. Vital, the Liberal from St. Vital, was telling the Manitoba Federation of Labour something else, and the member for St. James was introducing a motion which satisfied neither group.

That is what happened. I sat and listened to the Liberal equivalent of the Spanish Inquisition as he attempted to embarrass and harass individual members who came before the labour relations committee to report on their experiences with final offer selection. He attempted to harass them; there was no compassion. Their position on final offer selection saw no compassion. Actually, it demonstrated very little understanding of what final offer selection was all about.

The two-faced approach of Liberals to policy in this province is further exemplified by the Liberal position on private school funding. When the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) in 1988 explained her platform on education, her platform was, we are moving to 80 percent funding to private schools. Madam Deputy Speaker, there was no consultation with the teachers, no reference to the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. It was simply political opportunism at its worst. So now what do we have? We have—

An Honourable Member: Did your Leader go to private school in high school?

Mr. Storle: Madam Deputy Speaker, yes, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), the New Democratic Party, did go to a private school. It was not funded by the public. No one on this side has any objection to private schools. I have said that consistently—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know the New Democrats in Ontario fund private schools 100 percent. I know the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storle) supports private schools, but he is being somewhat irrelevant on the resolution. I would encourage him to stick to what the resolution is.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thank the honourable member for that bit of wisdom and advice, and I would remind the honourable member for Flin Flon that he should be speaking to the amendment. His comments—debate should definitely be relevant.

* * *

Mr. Storle: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and of course, I was speaking directly to this resolution, the amendment which talks about education and training.

I want to indicate that the Liberal Party not only, without consultation and without apparent forethought, indicated they would move to immediate 80 percent funding of private schools. When they had an opportunity in 1989, when The Public Schools Act was amended to put a moratorium on private school funding, they chose not to.

Now that the Liberal Leader is the third party Education critic, she is pretending that she has this gigantic concern for the public school, this tremendous concern. At the same time, she is supporting a policy that spends an additional \$8 million to \$10 million on private schools, while small schools in Cartwright and Baldur and other communities are closing. The hypocrisy of that is unbelievably apparent. That kind of political hypocrisy will not be tolerated for very long.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Storle: I was explaining to the people about the hypocrisy of the Liberal Party. The Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) could not spell public

education two years ago. The fact of the matter is that this resolution—

An Honourable Member: . . . Jobs Fund.

Mr. Storie: Well, I would be more than happy to talk about the Jobs Fund if the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) knew anything about it.

This resolution typifies Liberal thinking. They believe if they side on every occasion—now that they are a third party—with what they believe to be a responsible progressive approach, the approach taken by the New Democratic Party, that somehow that will lift their credibility. The fact of the matter is that it does nothing but further erode what little credibility they have left. That is the truth of the matter, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We have watched in amazement as this group has flip-flopped on virtually every issue introduced into this Legislature in the last two and a half years.

If I might be permitted a final example, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) spent several months leading up to the budget explaining the circumstances the province faced and, in his own inimicable way, wringing his hands over our circumstances. What did the Liberal Finance critic say about the Minister of Finance's performance today? In public, on the airwaves in Manitoba, he said the Minister of Finance was doing a great job—was doing a good job. He came into this House immediately and began to criticize him

until he was reminded that he said the Minister of Finance had done a good job.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Edwards: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard the comments that have been referred to, and I cannot let them sit on the record as interpreted by the member for Flin Flon.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Finance critic, the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) criticized—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Edwards: —the outrageous deficit financing of the NDP administration and said it is time that ended, and all Manitobans agree, frankly.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. James does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over facts.

* * *

Mr. Storie: I want to thank the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) for allowing me a minute to search for my CJOB transcript, where the member for—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Wednesday, May 15, 1991

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