



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, Cliff	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
MANNESSE, 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

Tuesday, May 28, 1991

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of the Salvation Army Grace General Hospital praying for the passing of An Act to amend The Salvation Army Grace General Hospital Incorporation Act.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), 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?

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

The petition of the undersigned Winnipeg Canoe Club of the city of Winnipeg humbly sheweth:

THAT the petitioner desires to be converted to a not-for-profit corporation by providing that, upon dissolution of the club and after the payment of all debts and liabilities, the remaining property of the club shall be distributed or disposed of to charitable organizations or to organizations the objects of which are beneficial to the community.

WHEREAS your petitioner humbly prays that the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba may be pleased to amend "The Winnipeg Canoe Club Incorporation Act," which is now before the Legislature and will be re-enacted as Chapter 219 of the Re-enacted Statutes of Manitoba, 1990, for the purposes above mentioned.

And as in duty bound your petitioner will ever pray.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairman of Committees): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, 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. Gerald Ducharme (Minister responsible for Seniors): I would like to table the report of 1991-92 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Manitoba Seniors Directorate.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 1991-92 Department of Highways Expenditure Estimates.

I would also like to, at this time, table the Highway Construction Program for the year 1991-92.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the report of the Winnipeg Wards Review Committee.

* (1335)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us this afternoon the Honourable David Karamanzira, who is the Minister of Higher Education from the Republic of Zimbabwe; also Dr. Elijah Chanakira, who is the Permanent Secretary for Higher Education for Zimbabwe; His Excellency, Dr. Kajese, who is the Zimbabwe High Commissioner to Canada; Mr. Solomon Mhianga, who is the Education Attache for the Zimbabwe High Commission in Ottawa; and Mr. Lewis Durango, who is from the Department of Higher Education.

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

Also with us this afternoon we have, from the Leaf Rapids Education Centre, thirty Grade 8 students. They are under the direction of Mrs. Suzanne Billing. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie).

Also this afternoon nous tenons à vous signaler la présence, dans la galerie publique, de trente étudiants de la 11 année du Collège St. Jean Baptiste, sous la direction de Monsieur Clément. Cette institution est située dans la circonscription du député de Emerson (Mr. Penner).

(Translation)

We have seated in the public gallery, from Collège St. Jean Baptiste, thirty Grade 11 students, under the direction of Mr. Clément. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

(English)

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Manitoba Telephone System
Long-Distance Competition**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, last week we asked this minister a number of questions about the competition and deregulation of the telecommunications system in Canada. The minister, of course, told this House that he, quote: welcomed competition and the Unitel application. It is desirable by all citizens. He is quoted as saying in Hansard.

Today we have learned that US Sprint is working together with Unitel and looking at buying and working with Unitel to provide telecommunication services to Canadians in a deregulated market, which is rather curious. It is very similar to what we see with the railways now where the Soo Line has been bought by the CPR, and they are now diverting trains through the United States.

Mr. Speaker, we will now be able to have a telecommunications deregulated system where long distance can be diverted through the United States from Winnipeg, say to Toronto, back through U.S. firms and up, which will result, in our opinion, in a major increase in local rates and, of course, the effect of the deregulation.

My question to the minister is: Does he still stand by his quotes last week in this House that competition would not create any problems for the local ratepayers and the Manitoba Telephone System of this province?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act):

Mr. Speaker, yes, I do. The citizens of Manitoba want the broader choice of services that is allowed through competition.

I want to remind the member that our presentation in front of the CRTC hearing was that, if competition is to come into being in Canada, the rate of contribution from the long-distance portion of the network must be maintained, so that allows the maintenance of the low local rates, maintains the low local rates that all citizens want and allowing also the broader choice of services that competition does allow.

I must also remind the member that it is important that we do respond to what our customers want because 20 percent of the ratepayers in the Manitoba Telephone System generate 80 percent of the revenues. That is fairly significant that we look after those users and give them the choice of services they want, but we are adamant that the rate of contribution that presently exists from long distance be maintained in any future agreement. I also want to remind the member that the application of Unitel does not apply to the province of Manitoba at this time.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I have an internal document prepared in March of 1991 in the Manitoba Telephone System that totally refutes everything the minister said in this House last week and everything the minister is saying again to Manitobans today. In fact, people at the Telephone System leaked us this document because they think the minister is misleading the people of Manitoba about the impact on the telecommunication system.

It tells us very clearly that it will cost \$89 million more in capital expenditures in the Telephone System for the Unitel application. It also tells us that it will cost, in six years, over \$118 million in revenue per year for the competition that the minister is supporting, and further that the people who will see a reduction will be a 58 percent reduction for big business in the province of Manitoba.

I would ask this minister to come clean with the people of Manitoba about who the winners are. Just because Oz Pedde said he may move his Greenshield operations to the United States does not mean to say that the government should cow tail to those people and lose a made-in-Canada telecommunication policy.

* (1340)

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition of his comments back in 1987, and I will read them into the record: Certainly I believe strongly that this province must proceed with one area interconnect agreement—which is competition, Mr. Speaker.

The member recognized it himself back when he was minister responsible, and that the citizens want that service available to them. Nobody is misleading the public, but we are protecting the public in the submissions we are making, that the degree of contribution from long distance to the local network must be maintained. That is the position we have taken, that competition should be fair, equal and open, and no preferential treatment to either supplier or any supplier.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, if the minister will table the whole speech, he will find that our position was that we should stop all long-distance competition and keep those revenues for the local ratepayer, very clearly in the whole speech, and then we would move in agreement with the federal government on the interconnect agreements for local business users. That was part of the package, so do not quote one part of the package without the whole part.

My question to the minister is: Can he tell the people of Manitoba and the people of the Legislature whether the document that is prepared in his own Telephone System quoting \$118 million per annum in lost revenues, as at stake with these applications, and an \$89-million increase costs in capital, are those the accurate numbers or what the minister told us last week that we have nothing to be worried about with this new deregulated, Americanized environment?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, in the member's preamble, he says that he would protect long distance. I want to remind him he was involved in the Edmonton agreement where he was going to give away all provincial jurisdictions on long distance. He was classified as a federal responsibility. He was going to have no control over long distance in the future whatsoever, an agreement he signed in the Edmonton agreement.

The member is not being fair and honest with the House by giving that kind of information that he just gave in his preamble. He is in favour of competition. He was in favour of giving away all control on long distance, which this government is not going to do

in the MOU we sign or in the proposal we made to the CRTC commission.

CP Rail Job Protection

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I raised the issue of CP Rail diverting potash train traffic onto its U.S. subsidiary, Soo Lines, via North Portal, Saskatchewan. The Minister of Highways and Transportation stated that there are no trains presently operating around Manitoba, even though the document from the CP superintendent shows quite clearly that at least 60 trains and possibly more are operating around Manitoba.

Considering that this Filmon government supports free trade, will the Minister of Highways and Transportation tell this House what action he is taking to protect the CP Rail jobs in Manitoba?

* (1345)

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in reply to questions raised by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the member for Transcona, I had indicated that I had the assurance from CP that they would not be diverting traffic around Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, late in the afternoon, I got a document which was dated March 22, 1990, in which information apparently indicates that they have been bypassing Manitoba in terms of potash movement to the States. I have to express deep disappointment in the lack of trust that I had with the company. I will be trying to deal with the issue together with my colleagues, in terms of what position we will be putting forward.

CP Rail Job Protection

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, given that the Filmon government continues to support free trade and that the diversion of CP Rail trains around Manitoba is a result of free trade, how can this Deputy Premier justify the loss of revenue and the strong possibility that Manitobans stand to lose several hundred jobs?

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate it if the member would repeat his question.

Mr. Reid: With pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the Filmon government continues to support free trade and that the diversion of CP trains around the province of Manitoba is a result of free trade, how can the Deputy Premier justify the loss of revenue for the province of Manitoba and the strong possibility that Manitoba stands to lose several hundred jobs as a result of this action by CP Rail?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a hypothetical situation at this particular time, as it relates to job losses with the rail system in this country.

Let me make it very clear, as the Premier did yesterday, our position is that the CPR owe to this country an obligation to do business in this country. The long-term commitment, I believe, has to be there and has to be made clear.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) have had previous meetings with the CPR and, I can assure you, will continue to have meetings with them to put Manitoba's position forward very, very clearly to them.

CP Rail Capital Investment

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, considering that CP Rail does not pay the GST and received a 13.5 percent reduction in its tax this year, can the Minister of Highways and Transportation tell this House what level of capital investment CP Rail has made in Manitoba, since they have made a \$108 million investment in its Soo Line in the U.S.?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I will have to take the details of that question as notice.

However, I want to indicate the course of action that this government is going to take based on the position and the information that has come forward regarding CP. I want to express one concern to the member, based on the document that he forwarded yesterday, which was dated a year ago. I would hope that member did not have that information prior to yesterday, because if he did, I think it would have been inappropriate for him to table it yesterday, based on the impact that it could have had on Manitoba.

If he had that information earlier, I would have appreciated to have had that information earlier and to be able to try and do something about the issue.

At the present time, I want to indicate that we are looking at various options in terms of how we can respond. We will not make a knee-jerk reaction to the circumstances that have developed. However, we will develop a strategy in terms of trying to assure that these things in the future will not happen. One of the things that I am contemplating at the present time is the possibility of writing the federal minister as well as the president of CP, and we will try and see whether we can establish some kind of a rapport and understanding which we can have confidence in, which at the present time I do not have.

City Council Reduction Government Position

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, we have just received, in the last minute or two, a copy of the report of the Winnipeg Wards Review Committee, some five or 10 minutes after members of the press gallery had received a copy of the report. I think that should be noted.

My question is to the Minister of Urban Affairs. Recommendation No. 5 from the Wards Review Committee says that there ought to be no pie-shaped wards for the new construction of Winnipeg City Hall. Can we assume that this is also now the government's position, and if it is not the government's position, can the minister tell us what the government position is?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the report arrived in my office yesterday afternoon, and I provided it at the earliest opportunity to members of the House. The Clerk advised me that technically the rules of the House are that the report is distributed after Question Period. I endeavoured to provide copies at least to the critics in advance of that in order to—

An Honourable Member: The press did not have that problem.

Mr. Ernst: I cannot comment with regard to what, who or how the distribution takes place outside the Chamber. I am following the rules, Mr. Speaker, as I understand them.

With respect to the question from the member for Crescentwood, the government has taken no decision as of yet. We received the report. We will be looking at the report, looking at its recommendations and ultimately will make a decision. That decision will be communicated to the House by way of a second bill.

Public Consultations

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, time is running out in this session for the opposition to have proper time to analyze any bill that may come forward.

The minister in Estimates yesterday said that the bill would be ready for introduction to the House some time around the 20th of June.

My question to the minister: Is he going to take the recommendations contained within this report for public consultation and review? With whom is he going to consult and when does he expect the cabinet decision?

* (1350)

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the report is in fact a consultative process, so it is not intended, at this point, beyond the right of the public to appear at committee when the bill has received second reading, to go further into a public consultative process. The government will, as quickly as we can, deal with the issues raised and ultimately provide a bill as quickly as we can before the House.

Government Position

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, the report also recommends that there be 15 councillors for the City of Winnipeg, and those councillors be elected in individual member wards. Is that the position of the government of Manitoba?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I can advise the member that, when the government has given consideration to the report of the Winnipeg Wards Review Committee and has determined its position, it will be presented in a bill before the House and the government then will have elicited its position.

Immigration Policy Fee Structure

Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radisson): On April 1 of this year, the federal government introduced a broad range of fees charged to applicants who are wanting to immigrate to Canada. Not only are these fees at a large increase, but they are also nonrefundable. Since many potential immigrants will not be able to afford the new fees, the policy is clearly discriminatory on socioeconomic grounds.

My question for the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship is: Does the government support this fee policy?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, I will take the details of the question that was just put forward and return to the House with an answer.

Ms. Cerlill: Since the minister said yesterday in the House that this government will not be moving toward any system that will discriminate against immigrants, will this government be proposing to reduce fees in its negotiations with the federal government?

Mrs. Mitchelson: All of those things will be taken into consideration as we move towards an agreement with the federal government.

I indicated yesterday in Question Period that there would be no policy by this government that was discriminatory in any way towards any new immigrant who might want to come to this country or to this province.

Immigration Consultants Investigation

Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, this government is not making very clear what policy it is taking forward to the negotiations.

The new fee increases will create a two-tier system on immigration. Less fortunate people will be forced into the black market, which we have been exposed to recently, and preyed upon by unscrupulous immigration consultants. Can the minister tell the House what impact the fee increases will have on immigration consulting business?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Without accepting any of the fearmongering that is put forward in the preamble of the New Democratic critic, Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate, any negotiation for increased powers over immigration that we would negotiate with an agreement with the federal government would not discriminate in any way against any immigrant who would want to come to Manitoba or to Canada.

City Council Reduction Impact on Inner City

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): My question is for the Minister of Urban Affairs.

Yesterday I asked the minister several questions about the Winnipeg Wards Review Committee. He responded by saying that he would review this report. He has now tabled this report. I would like the minister to tell us some of the principles by which he is going to guide this review.

My first question for the minister, Mr. Speaker, is: What guarantees do we have in this reduction from six community councils to five? What guarantees is he going to put in place for the inner city of Winnipeg?

* (1355)

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr) earlier, the government has taken no position as of yet. This is a report to the government, received from the committee. We will review it, and then we will make recommendations and those recommendations will be tabled in a bill before the House.

Ms. Frlesen: Thank you, but I was asking the minister about principles. Perhaps he missed that part. What underlying principles does this government have when it approaches the City of Winnipeg?

Impact on St. Boniface

Ms. Jean Frlesen (Wolseley): My second question for the minister is: What guarantees will he have in place? What are his principles in reference to the historical and significant presence of St. Boniface in the Winnipeg community?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): As I have indicated previously, the current act presently is in place. When we deal with the review committee report, we will deal with a number of aspects that are recommended, and they will table it in a bill. In principle, Mr. Speaker, we support the current position with respect to the Francophone community and are in fact meeting with them currently on a variety of ways to better meet the needs of that community in the city of Winnipeg.

Civic Elections Spending Restrictions

Ms. Jean Frlesen (Wolseley): One of the things these new proposals do is to change the conditions of election in the city of Winnipeg. It creates much larger wards, creates very different economic conditions, I think, for elections. I want to ask the

minister, what are his principles governing the restrictions on spending in civic elections?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Again, this is a report to the government. It was requested by the government. We will analyze the report. We will make decisions around the report and around changes to The City of Winnipeg Act. Following that, we will bring forward our recommendations. At that time, I would be pleased to debate the issues with the member for Wolseley.

Civic Elections

Greg Lyle Campaign Participation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier.

We have information that Greg Lyle, the principal secretary for the Premier's office, had attended at least one candidate in the last civic election.

My question to the Deputy Premier is: Will the Deputy Premier advise this House if the Premier's office authorized the principal secretary, Greg Lyle, to attend civic campaign offices, in 1989, in the company of Seech Gajadharsingh and Claro Paqueo?

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, individuals who work for any ministerial office are free, on their own time, to participate in whatever activities that they feel are in their own interests.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the Deputy Premier did not in fact deny it.

Claro Paqueo Premier's Staff Involvement

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Will the Deputy Premier tell this House what kind of discussions on immigration matters the principal secretariat or any other member of the Premier's office staff has had with Claro Paqueo or Seech Gajadharsingh?

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell you what discussions took place between any individuals. As I said previously, individuals who work for ministers' offices are free to do on their time, on their own time when they are not working for ministers' offices, as to what they choose in their best interest.

Immigration Consultants Investigation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier: Given the fact that neither a criminal investigation nor a Civil Service review will uncover all the potential back-room dealings and questions of ethics that are coming out of this case, and the fact that justice must also be seen to be done, will the Deputy Premier today order a full-scale independent inquiry into this terrible exploitation of immigrants?

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, we take this issue very seriously. There currently is an RCMP investigation taking place, as is there a full Civil Service investigation taking place, which I am sure will look at all the matters related to this issue.

CFB Shilo Closure

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): For the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Brandon has recently had another piece of bad news with regard to the closure of the main post office. Indeed, it has had more than its share of federal Tory cutbacks that are chipping away at the local economy. I would refer you to the closure of the control tower at the airport, the discontinuation of the VIA Rail service, the loss of manufacturing jobs as a result of free trade and, as I said, now the closure of the post office. On top of this, we now have the threatened closure of the Shilo base, which could result in the loss of over a thousand jobs and a payroll of \$70 million.

I would like to ask the minister: Does the government of Manitoba have any plan of action to deal with this possible closure of the Shilo base?

* (1400)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Yes, we do. As I indicated to the honourable member the other day, certainly, at the administrative level, we have had contact and discussions with the federal government. I have written the federal minister responsible. We are currently in the process of arranging a meeting with the federal ministers at the earliest possible date, so we certainly are pursuing this very important matter.

Future Status

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister, given the fact that the local Conservative MP is unable to get any information from the federal minister, Marcel Masse, can the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism now tell the House what he knows about the future possibilities of the base? He alluded to getting some information. Can he tell the House about the possibilities of continuing the base in the future?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): At this point, Mr. Speaker, a lot of that would be premature. An awful lot of it is based on rumours and hearsay, and I think the most appropriate thing would be after we have had our meeting with the federal ministers, that we will, in fact, report back to this House.

Mr. Leonard Evans: In the meantime, I wish the provincial government would stop cutting jobs in the city of Brandon as they have been doing for the last three years, like MPIC, ACC and BMHC and you name it.

Brandon, Manitoba Postal Outlet Closure

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, was the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism informed in advance about the closure of the Brandon post office, and did he make any effort to persuade the federal government to maintain its operation?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): The answer, Mr. Speaker, is no, that we were not notified in advance of the impending closure of the Brandon post office, and the obvious answer to the second part would be yes, that we are extremely concerned with any reduction in service capabilities and job losses, and so on, as we have indicated on many occasions in this House.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corp. Tender Process

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): My question is to the Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister took a couple of questions as notice with respect to the awarding of a contract for some office furniture to a company that purchased much of that office equipment from the United States. Today, the Manitoba Public

Insurance Corporation confirmed it has abandoned its Buy Manitoba policy.

Can the minister indicate why the MPIC has also abandoned any support for the manufacturing industry in the province of Manitoba by not actively seeking out manufacturers of office furniture and the like equipment when it is tendering or preparing a tender for such equipment?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): I think the member is choosing to put a rather unfair slant on the type of equipment that is being referred to as office furnishings. I know that he probably did not intend to do that, but basically we are not talking about chesterfields and armchairs. We are talking about office equipment, very specialized equipment of a nature where there are literally hundreds of various interlocking and interchangeable pieces.

Mr. Speaker, the corporation went through a rather lengthy development of criteria for this proposal. There were, in fact, some 150 different specifications that were laid out as requirements for this proposal. They sought out eight of the largest and what would be considered best opportunities for supplying this material within the city of Winnipeg. The list is quite clear that they certainly made every effort to be able to purchase this in Manitoba and, as a result, all of those firms that brought forward proposals and recommendations were Winnipeg firms, and they did not end up doing business with them.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Speaker, I am anxious to see the list. I phoned personally five of the largest companies, and there was no indication whatsoever that MPIC had contacted them.

This minister is trying to confuse the issue. There are manufacturers of this kind of computer work station equipment in the province of Manitoba.

My question is to the Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act. Mr. Speaker, this morning I spoke to a business person who manufactures this very same equipment, who personally had contacted MPIC to inquire about their need for such equipment. This business person was not contacted, was not notified of such tender.

Can the minister explain why Manitoba manufacturers, who manufacture this specific kind

of equipment, were not given an opportunity to create jobs in Manitoba?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I would welcome him to table the name of that company and the materials that they produce, because I had indicated there were 150 different criteria that were laid down as part of this contract.

I can tell you that I have researched the names of the companies that this member brought forward yesterday, and I am unable to ascertain that any of them would have produced the material that the corporation was looking for. This is not chesterfields and armchairs, Mr. Speaker.

Free Trade Agreement - Mexico Impact Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, my subsequent question is to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. The manufacturing sector has been sideswiped by the Free Trade Agreement.

Can the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism indicate whether, in his discussions or in his consultations about the free trade agreement with Mexico, he has contacted the general manager of Furniture West Inc., which represents furniture manufacturers across western Canada, who has indicated to me today that free trade with Mexico will be devastating for the manufacturing industry and particularly the furniture manufacturing industry in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I think, as I indicated some time ago to the honourable member for Flin Flon, we have gone through an extensive consultation process on the potential Canada-U.S.-Mexico free trade with various sectors of our economy. The manufacturing industry has been well represented at those meetings, as has the furniture manufacturing industry.

All of that consultation process will help us formulate both the position as a government and precautions that we would suggest in terms of specific sectors of the economy, but clearly, that particular industry segment that he has referred to has been at the meetings, have expressed certain concerns. All of that consultation process will form part of our position as a government, and the rationale and decisions will come forth very shortly, Mr. Speaker.

Education Facilities Construction Projects

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier took as notice a question posed by the Leader of the third party with regard to information that I provided during the Estimates process on the new construction of schools for the fiscal year 1991-92. At that time, I indicated that the plans had not been finalized, the announcement had not been prepared yet and, once that was done, I would be pleased to share it with the Leader of the third party. That is still the case.

Mr. Speaker, from time to time, MLAs from all parties will seek information regarding construction of school buildings in their particular constituencies. We try to provide as much information on those projects as we can. As a matter of fact, the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has from time to time asked questions with regard to construction of school sites in his area.

In addition, prior to making an announcement on an initiative, I invited the opposition critics to my office to share with them information prior to the announcement.

Mr. Speaker, in the case of the detailed information that was put on the record yesterday, I did provide some information to three MLAs. It was inadvertently made public, but this was done in innocence and was not done to pre-empt the usual process of approval of public announcements. Indeed, there was a misunderstanding of what information was in the planning stages.

Health Care Profession Abuse Reporting Guidelines

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health.

Yesterday, there was a report out of the province of Manitoba, a very devastating report, which spoke about the sexual abuse that is perpetrated by doctors against their female and male patients. One of the recommendations of that task force report was that the medical act of the Province of Ontario be changed to make reporting by other doctors of such abuse, when it comes to their knowledge, mandatory.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House today if he has had any discussions with respect to the

College of Physicians and Surgeons here in the province of Manitoba to ascertain whether they believe such mandatory reporting would be a valuable thing?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I missed the preamble to my honourable friend's question. Did she indicate that was a report made in Manitoba?

An Honourable Member: Ontario.

* (1410)

Mr. Orchard: Ontario, I am sorry, because I was not aware of any report that was made in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, no, I have not had any communication with the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I suspect that within the next short while that report will be part of the mail that comes into my office, and I will forward it to not only the college but the commission for appropriate comment as to any appropriate action that might be taken by the Province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, one of the pieces of information came to light was that between 5 percent and 10 percent of all patients are in some way physically abused by the members of the medical profession.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House today if his government would support such mandatory reporting in The Medical Act of the Province of Manitoba?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, without having received the report and knowledge of the background information, the research, how the report gathered its information, I simply would be ill advised to make comment as to how the Province of Manitoba, this government, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the commission, might react to a report we have not received.

I indicate to my honourable friend that, when the report comes in, I will have it thoroughly analyzed and seek the appropriate response from the college and from the commission, and take whatever steps may be deemed appropriate should the situation, as enunciated by my honourable friend from a report in Ontario, be applicable to the Manitoba circumstance.

City Council Reduction Term Length

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Yes, Mr. Speaker, in reading again the report of the government, we see a recommendation to have the City Council terms be extended from the present three years to four years.

I would ask the Minister of Urban Affairs, who of course voted for 29 councillors in the independent boundary review that the New Democratic Party established in legislation a few years ago—in fact, his whole caucus voted for the 29 members, but I guess that was before the tax problems based on the urban sprawl that many members opposite helped create—under what authority does the government commission that this government established come back with the recommendation to go from three years to four years in terms of the present City Council?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I reject a goodly portion of the Leader of the Opposition's rhetoric in his preamble because he knows not of what he speaks.

With respect to issues that were raised by the public in a public hearing process, I would assume they are reflected in the report of the Winnipeg Wards Review Committee. When the public comes forward or when any member appears before a committee of this type and wants to express a particular point of view and it is expressed sufficiently frequently, then I am assuming the committee decided to reflect that point of view in their recommendations.

Impact on Inner City

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Then I would ask the minister if the public was the generator of the ideas that are contained within the report, why the government on page 37 from this report, can accept a consolation prize for the inner city? The greatest concern expressed by community groups, by citizens was the fact that the reduction in the City Hall, and I quote: will have a major overall effect on the inner city.

In fact, the city comes back with a recommendation to establish an inner city advisory committee to be made up of inner city councillors and, quote: councillors from other regions.

Is this the consolation prize that this government is going to establish for the inner city as they lose

their democratic representation under the Tory agenda for the corporate Winnipeg?

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

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, I think, has leapt to a giant conclusion, and his allegation that this is government policy at this point is wrong. I have said at least a half dozen times already today in Question Period, this is a report to the government by the Winnipeg Wards Review Committee.

We will consider it, then we will make decisions based on the recommendations in here and other changes to The City of Winnipeg Act and will be tabled in a bill accordingly.

Grassroots Candidates

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Of course, going from one councillor for 22,000 electors to one councillor for about 44,000 electors will incur major costs for people who do not have the corporate donations or other interest donations, and will cause considerable changes in the people—there is a relationship between wealth and electability, Mr. Speaker.

I would ask the question of the minister. What provisions will the government put in place to ensure that grassroots candidates can run in grassroots communities with a change in the amount of electors that people will have to appeal to with the corporate council established and recommended by the Conservatives?

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

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, once again, I repeat, this is a report to the government. We will consider it and provide a bill before the House, at which time we will be able to debate fully the question raised by the member.

Educational Facilities Portable Classrooms

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training.

Can the Minister of Education and Training today tell the House whether the 14 portables that members of his caucus wrote to constituents in St. Vital about are, in fact, going to be part of the construction plans for 1991-92?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, it is true that area of our city is one that is experiencing rapid growth in student population and, although the new construction for a school was approved in June of 1990, the school will not become a reality until September of 1992 or thereabouts. In the interim, we will have to provide some alternative space for students.

There are two alternatives that are being looked at. One is the provision of portable huts, if you like, as temporary classroom units, and the other is to move students from the school division into a vacant school somewhere else in the city. The school division has made its preference known, and they would like to see the relocatable huts at their site.

Indeed, we are working towards that end. However, the announcement has not been made at this time, but it will be coming very shortly.

Construction Projects

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in fact the relocatables have been announced by the Minister of Education and Training through his members of caucus.

Will he now announce, to the rest of the Legislature, the other decisions that he has made with respect to the construction budget for schools for 1991-92?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, when all of those new announcements are finalized, we will be in a position to make them in one announcement. I will, as I indicated in the Estimates, provide the Leader of the third party and the critic of the opposition party the total list of the new projects that will be considered and will be embarked on in this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the Order Paper shows today Addresses for Papers and Orders for Return. I understand there is some dialogue going to continue with respect to certain matters. I would, therefore, ask that this be postponed for a day.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we will move to Supply. I therefore move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), that Mr. Speaker do now

leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Seniors Directorate; and the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Northern Affairs.

CONCURRENT COMMITTEES OF SUPPLY SUPPLY—SENIORS DIRECTORATE

Mr. Deputy Chairman (Marcel Laurendeau): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will be considering the Estimates of Seniors Directorate. Does the honourable Minister responsible for Seniors have an opening statement?

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister responsible for Seniors): Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do.

I would like to take this opportunity to outline some of the positive steps Seniors Directorate has taken in the past year and in my early three months as Minister responsible for Seniors and the direction my department and the government will continue to take.

As Minister responsible for Seniors it is my goal to provide the seniors of Manitoba with opportunities for quality of life. With the help of the Seniors Directorate, we are using the team approach by sharing skills, knowledge, experience and abilities. We are actively involving seniors in any decision making that affects their lives. Seniors are a large and visible part of our society. They play an important role in the economic and community life of the province.

Seniors Directorate has provided seniors with a better access to government programs and services. The Seniors Information Line which began in September '89 is receiving over 100 calls a month. This number does not include the many calls that staff make to the various departments of Housing, Health, pensions and social services on behalf of the caller. This line, however, continues to be used by an increasing number of seniors from all over the province. Our outreach offices in Portage la Prairie and The Pas are also helping in working with seniors, individuals and all groups.

During the 1990 consultations, the seniors of Manitoba talked with the directorate staff about many areas of concern. They have identified financial abuse as one of their main concerns. In response to this, the directorate has been working very diligently to complete a financial elder abuse educational package. This project is being done in co-operation with the federal government, and we anticipate it will be ready for distribution some time in late June. This is an important step in enabling seniors to recognize, avoid and prevent financial abuse now and in the future.

The two publications previously released by the directorate, Questions to Ask Your Doctor and Pharmacist on Taking Medication and the Manitoba Seniors Directorate Information Guide have proven to be so popular we are now distributing the second printing of these publications. I might add that these publications, as well, were developed in response to the needs identified by the senior community during these consultations.

During 1990, the directorate worked with seniors organizations to plan Seniors Month events in Dauphin, The Pas, Brandon and Winnipeg. This year, seniors events will be held in Brandon, Flin Flon, St. George and Winnipeg. These events are planned and run by seniors working in partnership with the government and community.

The Seniors Directorate provides a valuable and constructive service for seniors in this province. They continue to initiate strong working partnerships with seniors at all levels of government, corporate and community. We are ensuring that seniors are involved and consulted in all aspects. The directorate has involved the Manitoba Society of Seniors, Age and Opportunity, Creative Retirement, the Council on Aging, as well as regional seniors councils. The staff has attended annual meetings, regional meetings and assisted at conferences and workshops.

* (1430)

Government departments in the community are increasingly asking the directorate to review policies, programs and to take part on advisory boards and committees. The directorate has initiated interdepartmental committees to look at options for seniors on important issues such as transportation and as I mentioned earlier, abuse. Most importantly, they are being recognized by seniors as a vital contact point to the government.

I look forward to comments by the two critics and going through the Estimates of this year.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: We thank the honourable Minister responsible for Seniors for those comments.

Does the critic for the official opposition party, the honourable member for Broadway, have any opening comments?

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are very concerned about the plight of our senior citizens because of the emerging trends in Canada, for example, the population trend and the distribution of population in our society.

In 1981, for instance, all across Canada there were 24,343,000 people. Out of that number, 2,360,985 were senior citizens, approximately 10 percent of the total population in Canada. In this province, in Manitoba, there were in that year, 1981, 1,026,245 people, and out of that 121,880 were senior citizens, approximately 12 percent of the Manitoba population.

In a period of 10 years, now, which is '90-91, there are approximately 27 million people all across Canada. The percentage of senior citizens has not changed. It is still around 10 percent of that total population. In Manitoba, there are more or less approximately 1,140,000 people, and the number of senior citizens is approximately 12 percent of that, which is 136,721.

Forty years from now, by the year 2031, the percentage of senior population all across our nation will change from 10 percent to approximately 28 percent, total population. Since, in Manitoba, the proportion of senior citizens is proportionately greater than the corresponding percentage all across the nation, whereas in all across the nation it is 10 percent, in Manitoba it is 12 percent. If we project the senior citizens in Manitoba, it will be around 30 percent senior citizens in this province.

Now, there are certain implications about the changing distribution of our population. There has been a study conducted about the implication of this in relation to social spending, to public budgeting and other public expenditures. This pattern of increase can be correlated. For example, you can correlate the various age groups of the various seniors groups depending on how old they are with their degree of need. You can also correlate the

proportionate public spending that will be needed in order to support such segments of our population. They projected the total population, the early mature group from the ages of 65 to 74 years will increase by 21 percent, whereas the late mature group—they call them late mature because they are older—those who are older than 75 years old, they will grow by a tremendous increase of 46 percent.

With respect to life expectancy, there is a difference between the gender. Women have an increased life expectancy of 7.5 years greater than it is today, but the quality of the life of the women senior citizens will only increase by 1.4 years, whereas senior citizens who are male, the increasing life expectancy is less than the life expectancy of those who are female. It is only 4.5 years compared to the women's 7.5 and, correspondingly, the quality of their life will also increase only 1.3 years.

These statistics are very fascinating and interesting. Between this year 1991 and the year 2031, 40 years from now—in a period of 40 years, those who are 65 years or older will outnumber the younger set, those who are 15 years or older. You can see the changing nature of our population distribution. If current social spending holds at the same level, and if this demographic projection holds, the total spending in our country will jump from 26 percent to—about 38 percent of all social spending in Canada will be directed to older people. The older the group, obviously, the greater the degree of need of these groups.

Those senior citizens who are 65 years old or older as distinguished from those, let us say, 85 years old or older, it is very obvious, very natural that the older the group, the greater the intensity of their needs as individuals in our society. Let me give an example. People who are 65 years old, for example, they studied and found that 34 percent of those who are 65 years or older, approximately 34 percent of them will need some help to do some shopping, whereas if you compare them to the older groups, let us say, 85 years old or older, there will be 66 percent of those older groups who will need help to even buy the basic food that they need in their daily life.

In general, we can say that these kinds of needs intensify the older the age group of the senior citizens. They need some help in doing their household work. They need some help in looking after their personal finance. They need some help

in preparing their meals. They need some help in their personal care. Generally speaking, those who are 85 years or older will have twice as much need than those who are only 65 years old.

Now, because our body is not a perpetual machine that can work forever, we of course grow weaker as we grow older, except those of us who have found the fountain of life, there will be disabilities. There will be people who are disabled.

Now let me make some comparison between what they call the younger seniors, at 65 years old, and the older senior set, which is 85 years old or older. Fifty percent of those 65 years old will more or less be disabled people, whereas 80 percent of those who are 85 or older will be in the category of disabled.

If you concentrate on those who are disabled, whether they are in the younger set or in the older set, if they belong to that category of disabled people the disability takes many forms. For example, they will have some disability about moving around. They need a wheelchair, for example, and right now, of those who need wheelchairs, in both the younger set and the older set of senior citizens, 18 percent of them do not have such wheelchairs that they need right now.

*(1440)

Those senior citizens will sometimes want to travel, sometimes short distances, sometimes long distances, and they have disabilities. Some of them cannot even make use of the bus system or the train or the airplane. About 9 percent of them cannot travel anymore. Some of them would like to use the public transit system. Yet, even if it were free at the time when we have our Handi-Transit, 25 percent have experienced difficulty getting off and on the bus. It is very difficult for senior citizens with disabilities to move around.

Some of them and even younger people—I have seen some of the younger ones, they have some hearing impairment. If you are in the group of 65 years old or older, then 43 percent of that group will have some kind of hearing impairment. Of all those who have hearing impairments, 31 percent of them still have unmet needs about getting the proper equipment to restore their hearing capacity.

What about people who have vision impairment? Of the 65-year-olds, there were 24 percent of them who had some kind of problem seeing. They have vision impairment. Of those who are more or less

blind or near blind category, about 10 percent of them do not have the necessary aid in order that they can see.

You see the difficulties of our senior citizens. We have heard that Canada is the second best country in the world today to live in. We are only next to Japan. Despite this, the present data show that most of our senior citizens have needs and these needs are yet unmet. We are now beginning to cut down on their well-being by cutting down public assistance to our senior citizens.

Let me cite an example. In Alberta very recently—this is a rich province, richer than Manitoba, and yet they started cutting on seniors benefits. For example, Premier Getty's government cut \$22 million worth of health care programs. These cuts affected the previously enjoyed benefits and advantages enjoyed by senior citizens in Alberta, like free dentures. They have free dentures. They have free pharmaceuticals. They have free oxygen when they are interned.

These people, because of these benefits they enjoy from their government, are traditionally Tory supporters but, now that they have these cuts, the government is now beginning to regret the indiscretion that they have done because of the backlash that they are having even among the traditionally supportive elements of the population, the senior citizens.

For example, the Minister of Health in Alberta, Nancy Betkowski, was called a nitwit and if her brain is dynamite she could not even blow her nose.

An Honourable Member: Who said that?

Mr. Santos: One of the senior citizens, who are angry, the traditional senior citizens, supporters of the Tory party in Alberta, Conservative Party.

They are angry, real angry. Another senior citizen called her a whippersnapper who cannot walk, cannot chew the gum at the same time. Ten percent of Alberta's 2.4 million population are over 65 years old and they are now suffering a quiet users charge that could cost every senior citizen in Alberta \$1,000 more in terms of health care expenses that they need to dole out of their pocket. The benefits were taken away from them by the Tory government and they are saying now that the political whiplash is not worth the money that they saved. This is a lesson that the Tory government in Manitoba should learn. There are tremendous political implications of benefits granted to any segment of the population

and then taken away. It is better not to give them at all, initially, in the first place, than give them and then take them away.

Throughout the country in general our social spending is lopsided in one sense and this is from an objective study. For example, the per capita spending for every elderly Canadian all across the nation who is 65 years old is more or less \$6,500 per head per annum. This takes pensions, old age and whatever, compared to what a younger person, 15 years or younger, who gets only \$2,500, some kind of family assistance program.

You can see the implication of the growing number of senior citizens all across the nation and the increasing number of senior citizens in terms of social spending. With a number of those by the year 2031, with a number of those who are 65 years or older increasing from 10 percent to almost 28 percent of the total population across the nation, you can see the implication of that in terms of social spending, even at the level of the federal government. There will be overall spending for old age security, survivor's benefit, permanent sickness benefits, all of this will escalate and by that year, public spending would have increased by 204 percent. Where will all this money come from? There will be a crisis in our social programs by the end of the next 40 years.

As I have stated before, the intensity of need increases as the age group increases. For those who are 65 years or older their health care spending, for example, is 4.5 percent greater than those who are under 65 years old. If they are 75 years or older their health care spending is 6.7 times greater than an individual in the younger group. The older the citizens group the greater the need for their health care, the greater the level of public spending.

If money is limited as it is, it can only come from taxes or from borrowing and from whatever economic growth that we have all across the nation. By definition it is a kind of a zero-sum kind of a game. The increase in one type of social spending will correspondingly remain a decrease in other types of necessary social spending. If social spending for the senior citizens group and the older people will be by that time more than 25 percent of the population all across the nation, will increase by 204 percent in terms of their pensions and their other sources of income, their health care spending will also increase and it is projected by that year 2040,

there will be 118 percent increase in health care spending overall across this nation.

By definition also, since resources are limited, we will have less money for education for the younger people, for the youth. Education is expected to decrease from 32 percent to 18 percent only. Unemployment insurance is expected to decrease from 12 percent to 9 percent, family benefits expected to decrease from 3 percent to 2 percent. These are all the overall implications of the changing nature of our demography and our population distribution in terms of age groupings.

If we tried to compare Canada with other countries in terms of what is spent for social legislation, Canada has the highest percentage of money spent, because in Canada we spend 87 percent in social programs. United States only spends about 65 percent of their resources. Japan, which is No. 1 in terms of the best place to live today in the world, spends only about 40 percent for social programs.

* (1450)

How do we determine a nation's financial capacity to sustain all the social programs and social legislation? They are, of course, financed by general taxation and also by our social security contribution. Our contribution is dependent on whether we are working or not. If we are unemployed, how can we contribute to that pool of money to finance all this kind of social spending?

So the social policy planners and social decision makers, people who are in positions of authority to plan for the future, they have a significant role to play. We have to make sure that the factors that will sustain our social capacity to spend will be at work and will be operative and effective. We should be concerned about the rate of real economic growth in our country. We should be concerned about the number of people who are working, because the greater the number of those who are working, the greater will be the number of those people who can make contributions to the pool of money that we spend, either in the form of taxes or in the form of social security deductions.

There should be real earnings. It must increase proportionately, if we are to have the necessary resources to take care of our social legislation and to take care of our people.

If you are a senior citizen, there are many problems. You are usually separated from your

family. It is a lonesome kind of a life. If your spouse has predeceased you, loss of a lifetime partner means a lot to an individual. Usually, but not always, the one who is left behind sooner or later follows the one who has gone. He cannot withstand being alone. Being uprooted from the familiar family environment and having disabilities, you have physical constraint. You reduce your activities. It is not a very nice quality of life unless you are more or less taken care of in most of your needs.

There is a concern, according to the counsellors, which includes the following in terms of priority: The bereavement or loss of loved ones will rank highest. That is a problem amongst senior citizens. Elderly abuse that they suffer from the members of their own family, next; disruption of family relationships, next; mental health problems; marital conflict. If they are still married, they have some problems.

There are, of course, some programs that seniors groups have undertaken to overcome all these kinds of personal and group problems. For example, in the 185 Smith senior centre, they have some kind of activities and programs, knowledge-sharing program. They have some kind of organized programs about the use of medication. They have seminars and meetings about caregiving, how to meet stress. They have programs about personal problem solving and of course fitness classes in north Winnipeg, Selkirk Avenue Senior Centre. They ran an environmental series in food irradiation and the problem of radon gas in homes. They even have some program about recycling, why and how to recycle resources.

The senior citizens educational program at the West End Senior Centre included some issues, discussion of issues in health series like how to take care of your problem about your foot care, dental hygiene, how to take care of your back pains, your hearing impairments and about the use of medications. They also have some concern expressed about how to get help from government. For example, they could be snowed in during the wintertime. They do not know who to contact about snow removal assistance. In deep winter, they could be cut off really from the outside world, and if they had no more food in the fridge or had to get in touch with home meal services—transportation problem is nowadays also expressed because of the recent changes in city policy with respect to Handi-Transit.

In regard to immigrant senior citizens, of course pension benefits are not available to them. They are culturally isolated and they have difficulty in getting to places to attend, even meetings for the educational programs.

In general, senior citizens need some kind of assistance in the area of health care so they will have an adequate health care system. They need some assistance in the area of housing. They need some assistance in the area of transportation, some government assistance in financial adequacy to meet their needs.

There are lots more problems, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. I now yield the chair to our friend the Seniors critic, MLA from St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry).

Mr. Deputy Chairman: We thank the honourable member for Broadway for those opening comments.

Does the critic from the second opposition party, the honourable member from St. Boniface, have any opening comments?

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Deputy Chairman, yes.

Firstly, let me congratulate the minister on being appointed Minister for Seniors in the last cabinet shuffle. We will look forward to working with him in the next Legislature.

I would say I am pleased to add a few comments on these Estimates. I have worked with the seniors for many years and I know what it is to understand these people who have problems. Just last night again I was invited to dinner with the residents at the Tache Nursing Centre. They were honouring, for example, people who have been there for 31, 32, 50 years. Maybe it is not their place to be in a personal care home. For example, a young fellow at 18 years old who was in a car accident 31 years ago has been sitting there with the seniors. We have looked at different options, having a wing for young people in homes like that, because I am sure it is not always interesting for young people who are handicapped living in those situations. Of course, in those days they did not have the facility that they have today. These are homes that are also required. Personal care homes may be an in-between housing between senior citizens housing and the personal care home, people who are married, for example, and their partner is incapacitated in some manner where they still could be living at home with home care or something like that.

Also, I would like to comment on the last time, the honourable Minister for Seniors in the last Estimates, for example, mentioned the Seniors Directorate. It is to support seniors in achieving or accomplishing programs working with the different organizations to make sure that we are keeping all the seniors of the province up to date with government programs and activities. Maybe I can refer this time, for example, the deindexing of 55-Plus program. I do not think it was fair to do that. The most vulnerable people, I think, are the seniors.

If we look at the correspondence that has come through in the last month from seniors who have been upset with government for what they have done, I will make more comments, through the Estimates, on this program here, because I have several letters and I would like to comment on some of them. The minister says, we are committed to improve the quality of life for Manitoba seniors, and I think that proves otherwise when we see what they have done.

* (1500)

Also, in the last comments, one of the areas that has been a major problem for a lot of seniors has been transportation. We have developed a transportation committee with representation from government departments. We have not received a report yet. We have phoned the department and the report is not ready.

Another comment made by the minister the last time: We are developing a public awareness campaign to inform seniors about fraud from door-to-door salespeople. We appreciate that the minister on May 10, 1991, issued a press release on door-to-door sales: Common sense urged.

What have we done to advise seniors of our province in that respect? Just last week, I visited one senior on Des Meurons in St. Boniface who has had problems with her house. I went down and visited with her. She had four estimates. One of the contractors had told her to replace the roof for \$1,700, another one for \$1,100. Then she came down to the government offices. She had received one for \$454. The government advised her to take that one, but nobody went down to visit and see what was wrong with her house, just told her to take the lowest bid. I do not think it is the proper thing to do. I have taken it upon myself to take someone down who knows roofing and ventilation. I will make the minister aware after that I have visited this lady. I

think if more people did that, even elected officials—I will say at this time, with previous problems, I have contacted the minister when he was Minister of Housing, and I have had good rapport with him and several of the problems were resolved by looking at it in a positive way with the minister. I would like to say thank you at this time, and I hope it will continue with Seniors, because we have several problems with the seniors and I am sure the minister is aware.

Another thing the previous minister mentioned, we are working with the bankers association to develop an antifinancial abuse package so that the seniors can deal with confidence when it comes to dealing with their financial affairs. Have we seen the package? No, not yet. We have phoned and they say that it will be released in June. Hopefully, we will be able to see the report shortly and I think, as an elected official in St. Boniface, I would like to circulate or send a brochure out to my constituents. Especially in St. Boniface, I have a very large elderly population.

Again, the minister the last time mentioned the seniors of our province are part of the leadership of our province. It is important and we fully ensure that their lives are in the hands, and their contribution can be fully realized and appreciated. If this is so, why then has the 55-Plus program been deindexed? Again, I reiterate the fact that the seniors—we have had so many requesting that this not happen.

Transportation is another issue. We have been presented by Mrs. Renton. I believe the Minister responsible for Seniors will have received that presentation. It will be interesting to see what comes out of that presentation because we look at transportation for the seniors, not only in certain areas but, I think, across the city of Winnipeg. I know the minister himself, I have approached him on one situation where it was in his own constituency, and I believe he paid out of his own pocket. I congratulate him on that, but it should not be. It should not be the elected official who should pay out of his pocket, and I am sure he is not the first one and not the only one.

I could go on all afternoon, I guess, with problems for seniors, but I think what we should do is discuss this in Estimates thoroughly this afternoon and try to come up with positive suggestions and recommendations to the minister and work together positively for our seniors. In conclusion, I would like

to say thank you again for having the opportunity to make a few comments on this Estimates process.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: We thank the honourable member for St. Boniface for those opening comments.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask the minister to introduce the staff members present.

Mr. Ducharme: I would like to introduce Kathy Yurkowski and Dorothy Hill, who are with the Seniors Directorate. I am sure you have talked to some of them.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Item 1. Seniors Directorate 1.(a) Salaries \$118,000.

Mr. Ducharme: Maybe you could pass my salary later. You can see that there is not a minister's salary in there. We will not have that problem with this one.

Mr. Santos: I would like to give the opportunity to my colleague the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Can I ask, Mr. Deputy Chair, where we are, please?

Mr. Deputy Chairman: We are dealing on page 149 of the Main Estimates. It is Appropriation No. 1, Seniors Directorate, and it is 1.(a) Salaries \$118,000. If you are looking in your supplementary, I guess we are dealing with—

Mr. Martindale: Okay, I think I have it, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

It is a fairly small department, and I think my questions will fit on this page. In fact, I notice that one of the objectives is: "To promote the interests of seniors and to ensure programs and policies are sensitive to their needs and concerns." Another one of the roles and missions is: "providing direction on policy options for the Cabinet Committee for Senior Citizens." We certainly hope that committee of cabinet recommended against deindexing the 55-Plus program but, because it is a cabinet committee, we will never know.

Since part of the mandate is to represent the views of seniors and seniors organizations, I think it is of interest to state publicly what those views are, especially on the deindexing of the 55-Plus program. We know that the Manitoba Society of Seniors is totally opposed to deindexing of 55-Plus and also the North Winnipeg Co-operative Community Council for Seniors are opposed. I was

at a recent meeting of this organization. All of the members of the organization are people who work with seniors. One member said that the deindexing of 55-Plus is the beginning of the end of the program. I hope that person was wrong, but no one contradicted that analysis.

Has the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Ducharme) succeeded in representing the views of seniors and seniors organizations in government? I think the answer is no. The proof is the deindexing of the 55-Plus program.

Who are we talking about? I think it is important to put on the record who seniors are, who are poor and who qualify for this program. I helped two of my constituents apply for the Life Saving Drug Program, which is an excellent program, I believe, under the Department of Health. I was quite surprised to find that their income for two people was between \$11,000 and \$12,000 a year, which happened to be just on the border line for the program. They did not qualify, but their income was \$7,000 a year below the poverty line.

Why are many seniors in our society poor? Well, many of them worked in the paid work force, but they were poorly paid. Many people over 55 are still in the work force, but are poorly paid. Many are on social assistance which is considerably below the poverty line. Many are retired, but their retirement income is below the poverty line.

* (1510)

One would think they should have income in addition to either social assistance or Old Age Security and/or the Guaranteed Income Supplement, but many worked for companies that had no pension plans. Many people worked for companies that had pension plans, but they were poor ones. Then there are people who only worked part time or were not in the work force long enough to accumulate a very good company pension. Of course, the same goes for the Canada Pension. The less you make, the less your Canada Pension is going to be. If you work part time or only work for part of your adult life, then your Canada Pension benefits are going to be lower as well. In fact, one of my constituents worked for 30 years and worked for four different companies and has no company pension.

There is a change, though. There is a trend. That is that more women are in the paid work force, and so more women are retiring with company

pensions and Canada Pension. That has affected the 55-Plus program. My understanding is that the take-up is declining in 55-Plus and the reason is more people over 55 who have company pension benefits. So what is the government doing? Well, they are deindexing the 55-Plus program at a time when the costs would or are declining because of the reduced take-up.

I would like to stop now and actually ask the minister to see if my assumptions are correct here. Is it true that the take-up is declining because more seniors are retiring with company pensions and Canada Pension benefits?

Mr. Ducharme: First of all, I am glad, as has been mentioned by the member, it has been mentioned by a couple of members, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) and also the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), in regard to the 55-Plus program.

I met with the MSOS approximately one week ago and explained the predicament that governments are in, there is the difficult times, and you have to remember that the 55-Plus program was not reduced. The 55-Plus program was continued at the same level it was the previous year, and explaining to the individuals and the MSOS, when you are looking at different decisions that you have to make, there are places that are to be reduced. We increased our health care. The member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) mentioned earlier in his remarks that in another province that is probably more fiscal, has more monetary values than we have, has cut back on their health care, which has hurt the seniors.

We felt that instead of cutting back on the seniors, we increased the health care benefits that are very, very necessary to seniors and everyone else, but especially to seniors who cannot or should not be lying there in a room and worrying about where they are going to make their payments. When we came down to that, we held the line on the 55-Plus. I have to mention and keep repeating that at the time there is no way that this government is considering discontinuing any 55-Plus program, but we have to remember that in '81 to '86 there was no increase by administration of that. I know that the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) was not part of that administration. However, when Winnipeg's inflation rates were at 8.8, 6.7, 3.6 and 4.1, when we had inflation rates at that amount in Winnipeg I am talking, in Canada they were 12 and 10 and 5 and 4

and 3 in those particular years. There was no increase by the NDP administration in those years.

I can see the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), he can criticize this government and he can get away with it because he was not here in '81-86, but I tell you every time that the previous administration gets up and makes remarks about how wonderful they were to the seniors, let us get it on the record, and let us get it on the record very, very clear, that they talked a lot, but they did not increase it at the times that the inflation was rampant and there was money around.

I will not apologize, when revenues were at zero and I am told that these difficult decisions are to be made, when we can increase the health care and we maintained the level. It also mentioned that we do not—also mentioned by the member that the lifesaving health drug program, that is part of the health program. We have shown, and when he gets to the Estimates of Health he will see that the health programs have increased, and I am saying that, as I explained to the others, when we sat down I felt, as a minister of Seniors, if I could hold the line I am doing well as Seniors minister. If I can hold it at what the seniors are getting instead of reducing the basics of health, housing, economic and transportation, these types of problems that have been mentioned by the members of this table. We have these problems. These problems are not overnight, and I tell every senior group when I see them that, you want to go back and start talking about the words of the previous administration, and what I could do as a Senior minister with \$1.8 million every day. It is gone, period, disappeared.

However, that is the position we took, and every department was taking those positions, and I was part and parcel, whether it be Government Services or whether it would be Seniors, and I sit in the large department, because I sit as a member on Seniors. It may not be a large department, but the way the new envelope is done, I sit with Family Services, I sit with Education, and I sit with Health, and those are the largest departments. When I see they are trying to adjust their books and they say, listen, we are increasing our departments, if you can hold the line. It has been mentioned time and time again. I am sure there are seniors out there and I agree.

I also have a mother who has been a widow for 20 years who never had a pension and who participates and probably has an income below \$1,000 a month, and living on her own. I agree, I

can see the tough times they are having, but when my mother says to me, Gerry, I just like to hold everything, at least I am not down in my income.

I am just saying that you get these people, and I am trying to go about the city and the province talking to these people and saying, these are the choices we had. Even with MSOS, you say, well, maybe we could have cut out the Seniors Days. Maybe that is your priority—or cut out the MSOS grant for one year or cut out the games that they have every year. Maybe you could have done that. However, I felt, instead of cutting out those types of programs that we at least keep everybody at the same level. That is what I attempted to do as Seniors minister.

Mr. Martindale: It is interesting that in cabinet discussions, no decrease, that is, keeping with the status quo, is considered a win. The minister said that 55-Plus was not reduced. I use the word "deindexed." I think that is an accurate way of describing it. There is, however, a reduction in the standard of living for people since inflation eats into their income if a program stays at the same level.

I would like to try one more time and find out if the minister is aware or if he could ask his staff whether in fact there has been a decrease in the take-up because there are more people retiring with pensions?

Mr. Ducharme: The details that you are asking on that would have to come from people who do the detail work, and you know who that is, that is Family Services. What I will do as minister and my staff is, we will direct that question on and make sure that information is ready for you when you appear at Family Services.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you. I have some figures here and I would just like to verify if they are correct. A single person would be eligible for a yearly total income of \$8,930.40 plus \$111.60 times four or four quarterly payments of \$111.60 for a total of \$9,376.80. This is for people who do not receive Old Age Security benefits but are eligible for 55-Plus. Are those figures correct, \$111.60 four times a year?

Mr. Ducharme: Yes, they are correct. I can also give you figures for '81-86. They were \$46.92, and they stayed like that for five years.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us how much below the poverty line \$9,376.80 a year is for

someone in a rural area and for a single person living in Winnipeg?

Mr. Ducharme: I do not have those figures in front of me.

Mr. Martindale: Well, it is \$260 below the poverty line for a rural person and \$4,778.20 below the poverty line income for a person living in Winnipeg. Can the minister tell us what some commonly accepted definitions of poverty are in Canada?

Mr. Ducharme: I would like to at this time tell the member what the total expenditure for the 55-Plus is. He also has those numbers probably in front of him. They are \$9 million for this year. I would not—you are asking an opinion—

Mr. Martindale: No, I am asking for facts.

Mr. Ducharme: Well, I have not got those facts.

Mr. Martindale: There are two commonly accepted definitions of poverty in Canada. One is that the poverty line is 58.5 percent of income spent on three basic necessities: food, shelter and clothing. Another definition, I think it is the one of the Canadian Council on Social Development, is that you are below the poverty line if you earn less than half of the average income in Canada. So we see that the income supplement, even for people who are eligible for 55-Plus, is considerably below the poverty line.

*(1520)

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): What if you live in a huge house and you cannot afford the mortgage?

Mr. Martindale: The member for Crescentwood says, what if you live in a huge house with a mortgage you cannot afford? This does not include people who are living in houses with huge mortgages.

Could the minister confirm the figures for a married person eligible for 55-Plus? They would get \$119.90 four times a year, is that correct?

Mr. Ducharme: That is correct.

Mr. Martindale: And how much below or above the poverty line would a couple in a rural area and in Winnipeg be?

Mr. Ducharme: The member has certainly one advantage. He is asking the question, he has the answer right after, so I would suggest maybe he could answer that one.

Mr. Martindale: A rural couple would be \$1,900 above the poverty line income of \$13,064. However, if a couple lived in Winnipeg and were on 55-Plus, their income would be \$4,228 below the poverty line which is \$19,187 for two people living in Winnipeg. These figures, I believe, were provided by the Manitoba Society for Seniors.

Do you think that by deindexing 55-Plus, people who are eligible for it have any hope of keeping up with inflation and increases in the cost of living, given how far below the poverty line they are?

Mr. Ducharme: To the member, I am wondering whether his government in '81-'86 took those figures into consideration when they gave no increases from '81 to '86. They should have. I thank the member for those, but he has got to remember that we want to keep going back to the figures that are addressed by his opposition on the 55-Plus. I will say to him again that my answer to the people of Manitoba is that when rapid revenues were increasing every year, that their particular government did not increase it.

I can take the criticism from the Liberals again, because the Liberals were not involved in making those decisions, but your government was. You did absolutely nothing for those people from '81 to '86 in increasing their 55-Plus program. When again you want to talk about a minimum type of allowances and what people's poverty line is, can you imagine how they were affected when we had increases of 8, 6, 7 percent? When inflation was at that height, what did you consider then?

When we are at a place where revenues are flat, we are asking everybody to hold the line. However, when you had the chance in those days, you did absolutely nothing either. You did nothing at all. As a matter of fact, if you want to talk about people losing their income as a result, I would say it was much greater in '81-'86 as a result of no increases than it is now.

Mr. Martindale: I do not think it is accurate for the minister to say that the NDP government did absolutely nothing. I am sure that he has been well briefed. I am sure he has the figures with him. I believe there was a substantial increase in 1986. Perhaps the minister would care to read that into the record.

Mr. Ducharme: I believe in 1987 you increased it.

Mr. Martindale: By how much?

Mr. Ducharme: You increased it by about approximately 80 percent, I believe, and I will tell you what you increased it in '87. You increased it in '87 from \$46.92 to \$94, is what you increased it in '86-87. This is after you had increases in revenue of 12, 10, five, four and three in revenue.

Mr. Martindale: So the NDP government almost doubled the 55-Plus supplement in 1987. Is that correct?

Mr. Ducharme: You do not know what we are going to do in the next legislation, but at least we kept to what our revenues were. That is the way we have it set, is our revenues. We have a zero revenue, where you in 1981-86 had a very large increase in your revenues, and you did not increase them. I will keep repeating that for the record.

Mr. Martindale: According to my colleague, the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), the NDP government increase in 1987 was 104 percent, so I would suggest that more than made up for inflation between '81 and '87.

This is one area that I would actually be happy to be wrong in, and that is the prediction by someone that deindexing is the beginning of the end of the program. I have listened very carefully as this minister and the Premier have answered questions in the House, and one of the things that I heard the Premier say was, for this year only. So I would like to ask the minister if there is some hope that next year in the budget, if he and the seniors committee in cabinet fight a little harder and are more successful, 55-Plus will be reindexed in the budget next year.

Mr. Ducharme: There is always hope to increase benefits. There is always hope to increase all budgets and give more benefits. It would be a lot easier if I had been in government in 1981-86 when I had the chance of those revenues to increase.

However, I have been put in probably the worst position anybody ever could have been put in. It would be a lot easier to give money away and increase benefits than to say, hold the line. I wish previous administrations had done that.

Mr. Martindale: I would have to agree that the minister is in a difficult position, but his government had to make choices. We as opposition parties, on behalf of seniors as individuals and organizations, regret that the choice that they made was to reduce government expenditure which would have helped many in our society who are amongst the most

vulnerable. That is senior citizens, most of whom are living below the poverty line and many of whom are way below the poverty line, if they qualify for 55-Plus.

Mr. Ducharme: It is too bad the previous administration had not saved 10 cents on every dollar. I could have really had a 55-Plus program that probably would have been the top one in Canada.

Mr. Martindale: I have some more questions on another topic and, if the minister wants to take this as notice, I would be pleased to have him get back to me, because it does not directly bear on his department, but it is a concern of seniors. It has to do with a change in licences, I presume, part of the Department of Transport. It is the requirement that people must have a Class 4 licence to drive vans and other kinds of vehicles, and I was aware of this change a year ago. I assumed that it was done for safety reasons, et cetera.

I was surprised to find that this has had a big impact on seniors organizations. For example, Luther Home in north Winnipeg has two vans which they loan out free of charge to many different organizations. In fact, I used to be a volunteer driver of one of those vans.

What has happened is that many seniors are unwilling to take the Class 4 driver's licence test and so seniors organizations are losing their volunteers. This is having a detrimental impact both on the volunteers who were driving the vans and on the organizations for whom they volunteer. So these agencies are concerned about this and I am concerned as well. It also has affected the agency that I used to work for.

I am wondering if this minister would talk to the Minister of Transport on behalf of the seniors and find out why this policy change in licensing was made and report to me. I will pass that on to the North Winnipeg Co-operative Community Council for Seniors and other organizations.

Mr. Ducharme: We have consulted with a couple of groups and we have raised this safety issue with the Department of Highways. I am told that that was a safety issue, but we have just sent a memorandum to him and that is where we are at right now. If there is some further information that comes forward, I will get back to the member.

* (1530)

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. We are being called into the House for a vote, so we will recess until the vote has taken place.

* * *

The committee took recess at 3:30 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:30 p.m.

* (1630)

Mr. Deputy Chairman: We are considering the Estimates of the Seniors Directorate, item 1. Seniors Directorate 1.(a) Salaries \$118,000. The honourable minister is answering the question.

Mr. Ducharme: Yes, before closure was called by the NDP government and we have now lost about—or NDP party, who think they are still government, I would like to clarify a question that was brought up about Class 4 licences.

I will read into the record, Mr. Deputy Chairman—first let me clarify that the revised definition of a bus in the Classified Driver Licence Regulation includes all motor vehicles with a seating capacity of more than 10 people, including the driver.

Effectively, a Class 4 licence is required to operate buses having a seating capacity between 11 and 24 persons, including the driver, while a Class 2 driver's licence is required to operate buses having a greater seating capacity.

Previously, the definition of a bus in our Manitoba Classified Driver Licence Regulation exempted vehicles which were not used for hire or compensation. Pursuant to the National Safety Code, which is a set of safety standards related to vehicles and drivers which all provinces have agreed to adopt, the unified classified driver licensing system was adopted as the standard for the classification of driver's licences.

Under the provision of the National Safety Code, the drivers of all vehicles, except those used purely for personal use, are subject to Class 4 or Class 2 driver's licensing requirements.

Since all provinces have agreed to classify vehicles for the purpose of driver's licences in accordance with the uniform classified driver's licence standard, any province which does not implement the standard will be placing their drivers in an awkward position before this amendment to the Classified Driver Licence Regulation in

Manitoba, affects a number of persons who operate buses for institutional purposes. Previously, as mentioned in the foregoing, the operators of such vehicles were exempt from the Class 4 or Class 2 licensing requirements, provided the vehicles were not operated for hire or compensation.

The whole point of the classified driver's licensing system, however, is to ensure that the persons are tested as to their ability to operate safely the various classes of vehicles described in the Class 5 driver's licensing system. To obtain the applicable Class 4 or Class 2 licence, a person is required to first file an approved medical examination report and then successfully complete a written and a road test.

Incidentally, I believe one of the major reasons why potential volunteer drivers may have been reluctant to undergo a driving test to obtain a Class 4 licence has been the possibility that they may lose their Class 5 licence privilege if their test results are below the qualifying level. I want to assure you that anyone wanting to operate a bus may take a test for a Class 4 licence without placing their Class 5 licence in jeopardy. A written test consisting of 15 multiple-choice questions and a Class 4 road test, 30 demerits maximum, are required to obtain a Class 4 driver's licence. At no time during the written or road test is a driver's Class 5 licence in jeopardy.

I trust you will understand that the purpose of the Class 5 driver's licence system is to ensure that drivers are able to operate various classes of vehicles safely before licences to operate such vehicles are issued.

I must comment that I guess the main reason is that you do have a lot of seniors who operate school buses, and I know in some institutions that we have, St. Amant and different areas, they operate buses, and I guess with the amount of passengers they want to make sure that there is that safety feature available. I want to put on record that their Class 5 is not in jeopardy.

Mr. Gaudry: Mr. Deputy Chairman, we have discussed previously the indexing of 55-Plus, and since I have advocated for it right from the start when we saw that it was being deindexed, I have received several letters. I would like to put one on record here. It was addressed to Mr. Filmon:

I am enclosing a coupon from an MSOS journal, as well as a copy of an unsigned letter to the editor of the journal. I did not write the letter, but I am in

full agreement, so I want to make sure you see it. I have a tear sheet of an ad your party put in the MSOS journal in September 1990. I am sending you a copy of it as well to remind you of what you said about seniors at the time. I have underlined several points you made, but have apparently forgotten. By the way, I hope your party paid for this, rather than the taxpayers, especially since you are renegeing on those promises.

You said, we want to do more, we can do more but only with your support on September 11. Well, sir, we did support you. At least some of us did, so where is the more. What we are getting is less. The SAFER program is not indexed and is reduced each year. The 55-Plus has been deindexed and will eventually disappear, as will SAFER. These are programs that are vital to the well-being of low-income seniors. At the same time, you are giving hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Rotary Pines development, which will benefit only high-income seniors. No doubt those who are applying for admittance are selling their homes so they can pay the \$30,000 entrance fee and the subsequent high rentals.

I might add that at my present income, government pensions only, it will take about two and a half years to receive that amount, not to save, but receive, and many seniors are worse off than I. By the way, sir, I trust you and Mr. Ernst are enjoying this lovely long weekend at your cottages at the lake. The seniors I am referring to cannot afford such luxuries and we have to stay home.

We are also appalled at your paying Mr. Hughes at our expense an incredible \$150 per hour. I predict that this inquiry, which is not really necessary, will end up costing the taxpayers, half of whom live outside of Winnipeg and are not all that concerned with the problem, at least \$200,000. Let us wait and see if I am right. In fact, while I am not a betting man, I will bet you \$100 I will be right. I cannot really afford it, but if I lose, I will donate that amount to the Winnipeg Humane Society, and if you lose, I will expect you to do the same. Will you take me up on that, and if you do, will you do it publicly?

By the way, I also recall that in your victory speech on that September night you made definite promises to seniors. Unfortunately, I cannot recall your exact words. I did send for a copy of the speech but what I received was only an outline, notes on what you would say if you won. So the promises you made to the seniors in that speech were obviously made

on the spur of the moment in the excitement of winning a majority, but were not from your heart. So much for promises from politicians, but I guess I am naive enough to hope for the best.

I am sure my name will be familiar to you. If not, I will remind you. For the past two years, after the SAFER cheques come at the end of July, I have been bugging your government to index this program so that the payment will not be reduced because of the indexing of the OAS, GIS, CPP, and DVA. Because we on pension received a little more from these programs, the SAFER was reduced.

Because of the help from the opposition, I managed to get you to increase the payments in January both years although the increase was not as much as the decrease had been therefore. Our SAFER cheques are decreasing year by year. Are you willing to admit that your aim is to do away altogether with SAFER and 55-Plus eventually? This is what some people in the appropriate departments have told me they believe. No names, I do not want to cause anyone to be fired.

I cannot understand how you can get rid of so many employees, many of whom will eventually end up on welfare, while at the same time giving away so much to developers and lawyers as mentioned earlier on page 1. But again, perhaps I am being naive, although at 70 I should know better.

You will be hearing from me again, Mr. Filmon, when I receive my July SAFER cheque, which I expect, in fact I know, will be once again reduced. This time I expect to have the MSOS behind me on the issue and I intend to do more than merely write letters to the editors to most of the newspapers in the province.

This year I intend to hold a press conference and publicize the issue even more. Do not worry, you will be hearing from me. By the way, in both of the previous years, I wrote to the Housing minister several times before I finally got a reply which was in political gobbledeyook. However, although I also wrote to the Minister of Seniors also several times, I never did hear from him. What is the use of having a Seniors minister if he ignores seniors problems? Each time I called his office, I was told a letter is being drafted, but I never did receive that letter.

I can assure you, Mr. Filmon, that if I do not receive replies, or if I do, and they are more or less unintelligible and do not answer my questions, I will go back to the media. In other words, I intend to

pursue this problem to the best of my ability, and if it means embarrassing the government and particular ministers, so be it.

Your majority is very slim, Mr. Filmon, and could become nonexistent in the near future. As you continue to hit upon poor seniors and fatten up the already rich developers and businesses and wealthy seniors, as you are doing, you stand to lose a great deal of support. Many of the poor seniors vote Tory anyway, simply because they always have, but as your government causes them to become increasingly poorer, even in some cases destitute, they are bound, eventually, to switch their support and, as I said, your majority is already an endangered species.

* (1640)

Mr. Deputy Chairman, that is one of several letters I have received and I would like to refer the unsigned letter to the editor of MSOS where they say, what all governments forget is that we seniors did not have the advantage that the younger people now have. They have some kind of retirement plan in reserve in their retirements. The Manitoba government has just announced the cutback on the 55-Plus supplement, meaning no increase, once again centering out the single person.

It is bad enough that we have all to contend with the GST and cutbacks in our rail services and transfer payments, utilities have increased along with property taxes, but the Manitoba Resident Homeowners' Tax Assistance has been \$325 for years, as well as the Manitoba pensioners' school tax assistance at \$175.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, my question to the minister—seniors information line. In September of 1989, a toll-free seniors information line was designed to provide seniors with easy access to government departments. Until March 31, 1990, the directorate received 500 calls for information on programs. How many calls have been received since?

Mr. Ducharme: Approximately 1,700.

Mr. Gaudry: Does the information line serve to solve the problems of the seniors or does it simply direct them to another government department?

Mr. Ducharme: Generally what we will do is, if we know the answer and we can solve the problem right away, we will do it. However, if it means that we gather information and get information from the other departments, we do that also. So we do both.

Mr. Gaudry: Does the information line have someone who can respond and answer the French-speaking seniors who would call to enquire?

Mr. Ducharme: Yes.

Mr. Gaudry: In the last three weeks we have been calling the department for having a bilingual information for the 55-Plus program and we have been told two weeks and maybe the first of June. We know the program's application is the end of June of '91. It is not the first time seniors in St. Boniface have asked me if I could get it for them and like I say, it is over three weeks now that I have asked and I have had no concrete reply as to when it is going to be available.

Mr. Ducharme: Okay, first of all, again specifics, that comes from Family Services, as you can probably appreciate. In answer to your bilingual, I would like you to know that because I took over the Seniors portfolio and a lot of people in the southeast section of the city of Winnipeg are bilingual, my new EA, who will be helping along with the SA, is totally bilingual. That is one of the purposes that when we did some changes, I asked for that specific person because of the bilingual and I think the member knows who that is.

Mr. Gaudry: One more question and I will pass it on to the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos). When will we receive the final report on the elder abuse discussion paper?

Mr. Ducharme: Okay. First of all, you did ask some questions earlier in your preamble in regard to—I know you mentioned about Tache. I was there yesterday. I wonder if you noticed on one of the doors—to show you that the Tache hospital is very close to several of us—the St. Vital JCs, of which I was president of the year, donated a room to the tune of about \$92,000 in 1968-69. I just wonder if you ever saw that little room with the plaque on it?

Mr. Gaudry: Oh, yes, I have seen all of them. I have been door to door during the election campaign.

Mr. Ducharme: Good. You and my mother-in-law, right?

You also mentioned, in regard to the video that we are producing, there will be a bilingual video. The literature will be bilingual. We will also have that in Francais and English.

We will be producing a video very, very shortly. What we have done is we are now in the process of

having someone write the information, and now we are in the process of having prices come forward from people who produce videos. That is out of that \$100,000 announcement that we made. So I can assure the member that we are doing everything we can for the Francais, and we will continue to do that.

We have been working also with the banking association in regard to the fiscal problems that we have, the financial abuse. When I became minister, what we did was we looked at the consultant work throughout the province that was carried on by the previous ministers. When that report came forward, we have been using parts of that report.

We have an abuse resource centre that we have established. I think we have put in about \$180,000 over a three-year period. What kept coming up was the financial abuse, and so we felt, let us tackle that right away. That is what we have done. You can see by my budget I was able to hold the line, but it did not change very much from the year before.

Mr. Gaudry: Just one final question on the videos. How will you proceed so that the seniors are all aware that this is available? Are you going to go through the organizations?

Mr. Ducharme: We are going to go out and produce about 300 copies of the English and about 50 Francais. There are organizations, as the member knows. I have met with most of them. I have met with, I think, probably in the Francais will be the federation of Franco-Manitobaine, the one on Provencher 340. I have met with them already. They are very pleased with my bilingual staff. We will also go out and work with those specific groups on the videos and on the information and the pamphlets, hoping that along the way we will adopt more of the information that has come out of the consultants when they went out throughout the province.

Mr. Santos: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, before we go to the substantive issue areas, I would like to take a look at the Appropriation No. 24-1, Reference No. 1, page 15, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review. There are only two major items here to be scrutinized, Salaries, which take almost half of the total appropriation and the Other Expenditures.

When I look at the Managerial salary, for example, it is increased by \$2,200 and the rest of them also by the same proportion. It amounts to 4 percent

increase for every member of the staff. Is that correct?

Mr. Ducharme: I am told that is just a normal increase every year, approximately 4 percent.

Mr. Santos: In my mind, I want to contrast this with recipients of benefits. Instead of getting an increase at all, they got frozen and increase denied. So I just like to point out the disparity between the two.

Mr. Ducharme: Yes, but we also deal with many, many seniors who also have increases. I am saying that this is the amount that was put in the budget. It is put in and if it is not used, then it will go back. It is just an amount that is put into your budget figures. It is not just to raise, it is also to work with administrative support, et cetera.

Mr. Santos: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, if we look at the Other Expenditures categories, there is an item there called Communication/Advertising. There is the initial thing: \$52,500. It is increased to \$98,200 and when I computed it, it is an addition of \$45,700, amounting to 80 percent increase.

Can you explain the increase?

* (1650)

Mr. Ducharme: I was told that if you take a look at the other line, you will notice that you had two lines last year and they were put in the wrong category last year. If you combine those two, you will notice that eats up a lot of the \$98,000. If you take the \$52,500 and the \$46,000, if you take your amounts, our video will also come out of this along with all our pamphlets that I was talking about, the financial abuse, will also come out of that proportion. That was the reason. Our cost to the financial abuse program was \$50,000 and the feds are putting in \$50,000.

Mr. Santos: The last item they call Other Operating. It is not clear what that is. It is \$17,000 increased by \$8,000 to \$25,000, which is 47 percent increase. Can you explain the item, what it constitutes and what is the increase for?

Mr. Ducharme: I have to apologize, I do not know what all the amounts are. We have it down as operating costs. What I could do for the member is I will get you a list of what specifics come out of there. I will make sure I provide you with that. I will give you a list of examples of what comes out of there. If you notice though that our overall costs and

total expenditures have only gone up totally for the year by \$4,000.

Mr. Santos: Totally it is about 2 percent increase, \$4,600 increase overall. What bothers us is the way it is distributed, the increases obtained not by the seniors who are recipients of substandard services, but in advertising and other operating which cannot be explained at this point.

Mr. Ducharme: No, I explained that a major increase of that is \$50,000 for a video that is going to work with the financial abuse and all the pamphlets going out to instruct them. That is what is going to come out of there, Mr. Santos, is that out of there, that major part is coming out and that is all going to be coming out of this year's. So that is a major part of the total. So the seniors are going to benefit by that amount.

Mr. Santos: The Elder Abuse Resource Centre, Age and Opportunity, reported that for the last three months of the year 1990, there were 54 female victims, 11 male victims, totalling 65 cases of elderly abuse. On the part of the abusers, they were distributed as follows: There were 37 male abusers, 24 female abusers and four of them unknown. What are the four unknowns?

Mr. Ducharme: I would not know what the four unknowns would be. Again, I will get back to the member on the four unknowns. Unless, wait—the only guess I would have is that there might have been some people who will probably maybe give in their names and there would be calls that would not be identified. Some people might not give their names. The same thing happens, I know, with the women's abuse centre. Some will phone in and not give their name; they are still hesitant. I know they try everything in that particular program to try to identify. I know when I worked with Housing and I was over at Osborne, they try to identify, but they record even the ones who will not leave their name. I am informed that the phone calls, nonidentified, are the four unknowns.

Mr. Santos: Mr. Deputy Chairman, how would the video lead to the remedying or alleviating these cases of elderly abuse?

Mr. Ducharme: What the video will be, it will be on financial abuse and it will be awareness. We will sit down and work with the different seniors. As you can probably appreciate, financial abuse, if you look at it, is probably not by a stranger in so many times. It is also by families, and we really have to tie into

that and that awareness, that families do take advantage of seniors. We are going to work on that.

Mr. Santos: In view of this inability of the honourable minister to answer these basic questions, I would like to make a motion.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Would the honourable member read the motion out loud?

Mr. Santos: That the Minister responsible for Seniors be censured severely for his government's cruel and callous decision to deny the needed increase to seniors 55-Plus program.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: It has been moved by the member for Broadway and seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) that the Minister responsible for Seniors be censured severely for his government's cruel and callous decision to deny the needed increase to the seniors 55-Plus program.

I am ruling the motion out of order. Citation 951: It is not allowable to attach a condition or an expression of an opinion to a vote or to change the destination.

An Honourable Member: What is the point . . .

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Ducharme: I do not mind somebody passing a motion because they do not like what happened on 55-Plus, but for someone to sit here today who I could criticize on issues he did in the House and things he said in the House, I really resent the idea of ever saying that I am cruel to seniors.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The honourable minister did not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Mr. Santos: If the honourable minister would care to read the motion carefully—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I have ruled the motion out of order as of this time.

* * *

Mr. Santos: It is not directed against the minister's government—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Labour, on a point of order?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): No, I would like the floor, to speak.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, I, too, share the concern that the—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Are you speaking to the motion?

Mr. Praznik: No, I am speaking on the matter on hand, Mr. Deputy Chairman, which is the matter of Estimates. You have recognized me and I have the floor.

Mr. Deputy Chair, we on this side of the House—the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Ducharme) began, whether under point of order or otherwise, to respond to the motion that was ruled out of order. We on our side of the House sat and listened to a speech about women from the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) in which members of his own party looked in great horror. We looked upon a member who made statements at his own party, if a member on our side had spoken—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that we are dealing with the Seniors Directorate, and he is not being relevant at this time. I am calling him to order.

Mr. Praznik: The point that I am making is that we sit here and we listen to the hypocrisy of members of the New Democratic Party who try to champion all causes, particularly seniors. The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) carries on a chain of questions that make his party sound like they are legitimately concerned about seniors issues, as they try to be about women's issues, yet the reality of it is hypocrisy, time and time and time again. We saw it when the member for Burrows spoke about women and the same thing is true in the case of seniors, because when his party was in government—

Point of Order

Mr. Martindale: On a point of order, I do not know what speech the minister is referring to, but I would like to ask him to retract. I do not think I have made any speeches on women in the House or in committee.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order, please. The time is now 5 p.m. and time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

SUPPLY—NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Madam Chairman (Louise Dacquay): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs. We are on page 140, 1.(a) Minister's Salary \$10,300.

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Madam Chairman, my questions deal with the Native Affairs Secretariat of the minister's operation.

Members of this House had the pleasure this morning of meeting with some individuals involved with the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council police force. That organization is probably well known by the minister in his capacity as a very effective organization and, quite clearly, an organization that should probably be expanded, not downsized, in an area that we should be moving in clearly as we move towards self-government for aboriginal people and other improvements in the system to try to redress some of the wrongs of the past 100 years.

My question is: Does the minister envision because of the tremendous underfunding of this organization—in fact, I can advise the minister they only receive 15 percent of their funds from the provincial government and capital allocations are almost nonexistent. I am wondering if the minister can indicate whether or not his branch will be assisting this organization and other aboriginal policing organizations in order to expand or improve their operations, not downsize which may occur as a result of government cutbacks in various areas.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs): Madam Chairman, the member should be advised that the department that I represent and the Native Affairs Secretariat, in fact, do not do any basic program funding or very little. The program which he is referring to, the DOTC, is funded under the ministry of Justice, and those questions would be appropriately asked during those Estimates. I do, though, say as well I appreciate the excellent work that the DOTC force carry out on behalf of the Native community, and I can say that I have supported—as the role I have to play in the Native Affairs activities, I do in fact support the ministry of Justice in their endeavours to carry on the funding.

* (1430)

Mr. Chomlak: I am wondering if the minister can indicate whether or not he sees any role for the Native secretariat in terms of at least sourcing or finding adequate funding for this very worthwhile organization and other organizations of their kind in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Downey: Basically, Madam Chairman, as the member is well aware, there would be two sources of funding, one from the federal government, the other from the provincial government, and I support both sources of funding. As far as the Native Affairs Secretariat, I encourage funding to be continued.

Mr. Chomlak: I am very happy to hear that the minister will encourage that funding continue. I am wondering if the minister will encourage that funding increase from this government, a government Treasury Board which he sits on, that does allocate these funds to an organization of this kind.

Mr. Downey: As the member well knows, the party with which he sits has basically strapped the province financially to the tune of which none of us are very happy about with an annual interest bill being paid of \$551 million this year and increasing difficulties that the taxpayers are undergoing. So it is a time of having to choose priorities, maintain levels of funding at last year's level; in fact, in some cases, we have seen some unwanted reductions. However, we are living in the real world, and it is a matter of allocating the resources that are available. When and if there is an opportunity to see some improvement, and when we do see some improvement in the economy, then decisions will have to be made as far as expansion of these kinds of programs.

Mr. Chomlak: Of course, the minister is well aware that the party that he represents has significantly offloaded many of the costs of doing business and the costs of running government programs onto municipalities and organizations just like this, just like the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council police force that must carry out additional activities on behalf of the RCMP and other policing services because other organizations and groups cannot participate in those activities. I am wondering if the minister has any suggestion as to how we can improve, at least, the capital allocations for this particular organization.

Mr. Downey: Again, Madam Chairman, I indicate to the member that the Department of Justice does the funding for the DOTC. I want to say, as well, that we do not and have not offloaded any provincial government costs onto DOTC. It is a matter of having to deal responsibly with the scarce resources that the province has available to it. I can again reiterate that is the situation because of the irresponsible policies and spending activity of the previous administration.

Mr. Chomlak: We continue to obtain the same scripted response from this minister as I obtained from other ministers in this government during other processes of the Estimates debate. Will the minister undertake today to assure this House that he will lobby in his capacity as minister responsible to the Native secretariat with the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) in order to ensure that the grants are not only maintained but increased to this organization and to expand this very worthwhile organization—something that should be increasing, not decreasing, as a result of this government's lack of foresight.

Mr. Downey: Madam Chairperson, I will continue to work on behalf of the Native community on all worthwhile projects.

Mr. Chomlak: Will this minister give us assurances that he will ask the Minister of Justice to expand in his capacity as minister responsible for the Native secretariat, the role of the province in funding the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council police force?

Mr. Downey: I will, Madam Chairman, do my best to try to maintain the programs that are identified as worthwhile through the different government programs.

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): I recognize that this particular portion of the debate can be very broad. There are a number of areas that I would like to discuss with the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) that pertain to the North, that pertain to government policy, particularly with respect to the North, but are not necessarily in the direct jurisdiction of the Minister of Northern Affairs.

Madam Chair, the Minister of Northern Affairs knows full well that his department has provided support for the construction of winter roads into northern communities. One of those communities was the community of Pukatawagan. I am wondering whether the minister, in his capacity as minister responsible for the events in northern Manitoba or having some responsibility, whether, in fact, he was consulted when the Department of Highways decided to withdraw its support for the winter road system including the communities of Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei, Bloodvein and Pukatawagan.

Mr. Downey: Madam Chairman, I can say that these general discussions took place. I was aware that there were decisions being made. I guess the decision by Highways was based on the fact that

there was alternate communication network to that community by rail and by air. I will be the first to recognize the difficulties that a community faces when it does not have winter road access to their communities. The kind of implications that communities will face because of that will be looked at by the department over the next few months.

Mr. Storie: Madam Chairperson, I guess we can take some satisfaction or some comfort in that the minister is going to be reviewing this but the fact of the matter is that this is no longer a luxury. A winter road for these communities is important financially to the communities. I do not know if the minister is aware of how much money community councils, band councils, can save by using the winter road versus their alternative, in this case—the argument the Department of Transportation is using is that they have an alternative.

I can tell you that to ship a box of groceries from Cranberry Portage into Pukatawagan costs more than \$30. That is just for transportation. To ship, obviously, a load of lumber for housing construction or anything else is prohibitively expensive and winter roads serve a very important economic purpose. It is not just a question of community access for the sake of recreation or visiting family and friends, et cetera. This is an important element and it is something that these communities have fought long and hard to achieve.

Madam Chairperson, we are very disappointed and I know that the minister has received comments and letters from communities expressing that concern. It would also be nice to think that that was the only area this government has attacked in northern Manitoba. The fact is that they have, in a very broad-brush way, attacked many of the services that are provided to Northerners.

* (1440)

One of the areas that concerns me the most is the area of accessibility to health care. This government has decided in its wisdom, or lack thereof, to impose a \$50 user fee on the Northern Patient Transportation Program. If there is any single act that shows the lack of understanding of the realities facing northern Manitobans, it is this act. A \$50 user fee.

When I asked the question of the Minister of Health and the First Minister about why they had singled out Northerners for the first major user fee in the health care system, they said well, they are

getting a service that is free and nobody else has that kind of a service. That shows a degree of ignorance which you would not expect from a front bench of a government.

I have sent copies of correspondence to the Minister of Health and copies to the First Minister that indicate quite clearly that the Northern Patient Transportation program does not begin to cover the real costs Northerners face in getting health care. For some reason the Minister of Health does not understand that some communities in northern Manitoba do not have doctors. To access the simple basic necessities of maintaining their health, they require transportation to a doctor's office, usually in one of the larger centres like Flin Flon or Snow Lake or Thompson or Leaf Rapids.

Madam Chairperson, they cannot get in their car and drive to those communities. The Minister of Northern Affairs has now taken away their winter roads. For someone living in the community of Brochet or Granville Lake, it is a \$250 charter to get in to get a doctor's appointment to have some serious ailment looked after or to have some diagnosis, some follow-up treatment. For those people, every time they see a doctor it is going to cost them \$50.

Madam Chairperson, I have a woman who called me the other day saying, what am I going to do; we are a single-income family, low by northern standards even. This woman is required to see a specialist in the city of Winnipeg not for emergency surgery, not for cancer treatment, but an equally serious illness, a follow-up treatment for an illness, on a monthly basis. Her doctor has told her that if she was in Winnipeg, she would be seeing the doctor every two weeks. This woman is now going to be charged an extra \$600.

For the record, I want to tell members opposite and this Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) what he is doing. This individual, her family has three children. She gets on a bus at eight o'clock at night, travels on the bus all night, spends five hours in Winnipeg during which time she has her medical appointment, gets on the bus again and spends another 12 hours on the bus, so she spends 24 hours out of 29 on the bus to get medical treatment. She is now going to pay an extra \$50 every time that happens for that privilege. On top of that, she spends about \$50 for meals, for food, for other expenses, every time that happens. She is spending \$1,200 per year now under the new

government user fee system, \$1,200 to access the exact same service that is available to 600,000 people in Winnipeg without the cost of \$1—exact same service, and this minister talks about that being fair.

Madam Chairperson, I want the Minister of Northern Affairs to tell this House whether he, as Minister of Northern Affairs, consulted with anyone in northern Manitoba, whether they be health care givers themselves, or interest groups, representative groups in northern Manitoba, whether he consulted with anyone before he allowed his Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and his government to impose Manitoba's first systemically discriminatory user fee.

Mr. Downey: I am tempted to let the member put all his questions forward and then respond to them all at once. Then maybe we could allow some other members to ask questions as well, but it really does not matter. I will respond briefly to him.

First of all, I do appreciate fully the difficulties that many Northerners in remote communities face as it relates to the winter road situation, but I also want to remind him that there are many months of the year that there is not a winter road available to them. He uses the example of groceries. I am not sure how they would get the groceries in at another time of the year when the winter roads—they just do not bring—

An Honourable Member: They haul it into the store.

Mr. Downey: I know, but you referred to one box of groceries at being \$30. I appreciate that there are major supplies brought in, whether it is fuel, groceries and the whole thing. I will be honest. I said to him, I will take a look at what the cost implications are for those communities and what in fact the difficulties are going to be imposed by it. We have several months to do that, but I can tell you I fully appreciate that, the difficulties that communities would face.

I just want to touch briefly on it—and I am fully concerned about any individual who has a serious health problem. The member refers to one individual who has a problem equally as bad as cancer. I think anyone who has a problem equally as bad as cancer, the member deserves to take it to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) for consideration. If this person has that kind of a difficulty, I mean, I am very much a lay person when it comes to medical activities or problems, but I

would think that would be worthy of a special consideration if the problem is as serious as cancer.

I just though want to briefly try to get an understanding of why the member is so upset about this. A person living in Swan River has to drive—

An Honourable Member: They have a hospital right there, first of all.

Mr. Downey: Okay. They have a hospital right there. They also have a hospital in Flin Flon, as the member referred, in Thompson, and services available.

An Honourable Member: It is a plane ride to get there.

Mr. Downey: The member says, it is a plane ride. What it is in fact, if it is an emergency situation or life-threatening situation, the member is fully aware that there is no charge. It is an additional \$50 if it is not that situation, which the member is saying is not fair.

I have not had, and I say this seriously, to my knowledge I have not had one letter from a northern person saying that this is causing an imposition on them that they are not able to handle. I have not had one. No, I have not. If I have, it has been not to my knowledge.

I am concerned about people who are in emergency situations getting the service, but again it is the same situation as the member advocating that a person who has to come from Swan River should have all their transportation paid for them to come to the doctor whom they choose. Is that what he is advocating?—or Benito or Cowan. I do not suppose there is a doctor in Cowan. Is that what he is advocating, that they should now have their transportation paid? That is the question.

I think that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), and he will be getting into his Estimates, will be able to further respond in a way in which I am sure will be maybe not within the members agreement, but the Minister of Health will be able to fully explain the policy. Now that the Minister of Health is here, I will put the case before him that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) said.

The member for Flin Flon said that there is an individual who lives in his constituency who has a disease as serious or a problem as serious as cancer, and the \$50 imposition of transportation charge is causing that individual some difficulty.

I said to him, if the individual has a problem as serious as cancer, then I think it causes need for a special review as to that situation. I am sure it would, but let us look at that specific situation, but the overall policy I believe should be answered during the Department of Health's Estimates.

As far as I am concerned, as Minister responsible for Northern Affairs, to my knowledge I have not received one letter or one phone call of concern about the imposition of the \$50 charge.

Mr. Storle: Madam Chairperson, I do not know whether the minister himself has received letters, but I can tell him that the community of Flin Flon, the city council, town council of the communities of South Indian Lake, Snow Lake, the Leaf Rapids health centre, among others, have already written expressing their dismay at this kind of imposition of a user fee on Northerners.

Madam Chairperson, the lack of understanding of the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) is astounding. The Minister of Northern Affairs still wants to use Swan River as an example. Swan River has a modern hospital. They have doctors in their community. When someone in Swan River or the surrounding area, when they are sick, they can travel within 10 or 15 or 5 or 25 minutes and see a doctor. In northern Manitoba, they have to charter a plane to see a doctor. To get primary health care they have to use the Northern Patient Transportation Program. Many of these people live at or below poverty. They cannot afford \$50 one time, let alone \$50 time and time again to get health care. There is no similarity between the experience of many isolated northern communities, many Northerners, and the example that the Minister of Northern Affairs references.

* (1450)

The fact is, if someone is sick in Swan River—I have driven to Swan River many times—if someone is sick in Swan River and wants to get specialized health care, which we also have to travel to get, and I recognize that rural Manitobans also have to travel to get specialized health care—we are talking about primary health care they have to travel to get. To have their son's broken arm attended they have to use the Northern Patient Transportation Program, or they have to spend hundreds of dollars.

Madam Chairperson, we are talking about families where there may be seniors involved. There may be many young children in a family who

require medical attention, medical advice more than periodically, on a regular basis. This minister and this government have no idea the havoc they are going to create in terms of health care of Northerners. It is patently unfair.

I also want to say, Madam Chairperson, that this minister and this government do not understand the costs involved in travelling and attending for health care appointments, for testing in Winnipeg, in particular, where most of the specialized testing occurs.

If you lived in South Indian Lake, or if this minister lived in Tadoule Lake, to get to a single appointment of a specialist to have your arthritis checked or your cataracts checked or follow-up for cancer treatment requires a minimum of three days, a minimum of two days away.

We all acknowledge that the Northern Patient Transportation Program is useful. It was introduced by the Schreyer government in recognition of the difficulties Northerners face in accessing adequate health care. Madam Chairperson, the minister and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), and, for heaven's sakes, the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) of this province refuse to recognize that. Not only are they now asking people to pay the first \$50 for transportation, they are asking them also to continue to pay hundreds of dollars in addition for food and accommodation.

That is something that no other Manitoban has to endure, nor should any other Manitoban have to endure it. Neither should the people of northern Manitoba have to endure that kind of hardship. It is creating a two-tiered system. It is attacking the people who have least access to adequate medical care, and it is patently unfair and unacceptable.

The Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) does not appear to know that this fee is not in place as we speak. In fact, the Northern Patient Transportation Program only believes that the fee is going to be implemented as of July 1. We do not know what conditions are going to be attached to it, but, Madam Chairperson, the announcement by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) stated that the fee would be a charge, that the \$50 fee would be a charge to elective transport. Well, elective transport is everything that is not emergency.

Yes, we have an air ambulance. In fact, for the minister's information, the people of Swan River have access to the air ambulance. The people in

33 other communities outside of northern Manitoba have access to the air ambulance.

It is recognized that rural Manitobans also suffer inaccessibility to health care, but they are not being charged an extra \$50 every time they seek medical attention. That is what is happening in many, many communities where there is no primary health care, Madam Chairperson. The fact of the matter is that this is a user fee based on geography. It is an attack on the health of Northerners, and for the minister to stand up in his place and defend that kind of practice is totally -(interjection)-

Madam Chairperson, the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) from his seat says, I have to pay. Does the minister think it is acceptable that he can access any specialist, any hospital, any service, the best medical services we can provide in the province of Manitoba at no charge and people in northern Manitoba should have to pay \$50? Does he call that fair? Every time he chooses to go down and see a specialist for follow-up cancer treatment, for whatever, he pays an extra \$50. It is totally and patently unfair. We still pay all of the charges that the member for Rossmere pays.

I also wrote to the minister about an example of a patient who used the emergency air ambulance and the Northern Patient Transportation Program and still had a bill of \$400. We face many more difficulties than the member for Rossmere. We are transported to at least two different hospitals before we get to the specialized care that sometimes we require. For the members on that side and the front bench to defend this policy is just incomprehensible.

Madam Chairperson, I can tell you that if the Minister of Northern Affairs has not received a letter yet, when Northerners start paying this totally unacceptable fee, they will be hearing from Northerners, because it is unfair. It is the unkindest cut of all, and it is abandoning the most important service that people in northern Manitoba rely on, and that is the health care system.

Madam Chairperson, I wrote to the Minister of Health expressing my concern over a number of cases where individuals were being charged in excess of what they could bear financially for accessing the health care system. I asked the Minister of Health to look into the Northern Patient Transportation Program and to start making some improvements, improvements that recognize that medicine has changed a lot since the introduction of

the Northern Patient Transportation Program in 1972 or '73.

One of the changes, of course, has been the introduction of specialized diagnostic equipment. We did not have CAT scans, IMRs and mammography units, and those things that are used to detect certain kinds of very serious diseases. Now, the doctors in rural and northern Manitoba want access to that specialized diagnostic equipment so Northerners are being sent to that equipment in southern Manitoba more frequently and justifiably so. If we are going to have equitable access to medical treatment, we have to have access to that specialized equipment.

This minister and this government are now telling Northerners that if they want the same treatment as Winnipeggers and other southern Manitoba residents, they are going to pay \$50 every time they need access to that equipment. Madam Chairperson, the people who are going to suffer are going to be the young in northern Manitoba, seniors in northern Manitoba and then everyone else. There is a tremendous health cost to this decision. It is unfair, it is unacceptable, both from a financial point of view and a medical point of view. This government is going to change its mind one way or another.

My question to the Minister of Northern Affairs, finally, is, will he now—I hope that he understands the nature of this problem more succinctly—stand up and tell this House when he is going to get the government to reverse its discriminatory health care and accessibility policy?

Mr. Downey: Madam Chairman, let me again reiterate that the member's question should well be placed to the Department of Health and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) during those Estimates. He has heard what I have said, No. 1, that there will be no one denied an emergency service in health care. Where, in fact, the member does not come clean is he uses some of the poorest examples to try and make his case. He has not clearly been able to, I think, put his position forward in which it is effective. He is using an old New Democratic scare tactic that it is a user fee. In fact, it is not a user fee.

Let us talk about fairness. Is he saying that the policy should apply to someone from Cowan, Manitoba; someone from Cowan, Manitoba, should now only pay \$50 towards coming to Winnipeg to

get a service from the medical system that is an elective activity?

* (1500)

He is saying that they should have to pay only the first \$50 of the transportation charge. Is that what he is saying, the people from Baldur should only pay the first \$50 of transportation to come to elective surgery in Winnipeg? Is that what he is saying? Is he saying that about communities of areas outside the city in rural Manitoba?

I think again, Madam Chairman, the member has not made his case very well. If there is a person needing emergency service and directed to come by the doctor, then it is completely paid for. These are elective situations of which there is a \$50 charge for individuals.

An Honourable Member: Have you seen a broken arm?

Mr. Downey: Again, fixing a broken arm? If the patient is directed to come to get their arm fixed, I am sure that would be looked after. Common sense has to be applied and I am sure it will be by the Department of Health.

Madam Chairman: Item 1.(a) Minister's Salary—

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): This minister has repeatedly advised this Chamber during Question Period, as well as during the Estimates process, that he has a genuine commitment to the people of the North. After having said that, he then proceeds to cut a total of \$2.6 million from his department's budget.

As if that were not enough, he adds insult to injury to the people of the North by telling them that Northerners just did not know how to vote in the last provincial election which is why they are now being punished by this government by way of programs and services cuts, laying off of workers during this time of recession, when 225 workers at Repap are being laid off for five months intermittently.

The minister's sense of commitment to the people of the North, in my mind and in the minds of all northern people, is seriously under question, because his actions since the last election have clearly not reflected any degree of that purported commitment. He has refused to listen to northern concerns like all of those people who have already been laid off or those people whose futures have been placed in uncertainty, because they do not

know if they will have jobs tomorrow, next week, next month or three months from now.

Many people are being forced to go on welfare, Madam Chair. He has refused to listen to Northerners who are now going to be subjected to a \$50 user fee for elective medical services. He has refused to listen to the concerns of the farming community in the North on the GRIP and the Carrot River bridge. He has sent a strong message, as a matter of fact, to the people of the North, that it is their damn fault for having been born in the North or for having chosen to move, live and work there, and that if they are not able to access programs, services or jobs, it is too bad. Maybe they should move to Winnipeg. That is his attitude. At the same time, he talks about a genuine commitment to the North.

He has also essentially told Northerners that, in terms of education, only the rich in the end can go to school because he has eliminated the Northern Youth Corps. Where are those students going to find summer jobs in the North this summer? Repap certainly is not going to hire summer students, because they just laid off 225 people and they are going to be off again in July. I do not know where those summer students are going to be finding jobs this summer.

He has refused to listen to the people of Norway House and those people from Cross Lake who have requested his department to maintain the current hours of the ferry at both communities. He has also refused to listen to the fishermen in the North and their request to reinstate the Freight Subsidy Program or for their request to maintain the Fishermen's Loan Program in MACC rather than shifting the program to CEDF like he has, even though in doing so he has created confusion, because he clearly does not have an implementation plan right now. So fishermen in the North are not only being shifted around from program to program, but they are also being confused deliberately by this minister in the sense that there is no clear-cut implementation plan in place yet.

Madam Chair, he has bungled on the Decentralization Program. For example, 18 months ago The Pas had requested a liquor inspector, finally got one, which, by the way, as I indicated to the minister last night, The Pas Indian Band and the Town of The Pas have gotten together. I understand the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has been invited to go to The Pas to meet with the two

communities to talk about the social problems that they are having in The Pas, where, as I said last night, young underage people are going into socials because there are not enough inspectors to go around and monitor socials. There are underage people who are gaining access into bars, again because there is a clear lack of monitoring by liquor inspectors.

This minister has also refused to do anything on the ACCESS program, on the Northern Development Agreement programs. In fact, he has also reduced the funding to the regional development corporations that badly needed money for economic development purposes.

People of the North regard themselves, Madam Chairman, as being citizens of Manitoba, and as such, and rightfully so, are asking to be treated like citizens of Manitoba.

Therefore, I make a motion, seconded by the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper), that item 1.(a) Minister's Salary in the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs be reduced by 25 percent, down to \$7,725.

Madam Chairman: The motion is in order.

Motion presented.

* (1510)

Mr. Downey: Madam Chairman, I am extremely shocked, disappointed and dismayed. I am extremely shocked, disappointed and dismayed at the lack of appreciation that this government, not me particularly—I do not take this personally. I do not take it personally at all. I take it as an attack on the excellent work that my colleagues have done on behalf of northern Manitobans.

I will speak individually and then I will speak collectively, as a government, as to the work that we have done. My colleague, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), has done more for northern health than the NDP government has ever done. I want you to see the developments that have taken place in Thompson in the health care field. They have gone from six doctors and specialists in Thompson to 20-some people working in the health care field under this Minister of Health. A brand new health care facility is being built in Thompson.

Let me tell you as well, Madam Chairman, the work that the minister has done as it relates to the kidney dialysis work in Thompson where, in fact, the New Democratic Party continued to force people to

come to the city of Winnipeg for dialysis treatment, wearing people out on the road. I am extremely proud of the work that our government has done and the Minister of Health has done.

Let me make reference to the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns). Let me make reference specifically to the work the Minister of Natural Resources has done for the northern communities in the joint management agreements with the Native communities of the North. The moose management area in The Pas—my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, was very co-operative in the support of the Native community of The Pas and the development of joint management of the resources. The same work he has done in the area of wild rice.

Where is the NDP party coming from and the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) coming from in showing their appreciation for the northern communities? What is he doing in this Assembly today trying to reduce—whoever the minister is, and I do not take this personally. I take this as a reflection on the government, not as me personally, that he is trying to in some way, personally, to reflect on the government. That does not impact on me personally.

Let me say as well, the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld)—the long-term dedicated work that the Minister of Mines and Energy has put forward through the Department of Health, the Department of Mines and Energy through Hydro in his work to settle a 20-some year outstanding claim that the communities of Easterville, the Chemawawin band and Easterville had and the Moose Lake communities. What did the New Democratic Party do for those communities?

My colleague, the Minister of Energy and Mines—Hydro, under his direction, took the lead and drove forward to see that those people received justice in the North. That is what he has done—again, a fine minister of resources trying to make sure the improvements come about for the people and the resource development of the North.

In the whole area of the Hydro settlement, the whole area of the Northern Flood Agreement, this government has taken the lead. After some 13 years of doing nothing under the NDP government, the five bands finally saw some reaction and some response to their requests. There was a \$10 million up-front payment in good faith and then the decision

to go ahead and negotiate globally, of which one band is still aggressively negotiating with Hydro. I would say, Madam Chairman, that this government's record is solid and sound as it relates to the North, and I can tell you I have heard many comments from the people of the North in their support of what this government is doing.

What did the former administration do? I hate to always refer to the former administration. It is not what they did, it is what they did not do that would fill volumes of books on the North. It is what they did not do for the people of the North in the area of resource development, in the area of job creation, in the area of looking after the health needs, and I can tell you the people of the North are pretty thankful for the services that this Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has provided to those communities. I can tell you very, very truly that he is well thought of in the whole northern area as it relates to the health care which has been provided and accommodated.

An Honourable Member: Oh, especially for that \$50 surcharge. They will love him for that.

Mr. Downey: The members opposite want to continue to play on one particular subject. Let us see how this plays out in the community. Let us see what the responses are, and I can tell you as far as I am concerned -(interjection)- As I said earlier, this whole issue of the \$50 surcharge is impacting the minds of the members opposite, I have asked the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) to bring forward more specific information.

Let me, as well, point out the hard work that the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) has done as to the development and the hard work that he has put into the whole upgrading of the Flin Flon smelter, and I am extremely proud of the presentation and the work that he has done on behalf of the people of Flin Flon.

What did the member for Flin Flon ever do for the people of Flin Flon? What did he ever do for them other than add an annual interest charge on their back of some \$550 million annually?

Let us just take a look at the activity that has taken place in the Repap activities at The Pas. The member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) keeps making reference to the layoffs that are taking place. Well, I can tell you, Madam Chair, I believe the people of The Pas are pretty happy to see Repap operating the old Manfor plant. In fact, they were so happy that he was close to not getting elected by the

people of The Pas because of the comments that his Leader said, and I will tell you, I know very well that the member for The Pas had to muzzle the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) any time he went near there, because of the criticisms of what was taking place in The Pas and the whole Repap activities. I know exactly that is what had to happen. He was embarrassed every time the New Democratic Party Leader opened his mouth as it related to Repap and The Pas. He had to muzzle him, and if he did not have to I want him to stand in this place and say so, but he did have to tell the New Democratic Leader.

In fact, I have to tell a little story. One thing about the member for The Pas, any time I visited there when he was the chief, he was very, very cordial and a very, very good host, but the day that he was the most excited, I have to say, was the day that they had the powwow and the big activity. They were expecting Audrey McLaughlin and Gary Doer to land, and lo and behold they were an hour or two late and the current member was very excited. Lo and behold they landed at the wrong airport.

Well, the member for The Pas thought I was going to have to be the only guest speaker there that day and he was really excited. -(interjection)- My commitment to the North is far greater than the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), the member for any of these seats that absolutely have no understanding truly of the northern way of life or the resource development.

Madam Chairman, I am again saying, speaking as a government member, I am extremely disappointed in the attitude that they would take some money away from the minister's office. After all, the government, the Treasury Board took half my salary away to start with, and now they want to take another 25 percent away.

An Honourable Member: Okay. We made a mistake. We should take it all. We did not want to take it out on your family.

Mr. Downey: But I, well, that is right, I am sure they are thinking of my family.

Can I say, though, I truly have an appreciation for the comments the members make. I really do. I think there are some genuine criticisms that come forward, but I have not heard one comment of criticism come from the members opposite when they tell this government that our priorities—they have not told us our priorities are wrong when we

say health, education and family services are our first priorities. They have not criticized that. They have not criticized in a major way the overall thrust of the government and what we are doing to try and bring the spending of government under control. I do not believe that they have been able to go to the people of Manitoba in a substantial way. Yes, they have been able to make some criticisms. They have made some criticisms of some of our smaller decisions, but in the overall thrust they have not attacked us. In fact, if they were to go to the people, I suppose they would not attack us on trying to be a responsible government.

An Honourable Member: You are not.

* (1520)

Mr. Downey: Well, they say we are not. I believe that we are. I have not heard major criticisms come from any region of this country, any region of this province that we are not on the right track in trying to control the expenditures of our province.

I believe firmly that we have to get our spending under control. I believe that we have to encourage more people in this province to become part of the overall economic opportunities of this province to add to the general overall resources of this province.

I believe that the engine that drives the motor for the recovery in the economic activity lies within the private sector, supported by government by creating an environment for the private sector to operate.

The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) should take a look around him sometime when he is in Thompson to see who generates the economy of Thompson. Is it government? Is it the federal government? Is it the provincial government? Yes, the government is a large employer out of Thompson, providing health care, which the Minister of Health has been strongly supportive of, providing the services for natural resources, providing the services for Hydro and related mining activity. The major generator of the economy of Thompson is private investment. He brags, he says, well, the second one is government. Well, what kind of a community would he have if it was government that was the largest employer in Thompson? There would not be a Thompson if it was not for Inco and you depended solely on government.

Somebody, someplace has to generate the wealth so we can have the social services, we can have the health care and we can have the education. Somebody has to do that, and let us

face it, the North has been traditionally a generator of wealth for this province. It is not being exploited; what it is being is, enhanced.

When you look at the long-term opportunities that are developing in the North, whether it is the development of the smelter and the work that is going to take place in Flin Flon, when you take a look at the whole activity with Repap, after we get the environmental work done, when you look at the whole activity that is taking place at Inco, when you look at Conawapa, major, major investments, probably close to ten billions of dollars being invested in northern Manitoba under the Progressive Conservative Party, probably ten billions of dollars to be invested over the next 10 years.

I want the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper) to stand in his place and say why he was not able to get Manitoba Hydro and the government of Manitoba under his administration to look at putting in the hydro to northeast Manitoba communities. He was a failure in his own community. It was demonstrated here yesterday and last night how out of touch he is with his community. We have the Liberals now communicating with Red Sucker Lake because they cannot find their member. The Liberals are having to come forward with issues dealing with Red Sucker Lake. The member for Rupertsland did not even know that his own communities were advancing treaty land entitlement requests to settle them. He was not up to speed on that.

He was not up to speed on the fact that Berens River, Channel Area Loggers—some two weeks after the decision was made, he finally found out that they wanted to take over the operations of Channel Area Loggers. He is way behind with what is going on in his own community, and I can tell you, he wants to think very carefully, when he considers running federally, as to what seat he is going to run in because they will remember that.

An Honourable Member: Winnipeg North.

Mr. Downey: Winnipeg North. The Liberals say he will be running in Winnipeg North.

I think it is important to note that, without the Conservative government in the province at this particular time, we would not have seen the kind of development taking place in northern Manitoba, we would not have seen the confidence in Inco in Thompson, we would not have seen the confidence

in Conawapa, we would not have seen the confidence in the northwest area, the confidence in The Pas area. I can tell you, when you look and talk to people outside of this province, they are excited about what investment opportunities there are in the North.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Chairman: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) has the floor, and I am experiencing a great difficulty in hearing him.

Mr. Downey: I believe the stage has been set for major economic activities to take place in the North, which will in fact generate income for Northerners, which will give Northerners the opportunities to invest, which will give Northerners the kinds of activity that I think they deserve and finally get to accomplish under a government that believes in development, truly believes in development of the real, meaningful kind. -(interjection)- The member wants to make fun of it.

I can firmly -(interjection)- I will relist the activities that are taking place. We have Repap, which is impacting and supporting Swan River, The Pas area, the Moose Lake area and the whole region in that particular area. Where would it have been under Manfor? Continuing to lose us millions of dollars.

We look at the upgrading of the smelter at Flin Flon, which I believe is going to be a major economic boost to that community. We look at the economic development that is taking place in Thompson with Inco. We look at the Conawapa development and the east side of the line. We look at the northeast Hydro development that is some seventy millions of dollars, giving those people hydro-electric power off the main system.

We have major, major economic activities taking place in northern Manitoba, and we will continue, Madam Chairperson, to work to create opportunities for the North, opportunities for the Native community, opportunities to help build this province, that is, far greater opportunities under this government than there ever were under the New Democratic Party.

Again, I have to say how surprised I am at the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), whom I considered somewhat of a friend at times, who would in some way deprive the minister's office of less in compensation. -(interjection)- Well, if the

member for The Pas does not want to be my friend, well, that is his decision.

I say, Madam Chairman, I cannot support this amendment to the salary.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Chairperson, I move, seconded by the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), that the question be now put.

Madam Chairman: It has been moved by the honourable member for Thompson, seconded by the honourable member for The Pas, that the question be now put.

Pursuant to Rule 14, page 46 of our rule book: "Where the motion for the 'previous question' is moved in Committee of Supply, or in a section of the Committee of Supply, the motion is not debatable."

Point of Order

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Madam Chairman, I just want to clarify the rules of the House. The official opposition has placed a closure motion before this House, and that has not happened this session, nor the last session, since this government came in. I simply indicate, on a point of order, that this is the first time that closure has been used. It has been introduced by the opposition and will not be the last time closure is used in this House.

* (1530)

Madam Chairman: The honourable Minister of Health does not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Chairman: All those in favour of the motion before the House, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Chairman: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Chairman: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Ashton: Yeas and Nays, Madam Chairperson. Call the members.

Madam Chairman: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Committee of Supply, please come to order. The motion before the House is moved by the honourable member for Thompson, seconded by

the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), that the question be now put.

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

Yeas 19, Nays 33.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Chairman: Order, please. The motion is accordingly defeated.

Mr. Ashton: We see an interesting alliance here, once again, in this Legislature as the Liberals join with the Conservatives to bail out the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), but I want the Liberals to know and I want the Conservatives to know that we will continue the fight against this minister on each and every opportunity, because this minister has done more damage to the North than any other minister in Northern Affairs in the history of Manitoba.

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): I hate to stop the member in full flight, Madam Chair, but I would just ask you for some procedural advice. We have another committee going, and I am wondering if the Clerk's staff are in place now to accommodate that other committee. If they are, then certain members and the ministers will have to be in their place. At that time, once we have the mechanics in place, the member can continue in full flight.

Madam Chairman: The honourable House leader indeed does have a point of order. The section of the committee sitting outside the House will now resume.

* * *

* (1630)

Madam Chairman: This section of the Committee of Supply will now come to order. We are dealing with the motion of the honourable member for The Pas that item 1.(a) Minister's Salary in the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs be reduced by 25 percent to \$7,725.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Chairperson, indeed we are still dealing with a resolution that I believe should be fully supported, at least, by all opposition members. No matter what the Liberals have done in terms of the previous motion, let them now put their votes where their mouths are in terms of the North. We look forward to seeing full support from the Liberals

for this motion, which does nothing more than do to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) what he has done to the North, which is cut back, and cut back to the tune of 25 percent, whether it be in terms of Northern Affairs programming or other items.

I want to say, Madam Chairperson, that this minister, throughout this discussion and debate on this particular motion, has failed to understand that he cannot, in the 1990s, stand in this Legislature, as he did only a few months ago, and say that the reason Northerners were getting cut back was because they did not know how to vote right—a direct quote, first from his seat and then from his feet. He has to realize this is the 1990s, that Northerners of all political persuasion, no matter how they vote, expect from the Minister of Northern Affairs, of all people, fair treatment.

The reason we have made the move of reducing his salary by 25 percent, so the minister understands it, is partly a comment on this government but also on the incompetence of that minister who has sat by and has not only not stopped the cutbacks, who has proceeded to voice his own views, his own twisted views, of politics that justify cuts to certain areas of the province because of the way they vote.

Well, that is not acceptable in the 1990s. That is not acceptable in northern Manitoba. It is not acceptable in any area of this province, because we are seeing increasingly that this government is doing the same thing in other areas of the city. We watched in the core area, in the north end, as we see them being the next victims of this government because they did not, to use the words of the Minister of Northern Affairs, vote right as far as the Conservative government is concerned. We are going to see, we are already seeing, cuts that are put in place, policies that are made that do nothing more than destroy the kind of equal rights people in the north end of the city and the core area—we are seeing other areas as well, we are seeing in the rural areas, the Parkland.

Who can avoid the direct fact that the Parkland is being hit, Dauphin and Swan River, because of the way they voted? They had the sense not to vote for this government, with its promises before the election, with its complete lack of honesty and integrity in terms of campaigns in this province, which turns around only a few months afterwards and breaks every single one of those promises.

That is what this fight is about, Madam Chairperson. It is about integrity in government, something this government knows nothing about. That is why we have moved this resolution, because this government has shown no integrity whatsoever in dealing with Northerners. It stands here piously—this minister stands piously and talks about his concern for Northerners. His own department has been cut back by 15 percent, a major slash in programmings. It has had an impact all throughout that department.

We have seen it in other areas. Education in the North has been cut by the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Derkach). We are seeing it in health care. He talks about the great things this government has done in health care. Bring in a \$50 user fee for Northern Patient Transportation—who is the Minister of Northern Affairs kidding? Where was he when these decisions were made? Does he not understand the situation facing Northerners who have to travel 8, 10, 12, 14 hours to get medical care?

Madam Chairperson, I have never, in the time I have been in this Legislature, seen a minister who is so out of touch with the department and the people he is supposed to be serving as compared to this minister. I do not even like standing here having to call him the Minister of Northern Affairs, because he is that in name only. He is only the Minister of Northern Affairs because he is appointed by the Premier (Mr. Filmon). He has no credibility in the North. He has never had any credibility in terms of northern issues. He has even less since we see the hatcheting of the North under this government.

What amazes me—what happens after he goes and he says, well, Northerners do not know how to vote right? What happens? Is he demoted? No, he is promoted. Not only now is he the Minister of Northern Affairs, he is the Minister of Rural Development and the Deputy Premier, a heartbeat away from the Premiership. Madam Chairperson, that is a scary thought for Northerners, that this minister might actually be the acting Premier—a heartbeat away from the Premiership.

What about Rural Development? What do rural residents—what can they think about having a minister responsible for their affairs that has done so much damage to the North, that has shown such an insensitivity and arrogance to Northerners because of how they vote? What can they be saying right now, Madam Chairperson?

That is why when we fight against this minister's actions, we are fighting for integrity in government. We are fighting for fairness. We want a government that is going to treat all Northerners equally with other residents of the province regardless of how they vote.

That is something that is not happening. This minister and this government have targeted Northerners because of the way they vote. They admitted that in their own words. They are showing it in their action. We will fight, on this department, every single other area where they have hatcheted the North. We will take the message to Northerners that the bottom line is that while this government thinks they can practise the pork-barrel politics of the 1950s, while this minister thinks he can run around this province pork-barrelling, handing out patronage to Tory friends, what we want is fairness for all Manitobans regardless of how they vote, where they live. We do not want just patronage and favouritism for Tory friends, Madam Chairperson.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Chairman, I am glad that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is running away like a scared rabbit after he gave that embarrassing outburst and tirade in the House. Even his Leader had to leave because he could not stand the hypocrisy and the stupidity of that presentation. This today is going to go down as a mark, a blot, on the copy book of the New Democratic Party.

I want to just congratulate the Liberals for having not been drawn in by that kind of political manipulation and stupidity that just resulted in that vote for closure.

This is a party who says piously throughout this province that they stand for democracy and they are willing, on a whim, on straight sheer politics, to move closure just without thought as if it is some insignificant thing that you do in the Legislature any time you feel like cutting off debate and shutting down people's right to speak, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, closure has been used in Parliament and in the Legislature from time to time and may, indeed, be used again. After people filibuster for weeks and weeks on end and have had plenty of time to debate an issue, closure may be used as a last resort. When you take something as serious as closure and throw it in on a casual whim because it gives you some cheap political thrill, that

is the most ignorant thing that I have seen done in this Legislature in my 12 years.

Point of Order

Mr. Storle: Madam Chairman, the First Minister is imputing motives. The motion that was introduced here -(interjection)- It is clearly against our rules to impute motives. The First Minister is suggesting that members on this side introduced a motion which would have reduced the Minister of Northern Affairs' salaries because of some cheap political—

Madam Chairman: Order, please. The honourable member for Flin Flon does not have a point of order. It is dispute over facts.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Madam Chairman, again the member for Flin Flon shows his ignorance. The vote was not on the Minister's Salary. The vote was on closure. That is the ignorance of the New Democrats that is portrayed by every word that is said by the member for Flin Flon and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). There is no light being shed in this debate and in this Legislature by virtue of that particular motion. There is just a lot of heat, shouting and irrational thinking going on in the benches of the New Democrats.

* (1640)

This is indeed a blot on the copy book of this New Democratic Party. This is an historic day, because it shows what we are facing in the New Democratic caucus, a miserable collection of misfits and has-beens, Madam Chairman, that do nothing but play political games in this Legislature for their own cheap gain.

I tell you, the public is sick of it. That is old politics. That is old-style politics that there is no place for in this Legislature in this province. I am glad that they have been exposed for what they are.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairman, I want to make a few comments. I tried to make these comments before the Leader of the official opposition introduced the closure motion.

I have been here for 14 years in this Legislature, and I have never seen an opposition member of this House ever bring in a closure motion before, simply to deny legitimate debate on the Minister's Salary. We have had these motions many, many times in the past, but never, never has, after one 20-minute defence by the minister whose salary was to be

reduced in part, the opposition stood up and put closure on the motion.

Now, Madam Chairman, there is a time and a place where closure has been used in this Legislature. Where opposition parties in the past have filibustered and stalled the legitimate process of government, closure has been used, but not for a number of years and never on the political thrills and frills of an opposition party that is floundering for an issue.

I used to think that there was the odd member, and I am looking at one right now that I thought at least had a semblance of integrity and understanding of the process of democracy in this House, and that individual who is now speaking from her seat has simply lost either her voice in caucus, a voice which could have contributed reasons or has fallen into the simple, callous and narrow-minded trap of the New Democrats, that anything is good if it is politically opportune. That is the kind of integrity we now see demonstrated by each and every New Democrat including ones walking out of this Chamber, no integrity, no principle, no commitment to democracy, simply closure for the narrowed interest of trying to re-enforce a weak and simple case, fraudulently put to this House.

I want to tell my honourable friends, those who are left that are newcomers to this party, my honourable friends are talking about services to the North. We had a motion to reduce the minister's salary put by one Native leader from The Pas and seconded by a second Native leader from Rupertsland. I find that terribly regrettable because the man that seconded the motion had the opportunity to deliver programs to his people in northern Manitoba as a cabinet minister in the Pawley government, but he was treated in a token fashion by New Democrats and was not allowed to make a single decision.

If you want proof of that, Madam Chairman, check out the memberships sold by the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), who prior to the no-session in this House, by the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper), had sufficient membership to defeat him in the nomination, planned as a New Democratic Party to eliminate the current member for Rupertsland, who now the New Democrats stand up and laud as their saviour, their voice for the Native community. The voice was so valued you were going to get rid of him and replace him with the current sitting member for Point Douglas. Now that is some kind

of commitment, faith and re-enforcement of stature of a cabinet minister in the Pawley administration.

This is the individual who seconded the motion, who had the opportunity to bring the electrification to his communities in the northeast quadrant of Manitoba and failed. This is the member who could have started a number of initiatives whilst a cabinet minister in government and failed his people because he did not have a voice in an NDP government of Howard Pawley that was listened to, and that is unfortunate.

Now for the New Democrats to stand up in this House and say this government is doing nothing for the North is absolute balderdash, Madam Chairman. Let us start out. Who initiated the privatization of Manfor, that money losing forest operation, to present an opportunity for the citizens in The Pas to have an opportunity for continued job opportunity, investment and growth in their community? It was not the New Democrats. It was this government.

Who is working diligently to rejuvenate the town of Flin Flon? I want to give my honourable friends a little history just in case my honourable friends forget. When we came into government in 1977, the constituency of Flin Flon had been represented by a New Democrat for eight years under Edward Schreyer, that messenger of all good things in the North, and you know what we inherited in 1977? We inherited the hospital at Snow Lake with a leaking roof, unfixed by the NDP with an NDP member. Who built the new hospital in Snow Lake? Bud Sherman and the Progressive Conservatives under Sterling Lyon.

Madam Chairman, what other initiatives are now currently going forth for northern Manitoba? Massive investment by Inco, and thank heaven that it is happening. The other initiative that is going forward is Conawapa for the good of all Manitobans, and to the benefit of northern Manitobans, just to name a few.

If all Manitoba had the investment opportunity that northern Manitoba is going to enjoy in the decade of the '90s, we would be a very prosperous province. My honourable friends stand up and fill the mailboxes of northern Manitobans with false information—false information.

I know my honourable friends laugh about that because that is the whole reason why the mailing budget for the New Democratic caucus

room—when they were but a scant dozen, the dirty dozen in the minority government times—was constantly over budget by multiples of three, four and five, to fill constituencies with false information.

Madam Chairman, what this House is being reduced to, unfortunately, because my honourable friends do not have reasoned issues upon which to attack this government from a policy standpoint, they have not made a single policy issue of substantive nature. They have whined and snivelled and misinformed their constituents. That is fine, but there is no positive issue that they have brought forward in criticism of this government's policies and the direction it has taken on behalf of all of the people of Manitoba, including those people served by the new public health building in Thompson, including those people served by the new mental health residence in Thompson, including those people served by the new dialysis program in Thompson, all of which were put in place by this government.

The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), as a backbencher for eight years under Howard Pawley, six and a half years, delivered absolutely nothing to northern Manitoba—absolutely nothing. Yet my honourable friends have the gall to stand up and say that this government has done nothing for northern Manitoba. What abject falsehoods to put out to the people of Manitoba. The record of this government I will put with anybody, this Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey).

Who delivered \$5 million to northern communities under the Northern Flood Agreement? Was it the New Democrats who flooded the land in the Schreyer years? Was it the New Democrats from 1981 to 1988 under Howard Pawley? No, absolutely not. It was this minister, this government, that put \$5 million toward northern communities.

An Honourable Member: Ten, Orchard, 10.

Mr. Orchard: I am sorry, I stand corrected. Ten million dollars that we put towards northern communities, and here it is, the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Harper), Chief of the Red Sucker Lake Band, unable to deliver anything while sitting around the cabinet table for those people in northern Manitoba, an abject failure until he had his eagle feather and said no.

He said no to his members in northern Manitoba while he was a cabinet minister. That is why it

comes so easy to him in opposition, because he constantly said no to every single request from the northern Native communities while he was a cabinet minister in the Pawley government and could have delivered. That is where he learned to say no, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, you want to debate programs, fine. You want to suggest different alternatives, fine. Get on with the job. I have not heard one single positive suggestion from any member of the official opposition since this election in 1990. All you have done is had your narrowed carping criticism often based on false presumption, false information, false preambles which we have had to correct constantly in this House.

You have had no major substantive issue and now you want to get into the personality attack. Well, that is some sort of opposition party. That is real integrity in the opposition party, and that is why I found it so offensive. I believed that at least the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) had some integrity that she could contribute to the New Democratic Party, but alas, she has fallen victim to the tactics of the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie).

I can say it no more eloquently about the member for Flin Flon than the official opposition House leader, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), where he called him Mr. Sleaze the other day in Question Period.

* (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Chairperson, I took exception to some of the remarks during the vote when the New Democratic Party had suggested or implied that in fact the Liberal Party supports this particular minister. Nothing could be further from the truth. If the official opposition only realized what in fact they have done by moving the motion.

Earlier this afternoon, Madam Chairperson, the NDP moved the motion to reduce the minister's salary. After a brief amount of debate, and I know for a fact there were others who were wanting to debate this particular issue. In fact—

An Honourable Member: Like who?

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, the New Democrat says like who? I know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) was standing on his feet, Madam Chairperson, but rather than allowing debate to proceed, the New Democratic Party moved the motion in which they knew full well was not

debatable, putting forward that the question be now put.

Madam Chairperson, I believe that if we take a look at our history books that this is likely the only opposition party that has used a form of closure. What the New Democratic Party has done is they, by moving that motion, are invoking closure. They are not allowing debate to proceed on the ministerial salary. That is wrong.

Madam Chairperson, how are the New Democrats going to vote if the government brings in a motion for closure on the City of Winnipeg? If they are consistent, they are going to have to take the side with the government. Do you believe in closure or do you not believe in closure as an opposition party? Unfortunately, what we have witnessed today is that the New Democratic Party has taken a position that there is nothing wrong with closure, even if you are an opposition party. That smacks against any democratic principles that I have ever heard of.

Why would the New Democratic Party not allow debate on the motion? They did not allow debate with the Minister of Health. The member had no idea if there were members or any of my colleagues in the Liberal Party who were wanting to debate the motion, no idea whatsoever. We had one person, one New Democrat speak on the motion in reference to the minister's salary. Then they took it upon themselves to stop debate, to deny the third party of this Chamber, the Liberal Party, the opportunity to speak on this resolution, on the motion that was put forward.

Madam Chairperson, the motion itself is something that we would want to put many words on, on the record. We, as an opposition party, have our views on this particular minister. We have a right to express our views. The New Democratic Party denied us that right. They denied the third party of this House the right to be able to speak on their original motion. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Madam Chairperson, you had an opportunity, we had an opportunity to be able to speak to get on the record what the Liberal Party felt about the original motion in regard to the ministerial salary, but we were denied that ability to speak, and the party, the opposition, the official opposition—and that is what really gets me, it was the official opposition that denied us that right.

I have heard and I have seen governments of the day invoke closure but not an opposition party. When the government brings in their legislation and for whatever reasons are having problems in bringing through or bringing forward their legislation—and if they were to invoke closure, what would the New Democrats say?

What would have happened if closure would have been invoked on final offer selection? What would have happened then? The New Democratic Party would have stood up justifiably so, because we would have done the very same thing, and we would have said no to closure.

Whether it is the government that is invoking closure or whether it is the New Democratic Party in official opposition invoking closure we oppose it. I am very disappointed that the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) did not caucus this issue, because I do not believe that they caucused closure. Madam Chairperson, can you imagine sitting around in the NDP caucus and saying, should we invoke closure on the government? That must have been an awfully interesting debate no doubt.

One has to question the ethics of what the New Democratic Party's real reason was in terms of trying to have the vote at this time. We, in the Liberal Party, were waiting to be able to debate this issue. Had we been given that chance, we would have continued debating on the ministerial salary. Thank goodness the New Democratic Party did not have their way on this issue. Thank goodness the New Democratic Party was defeated on this motion.

I will tell you something, Madam Chairperson, they took a hell of a chance by doing that, because had the Conservatives agreed with the New Democrats and supported closure we, as the third party, as the Liberal Party, would not have had the opportunity to be able to debate this.

That is what you should be ashamed of, that you have denied opportunity not only of the Liberal Party, of the Conservative Party, but even, I would argue, some of your own colleagues in the New Democratic Party, because I am sure as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) stood in his place and he talked so long about Northern Affairs and the concerns that he has—after the motion did the member for Flin Flon talk? Did the member for Flin Flon say what his opinions were on that particular item? Even if he did, what about the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes)? Madam Chairperson,

I believe that many of the New Democratic Party MLAs would not have supported this motion, and I believe that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) did not caucus this issue because I cannot believe that any official opposition party could invoke closure.

From his seat, the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), the Leader of the New Democratic Party, tries to defend what he has done, and Madam Chairperson, there is nothing that the New Democratic Party Leader can do that can possibly defend the actions of the official opposition, nothing—contrary to what the member for Flin Flon is saying—because no opposition has a right to take away the other members' opportunity to be able to debate a motion, and that is, in fact, what you have done and that is what the Leader of the New Democratic Party from his seat is trying to defend, and that is wrong.

Madam Chairperson, had we been given the opportunity to be able to debate the ministerial salaries, I am sure that the government would have been given an indication in terms of what the Liberal Party's position on the ministerial salary is. We do have some concerns that have been discussed and have been debated from the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry). The Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) has brought up numerous concerns that she has in regard to the department. Those are the type of concerns that we will use when it comes to debating the issue of the ministerial salary, not only inside the Chamber but also within our caucus, and then we will be making a decision.

So it is not fair for the New Democratic Party to stand in their place and say that, in fact, we are supporting the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), nor is it fair for the government to expect us to support the Minister of Northern Affairs because, in time, the Minister of Northern Affairs will know what the Liberal Party is going to do.

What we are supporting by that vote, Madam Chairperson, is the democratic principles, and that is something that we have seen the New Democratic Party abandon here 45 minutes ago. I believe that the New Democratic Party, in particular the Leader of the New Democratic Party, should be going home and giving a lot of thought as to what that party has done by moving a motion of that nature, because they can say whatever they want. The bottom line is that motion is a motion of closure which would not

have allowed members to be able to debate the issues.

* (1700)

Madam Chairman: Order, please. The time being 5 p.m. and time for private members' hour, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for Private Members' Business.

Committee Report

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairman of Committees): The Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 32—The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylcyia-Leis), Bill 32, The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Mount Carmel Clinic, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 22—The Manitoba Energy Authority Repeal Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr), Bill 22, The Manitoba Energy Authority Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la Régie de l'énergie du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld).

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave? Agreed.

Bill 23—Manitoba Intercultural Council Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), Bill 23, Manitoba Intercultural Council Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil interculturel du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave? Agreed.

Bill 24—The Business Practices Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), Bill 24, The Business Practices Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed.

Bill 25—The Environment Amendment Act (2)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), Bill 25, The Environment Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave? Agreed.

Bill 26—The Environment Amendment Act (3)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion for the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), Bill 26, The Environment Amendment Act (3); Loi no 3 modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave? Agreed.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Speaker: Are we proceeding with Bill 16 (The Motor Vehicle Lemon Law Act; Loi sur les véhicules automobiles défectueux)? No.

Bill 17 (The Consumer Protection Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur)? No.

Bill 27 (The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie)? No.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 19—City of Brandon

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), that

WHEREAS the city of Brandon is the second largest urban centre in the province of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the City of Brandon has problems and needs similar to the City of Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS the City of Brandon has specific needs concerning downtown redevelopment, municipal taxation, economic development, and municipal infrastructure; and

WHEREAS the City of Brandon is currently under the jurisdiction of the Department of Rural Development; and

WHEREAS it is more appropriate for Brandon to relate to a department of government that focuses on urban issues.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the government of Manitoba to transfer the responsibility for the City of Brandon from the

Department of Rural Development to the Department of Urban Affairs.

Motion presented.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this resolution again. I say again, because I have had this resolution or similar resolution—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was trying to indicate to the House, I have brought a similar resolution before this Assembly in years past because I think it is a move of government administration that should occur. What we are suggesting is transferring the responsibility for the City of Brandon to the Department of Urban Affairs, which at the present time, is only responsible for the City of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, this matter, I had proposed to the government I was in, in the late '80s. We were on the verge of moving in this direction because it is not a radical move, yet it is nevertheless an important move. I believe that, in making this suggestion, I am not casting any reflection---

Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate getting some order in the House because I cannot speak with the interjections that are going on.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am sure all honourable members want to give the opportunity to the honourable member for Brandon East, who has the floor.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In making this suggestion—because that is all this can be, this resolution. The Legislature cannot order the government to do anything in this regard, because it involves the expending of money, but this Legislature can send a message to the government that it would be an appropriate administrative change. It would not be a radical change, but it is a necessary change in my view. In fact, you could even make the argument that other regional cities should be put in the Department of Urban Affairs as well. By that, I mean Thompson, Flin Flon, Portage. Those are the other incorporated cities. You can go a little bit beyond that if you want to include other centres that have, by Manitoba standards, a fair-size population.

* (1710)

By making this suggestion, I am not reflecting negatively on the existing Department of Rural

Development. It has a good staff, and I am not suggesting that it is not doing its job, but the point is, the Department of Rural Development is primarily focused on rural issues. The department has responsibility for about 200 municipalities in the province, and by far, I guess 95 percent of them, or thereabouts, are very small.

The R.M.s, some of them are as small as 700 or 800 people. They have different needs than urban centres. They do not have the same needs that Brandon or Winnipeg have, let us say, with regard to water supply. They have water supply needs but not of the same nature, a different setup. They do not have water utilities as the urban centres have. They do not have sewage utility infrastructure as the larger centres have. These smaller communities do not have an urban transit system as the City of Brandon and the City of Winnipeg have. They are not concerned with the industrial development issues that Brandon and Winnipeg and larger centres are. They do not have the social problems that an urban centre has. You do not find the same degree of difficulties in terms of social problems. Certainly you do not have inner-city problems, core development problems, downtown development problems.

To me, Mr. Speaker, it makes very good organizational sense to make this move. As I said earlier, I suggested it when I was a minister, and I believe if we had stayed in office that change would have come about.

I am very concerned, I might add, about what has been happening to Brandon recently with all the cutbacks. I listed today in Question Period a whole series of cutbacks that occurred thanks to the federal government. Whether it be losing VIA, we no longer have the VIA Rail service. The airport tower has been shut down. In fact I attended the last day of operation of the airport tower, which occurred, incidentally, during the last election. We lost jobs there but, just as importantly, we lost the service, and how you get the scheduled airline service, bona fide scheduled airline service, that you go east and west, I do not know, if you do not have an adequate tower service. At least it makes it much more difficult to attract that kind of airline.

Today and yesterday it was announced that the post office was to be closed. Again, this is a symbol in my view of deterioration that has been caused by decisions made by the Mulroney government.

Particularly now, probably the greatest threat we have had is the fact that the federal government, the Department of Defence, is now considering closing the Shilo base, which employs over 1,000 people, with a payroll in excess of \$70 million. If that comes about, Mr. Speaker, the Brandon economy will be simply devastated. All of us, I would urge, should join forces in fighting this. I urged this of the Minister of Industry a couple of weeks ago, and I implied in my questions today that there should be an all-party approach to the federal government to get them to change their mind with regard to the closure of Shilo. I am afraid—and failing that, the government has to come up with a plan of some alternative. There has to be some plan of what will happen in the future to that base, if it should be closed down.

As I understand it, the Shilo base is not a favourite of the military brass, which is unfortunate. I suspect that if the hierarchy of the military have their way, I guess, they would not like to see any cuts; but if they have their way, I am afraid that is what will happen. So in my judgment, Mr. Speaker, what we have to do is to join forces with an all-party delegation to go to Ottawa to fight the good fight to help prevent this from happening. I might add, there has been added ample precedence for this.

As the Minister of Industry, I took a delegation involving various groups, including municipal representatives from the Brandon area, to Ottawa to try to fight the closure of the Rivers base. We did not manage to stop the closure, but we got the federal government sensitive to the needs of replacing that with other economic activity. Eventually, we had the Sekine bicycle factory located there and a huge federal training program involving Native people giving them an opportunity to work, and that went on for many a year.

I know I digress from the original resolution, but I am making the point that we have an urban centre, we have to protect it, we have to enhance it. It has been definitely attacked by federal government policies.

I think that we have to look at the basic problems that the city has apart from its economic difficulties. It does have distinctive problems with regard to sewage and water infrastructure. It has problems in operating its transit system. I might add, Mr. Speaker, when we were in government, both in the Schreyer years, in the Pawley years, we provided substantial assistance to enhance Brandon as an urban centre.

I think back to 1971, when I was in the process of fulfilling an election commitment that I made in '69, that if elected, we would enlarge the Brandon boundaries, and we did. By 1971, we enlarged the boundaries and virtually put it on the map. It was a most significant move, because it gave the city room to expand; it provided it with a large industrial park. It provided it with an industrial tax base, providing monies from Simplot, the hydro plant and other industries that were located in the R.M. of Cornwallis—where you had a situation of Cornwallis getting all these tax revenues, more money than it knew what to do with virtually at that time, and yet the City of Brandon having to provide the municipal services but not having sufficient tax revenue. I look back and I think that was a very significant move.

The other thing we did to assist in the urban development of Brandon was to provide 100 percent grants in lieu of taxes. Up until that time, the formula was such that only a percentage of grants in lieu of taxes were paid. In other words, the Crown, right in the Province of Manitoba, did not pay 100 percent taxes—or rather, 100 percent grants equivalent to municipal taxes because of the formula. We changed the formula and from that time on the City of Brandon, and other municipalities, are entitled to 100 percent grants in lieu of taxes.

The other very significant thing we did was bring in a bus subsidy program. Urban transit is very important for this city, and at that time, we brought what was an insignificant transit subsidy up to 50 percent of the operating deficit. I am sorry to say there have been cuts in that subsidy. The province is not as generous with the Brandon transit system as we were back in the '70s, when we brought it up to 50-50 formula, and then reinstated it again at the 50-50 level in the '80s. Also, we began the program of providing 50 percent funding of buses purchased by that system.

Here you have a situation where, in the City of Winnipeg, the purchase of buses is overseen, as I understand it, by the Urban Affairs department. Yet, in the City of Brandon, it involves the Rural Development department. So here is one concrete example. Well, the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst) shakes his head. I thought that this is, unless you have made changes, but as I understand, there is this bifurcation.

The other thing in common is the fact that Brandon has an urban core problem, if you will. We are very concerned about the downtown

development, and we were really disappointed that the newly announced government office building was to be located on the periphery of the city instead of downtown. We have office space coming out of our ears in downtown Brandon. There is all kinds of empty space, unfortunately. I wish it was all filled, then there would be no problem, but that is not the case. The government, although it has announced some kind of grant program to assist in downtown development, I do not think they have had any money yet; they are waiting to get their cheque.

Nevertheless, it undercuts any announced intention on the part of the government to help downtown renewal. If it has one opportunity to put jobs downtown, and it misses on that opportunity, I would just remind the—

* (1720)

I guess my time is about up. Two minutes. Okay, I just remind members opposite that in the mid-'70s, early to mid-'70s, we made a decision to put the provincial government building downtown on 9th Street where it is today, instead of at Rideau Park, where the then Minister of Government Services, the Honourable Russell Paulley, no relation to Howard, wanted to put it because we owned the land. The point being, it would be cheaper to put it out at Rideau Park. -(interjection)- Well, it is just like putting the Convention Centre down in St. Norbert some place instead of downtown or St. James or St. Vital. So we paid a little bit more, but it was the right thing to do. We put that multi-million dollar provincial office building right downtown.

That is where these jobs should have gone. We welcome the jobs; God knows we need the jobs because we have been losing them left, right and centre. They cut 47 jobs out with this budget, we lost 44 with the International Nursing Home being closed. We lost some at Rideau Park. They are squeezing BGH, the Brandon General Hospital, Brandon Mental Health Centre. I know we have lost more jobs than the government has said it was going to bring through rural decentralization. At any rate, my point remains, and I think I have made the point that Brandon has problems that would best be dealt with by the ministry of Urban Affairs, and I would even go so far as to say that other regional centres should be put in that department as well.

I know the mayor of Brandon and the council have said, well, why do we not put the two departments together? I think that is rather presumptuous on

their part to tell the government how to reorganize their own departments. All we are doing is suggesting that the Department of Urban Affairs take on some additional responsibility. So I would hope I would get the support of all members of the House in this respect. Thank you.

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): I would like to thank the Minister of Northern Affairs for allowing me to put a few words on the record.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Rural Development): I told you, I owed you one.

Mr. Carr: I want to put it on the record, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) owes me nothing, and I like it that way.

This is an interesting resolution for a couple of reasons. The first is that it is a matter of some controversy I know among the citizens of Brandon, because when we were considering this resolution in the last session of the Legislature, we consulted with a number of individuals in Brandon, including the mayor, and it was controversial. There was not by any means one voice coming out of the community of Brandon on whether or not there should be a transfer of jurisdiction from the Rural Development office to Urban Affairs.

On the face of it, it makes sense that Brandon, which is the second largest urban centre in Manitoba—and I believe growing, the population of Brandon is growing—to be along with the city of Winnipeg under the responsibility of the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst); but I want to use my time in debating this motion to talk about something a little different, which is related to the resolution in front of us.

I think the debate over the next five years in this country is not going to be which department of a provincial government has jurisdiction over metropolitan areas, but whether metropolitan governments ought to have jurisdiction over themselves.

It is remarkable that in the constitutional task force, of which I am a member, along with two members of the New Democratic Party and three members from the government side, heard no representations from the City of Brandon, from the City of Winnipeg, through its mayor or through its councillors on the issue of whether or not there ought to be constitutional status for municipalities in Canada, particularly the larger centres of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and, indeed, Winnipeg. Think

about it, the municipalities derive all of their authority from the legislatures of the provinces.

The Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst) could, if he wanted, especially in a majority situation, introduce a bill tomorrow that abolished the City of Brandon or abolished the City of Winnipeg.

Mr. Leonard Evans: They are creatures of the provinces.

Mr. Carr: They are, as my colleague the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) says, "creatures of the provinces," which means that governments can continue to offload from one to another. Ultimately, the offloading rests with the municipal jurisdiction, but the municipalities do not have the tax room or the authority to raise the revenues necessary to look after all of the responsibilities that have been offloaded upon them by senior governments.

Every time the City of Winnipeg or the City of Brandon wants to have a change to its charter, a change to the way in which councillors are elected, a change to the committee structure, a change to its own civic administration, it cannot do that autonomously, but it has to come cap in hand to the Legislature to ask us for the authority so that they can govern better within their own jurisdictions.

While the resolution that is put forward today by the member for Brandon is no doubt well thought out, and if the people of Brandon think it is a good idea, they are not going to get any argument from us; but I wanted to bring another level of discussion to the debate, and that is to what extent should the provinces remain the single authority from which the municipalities derive their power.

I do not want to go into a long discussion. It is a big problem; it is not going to be solved during private members' hour today; it is not going to be solved by the Manitoba Constitutional Task Force. It probably will not even be debated in this round of constitutional reform. One of the reasons it will not be debated is because the municipalities themselves are not coming forward and presenting a coherent set of ideas, but it is going to be debated over the next number of years. It will have a profound effect on the relationship between provinces and their municipalities and, in particular, large cities, even perhaps cities the size of Brandon.

Mr. Speaker, in principle, our party does not have any objection to the transfer of responsibility from Rural Development to the ministry of Urban Affairs.

We would want the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), who is proposing this resolution, to give us some confidence that the mayor and the council and citizens of Brandon think it is a good idea. If that is the case, I am sure we can have discussions with the member for Brandon East. In principle, we do not have any objections if it has the concurrence of the people most profoundly affected.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you would give me about a four-minute warning towards the end of my speech so that I can make sure I complete my speech.

Mr. Speaker, members of the House, I just want to deal for a few minutes with the motivation, I guess, first of all, as to why the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) would be motivated to bring this resolution forward. I believe the member for Brandon East has been a member for the Brandon East constituency from 1969 of which he sat in the government of Ed Schreyer for many years as a cabinet minister—

An Honourable Member: Eight years.

Mr. Downey: Eight years and then he sat in the Howard Pawley for some six years—

An Honourable Member: Six and a half years.

Mr. Downey: Six and a half years—14 years as a cabinet minister in the Province of Manitoba and he now comes back in this term recommending to this House that we proceed to move to incorporate the City of Brandon under its own act or under The Urban Affairs Act is really what he is proposing to do.

He tried to make it clear that it was not a reflection on the Department of Rural Development, that he was not unhappy with the staff, the work activities; but really in his whole speech I did not hear the real, hard concrete justification. I did not hear the justification as to why. I did not hear any major support resolution from the City of Brandon or petition from the City of Brandon or any great number of people lining up to give him support in his endeavour to have the transfer from Rural Development to Urban Affairs.

* (1730)

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that begs the question of the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), what has motivated him to do this? One has to have, No. 1, a clear vision, clear justification and, generally, a broad range of support. Now he

may have it. The member for Brandon East may have all these things, but what he did not do—and that is what a resolution like this should do—is really lay the case before this assembly in a hard-sell fashion, if he really is committed to it, to say, the reason I did not do it when I was a member-minister for 14 years was this, this and this. Either I did not get support of my caucus, or there was not support in the community, or I did not have the ability to finesse it through the system. The bureaucracy was too much of a problem for him or he really was not committed.

So one has to really see what is the motivating driving force behind what his resolution is today. Or, Mr. Speaker—and while I know it is not up to me to impute motives—but is it or could it be that he is looking for some political activity and some political coverage as a member of the Legislature?

Well, is that what he is after? I mean, I really am having a hard time in supporting a resolution of this nature without substantive justification behind it.

Let me go over it. I took some notes while he was going over it. He said he was on the verge of moving in the late 80s on it—well, verge of moving. I mean, verge of moving to go to caucus, to cabinet with it? It was the appropriate thing to do, yes, the appropriate thing to do but again, what substantiates appropriateness? Necessary? Well, what are the necessary reasons for doing it?

Other regional cities he throws on the table, other regional cities like the cities of Thompson, of Portage la Prairie, probably. I am not so sure that he has talked to those other cities and has any reflection from them as to what their feelings are, or is he flying a kite in what he is preparing to do?

Has he talked to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton)? Has he talked to the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie)? Does he have support from those members in asking those cities to come under the jurisdiction of the Urban Affairs? Is he satisfied that with one large city with 600-and-some thousand people—I am raising these questions to the member—with these cities outside the city of Winnipeg coming a part of the Urban Affairs portfolio, that the smaller cities outside of the city of Winnipeg will, in fact, have the same kind of clout, the same kind of impact as one large city and one or two or three smaller ones within that same branch? Has he researched that?

Is he confident that they will be fairly treated?—because after all, a large city being dealt with in the Rural Development branch has a fairly large impact on policy and what is, in fact, taking place, because the populations of those larger centers within the Rural Development branch have a fairly large voice. So they would be going from a jurisdiction that has a major, major component in the Rural Development portfolio to one in the Urban Affairs portfolio, which would immediately become the lesser partner or the lesser group in that organization of government.

I am not so sure the member has clearly thought his way through this particular issue, and I raise it with him as a concern that I am laying on the table.

He is indicating that the reason that he would like to see, another reason why the Rural Development branch or the Rural Development portfolio basically, primarily deals on rural issues—well, I guess the City of Brandon has a lot to do with rural issues and a lot to do with agriculture, a lot to do with activities that relate to rural Manitoba and to a large degree depends pretty heavily on rural Manitoba and rural communities around it for its very existence.

Yes, it has some industrial activity but what does the industrial activity relate to? Again, it relates to agriculture in a major way or some other industrial activity but not of the magnitude that we would like to see. -(interjection)- No, Winnipeg is not independent of the agricultural industry but has a major, major industrial component which is not as dependent upon the agricultural industry—more of an industrialized centre.

Again, what I did not hear him say were the hard facts as to why this change should take place. He referred to different needs. Water supply, well, water supply. We now have Brandon under the Southern Development Initiative which is not working on their water supply particularly but working on their sewage program, a major commitment by the province and the federal government, singling out Brandon specifically as an area that needs some additional support.

Urban transit—it has a good urban transit system. I do not believe it is treated that much differently under the Rural Development section as is the City of Winnipeg under their urban transit program. I did not hear the differences spelled out. If there are differences, I would have thought he would have.

He talks about social programs. He is saying that because the City of Winnipeg is under the Urban Affairs branch that there are not social programs in the City of Winnipeg, that it would, in fact, help remove the social programs. I do not think that is what he meant, but I do not think because the City of Winnipeg reports to the Urban Affairs branch, or the Urban Affairs department, that there are less social programs. Some people may say that Brandon may have less social programs and are able to deal effectively with them, as they currently do, without having to become part of the Urban Affairs portfolio. I am again at a loss for the justification as to why he would say there would either be less or there would be—there are different social problems, but the solutions are what we have to really work on.

I am not clear from the member's comments. Inner-city problems—well, what will change the inner-city problems of Brandon if they were no longer a member of the Rural Development portfolio but in fact were under Urban Affairs, as Winnipeg? He has raised issues, but he has not raised the answers, and that is what he should be doing to justify what his proposal is. He is leaving more questions than he is answers, and it is his job to come to this House and support and sell, with justification, why he wants to do what he is proposing to do. At this point, I do not have enough background to give him support on this particular resolution at this particular time.

I do want to talk about Brandon, and I think we have to compliment the leadership of Brandon for their progressive and their aggressive approach to what is going on, particularly in difficult times. We have a mayor, a council that are very aggressive.

I want to say that I am pleased to know that there is hard work in the development and expansion of the Simplot operation. Goodness knows, one would never hear a positive comment from the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), so we have to put it on the record. We see a major plan for some expansion there. Yes, we have to work very hard to accomplish these types of things but, again, a major feather in the hat of Brandon, I believe. We know McKenzie Seeds, that the member for Brandon East—

An Honourable Member: You have about a minute left.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, could you tell me how much time I have left, please?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable minister has five minutes remaining.

Mr. Downey: We look at McKenzie Seeds, which the member for Brandon East was proposing to sell at one particular time.

An Honourable Member: Come on.

Mr. Downey: Very surely, it is on the record. I am sorry. I did not mean to upset you.

Point of Order

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, and you are going to argue that it is not a point of order. The Minister of Northern Affairs, or Rural Development, is putting false information. He should know I dedicated virtually my political life to enhancing McKenzie Seeds, to keep it there in the first place, because it was going to be sold in 1968-69 to Ferry-Morse Company of the United States. I have the cabinet documents from the Weir government, that was going to sell—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Brandon East was quite correct, he did not have a point of order, but I believe he made his point.

* * *

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, I was not sure whether the member for Brandon East was listening to me or not, and I found out that he was. I just wanted to make sure that he was paying attention.

I want to further add that we have seen the major announcement by Ayerst Laboratories in the expansion of their work activities and, again, a major supporting of the agricultural industry. Decentralization, which I am extremely disappointed in the member for Brandon East not wholeheartedly supporting—he is saying we should have located downtown. He is saying we should have taken a more costly bid, I guess, to locate downtown. -(interjection)- Well, then he does not accept the principle of accepting the lowest tender. I guess when you are dealing with a farm community and a rural community that the location, as I understand it, is quite accommodating to the farm community and the other rural communities that will use the library service. I am disappointed in his negative approach to the whole development.

* (1740)

Mr. Speaker, I want to move an amendment to the resolution. I move, seconded by the Minister responsible for Seniors and Government Services (Mr. Ducharme), that the resolution be amended as follows:

By substituting all of the words after the first paragraph with the following:

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba strives diligently to meet the specific needs of the City of Brandon concerning downtown redevelopment, municipal taxation, economic development and municipal infrastructure; and

WHEREAS it is appropriate for the City of Brandon to relate to a provincial government with a proven commitment to issues of importance to all Manitobans, including those outside of the city of Winnipeg.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba endorse the efforts of the government of Manitoba in working to meet the needs of all rural communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba congratulate the Minister of Rural Development for constantly seeking positive solutions to the challenges faced by communities outside the city of Winnipeg.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Filn Flon): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the best thing we can do with that resolution and the WHEREASes in particular is send them to the Brandon council, because I do not think they would be particularly well received. It is quite insulting that the Minister of Northern Affairs and Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Downey) has chosen to belittle what is a serious issue, and not only for the City of Brandon but for other urban municipalities across this province.

I want to say that I will not be supporting the amendments introduced by the Minister of Rural Development. In fact, the Minister of Rural Development had an opportunity somewhat earlier to perhaps understand a little better how members on this side reflected on his commitment to rural Manitoba and, in particular, to northern Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the budget of the Department of Northern Affairs and the budget of the Department of Rural Development reflect the commitment of the government to rural Manitoba,

and that is virtually not at all. The self-serving amendment that the minister introduced I do not think goes any way towards furthering the interests of urban municipalities in dealing with the problems, legitimate problems, that they face.

The fact of the matter is that the City of Brandon, the second largest city of the province, has many of the same characteristics as the City of Winnipeg. While there may not be many obvious benefits to an immediate transfer of responsibility from the City of Brandon to the Department of Urban Affairs, I think there is no doubt that the kinds of discussions that that would raise would create some interest in the problems that urban municipalities face across the province.

Urban municipalities already have their own separate association. They convene annually to discuss the problems that urban municipalities face. I do not think it is out of line to assume that cities, once they reach a certain size, share many goals and objectives in common. They also, quite frankly, share many problems in common. The communities of Thompson, Flin Flon and Brandon obviously all have transportation services. Smaller communities do not have those services.

The communities of Flin Flon and Brandon certainly have core areas, if you will, and the Department of Rural Development does not deal with core areas. The Core Area Initiative is the responsibility of the Department of Urban Affairs, and while obviously the scope of the problems are not the same in Flin Flon or Brandon as they are in Winnipeg, many of the same problems exist, that is, the deterioration of the infrastructure in the central parts of those communities, the problems with redevelopment that is required, particularly with respect to housing.

Those are simply two areas where the Department of Urban Affairs I think has a better understanding of the problems that councillors from our cities are facing. That is not to say or suggest for a moment that smaller towns in the province of Manitoba do not have problems as well; they simply have problems which are different.

If we expect our City Councils in Brandon or elsewhere in our larger communities to deal with those problems, they have to have at their disposal the same resources that are at the disposal of the City of Winnipeg.

I believe and I think it is true that the Department of Urban Affairs has very close contacts with many of the officials at the City of Winnipeg who understand and are in constant communication with them about the problems they face in terms of development, resourcing finances for adequate development of infrastructure, waste water treatment, transportation, library services, you name it.

The fact is that the Department of Rural Development simply is not set up to deal specifically with urban problems, and I think the suggestion by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) is one that needs to be considered quite seriously.

Obviously, this is not something that is going to be done over the objections of councillors in the City of Brandon or councillors elsewhere. I think it can be done systematically and with the co-operation of those same individuals.

What I guess we would like to have seen, rather than some self-serving amendment having the minister pat himself on the back, is a recognition that if the government of Manitoba and the Department of Urban Affairs would desire, they could approach the councils and find out whether in fact there are some areas where they might be better served from the Department of Urban Affairs. We will obviously never know what areas might be better served under that department unless we sit down with them and say, where are your problems, and how might they fit into the organization of the Department of Urban Affairs?

Mr. Speaker, the other suggestion by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Downey) in his amendment was that somehow this government has endeavoured to provide services and support to rural Manitoba.

* (1750)

I believe that the Minister of Rural Development would be hard pressed to convince many municipalities, let alone the community of Brandon, that it has done much to improve the economic or financial outlook of those communities. Communities like Dauphin and The Pas have actually seen Civil Service jobs cut from their complement of government services jobs. They have seen opportunities lost, they have seen projects that were underway or on stream come to a halt, and I do not think by anybody's definition that is an indication of government support.

On top of that, of course, municipalities across the province received a reduction of approximately—what?—13 percent of tax point transfer from the provincial government and the Province of Manitoba. The Department of Northern Affairs as a matter of fact has frozen its capital budget for 1991-92. There are many smaller communities out there who are awaiting important infrastructure developments that are going to be put on hold. If anybody can interpret that as an indication of government support for rural communities, I think they are mistaken.

Mr. Leonard Evans: . . . 2,000 kilometres of highways.

Mr. Storle: Mr. Speaker, I am reminded by my colleague from Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) that the government also turned over some 2,000 miles of provincial roads to municipalities for their maintenance and care, a transfer which is going to cost municipalities hundreds of thousands of dollars over the next few years. They are going to be faced with the difficult dilemma of deciding which of those roads they can support, which they are going to have to let deteriorate, and which they are going to have to abandon.

Mr. Speaker, we have further examples of a deterioration in the commitment of this government to support rural communities, rural cities. The Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) has removed the offices of the Regional Services branch of the Department of Education from both Thompson and Brandon, our second and third largest cities. They have taken away important government services, services that have been in those communities for many, many years, and those communities are now going to have to do without. The services, obviously, are important to the school divisions in those communities, but they are also important to the surrounding areas and important to the school divisions and the communities surrounding those communities. Again, that cannot be considered an example of commitment and effort to support our rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, the other area that I mentioned earlier that many of our large municipalities have in common with the City of Winnipeg is the question of the deteriorating infrastructure of those communities. I can use Flin Flon as an example. Flin Flon has completed, as of 1988-89, the fourth phase of a multiphased redevelopment project of its water and sewer infrastructure. Unfortunately, the

City of Flin Flon faces a major hurdle at this point, and it is unlikely that they are going to get any support from the government this year because of the scope of the next phase of the improvements.

The City of Flin Flon is faced with the task of supporting a \$15 million water treatment facility upgrade. Clearly, a community the size of Flin Flon cannot undertake by itself that kind of development, and it is going to require some major support from the Water Services Board, the provincial government and the federal government, I believe, who also have some responsibility for the discharge that goes into the lakes and the river system around the community of Flin Flon.

Mr. Speaker, the government saw fit, almost a year ago now, to sign a Southern Development Initiative which provided some \$30 million, I believe, of provincial support to a number of infrastructure projects in southern Manitoba, but we have seen no similar commitment to communities in the rural northern and northern parts of the province.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the resolution introduced by my colleague from Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) was designed to allow urban municipalities to highlight those problems with the Department of Urban Affairs. There is a feeling amongst some urban municipal councillors that the real problems of small to medium-sized cities get lost in the dealings with the Department of Rural Development.

Again, as my colleague suggested and as the minister indicated, the people in Rural Development do their best. Within their jurisdiction, within their mandate dealing with the programs that are now available in the Rural Development area, they do their best, but they are not equipped and they do not have staff to deal with the much broader array of problems that face urban municipalities.

So, Mr. Speaker, the government, I think, is shirking its responsibility, is ignoring a very real problem, and, in my opinion, is insulting the members on council in Brandon and other urban municipal areas that would like this kind of consideration. I do not think that they have taken seriously enough what was a serious resolution introduced by my colleague from Brandon East.

It was introduced because there is interest amongst councillors for this kind of a move, and it was introduced because some of the problems that they faced are not being adequately addressed. I

referenced the need for infrastructure improvement—that goes for Brandon; it goes for Flin Flon; it goes for other communities, I am sure, as well. Until we get some recognition of the unusual problems that these small and medium-sized cities face, we are not going to have any solution.

For the government to provide a resolution which says that the government should be congratulated and the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Downey) should be congratulated for constantly seeking positive solutions flies in the face of what he has just done to my colleague from Brandon East's resolution. He has basically belittled the intent of it, failed to speak to the content of the resolution, and, in effect, insulted the people in rural Manitoba, the councillors in Brandon or Thompson or other members of the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities that support this proposition.

If it is a proposition that is worth supporting, if they think it is, then I think the government deserved at least to debate the merits of the proposition and the merits of the resolution rather than serving up another self-satisfying, self-congratulatory amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, in debating the amendment, I believe I have an opportunity to say a few more words. I just want to, because we are short of time this evening, begin by saying that this amendment totally destroys the intent of the resolution. I am surprised that it was not ruled out of order, because it ignores the problem that exists.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution as amended by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Downey) is indeed an insult to the City of Brandon. It totally destroys the intent of the resolution. It is a self-serving amendment.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I am not sure if I heard

it right, but I feel that the honourable member was reflecting on your ruling. I really think that you should take a close listen to Hansard and review the situation.

Mr. Speaker: On the same point of order, the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). No?

As indicated by the honourable member for St. Norbert, he did not hear the remarks, and neither did the Chair at this time. But I will take this opportunity to take this matter under advisement, and I will peruse Hansard. If there is a need to, I will return back to the House.

* * *

Mr. Leonard Evans: The fact is that this amendment is a self-serving amendment. In fact, it makes a mockery of the intent of the resolution. I would say that when the City of Brandon Council sees this they are going to be very, very unhappy. They are concerned that they be treated as an urban centre, the second largest city in the province of Manitoba. They have discussed this at length. They have talked about integrating and suggesting to the government that they integrate the Departments of Rural Development and Urban Affairs. I know that, failing that, they will stand up—the entire council will be very supportive of the idea of transferring the city to the jurisdiction of the Department of Urban Affairs.

The point is, the Department of Urban Affairs' staff is a department that concentrates on urban issues, and it just makes administrative good sense that its expertise be directed to assisting in the development of the city of Brandon. It has urban problems that are peculiar to it that should be handled by—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Brandon East will have 13 minutes remaining.

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

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Tuesday, May 28, 1991

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