



Fifth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, May 13, 1994

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

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

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Surgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

Emergency Preparedness Week

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister responsible for the administration of The Emergency Measures Act, it is my pleasure to advise the House that at two o'clock today I will proclaim the forthcoming week, May 15 to May 21, as Emergency Preparedness Week in the province of Manitoba.

The establishment of an annual Emergency Preparedness Week has been identified as a most cost-effective means of creating public awareness respecting improvements to protection of life, property and environment which can be achieved through effective emergency planning.

Emergency Preparedness Week will be held annually during the third week in May, which coincides with the anniversary of the cresting of the Red River in Winnipeg, May 17 through May

19, at 30.3 feet above flood level during the great flood of 1950.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the United Nations declaration of '94 as the International Year of the Family, the theme for Emergency Preparedness Week '94 is Family Emergency Preparedness. Booklets and brochures have been published in both official languages to provide guidance in family emergency planning. Copies of these publications have been distributed to all members of the House and are being made available to the general public through the Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization.

* (1005)

Further, with the assistance of Manitoba Education, the Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization has developed an emergency preparedness activity for students in Grades 4, 5 and 6. This activity, called the School Report Card, will be implemented in many Manitoba schools during Emergency Preparedness Week. Program materials are also being developed for the same in September to provide challenging emergency planning activity for students in Grades 7, 8 and 9. The program will involve students in the preparation of an emergency plan for the home or school and will enhance research, analytical, writing and graphic skills of participating students.

Mr. Speaker, in November of '80, the mandate of the Manitoba Emergency Measures was changed from civil defence to natural- and human-caused emergencies. Since that date, through various administrations and with the co-operation and support of members of this House, Manitoba has become a leader in emergency preparedness in Canada. With our continued support Manitoba will remain a leader in emergency preparedness into the 21st Century.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, just a few words on the statement dealing with Emergency Preparedness Week.

We wish the government well on their work in this area. Obviously, it is an important government role, to provide for the provincial government to work with the federal government and defence forces and other civic forces to have an appropriate response to emergencies.

Manitoba has had successes and we have had failures in dealing with emergencies. We had tremendous success in the most recent set of major forest fires in Manitoba in terms of dealing with the safety of citizens and the evacuation of people, but there was some controversy about how communities were treated and how all communities worked, particularly in northern communities, on preventing the emergency from spreading further, in this case a forest fire. There was a feeling in many communities that we could have prevented the expansion of this emergency; we could have prevented the evacuation and therefore had a greater emergency response team through prevention as well as response after the emergency took place.

There is still concern, Mr. Speaker, about how we utilize the floodway in flooding situations in the city of Winnipeg, most recently with the unusually high amounts of rainfall that took place over the summer and the considerable amount of flooding that took place in many basements in Winnipeg. Hand in hand with emergency response is the whole issue of disaster assistance. We think, of course, that many citizens had tremendous backlogs in terms of dealing with the disaster that took place in their homes in the last emergency in this province.

We wish the government well. We think it is an all-party issue to respond to our emergencies but to prevent our emergencies from taking place where we have that ability, Mr. Speaker, particularly in the area of forest fires and those kinds of issues. We believe also that we should have an appropriate disaster assistance program.

Thank you very much.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we join with the government and the opposition in proclaiming this particular week Emergency Preparation and Preparedness Week.

I am particularly pleased with the emphasis that has been placed on the home and school emergency planning activities. Having taught in schools, and I know there are a number of others in this room who have done the same, it is very difficult sometimes to make young people understand within the school environment that an emergency means they must act and they must act quickly.

The Fire Department has often done a wonderful job in trying to bring that home to them, but there simply is not that sense of awareness. That was brought home, I think, in spades last evening on the news when we watched the number of young people who have now suffered what appears to be permanent eye damage because they watched the eclipse without any protection whatsoever.

Children think they are going to live forever. That is why I take particular note of the decision by the government to emphasize some emergency preparation experiences for young people so that perhaps their sense of their own longevity will be brought home to them. But if they are not prepared for emergency, then they can in fact suffer the consequence of not having been prepared for that.

So a preparation of a young person to know how to access a school or a home is a positive thing and for that I congratulate the government.

* (1010)

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I am tabling today Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 1994-95 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

Department of Urban Affairs

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Urban Affairs): I am pleased to table Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the

1994-95 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Department of Urban Affairs.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this morning from the Charleswood Junior High School one hundred and twenty Grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Barbara Fitzjohn. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ernst).

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here this morning.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

The Winnipeg Jets Operating Losses

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the First Minister.

Pursuant to the agreement signed by the Premier in November of 1991 in which he recommended to his cabinet and had subsequently approved his cabinet dealing with the Jets hockey team and the operating losses, we have asked the Premier on at least two occasions in the last two weeks what would be the projected losses to the hockey team and therefore the projected liability for the Province of Manitoba as a 50 percent participant in the operating losses of the team along with the City of Winnipeg.

It was reported of course to all of us yesterday that the projections the city has is for between \$7 million and \$8 million for this current year, for some \$14 million for the next hockey season which is in this current fiscal year of the government's budget and for some \$20 million the year after that.

I would like to ask the Premier, does he now have his own numbers and own figures for the operating losses of the team, and can he share those numbers with the members of this Legislature?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I do not, as the city does not. The city, as I read and understood—the figure that was quoted is based on

no increase in revenues for the Jets, and I think those of us who are season ticket holders know that the Jets have already put through an increase in the cost of the tickets for next year.

Secondarily, there is much discussion about additional revenues from an ABC contract and perhaps pay-per-view and other things that may click in for next year.

In addition to that, on the cost side, it is based on a worst-case scenario anticipating some massive increases in the costs of signing various players. At this point, one can only say that it is a speculative figure and not the basis on which one would do their actual planning for the purposes of taxation and/or budgeting, Mr. Speaker.

I could not do anything other than indicate that this is the speculative position that the City of Winnipeg has taken as a worst-case scenario, and we are waiting for actual figures from the hockey club before we commit anything to paper.

* (1015)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Premier indicated in his Estimates that they had taken numbers through Treasury Board to cabinet prior to cabinet approving the operating losses of the hockey team. Our phones are ringing off the hook. I am sure members opposite are having the same phenomena with the projected operating losses of the hockey team. Yet, six weeks to the so-called deadline, we still do not know what the status is going to be of the team, the arena, the ownership of the team which the Premier has talked about.

Can the Premier indicate to us what is the best-case scenario for the losses of the team over the next two years? How will this best-case scenario fit with the option of the government that they have stated that they may look at purchasing the team which would cost \$16 million, and then, of course, on top of that, there would be this best-case scenario of the operating losses of the team? Can the Premier indicate what our liability is on this matter in terms of the Legislature?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, our liability is to accept one-half of the losses of the Jets subject to approved budgets for the remainder of the agreement, which covers potentially an additional

two years. If, of course, the team, in passing the June 30 deadline, is able to be sold and transferred out of Winnipeg, then there would be no further responsibility for losses.

I think that most Manitobans would prefer us to continue to work towards a long-term solution that would see the continued operation of the Jets hockey club with minimal investment on the part of governments or the taxpayers, and we have continued to talk in terms of only looking at some small investments in the establishment of a facility in Winnipeg that would be a facility utilized by the public for many purposes, including the Winnipeg Jets. That continues to be the situation.

We do have, because of the agreement though, an option to be able to either purchase on a short-term basis for transference to other private ownership or nominate other private owners to purchase the Jets at a fixed price that is in the agreement, and that might be a vehicle by which we can transfer ownership into other hands that are willing to invest considerable money.

But all of that takes considerable time, and even with the best work of people who are very active in the financial community, who are involved with the Burns committee, it is difficult to put together a package that may involve hundreds of millions of dollars ultimately.

They are working steadfastly on that. We continue to support their work as the best effort to try and transfer that club or strengthen that club with additional private investment and keep it in Winnipeg, but in the final analysis, if it is not possible to do so because private sector money is not available, we have no interest in the long-term operation of a hockey club with taxpayers' money.

I have said that all the time, and I repeat that comment. It would only be utilizing the option and utilizing our power under the option to effect a transfer that would get us involved, and it would only be on a short-term basis.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we agree with the government in the sense that we want to have a hockey team with minimal investment from the public, but it does not sound to the public that we are having a minimal investment when we have

numbers like \$14 million for next year, \$6 million to \$7 million for this year, \$20 million two years from now.

We do not have a guarantee that the hockey team will stay here. We do not have an asset in terms of a new arena. We have six weeks to go before the Burns report is allegedly going to be prepared for us, which is almost six or seven weeks past the due date that was set by the government. We had an agreement in November of 1991 that had all the same objectives that the Premier just mentioned in this House in the same agreement that he took to cabinet.

So the question becomes, when does this government expect the Burns report and will the taxpayers get any relief in terms of the recommendations the Burns committee will make? Will they get any relief from covering the operating losses of a hockey team which do not give us a hockey team for the long term, do not give us an asset and only just give us losses and liabilities from this Legislature?

* (1020)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I would correct a number of statements the member is making.

Firstly, as long as they continue to operate in Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Jets, according to third-party evaluation done by different chartered accounting and consulting firms—these repeatedly indicate that the Jets are responsible for approximately 1,400 jobs, an economic benefit in the range of \$50 million annually and direct taxation to three levels of government annually of \$14 million. So it is not that there is nothing coming, that we are getting nothing out of having the team remain here, even during this period of time in which we are responsible for one-half of the losses. That is the benefit, in addition to whatever other benefits people see, from the operation of a professional hockey club here in Manitoba.

In terms of having said that nothing has changed, that is true. That agreement was signed in 1991 as a short-term measure of maintaining the Jets here until a decision could be made.

We are now getting to the crunch point of having to make a decision, and we will have to collectively as a community. Not just this provincial government, but the City of Winnipeg, Province of Manitoba and all its citizens will have to decide whether or not whatever is the best proposal that comes forward is worthy of our support and consideration.

If it is not, because if it does involve too much involvement by the public sector in supporting the continuance of that franchise here, then we will all have to say we cannot afford to keep them here, and we are not willing to put in any additional money to maintain them here.

At the moment, they are maintained here for the purposes of giving us the opportunity to make a long-term decision, and they do contribute, as I said, \$50 million to the economy, 1,400 jobs and \$14 million of direct taxation revenue for every year that they stay here, so that is the other side of the coin while we are awaiting the final decision that we have to make collectively.

Winnipeg Police Services Police Informants

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): My question is to the Minister of Justice as the chief law enforcement officer for the province.

Judge Newcombe has prepared an 84-page document on the use of police informants by the City of Winnipeg police department, in which he was very critical of the role, the actions, of senior officers in the department.

My question to the minister is, has she received and reviewed the Newcombe report, and has she discussed its contents with the City of Winnipeg police department to ensure that the incident which led to Manitoba's, I think, lengthiest and probably costliest trial will not happen again, so we can get on with a new era of policing in Winnipeg?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, in fact the jury just announced its verdict yesterday, so my department and I will now be reviewing exactly what has come forward from

this particular case that has been before the courts, and then we will take action following that.

Mr. Mackintosh: My supplementary question is, has the minister received and reviewed the City of Winnipeg police department's 1992 policy and procedures on how officers are to deal with informants, and is she satisfied that informants will not be able to rip off the taxpayers of Manitoba again, so that we can deal effectively with the role between informants and officers in the department?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, the member is speaking about some of the process of a case which has just had its verdict announced by the jury yesterday, and we have to have a look at exactly what was delivered within that verdict and, also, then have a look at what may flow and what may follow from the results of this case.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I remind the minister that the new policy and procedures were put in place in 1992.

My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker: As the minister responsible for justice across Manitoba, will she ensure that there are policies and procedures in place in other police forces outside of Winnipeg so that we can learn from the mistakes that occurred within Winnipeg?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, it is always my intention to make sure that the policing across Manitoba and the investigations are of benefit to Manitobans.

I continually work with police officers across this province, and meet on a regular basis with senior officers to ensure that policing issues are being dealt with in the most effective way. We will continue to do that also.

* (1025)

The Winnipeg Jets Operating Losses

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Eleven days ago in the Executive Council Estimates, the Premier indicated that once the expansion payments ceased—this is with respect to the Winnipeg Jets—the team would likely be in

a loss situation. He was speaking about the discussions around the time he signed the agreement with Mr. Norrie and the majority owners. He goes on to indicate: "The magnitude, I do not think we ever had any absolute assurance on, but certainly we recognized that there would be losses after a certain period of time."

My question, Mr. Speaker: When this matter went to Treasury Board, given those comments, there must have been some range of possible losses that the government considered, worst case and best case, and there must have been some range as to what those losses could be. Surely the government would not have signed that agreement without having some information on that. We have now received the City of Winnipeg's estimates. The First Minister may disagree with those.

Can he share with us what those estimates are, were, what his best estimates are today, Mr. Speaker, so that the taxpayers can know what the potential for losses, which will be paid for by this government, are?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I think it is safe to say, Mr. Speaker, that the experience that we have had up to date, and I guess this is the fourth year of the agreement, I believe, that we are currently in—1991—we are into the '94—in any case, we have had three years of experience. The losses and the costs within that period of time have been within the range that we projected at that time.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, the First Minister also went on to say: "As well as cabinet approval, the projections were all based on best available information with respect to the projections of increases in salaries." So there were projections.

Can the First Minister tell us what those projections are for future years?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we have information available—I do not have it at my disposal at the moment—but we would prefer to deal with the actual budget, because the budget process—the club is limited to being at the top of the lower third of teams in the league in projecting its costs this coming year. So that means that out of 24 teams, they could spend no more than the eighth lowest team in the league.

That is a process that will be overseen by the interim steering committee, and in that process, they will obviously be taking into account actual expectations of salary renewals and agreements. I would much rather deal with actual figures as opposed to putting out for public debate any assumed figures, on the worst-case scenario, on speculative numbers. I do not think that is a responsible way for us to deal with serious decisions by fueling speculation.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, obviously I have called them, the First Minister has called them, projections. That is what they are. But the people of this province, I think, want and deserve to see what those projections are.

I have a final question for the First Minister. There is speculation amongst a number of councillors at City Hall that the \$5-million entrance fee originally paid by the Winnipeg Jets hockey team to enter the NHL—they have only been paying interest on it thus far, and now they are starting to pay off the principal as part of their operations, which of course ends up being paid for by the taxpayer.

Does the First Minister have any knowledge of that particular allegation which has been coming out of City Hall this morning? Is the First Minister aware of whether or not that is accurate, and can he comment on those allegations that are being made?

Mr. Filmon: I have no information on that speculation and will be happy to look into it on behalf of the Liberal Leader.

* (1030)

Social Assistance Single Parent Families

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the provincial government has had the single parent family report since November of 1990. It is an excellent report. It contains 30 recommendations in four categories. Of those, 12 would have a beneficial effect on the income of single parents living in poverty, 60 percent of whose families are headed by women living under the poverty line.

Can the Minister of Family Services tell single parents living in poverty, headed by female heads of households in Manitoba, how many of those 30 recommendations her government has implemented?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer that question for my honourable friend and indicate to him that we have had consultations throughout the width and the breadth of this province dealing with the issue of sole-support parents and our ability to move them off the welfare rolls into productive or meaningful training or job opportunities.

I want to say that the meetings have been very positive. We have brought together the private sector, the service providers and members of the volunteer community who have indicated that they want to take a more active role in providing support to some of the most vulnerable and needy Manitobans in our community.

I am very pleased with the consultation process that has just taken place and has ended, and we will be moving very quickly along with the federal government into specific pilot projects that will indeed provide additional supports and building of self-esteem for those young women in our community.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, single parents living in poverty in Manitoba give this minister an F for implementing only two—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate. The honourable member for Burrows, with your question, sir.

Mr. Martindale: Can the Minister of Family Services tell us how many jobs will be created as the result of the single-parent project, her sole-parent project in co-operation with the federal government? How many individuals will be moved from social assistance into paid employment?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are working very actively with the federal minister and with a working group at the federal level to put forward our plan and our proposal for pilot projects in the province of Manitoba.

Those discussions are ongoing, and we have been working very diligently both at the federal and the provincial level. I have high expectations that the federal government will be extremely supportive of the proposals that Manitoba puts forward.

Mr. Martindale: The minister fails to answer the question.

How many individuals will be moved from social assistance into paid employment as a result of this program, the main features of which are a seamless service accessed through a single wicket and a single application assessment process?

There are no goals regarding jobs, but there should be. Will the minister tell the House how many individuals are going to be moved from social assistance into paid employment as a result of substantial amounts of money spent on this store-front program?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I know not what the member opposite is reading, because the proposal has not been put forward yet. So if he has a paper or a document—there has been no proposal put forward to the federal government.

We are in the process of doing that right now. We are looking forward to strategic initiatives money from the federal government. That might be his policy, but there has been no proposal put forward yet to the federal government.

Legionnaires' Disease

Department of Labour Involvement

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, two cases of legionnaires' disease have been confirmed at King Edward School in Winnipeg. This illness is caused by bacteria and high moisture, humidity in poorly ventilated indoor air quality.

I want to ask the Minister of Labour if his department was contacted about these cases. Is there a record of the calls with the Department of Labour, and what was the result of the Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Branch investigation of the source of this virus?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I will take this question as notice, and

when I have the information, I will bring it back to the member and to the House.

Indoor Air Quality Testing Program

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, since this incident and the illness is preventable by testing indoor air quality, can the minister confirm that he has eliminated the indoor air quality testing program from his department, and can he explain any rationale for this very unsafe move?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, The Workplace Safety and Health Act very clearly indicates that the owners or operators of a workplace have a responsibility to ensure that the workplace is safe, including the air quality.

So the responsibility is certainly there, and it is the responsibility of the Department of Labour to ensure that where there are complaints, they are met, that proper information is provided to owners and operators of workplaces to ensure that they comply with the regulations in the law.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, since yesterday was the day to recognize ME and chronic fatigue syndrome, two other illnesses exacerbated by sick building syndrome and poor air quality, and I know that schools and other workplaces are calling the department to ask for inspections on indoor air quality, can the minister explain to the House what he and his department are doing with these requests that come forward for inspections?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, with respect to specific requests, I will ascertain what specific steps our staff are undertaking.

I would point out to the honourable member for Radisson that it was this administration some years ago when the Department of Education provided a certain fund, made certain dollars available for the improvement of air qualities in schools, and steps were taken to ensure that where we had problems, dollars, resources were provided to correct them. I am aware of a number of schools that took advantage of this program.

So this is an area this government has been concerned with, and it continues to work on this particular issue.

Health Care System Reform Status Report

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the 14th of May, marks the second anniversary of the government's document, Quality Health for Manitobans: The Action Plan. In his remarks during the unveiling of the plan, the former Minister of Health outlined what he said would be his government's vision for the reform of the health care system in Manitoba. The minister also indicated that the plan would take two years to implement and to complete. The two years is now up tomorrow.

My question for the current Minister of Health is, how does he explain to the people of Manitoba that most of the goals and achievements outlined in this plan have not come to fruition?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the honourable member for Crescentwood calls our attention to the quality Action Plan with respect to our health system in Manitoba. The plan is well along. I think it is very noteworthy that here in Manitoba we have chosen a phased approach, as opposed to the approach being used in other provinces in Canada where they have lopped off whole arms and whole legs of their health care system. We have not had to do that. We have taken the time to consult with over 13,000 Manitobans.

If the honourable member would prefer that we use the system used by New Democratic administrations or Liberal administrations in eastern Canada, closing hospitals, closing massive numbers of hospital beds, throwing thousands of health care workers out of the workforce, well, I reject that approach. The honourable member, I believe, would reject that approach, too.

Home Care Services

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the minister. The former Minister of Health clearly indicated there would be a shift from institutional services to community care services and that we would see an increase in support and home care services to help avoid people being institutionalized.

Can the Minister of Health tell us why we have not seen any expansion in home care services and, in fact, we have seen a reduction—home care services.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Just to remind the honourable member that we have opted not to use the approach, for example, used in places like Nova Scotia, which has a Liberal government, where they have announced today the closure of three hospitals and 29 further hospitals downsized—

An Honourable Member: The Premier was here to speak to their annual meeting in Brandon.

Mr. McCrae: Oh, I understand the Premier of Nova Scotia was a keynote speaker at the Liberal annual general meeting here in Manitoba. Perhaps that is the approach our colleagues in the Liberal Party are advocating. It certainly is the approach being advocated by honourable members of the New Democratic Party, and it is not the approach we will use here.

* (1040)

Ms. Gray: Mr. Speaker, we know that Nova Scotia has the highest per capita bed population, and—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will remind the honourable member this is not a time for debate. Now, the honourable member for Crescentwood, with her question.

Ms. Gray: Can the Minister of Health explain to this House why there has been a reduction in home care services, as opposed to an expansion, because that is what the people who receive home care want to hear about.

They do not want to hear about Nova Scotia. They want to know what is happening to their services in Manitoba.

Mr. McCrae: A member has defended the closure of three hospitals in Nova Scotia and the downsizing of 29 more on the basis that they had a high bed rate, and I say to the honourable member, tell that to the patients in those hospitals and tell that to the workers who have to be laid off in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, over the last six years in Manitoba, home care expenditure has grown in Manitoba by 93 percent. This year alone, we are adding \$2.6 million to the Home Care budget. We are adding \$4.5 million to the community mental health care budget. We are building more and more Support Services to Seniors organizations right across Manitoba, including in NDP ridings, including the riding of Transcona where the member there does not even know he has one.

Health Care System Funding

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, it is too bad the new minister has fallen into the same trap the old minister fell into of accusing the opposition of creating all of the chaos in the health care system, when it is their own failure of their own policies to put in place community-based services that has caused the difficulty.

My question to the minister is, since it is not only the second-year anniversary of the government's failed health reform plan, it is also the year anniversary of Connie Curran, will the minister advise this House where the additional \$100 million that they have now said will come out of the health care system, out of the hospital budgets—where out of each hospital budget is that money coming? What are the community services to be put in place to replace that \$100 million that is coming out of the hospitals?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, speaking of Connie Curran, do the honourable member and his colleagues know who is now the chief executive officer of the Canadian branch of the Connie Curran company?

Well, it is the person who sat around the table with the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plozman), the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), and I do not know who all else over there as they ran the government here in Manitoba.

He is the person who presided over the closure of over 5,000 beds in the province of Ontario and then went on to his reward with Connie Curran,

Mr. Speaker. That is the kind of example honourable members opposite want to set in this House as they talk about health care reform.

No, Mr. Speaker, we will not accept the policies of the New Democrats, which is to cut great gobs out of our health care system and throw hundreds and perhaps thousands of people out of work. We will not do that.

Mr. Chomiak: Perhaps the Premier (Mr. Filmon) will answer the question, because obviously the Minister of Health is unable to.

My supplementary question is, can the government explain why they have continued the user fees for home care equipment, why they have cut services in home care and why they are not revealing where the \$100 million in cuts to hospitals is coming from?

Mr. McCrae: Since the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) raised the question several weeks ago—they keep flogging this dead horse using a figure, a mysterious figure which is speculative at worst and mischievous at best. Honourable members opposite use speculative figures rather than real ones when they are talking about the future of health care in Manitoba.

But I do say, we are using a phased approach to the reform of our system. We are shifting from acute care to the community in a phased and organized way. We are providing high quality services to Manitobans so that we can have outcomes. We are not measuring the value of our system by the number of dollars that go into it or the number of beds that are in it or the number of people, but by outcomes.

We will continue to use that approach in the provision of a sustainable health care system for generations to come.

Mr. Chomiak: This government's health reform plan has been totally phased out.

My final supplementary to the minister: Can the minister explain the comments of the head of MHO, who said that somehow there are some things on pause. The pause to layoffs and the pause

in some of the \$100-million cuts are sitting on the desk of the minister.

Can he explain what the status is of that so-called pause?

Mr. McCrae: On the one hand, we are told we are not moving fast enough, and now I guess we have had a major conversion on the part of the honourable member for Kildonan because he sees the error of his colleagues' ways to the east of us and to the west of us. Now he wants to know how the pause is working.

I should tell the honourable member that I felt it was appropriate to have a good hard look at what we were doing in health care reform in Manitoba. I have been doing that, and I am going to continue with health reform, health renewal, in a phased way.

We are not going to go and close whole hospitals like they are doing in Nova Scotia or like they are doing in Saskatchewan or like they are doing in British Columbia and thousands and thousands of hospital beds and people thrown out of work in Ontario.

We are not going to do it that way, Mr. Speaker.

Chief Medical Examiner Investigation/Review

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): My question is to the Minister of Justice.

Several days ago, I raised the question about admissions made by the Chief Medical Examiner, putting in doubt whether suspicious deaths of Manitobans were in fact even reviewed by the Chief Medical Examiner in 1990 and 1991 to see if inquests should be held.

My question is to the minister. What inquiry has the minister ordered into this matter?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I have asked my department to begin looking at exactly what has happened, to speak with the Chief Medical Examiner and, in addition, to speak with others in the department to look at exactly what has occurred, under what authority that occurred, and to make sure that we have a full explanation.

Following that full explanation, I will then make a determination.

Mr. Mackintosh: A review by the minister's department is unacceptable to Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, a review by her department of her department.

My question is, will the minister now order a fair independent inquiry into this serious matter?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, again, I will first of all gather the facts. Following having the facts being gathered, I will then make a determination of any further action required.

Mr. Mackintosh: My final supplementary is, can the minister assure this House that the presigning of reports by the Chief Medical Examiner has not continued since 1991? Will she follow the proper course of action when there are fundamental questions about the conduct of her department and order an independent fair inquiry?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, I have explained to the member exactly what I will be doing. These allegations and issues arose during something unrelated to an examination in the department. I have now determined that my department will investigate what came up during the course of another hearing, that we will get the full background and then make a determination with all of the facts before us.

At the moment, Mr. Speaker, we do not have all of the facts.

**Foster Care
Long-Term Placements**

Ms. Norma McCormick (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Family Services.

Two weeks ago, our caucus learned from an April 1994 policy directive that the foster care rates for extended family care were to be cut to \$10 a day, and we raised our concerns for the aboriginal community.

These rate reductions will also apply to foster care rates for children in permanent home placement.

My question to the Minister of Family Services is, does she not see a problem with a funding policy which discourages the placement of children with extended families and which works against permanency planning for foster children, when we know that a stable long-term care arrangement provides these children with their best hope for growing up into healthy, well-adjusted adults?

* (1050)

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question because it does allow me again to put on the record the increased support of over \$6 million that we have in the child welfare system this year, in this year's budget. I look forward to getting into the detail with her of what those major increases will hopefully accomplish, with a new vision for child welfare in Manitoba that looks at family support, family preservation and family responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the dollars that are within the system will be redirected and reused so that children do not have to necessarily be brought into care in the future to receive the supports they need, to try to keep the family unit together.

I am thoroughly convinced that working along with Winnipeg Child and Family Services, we have a new vision for a new way of doing business in our child welfare system.

Fee Schedule—Negotiations

Ms. Norma McCormick (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary: In advising foster parents of the reduction of the rate to \$10 per day, department officials are telling foster parents that the rate is to be negotiated and will be subject to contractual agreement.

My question to the minister: If foster parents are willing to accept the reduced rate for a child in keeping with this present policy, will the minister guarantee foster parents that if there is change in the child's or the family's circumstances, that the \$10 rate can be negotiated back up to a reasonable rate?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, what I indicated in the past and I will iterate again today is that indeed we believe that \$320 a month tax free for the basic needs for children—and that is shelter and clothing—is an adequate amount.

Mr. Speaker, the money will still be in the system, and more money will be in the system so that we can put additional supports around children. Should the need arise, we can put additional supports around that foster family unit. We can put additional resources around the natural family unit so that we can keep children in their homes and try to provide the best service possible in the best interests of the children.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Ducks Unlimited Waterfowl Celebration

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Gimli have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, I wish to share with the members of this House some information regarding the Second Annual—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: What is the problem? Order, please. It is the honourable member for Gimli who has asked for leave to make a nonpolitical statement, and it is only the honourable member for Gimli.

Mr. Helwer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, I wish to share with the members of this House some information regarding the Second Annual Ducks Unlimited International Waterfowl Celebration. This special celebration will be held this Saturday, May 14, and Sunday, May 15, at Oak Hammock Marsh and at the towns of Selkirk and Stonewall.

At Oak Hammock Marsh, the event takes place at the Conservation Centre and surrounding area where the program on each day includes more than 25 activities. For example, there are a wide range of different conservation exhibits. There are

wildlife art and wildlife photograph displays, carving displays, a decoy carving show, wildlife calling demonstrations and a competition, retriever demonstrations, a fly fishing display, a wildlife film festival, an exhibit of butterflies and moths from around the world and a natural history book exhibit.

The variety of special events for youngsters include ecological games, nest box building, as well as waterfowl silhouette colouring and face painting. The program starts at 9 a.m. and concludes at 5 p.m.

The marsh life posters submitted by youngsters from all over Manitoba will be displayed at Stonewall Quarry Park and at the Agriculture building in Selkirk Park, as well as the Oak Hammock Marsh Conservation Centre. The winning poster will be used to promote the 1995 Waterfowl Celebration. Additionally, there are breakfasts and tours at the Marine Museum in Selkirk and at the Quarry Park in Stonewall. All proceeds from this Waterfowl Celebration support the Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all members of this House and all Manitobans to come and participate in this very special celebration this coming Saturday and Sunday.

Thank you.

The Winnipeg General Strike

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Burrows have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, May 15 is an important anniversary in the history of workers, organized labour and Canada.

In April 1919, the building and metal trade unions in Winnipeg presented wage demands to their employers. The metal workers asked for wage parity with their brothers in the rail shops. The metal shop owners rejected their proposals and refused to meet with union representatives. The builders admitted that the workers' wage demands were fair and the construction workers were underpaid but also refused to meet with union representatives. As a result, building trade workers

went on strike on May 1, and the metal workers followed on May 2.

The Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council then conducted referendums with its member unions on a general strike.

At seven o'clock in the morning of May 15, 1919, Winnipeg's female night shift telephone operators punched off duty. Unlike every other day of the year, there were no day shift workers to replace them. The Winnipeg General Strike had begun. Twelve thousand union members were joined by another 15,000 others who joined in the sympathetic general strike.

The main issues in the strike were the right to bargain collectively, reasonable living wages and decent working conditions. Since 1919, there have been great improvements in wages, and laws have been enacted governing minimum wages, the health and safety of workplaces, and collective bargaining has been recognized as a right.

Today, we pay tribute to the courage and tenacity of the workers and union leaders who, in May 1919, took collective action to fight for the rights of all workers. While they were not immediately successful, we, their successors, were, and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable government House leader, what are your intentions, sir?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Before we get into Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker, I do have a few items of House business which I would like to confirm.

Firstly, the Committee on Public Accounts will meet Monday, May 16, at 10 a.m., to continue their deliberations of the 1993 Auditor's Report and Public Accounts.

On Tuesday, May 17, the Committee of Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet at 10 a.m. to consider the 1993 Report of the Manitoba Telephone System.

On Thursday, May 19, the Public Utilities and Natural Resources committee will meet at 10 a.m.

to consider the 1993 Report of the Manitoba Hazardous Waste Management Corporation.

On Tuesday, May 24, the Public Utilities and Natural Resources Committee will meet at 10 a.m. to consider the 1993 report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation.

On Thursday, May 26, the Standing Committee on Economic Development will meet at 10 a.m. to consider the 1993 report of the Communities Economic Development Fund.

On Tuesday, May 31, the Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet at 10 a.m. to consider the 1993 report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

On Friday, June 3, there has been agreement amongst House leaders that we will consider condolences on that day.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable government House leader for that information.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, with respect to Orders of the Day, would you call for second readings of Bills 4, 5 and 9, and following that, the bills as listed under Second Readings on the Order Paper, Bills 2, 3, 7, 8 and 10.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 4—The Energy and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that Bill 4, The Energy and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur l'énergie et apportant des modifications corrélatives, be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this bill which will replace outdated legislation and provide for the introduction of

regulations governing minimum energy-efficiency standards or codes.

Bill 4 outlines the role and functions of the Energy ministry and provides the authority for carrying out the responsibilities assigned to the department and to the minister. Once enacted, Bill 4 will clarify and reduce energy-related legislation by repealing The Manitoba Energy Council Act and The Manitoba Energy Authority Act. Amendments will also be made to The Manitoba Hydro Act.

The Manitoba Energy Authority Act was introduced in the late 1970s when no Energy ministry existed. With the establishment of the Department of Energy and Mines in 1979, the majority of the authority's responsibility related to energy planning and policy development were provided through the department.

The authority was primarily used as a vehicle to negotiate extraprovincial power sales and to encourage the development of energy-intensive industry. The authority was discontinued in 1992. With the passage of this bill, the legislated role of the authority to negotiate and approve transactions for exporting or importing electricity will be left with Manitoba Hydro. This will be accomplished by the consequential amendments.

Section 12 of the bill repeals the section of The Manitoba Hydro Act which requires the approval of the Manitoba Energy Authority for all extraprovincial power negotiations. Approval for future extraprovincial transactions will be by Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. Mr. Speaker, this was the situation before 1980.

In addition, developing and co-ordinating contingency plans to deal with possible energy shortages will be the responsibility of the Energy department. Promoting and encouraging energy-intensive industry in Manitoba will be undertaken by the Department of Energy and Mines, the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism and Manitoba Hydro.

* (1100)

In the absence of an Energy ministry in the 1970s, the Manitoba Energy Council was passed which provided for the appointment of an energy

council to provide advice on energy matters to the Minister responsible for Energy. When the Energy department was established in the early 1980s, the council's role was gradually reduced and it was last active in 1987. Bill 4 will, however, enable the minister to appoint an advisory committee to respond to any energy matter on which the minister may wish to have public consultation or advice.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will provide enabling legislation for implementing and enforcing regulations concerning minimum energy-efficiency standards or codes for products which use energy or products that affect the use of energy.

Bill 4 is intended to provide a mechanism to prevent Manitoba from becoming a dumping ground for products regulated in other jurisdictions which do not meet energy-efficiency standards. Regulations restricting such products will be subject to public consultation, and where advisable, will be harmonized with other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to tell this House the bill will also require the development and use of energy resources in Manitoba and must be consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

In closing, I wish to state the primary reason for introducing Bill 4 is to establish the Energy ministry as the responsible agency for energy planning and policy development, particularly on energy supply and demand issues. The bill will introduce, for the first time, enabling legislation to implement regulations for end-use energy efficiency in keeping with the principles of sustainable development. The bill is the result of considerable discussion by representatives of government departments, and I commend the efforts of all those who have been involved in its development.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge the support of this bill by every member of the House and look forward to their comments.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 5—The Highway Traffic Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Manness), that Bill 5, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route et apportant des modifications corrélatives), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce Bill 5 amending The Highway Traffic Act, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act, and The Off-Road Vehicles Act.

There are two purposes for introducing this bill. The first is to implement a new system of providing Autopac services to the citizens of Manitoba. Although the bulk of the bill consists of amendments to The Highway Traffic Act and The Off-Road Vehicles Act which are under the purview of my department, and these amendments are necessary to accomplish an initiative brought forward by the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, that is the initiative Autopac 2000. Manitoba Public Insurance is currently engaged in a major project that will result in fundamental changes in the way vehicle registration and insurance services will be delivered to the public of Manitoba.

One of the most significant features of the corporation's business plan is the introduction of staggered vehicle registration and insurance renewal periods in place of the current fixed renewal date of March 1. For individual motorists, the new registration period will be determined by using the registered owner's birth date plus an offset of some months. The result will be 365 possible renewal dates per year. Introduction of staggered renewal periods is an extremely positive innovation from every aspect. It will reduce the

financial burden felt each year during the traditional Autopac renewal period. It will eliminate customer line-ups and smooth out customer flow for Autopac agents thus allowing for better public service. It will also enable Manitoba Public Insurance to administer the renewal process more efficiently.

Another component of the business plan is the daily proration of fees and premiums. At the present time fees and premiums are assessed based on a system of monthly proration. This means the vehicle owner must pay for an entire month when the vehicle is registered or deregistered during any part of that month. With daily proration fees the premiums will be assessed in accordance with the actual number of days the vehicle is registered in that month.

There is one more component of the plan I know that members would be interested in. This is a transfer-of-ownership document. The transfer-of-ownership document introduced a new level of consumer protection for the vehicle purchaser. It will provide potential purchasers with better assurance of the credibility of the seller and the accuracy of the odometer. Every person registering a vehicle will be issued this document in conjunction with the vehicle registration card. It will describe the vehicle and the owner, or owners, who have the right to sell this vehicle. When the vehicle is sold, the owner must pass on the transfer-of-ownership document to the new owner. The owner must also indicate the vehicle's odometer reading at the time of the sale on the ownership document. The new owner will be required to produce a transfer-of-ownership document, along with the bill of sale, at the time of vehicle registration.

We are very pleased to introduce these amendments which we believe will lead to a significant improvement in the way vehicle insurance and registration of services are delivered in Manitoba.

The second purpose for introducing this bill is to ensure the admissibility of the register of motor vehicles records as evidence in court. Last July the Manitoba Court of Appeal declared the registered

records inadmissible because of the use of preprinted letterhead containing the registered signature. Amendments contained in this bill correct this legal technicality.

I look forward to discussing the details of this bill in committee and urge all members of the House to quickly move this bill along to completion. I will, Mr. Speaker, also tell the members opposite that I will supply the spreadsheets as soon as I have them available. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 9—The Convention Centre Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), that Bill 9, The Convention Centre Corporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Corporation du Centre des congrès, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (1110)

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce for second reading the bill entitled The Convention Centre Corporation Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the bill is primarily for housekeeping nature. The Board of Directors of the Winnipeg Convention Centre and the City of Winnipeg had submitted application for amendments to The Convention Centre Corporation Act in two specific areas. Both amendments have been adopted by the Council of the City of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I will like to take a few minutes to describe each of the amendments.

The first amendment, Clause 6(1)(b), will allow the Winnipeg Convention Centre Corporation, with the approval of council, to make short-term banking arrangements in which amounts not exceeding the sum of \$250,000—I would like to

indicate that when the act was enacted on July 20, 1972, the amount of \$100,000 for short-term banking arrangements was reasonable in relation to the operation at that time. Due to the growth and the magnitude of the present Convention Centre operation, short-term cash flow deficiencies have occasionally occurred when hosting major events.

This proposed amendment will facilitate ongoing cash flow requirements of the present Convention Centre operation.

The second amendment is to increase the board of directors from 13 members to 15 members and to specify the following: term of councillors, term of directors, incomplete term of office, maximum consecutive years of service, reappointment after a period of absence, transitional staggered terms of appointment.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments will facilitate a more effective and timely rotation as well as ensuring continuity of directors of the board of the Convention Centre Corporation. In addition, the maximum years of service by directors on the board, the reappointment of directors after a period of absence from the board, and transitional measures will now be clearly specified.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would expect that these are noncontentious issues with respect to the amendments, and there ought to be no difficulty on the part of honourable members supporting this bill; at least, I would hope not.

I would recommend the bill to the honourable members of the legislature for their consideration and adoption. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 2—The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment and Pharmaceutical Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), Bill 2, The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance

Amendment and Pharmaceutical Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'achat de médicaments sur ordonnance et la Loi sur les pharmacies, standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this particular bill to express some concerns I have, not so much about this bill, but about the policy of the Department of Health with respect to the whole issue of prescription drugs.

The Liberal Party has been on the record for some time as recognizing the need for reform in our health care system. We have also been on the record as saying that one of the ways in which the health care system needs to be reformed is to move from the dependence on acute care to home care service delivery.

We need to philosophically change our attitudes so that the health care system is directed not just to illness care but to wellness care. An integral part of keeping people well, keeping them healthy, is the insurance that they get adequate drug therapy when they need adequate drug therapy and that that drug therapy be considered part and parcel of the health care system.

What has been happening over the last few years is the removal of a number of drugs, even those which formerly were covered by prescriptions, from coverage by our Pharmacare system. The reason for this determination has presumably been a cost-saving measure; however, I would suggest to the government that it does not always work that way.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

In the case of senior citizens, when they no longer have adequate coverage for their drugs, many of them choose not to take those drugs. The ramifications of them not taking those drugs is that they then find themselves back in a health care system, back in a hospital situation, which is far

more costly, I would suggest to the government, than had they been continued on a drug therapy program.

The cost of prescription drugs for many people is far too high. We know the changes that have been made by the Province of Manitoba have in fact given an unfair burden to those over the age of 65 who live on modest incomes and to those who are members of our working poor.

It has always amazed me that we fail to recognize, as a society, that it is the working poor who are often among the most disadvantaged in our community. Social assistance rates, although certainly not as high as many of those families need, often put families in a better position than families who are working, because with low minimum wage laws we have a situation in which those people who have to live on minimum wage frequently find themselves in a decision. I am speaking most particularly about single parent mothers who find themselves in a position of having to choose whether they continue to work or whether they go on social assistance because in some cases the social assistance benefits are better than the benefits they were receiving from remaining as a working parent.

What also hits them very dramatically by living on low wages, as a result of their gainful employment, is that their health care benefits are diminished. Drugs are covered if they are on social assistance. Drugs are not covered for many of them when they are low income families; low income because they have chosen to be gainfully employed and to not exist on the social safety net provided by the province and by the federal government.

When drugs are delisted, these families are very adversely affected. This time of year, for example, for many families is a particularly difficult one, because if their children are asthmatic, if their children are subject to a variety of allergies, the allergens tend to be at their highest. As the pollens begin to bombard us, those who suffer from allergies, particularly allergies to pollens and grass and weeds, find that they have difficulty breathing.

They are frequently subjected to severe nasal congestion.

Most of those drugs are not covered. I think it might shock some of the members if they went to their local drugstore to discover the high cost of many of those drugs which are not covered. If those children, and if adults who suffer from the same type of allergen, do not treat themselves adequately, if they do not keep the antihistamines in their system, then many of them will find themselves in hospital. They will find themselves in emergency rooms, on inhalation treatments, necessitated because they had not provided themselves with adequate care.

The cost of emergency, the cost of inhalation treatment, in a hospital for just one of these children is far greater than the cost that would be covered under prescription drugs. We must change our philosophical orientation and recognize that if we are genuinely interested in the reform of health care, then we must also be interested in what should be covered by prescription drug legislation.

* (1120)

It concerns me, when I see sections of this bill dedicated to "The minister may make regulations." I am referring to Section "9(1.1) The minister may make regulations (a) specifying drugs and other items in respect of the cost of which benefits may be paid."

Well, that is part of the present act. The result of that present act has been more and more drugs have been deleted, have not been added—they have been deleted. The implications of that on the health system are very negative. They are negative for the treatment of the patient. But more importantly in terms of the fiscal arrangements of this government, they are more costly.

Therefore, I would have liked to have seen in this bill a recognition that prescription drugs are not a luxury. Prescription drugs are a part of the treatment system; prescription drugs are a part and parcel of necessary reform; prescription drugs are a part of wellness; prescription drugs are, in fact, cost-effective in allowing individuals to remain outside of the acute care hospital system in many instances.

The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment and Pharmaceutical Amendment Act does provide, we hope, for a long-awaited efficiency of the system. This party is on the record—and I mean this party, the Liberal Party in Manitoba is on the record in 1988 as supporting the concept of a Pharmacare card whereby people could, once they had reached the maximum benefit that they had to pay, they would be then afforded the opportunity to pay only the minimum, they would be given their prescription, and it would be the pharmacy who would then, in turn, bill the government.

We knew this would be cost-effective. We knew it would be efficient, the government has admitted to that, and here we are in 1994, some six years later, and we are still waiting for those efficiencies in the system.

Those efficiencies must be found. The formulation of a smart card, the formulation of an ability to ensure that people do not deny themselves their drug medication because they cannot afford to pay the 100 percent, when we know they are going to get a rebate, must be provided for and as soon as possible.

The other difficulties that people find themselves in, and have found themselves in, are those who have not submitted their forms soon enough. Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, in the normal course of events, clearly people should be efficient about their filing of claims, but there are always extenuating circumstances. There are circumstances in which there has been a death in a family, and which the family left behind is not perhaps working at its most efficient and therefore does not claim their benefits as quickly as perhaps they might.

Surely there must be some discretionary power used and employed by the minister so that when there are extenuating circumstances and when it is clear that there are extenuating circumstances that there are not these callous letters back from the Department of Health saying your deadline was April 30, and you did not submit in time for April 30 and therefore you do not meet the requirements. That certainly should be applicable to most cases.

There should be an onus on the patient to submit quickly and efficiently, but there must be the leeway so that the government can act in a more compassionate manner. The discretionary power should be left with the minister. I do not see it in this particular legislation, but I hope that the minister will take my words and perhaps put it in the legislation in order to provide him at this moment, but others, with that discretionary power for the extenuating circumstances that do exist.

With those comments, Mr. Acting Speaker, I leave the bill standing and hope that others will also bring in amendments to this legislation to make this legislation effective and efficient legislation and responsive to the needs of the citizens of the province of Manitoba.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): The member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) has this bill standing in his name, and I want to indicate that we are prepared, we will be prepared, to expedite as swiftly as possible the passage of this particular bill, although we recognize that the critic for the Liberal Party also wants to speak, and there may be one or two members of my party who wish to comment on this bill. But, in general, of course, certainly in theory and in philosophy, we would like to see this bill go to the committee stage to allow for public input and to allow for discussion of some of the aspects of this bill. Like the other two parties in this House, we supported, by way of resolution in the last session of the Legislature, the provision of a Pharmacare card, the provision of a PHIN card in order to assist the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the government's record in terms of reforming health reform is not a very favourable one. The performance of the last several years leaves a lot open to question and to challenge. But I think that the introduction of the Pharmacare card, which was recommended by all political parties in this House, is a very positive step forward. We certainly have some concerns with respect to the introduction of something as complicated and as innovative as this card will be, and that is why we would like the matter to go to

the committee stage in order to allow for comments from the community and comments from experts and specialists in the field to determine the bugs and the debugs and the flaws in the introduction of the card.

We welcome it for many reasons. First and foremost, it will result in people not having to go through the archaic procedure of submitting their forms and having them come back in my mail and all of the steps that are involved in the old system, Mr. Speaker, the old technology. We have access now to expanded technology, to communications that will allow people to have instant access to not only their prescription drugs, to not having to put money up front. It certainly has been a problem with those on fixed incomes, and people that have very exorbitant drug costs have to put the money up front and then wait for the return of their funds from this system. So we certainly welcome that.

There have been concerns expressed to us about the whole question of the protection of privacy, and these are very real concerns. That is one of the reasons why we would like to hear expert opinion and hear discussion from the public concerning the whole question of privacy.

As we move into new and expanding technologies, Mr. Speaker, we are clearly in some cases in uncharted waters, and we must go forward with caution and with prudence in order to ensure that we do not jeopardize the privacy and we do not jeopardize the confidentiality of those involved in the system. This is a classic example of a new technology being introduced, and the technology and a process being introduced which has the potential for difficulties in terms of communications of information regarding privacy.

I reviewed the comments of the minister, and I was pleased to see that the amendment to the act was developed with the assistance of the Consumers' Association of Manitoba, the Manitoba Society of Seniors, the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Dental Association of Manitoba, the Pharmaceutical Association, Mr. Speaker. We are pleased that input was sought because this is an area where, in

fact, as we develop new technologies, and as we set precedents, the groundwork we lay, that is laid down in this area, is going to be duplicated and replicated in the future. We have had discussions during the Estimates process about the so-called smart card that will follow in terms of technology, and any developments that we proceed with this particular card, that is the PHIN card, P-H-I-N, will be followed by the smart card. So any precedents laid down and any bugs uncovered in the process will not only assist us, but also a precedence set could serve to harm the process in the future, so we must proceed with caution.

* (1130)

Having said that, we are also very pleased because, as I recall, from my readings of Hansard, one of the former colleagues, Mr. Jay Cowan, spoke of this card in the introduction a long time ago in this Chamber in 1988, I believe. I know that there has been resolutions in this Chamber since then, so we are very pleased that we are proceeding with this.

Although I understand that there are bugs in the system, and they are being worked out, because I was under the impression that the card was to be in effect March 1, and I understand it has been moved back to April 1, and now I am not entirely certain of what the start date of the particular card is.

The member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) spoke of the whole question of health reform, and the movement from acute care beds to a wellness model, and it is certainly something that we have been advocating in this House for some time. There is no question that the wellness model is the goal, the goal we should follow. In fact, perhaps it should be the department of wellness, Mr. Speaker, not the Department of Health of which we should be speaking.

The move toward community-based service is one that has been long advocated by members of this side of the House, and it is something that must be put in place prior to the dismantling of the acute care system and the downsizing of the acute care system. Therein lies the failure of this government with regard to its health reform plan—the failure to put in place realistic, meaningful community-

based care and outreach programs prior to the movement of individuals out of the acute care system. That has been our major criticism, as well as the criticism of the lack of communications.

As I have posed it to the minister, the problem with the Department of Health is that it is a monologue disguised as a dialogue. I have mentioned that to the minister on many occasions and it continues, Mr. Speaker, that the efforts and the movement with regard to health changes in this province continue to be top down and not adequately taking into account representations of the community.

That is why we are very interested in this process, the introduction of this particular bill, The Prescription Drugs Costs Assistance Amendment and Pharmaceutical Amendment Act because this affords us an opportunity—and the minister has indicated that there has been input from the community, Mr. Speaker—to go to committee and to hear realistic, subjective and objective viewpoints presented by members of the public and presented in a form that allows us to amend and change where necessary.

And that may have to take place, Mr. Speaker, because as I previously indicated, we are venturing into relatively uncharted waters in this regard, and the one constant that will remain with us will be the constant of change.

The theory and the philosophy behind this particular amendment is one that we support. I only wish that other aspects of the government's health reform had adhered to this particular philosophy. Perhaps we would not be in this state that we are in presently with regard to health care in this province if this philosophy had been adhered to that provided for contribution of members of the community, that provided for meaningful input, that provided for a chance to dialogue and that provided for change coming in once the technology was prepared. Unfortunately, that has not characterized the government's health reform to date, and the result has been a real difficulty. If one looks at the area of prescription drugs, it is pretty clear that there have been changes in this area.

There is no doubt that prescription therapy is, in fact, a preventative and in many cases one of the areas of health that can contribute to keeping people out of acute care bed hospitals, Mr. Speaker, and it has been disheartening to see a movement away from universal coverage under our provincial Pharmacare program. [interjection] The member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) asked me to comment on the question of the generic drug issue, and I will get to that.

It has been disheartening to see the government move away from universality in many areas, certainly in home care supplies and other areas, and it has been disheartening to see the government move away from universality with respect to our prescription drug program.

There were major changes to the formulary last year, and one notes that a lot of those changes resulted in real difficulty with individuals who had been previously under a form of drug therapy and saw their particular drug delisted, and forced them to either pay the cost or change to some other type of therapy or none at all, Mr. Speaker. That was unfortunate, and it was a—I can recall questioning the previous minister in the House on this particular issue and attempting to have some moderation changed to the policy, but it was to no avail, and changes did occur that severely impacted on individuals.

Not only did we see drugs come off of the formulary and prevent and preclude people from having access to this form of drug therapy, but we have of course seen the government break its promise on Pharmacare on a yearly basis, which was to, at a minimum, maintain the level at the rate of inflation, but to increase the deductibles so that individuals have to put more money up front and to decrease the total amount returned to individuals in this year.

In fact, we see the deductible increased again. In fact, since the Filmon government took office in 1988 they have raised the deductible by nearly 50 percent while inflation has increased by less than 25 percent.

It is unfortunate because it impacts on those who are generally not well, the sick, and those who can

ill afford, both financially and physically, to bear an additional burden. We have been critical of this, and it is unfortunate that it has occurred in the past several years and continues to occur.

So while we are quite positive, philosophically and otherwise, in our comments with regard to this particular amendment and in regard to this particular bill, we of course have been highly critical of the changes made by the government in the Pharmacare program, which has moved us on the road away from the broad-based universal health care system that is so admired in Manitoba and Canada. [interjection] I note that members opposite on the front bench are encouraging me to discuss aspects of the Americanization of our health care system or Connie Curran, but I would be loathe to indicate that even though members opposite would wish me to, because the whole question of this—we on this side of the House tend to be very positive as often as we can.

In fact, that is why we have introduced again this year a bill for The Health Reform Accountability Act, which I am sure members opposite will support, I am positive. Another one of the positive aspects is—one of the reasons why we raised the issue of the private labs and the potential for dealing and increasing the amount of money available to the public health care system by dealing with this issue.

I know members support us in our initiative to deal with these questions and why we have raised many of the issues of the decrease in service to home care: To put in place the broad-based community health care that is so desired and required as a result of the government's hacking and slashing of the acute care system, which is why I speak favourably, both philosophically and structurally, with these amendments—a process and a change that we asked for and called for in this Chamber. It was called for unanimously in this Chamber. That is perhaps one of the better examples of how we can function to work together to improve our health care system.

* (1140)

But at the same time, members opposite have to be aware that there are—and that is the difficulty, I

am not certain that members opposite are aware of the flaws in this system, of the failings of the system. It is incumbent upon us in the opposition to point out these failings and the flaws in the system in order to make a better health care system. I know members opposite do not want to hear that, but it is incumbent upon us in the opposition to do it, because if they do not hear it from us, they will certainly hear it from the people who sent us all here, when next we have occasion to go to the polls.

Mr. Speaker, there are many areas of preventative health and wellness that the government could put in place with regard to this. This is a small step, but there are certainly many, many areas. The government has talked for some time about their healthy child development, and I think they would have support of this House, all members in this House, on a meaningful healthy child development.

We know that infant mortality is much higher amongst those in the low-income level. We know that low birthweights are a major factor based on socioeconomic background. We know that these must be dealt with if we want to have a healthier population, if we want to have a population that spends less time in these high-priced acute care hospitals, that has less need for the kind of thing we are talking about today, that is, prescription drugs and prescription therapy. So we must have movement on the part of this government with regard to healthy child development, with regard to wellness.

Mr. Speaker, there were many policy papers that were put out by the former minister with regard to preventative health care to a wellness model. Unfortunately, very few of them have come to fruition, and that aspect of reform, that is, prevention and wellness, seems to have been lost in the government's single-minded attempt to cut costs and only costs. As a result, that initiative has been lost, and we have been trying diligently in the Estimates process to have the minister acknowledge this and move towards this.

(Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

We find that we have basically been stonewalled by rhetoric and by steadfastness and a refusal to budge and a refusal to move at all in this regard. It is unfortunate because that is the way we must go. This is not a political issue. It is a practical issue and it is an important issue and it is a philosophical issue. If we all believe that our health care system should move towards a wellness model, should move towards a preventative model, then we must undertake real initiatives in this area.

If the government were to launch meaningful initiatives, they would have the support of members of this side of the House. From the comments, I know, of the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), they would have the support of members of the Liberal Party as well, if the government would move towards that kind of a model. But it appears that that is not the case. It appears that the government is going to stay steadfast in its insistence to hack and slash, and it is unfortunate for the people of Manitoba.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

To return, just in general, to the whole question of prescription drugs, we also had an interesting experience and an interesting development this week. Unanimously again, Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, all parties called on the federal government to undertake to live up to its commitment in the recent election campaign to do something about this whole question of the bad legislation brought in previously concerning pharmaceuticals, the bad legislation that extended the patent rights on prescription drugs to 20 years, the bad legislation that we were told was brought in because of GATT or because of NAFTA and which, in fact, did not have to be brought in, which is probably one of the reasons why drug prices have gone up so dramatically in this country, which is one of the reasons why drug prices have gone up so much in Manitoba, which is one of the excuses given by members opposite—and to a certain extent it is legitimate—that the costs have become out of hand in the Pharmacare program, which is why they have justified their cutbacks.

Notwithstanding that, Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the action should have taken place and

should take place at the federal level. The federal government must step in and must do something about the whole question of this extending of the patent right, because we know that it is a licence to print money for large pharmaceutical multinational companies at the expense of the consumer, at the expense of the people that we are trying to help through this particular amendment and through the changes to the Pharmacare program. The unfortunate thing is, the initiatives—Bill C-22 and Bill C-98—of the federal government have resulted in increased costs for Pharmacare drugs. It has had a severe impact on all the economies, and more importantly, it has had a severe impact on those requiring drug treatment.

So tangential with this, with improvements to our system to provide—to improve the system for the delivery of pharmaceuticals in Manitoba, something unanimously agreed to by all parties.

We also unanimously agreed this week in this session, by way of resolution, to call on the present federal government to do something, to live up to their promise to deal with the issue of this extended patent to large pharmaceutical companies and to allow for their flourishing and the advancement of the development of generic drug companies who we all know from experience and otherwise have enabled us, at one time, to enjoy a better, lower level of drug cost. So it is comforting to know that members unanimously passed that resolution this week in the Chamber.

Now we are dealing with a bill that was a result of a resolution passed also unanimously last session concerning the introduction of the pharmaceutical card, the PHIN card or the PIN card, however one wants to characterize it. That in itself is a positive step, and maybe that is an example, perhaps. In this era of massive government cutbacks to the health care system and chaos in the health care system, perhaps there is some action that we in this Legislature can take in harmony to try to improve the system for the benefit of all Manitobans. Certainly, because this bill was unanimously passed—pardon me, the resolution was unanimously passed, which is the predecessor to this bill, perhaps it could show the

way to the proper development of our health care system. Because at present with acute care bed hospitals in the city of Winnipeg and Brandon facing \$100 million in cuts with no expansion of home care services, with the introduction last year of user fees in home care equipment and supplies, with the various cutbacks, the strains and the stresses amongst the population are very real.

We must remind members opposite that these are very real people suffering very real difficulties as a result of the changes that the government has imposed on the health care system. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it is not getting better out there.

It certainly is not getting better, which is one of the reasons why we called on the government this week to not pay Connie Curran that three-quarters of a million dollars still sitting in trust that has not been paid out to her. We called on the government this week, do not pay that money out. She does not deserve that money. The health care system, the people of Manitoba require that money for the health care system, not the American consultant to put into her bank account.

We called on the government this week to not pay that money. I still might be hoping against hope, but I am still hoping that the government will see the light and say, no, we are going to stop payment of this three-quarters of a million dollars. That money could go back into the health care system and provide meaningful service. It could perhaps expand some home care programs. It could perhaps result in more drugs being put on the formulary, could perhaps result in improving the deductible for Manitobans. That money could help to expand community-based care in our community clinics, to provide nutrition to young mothers and young families.

* (1150)

That three-quarters of a million dollars waiting in trust, sitting there just earmarked, Connie Curran, U.S.A, if you would stop that, if members opposite would stop that, Mr. Speaker, perhaps we could use that money to improve this very system we are talking about, this bill, and that is the system of introducing the PHIN card.

I know members opposite are encouraging me to continue on my course of talking about Connie Curran, but I digress, and I prefer to confine my remarks to the general philosophy of this bill. Frankly, as I said, we are very anxious to see this bill go to committee, because we are anxious to hear from the public, we are anxious to hear from the experts in the field, we are anxious to hear what improvements can be made in this process, because it is a new process, it is uncharted waters, and I am sure there are suggestions and amendments and there are changes that could be brought forward that could improve the system.

Let members recognize that this is a significant change. Let members recognize that by introducing this technology in this legislation, that access to information, confidential information becomes a problem and it becomes an issue.

I reiterate, I recognize that many groups have been consulted, but I suggest that as broadly based as possible advice should be sought on this bill, because if one is aware of the ramifications of this particular bill and the implications, if one looks at the implications and the ramifications of this bill, we should ensure that we consult broadly and we look at and talk with as many experts in the field as possible.

I had occasion to hear a discussion on Morningside of new technologies and privacy incumbent upon those new technologies, and I thought that every time there was in that discussion a suggestion that privacy was assured as a result of the introduction of a similar kind of technology, there was a counterargument put forward as to how that privacy could not be assured. So, Mr. Speaker, this area is rife with difficulties, and I—
[interjection]

Mr. Speaker, members opposite are encouraging me to use all of my remaining 12 minutes. In fact, I hear cries from the back bench to perhaps offer me leave to continue my discourse, but I do wish to—we should not underscore the difficulties in this area and we should not underscore the difficulties of the technological changes and the whole issue out of privacy, and I suggest that when the technology is introduced, that when

the—[interjection] The member talks about new technology and old technology, and I must add that in certain cases I utilize old technology. This area is ripe with difficulty, and I think we are going to have to be very cautious in the introduction of this process to assure individuals who may be concerned about the potential for misuse of information and the potential for loss of privacy and loss of confidentiality regarding this technology.

Just let me—and this is no criticism, Mr. Speaker, but just let me cite an example. Supposing an individual is on, shall we say, an antidepressant or some other psychiatric drug, there is a stigma. I think we have to recognize there is a stigma associated with psychiatric illness and mental illness in general, and it would be interesting to note if an individual was to receive or was receiving a psychiatric drug they might be concerned about who was aware of this fact, because it obviously would reflect upon their—it may reflect upon their competency, even though that is not realistic. An illness of the mind in my opinion is really fundamentally no different than an illness of the body.

Nonetheless, one could foresee situations where individuals might be not as inclined to perhaps approach their druggist or their doctor to obtain, say, a psychiatric drug or a drug of some kind because of fear that that information would be made public or could be made public. That is just one example of an area that as we move in these uncharted waters has to be considered, and that has to be considered with respect to individuals.

I know that the bill has penalties with respect to the release of information and has guidelines built in, but I think we have to look very carefully at the specific government agencies and others who interact with individuals who may have access to this information.

It is one thing, for example, for the Department of Health and certain areas and aspects of the Department of Health to have access to this information, but what happens if an individual, for example, is incarcerated? The individual is incarcerated, and we have now introduced the

element of the Department of Justice and Corrections into the equation. To what extent does that particular department have access to the information that is contained in the individual's prescription profile or registry?

I know that safeguards, or I hope that safeguards are built in in that regard, but these are the kinds of questions that will come up, questions with regard to Family Services, questions with regard to access to information from other government officials and from outside officials. One of the concerns expressed in that Morningside discussion that I referred to previously was the fact that private agencies have obtained access to a fair amount of information contained in the new technological area.

The fact that these private agencies had access to it opened up a whole new area of discussion, and also an area of potential abuse.

I am not suggesting by these comments to indicate that this will necessarily happen in Manitoba, but I think it is a concern that must be expressed and which we must be wary of. We should subject this particular bill to very intense scrutiny, particularly in committee, and we should attempt to discuss it and go through literally every plausible scenario in our review of this legislation. We should go through every plausible scenario to ensure that every contingency that we can possibly think of can be considered and to ensure that any of these potential difficulties can be dealt with by the legislation, the amendments.

So, Mr. Speaker, certainly, as I have indicated throughout, we are looking forward to this matter going to committee. I believe I probably will be the only, with the exception of the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), who will make very brief comments, I will be basically the only member of our party dealing with this amendment. We look forward to its movement towards committee, we look forward to the opportunity to scrutinize it in detail.

And I might add, when it does go to committee, I would suggest that we be vigilant and spend adequate energy, time and discussion on this at committee to ensure that the effects of this

amendment are followed through with, because once we are into this technology and once we are into this development, there is probably no looking back, and if we want to have an effective program in Manitoba, if we want to build on this program to further develop the technologies by way of the smart card, if we want to do that then we must assure ourselves that we are laying adequate groundwork and that we are establishing an adequate system in place for Manitobans.

When bills and other matters are considered at committee it is always a very important area and function, but I suggest that with this particular bill it becomes of greater importance because of the implications, the long-term effects and the precedents that can be established by this bill and by the introduction of this technology.

* (1200)

Mr. Speaker, in general, that fairly well sums up my comments and I believe most of the comments of my colleagues, and I certainly thank members opposite for their helpful suggestions with regard to my comments and the effect of same, and I believe that the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) has a few brief comments to put on this bill, and I can assure the House that that will complete our discussion of this bill at this reading, and we will look forward to its movement to committee. I understand that the Liberal Health critic at some future point wants to put on the record some comments in this regard, but I want to assure you that that will be our suffice in terms of our review of this bill at this time.

Having put those comments on the record, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I will be very brief with my comments, Mr. Speaker, regarding Bill 2, The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment and Pharmaceutical Amendment Act.

This is an important piece of legislation, I am sure, for most Manitobans, and I know it is for my constituents. I have had dealings with several of my constituents over the last four years with concerns that they have with respect to the prescription drug costs in our province. I know I have had several of them come to my office and

talk to me about problems that they have encountered with respect to the government's decision not to extend the deadline for the refundable monies, and I am talking about the artificial deadline.

I believe that this piece of legislation will allow the cost to be immediately refunded to the individuals that are applying or are receiving prescription drugs through the dispensing pharmacies or agencies, and at that time it will effectively reduce the immediate costs for the consumers, for those that need prescription drugs. They will then be able to go to the pharmacies and receive their prescriptions or have their prescriptions filled, and at that time they will not have to pay out of their own pockets the full cost that they would have done under the current system.

This will reduce their immediate costs and, of course, will reduce the risk of them losing the refundable portion of the monies for those that, through either oversight or through personal circumstances, may not have applied for the refunds by the artificial date that had been in place in the past.

It is my understanding that there is supposed to be a smart card that is supposed to be coming, although we do not know when the start date is for this program or this initiative. We think that this will increase the opportunities or speed up the process to reduce the costs for the consumers in the marketplace, most likely the seniors, the sick and the disabled of our communities that will have to pay these monies out of their pocket. This will reduce the cost for them.

I hope that it will improve the service delivery for the people. I hope, and I look at the legislation itself, that there is going to be some insurances or some protections put in place for those that may attempt to issue false receipts or provide misleading information. There are also other sections of this legislation that protect information confidentiality. My colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has put his comments on the record pertaining to individuals who may be incarcerated and the problems that might be

encountered there. I am sure the minister would have listened to those comments, and I hope he will take them under advisement.

The concern that people in my community have as well, Mr. Speaker, is the 20-year patent protection and the ever-escalating cost of prescription medications in our province. We hope that the federal government will seriously consider and effectively implement a repeal of that 20-year patent protection for the prescription drugs within Canada. Of course, for those who are within our province of Manitoba, that has added greatly to the costs.

The other concerns that came to my attention, Mr. Speaker, by constituents who have drawn their concerns to my attention concerning prescription drugs, is the deinsurance of some of the drugs or the delisting of some of the drugs that the government had previously covered. Of course, this further adds to the costs of those who require those drugs, and quite often it is the seniors in my community that are impacted by this decision.

That is an unfortunate decision that the government had taken last year, and of course, we have drawn that to the government's attention in the past.

My colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has indicated that we are prepared to have this legislation move through to the committee stage and to allow the members of the public the opportunity to come forward with any concerns or any comments that they might have with respect to this Bill 2. We look forward to those committee hearings taking place, to listening to members of the public. Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a matter of House business, there has been discussion amongst House leaders with respect to sitting next week. I suspect, if you

canvassed the House, there might be unanimous leave to sit on Wednesday, May 18, in the evening from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. and to waive the sitting on Friday, May 20.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave to not sit on Friday, May 20? [agreed]

Is there leave to sit Wednesday night, May 18, between the hours of seven and 11? [agreed]

Committee Changes

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I move, seconded by the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be amended as follows: the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) for the member for Gimli.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 3—The Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), Bill 3, The Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation de traitement du cancer et de recherche en cancérologie, standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that that matter remain standing? [agreed]

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, as the minister indicated, this is primarily a housekeeping bill to establish a piece of legislation, The Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation Amendment Act, but it just amends the present Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation Act as it presently exists.

The remarks that I want to make are primarily about the Cancer Treatment Centre itself, which provides some very valuable service in this community and to all of Manitobans. The fundraising efforts of this foundation which have been, quite frankly, magnificent in the amounts of money they have been able to bring in, should be, I think, recognized by the citizens of the province of Manitoba. There is a sense, quite often you

know, that it is governments and governments alone that fund the health care system. They do it through taxpayer's money. Well, a large part, certainly—the vast majority of the health care system in this province is funded by the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba through the taxation system and therefore through the government.

* (1210)

However, there are a number of foundations, the Cancer Treatment Centre Foundation being one, that go seek from corporations and from individuals vast sums of money, and it never ceases to amaze me the degree of generosity that is portrayed by Manitobans when these foundations come to them and request funds. They literally turn out their pockets in order to achieve the sums of money they need to remain viable foundations.

One of the changes that I must say I am absolutely delighted with in this bill, has been the change in the membership of the foundation. In the past there has been a tendency for the governments of the day to appoint large numbers of the members of the board to the research foundation. What has happened in this particular amendment is that the individuals who will now sit on this board come from very specific representative bodies. The Health Sciences Centre will have a representative. The St. Boniface General Hospital will have representative. The board of governors of the University of Manitoba will have a representative.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Unfortunately we are still left with 10 persons appointed by the Minister of Health and another seven appointed by the foundation, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. That concerns me because I think the foundation itself has a better understanding of the type of individual it needs on that foundation board than frequently does government. All too often the government appointees, no matter what the government in power—this is not a criticism of the present government—tend to appoint people, not because of their knowledge of cancer, not because of their knowledge of fundraising, which are the two most important components of the foundation,

but because they belong to the right political party of the day or they represent a favour due and owing or whatever, and I think that is unfortunate. It has led to a lack of consistency on the boards, and that is not in the foundation's best interest.

I think when we look at the very fine work that has been done by this foundation in the past, and hopefully will continue to do so in the future, that we should be trying to depoliticize to a greater extent than what this particular amendment allows for.

I was hopeful, quite frankly, that the balance would have shifted more dramatically, that instead of seven persons appointed by the foundation subject to the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, they would now become the predominant number, and that has not happened. Ten persons will still be appointed by the Department of Health, and that leads itself to the political type of appointment which I do not think serves this foundation particularly well.

I would ask the minister to reconsider and to change the mix. I am not suggesting there is not an interest in the Department of Health for this foundation and that the Department of Health should not, indeed, have representation. I think they should, but I do not think they have to have the majority of members on this particular foundation. I would like the government to consider that and to amend the bill accordingly.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg), that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Barrett: We do not

Mr. Speaker: There is no need for that. Leave has already been granted to allow this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). Okay.

Bill 7—The Crown Lands Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr.

Driedger), Bill No. 7, The Crown Lands Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les terres domaniales, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). Stand?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 8—The Fisheries Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger), Bill No. 8, The Fisheries Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pêche, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). Stand?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on The Fisheries Amendment Act, because although I will probably not be the only speaker from my party on this particular act, we would like to see this act proceed as quickly as possible to passage, and hopefully see that it will come into force and effect almost immediately.

I think the provisions in the bill, particularly with respect to search and seizure and with respect to additional fines, are ones that should be put into place as soon as possible and, hopefully, even for this particular season of the commercial fishery in the province of Manitoba. Therefore, I think that it is mostly a housekeeping bill but with some positive additions, particularly with regard to the fines.

I think this will keep our fishery, hopefully, in better control against those who would violate, and unfortunately, there are those who would choose to break the rules as they presently exist. This will give some force and effect to those who have the authority to enforce this regulation.

I hope that with the agreement of the other opposition party, we can move this bill along quite quickly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 10—The Wildlife Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger), Bill No. 10, The Wildlife Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la conservation de la faune, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Is it the will of the House to call it 12:30? [agreed]

The hour being 12:30, this House now adjourns and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday. Have a great weekend.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, May 13, 1994

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