



First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u>
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, September 26, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Federal Immigration Policies

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Walfredo Burtudez, Teodora Burtudez, Mike Legaspi and others requesting the Legislative Assembly to request the Government of Canada that they cancel the fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Federal Immigration Policies

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Santos), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS Manitoba has been immeasurably enriched socially, economically and culturally by immigrants and their families, and;

WHEREAS it was for this reason that successive provincial and federal governments have encouraged immigration to Manitoba, and;

WHEREAS since 1993, the current federal Liberal government has reversed these policies by instituting a series of changes making immigration more difficult; and

WHEREAS the 1994 changes in quotas for family reunification class of immigrants were unfair and punitive; and

WHEREAS the fee increases for immigrants instituted in the 1995 federal Liberal budget are neither fair nor justifiable and border on racism, and;

WHEREAS the new \$975 fee being imposed on adult immigrants is more than many immigrants make in their home country in an entire year, and will make it even more difficult for people from these countries to immigrate to Canada;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request that the Government of Canada cancel these fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba.

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, not disagreeing for a moment with the substance of the petition, I ask your consideration. This is petitioning the Government of Canada, not the government of Manitoba.

We have had, I think, two or three similar types of petitions coming forward, and you say, well, while certainly you do not disagree with the substance of the issue particularly related to the matters raised within the petition, I ask for your consideration with regard to the appropriateness of being presented here in this House.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, it is an area of joint jurisdiction, and I believe that is why it has been tabled in this House. I would certainly await your ruling in terms of whether there are any difficulties in terms of the wording, but it is a matter that does affect both levels of government, although I do appreciate the comments of the government House leader.

* (1335)

Madam Speaker: As I indicated earlier in my remarks, I have reviewed the petition, and perhaps yesterday I did not hear all of the appropriate wording.

I have researched it and checked it, and perhaps for the benefit of the government House leader and all other members, I will just quickly read the WHEREFORE portion of the motion which is basically a request of this government to request that the Government of Canada cancel—

So with your indulgence, I will quickly review the wording: "WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request that the Government of Canada cancel these fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba."

Therefore I rule that there was no point of order, that indeed the petition is in order.

Federal Immigration Policies

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Hickes), and it complies with the rules and the practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS Manitoba has been immeasurably enriched socially, economically and culturally by immigrants and their families, and;

WHEREAS it was for this reason that successive provincial and federal governments have encouraged immigration to Manitoba, and;

WHEREAS since 1993, the current federal Liberal government has reversed these policies by instituting a series of changes making immigration more difficult; and

WHEREAS the 1994 changes in quotas for family reunification class of immigrants were unfair and punitive; and

WHEREAS the fee increases for immigrants instituted in the 1995 federal Liberal budget are neither fair nor justifiable and border on racism, and;

WHEREAS the new \$975 fee being imposed on adult immigrants is more than many immigrants make in their home country in an entire year, and will make it even more difficult for people from these countries to immigrate to Canada;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request that the Government of Canada cancel these fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Annual Reports for 1994 for the Residential Tenancies Branch and the Residential Tenancies Commission.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw all members' attention to the loge to my right, where we have with us Mr. Harold Neufeld, the former member for the constituency of Rossmere.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Winnipeg Jets/Arena MEC Proposal

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I want to congratulate the former member for Rossmere being the first Conservative to admit about the \$800-million-plus deficit. You were right.

My question is to the Acting Premier.

Madam Speaker, on June 23, 1995, in legislative committee I asked the Minister responsible for

Infrastructure, Finance, Lotteries and the Jets a specific question on the forwarding of \$10 million to the so-called private sector group, the MEC group, for the deposit for the hockey team to be purchased. On June 23 the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) took the question as notice. I note that on June 14 the Ministry of Finance issued a transfer of a cheque of \$5 million as a so-called repayable advance to Thompson Dorfman Sweatman in trust for the Manitoba Entertainment Complex.

I would like to know from the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) why his Minister of Finance did not disclose at the committee that \$5 million was forwarded by the government as part of the deposit and did not disclose that to the legislative committee that was meeting at the time.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): If the Leader of the Opposition was putting all of the information on the record and reading his entire question from that day, I am sure he will recall, because we discussed it later, that he asked me about the advancing of the \$10-million deposit and whether or not there were any elements of that which included money from the grassroots campaign, the campaign by CJOB, by the media outlets, by the banks and so on that raised approximately, I believe ultimately, some \$12 million or \$13 million.

I believe I indicated to him at the time that I did not think any of those funds had been utilized, but I would take the matter as notice. I ultimately informed him of that, and I am sure he can confirm that here today, that in fact in terms of the \$10-million deposit, none of the proceeds used were drawn from the grassroots campaign. I would hope that he would put his entire question on the record. The question that he asked that day in Estimates, that was the question that he asked. I answered his question, and I would ask him to be comprehensive when he asks his question, Madam Speaker.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: I suppose there are sins of commission and there are sins of omission, Madam Speaker, and if the Minister of Finance feels it is appropriate not to inform

the public at a legislative committee about the \$5 million, I am truly disappointed and I think Manitobans should be.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am certain the honourable Leader of the official opposition has a question.

Infrastructure Works Agreement Entertainment Complex

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, under the so-called Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program Agreement, contracts that are awarded for the implementation of projects would be entered into with the relevant provisions of this agreement referenced. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance to table today the contract under the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Agreement that deals with all payments to the MEC group, the Spirit group dealing with the so-called infrastructure proposals and funds that will go from the people of Manitoba to—[interjection]

Well, if the Deputy Premier wants to answer the question. I asked him the first question. If he would like to answer it: I would like to ask the Deputy Premier to table the contract pursuant to the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Agreement.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, besides his direct question, the Leader of the Opposition had a lengthy preamble and I think he seems to be suggesting to us that not only do we answer his questions directly, we speculate on what other questions he might want to be asking or thinking he should be asking and try to answer that. Talk about absolutely ridiculous. He asks a question, we answer his question, we provide him with that information.

In terms of the infrastructure agreement, as has been indicated, in fact, the same process he is referring to back on June 23, we discussed at length the infrastructure program. In fact, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) moved a motion deleting funding from the infrastructure program that we had indicated would be utilized for a new entertainment complex arena if one were to be built here in Manitoba.

So, again, in terms of the tone of questioning, we had a lengthy discussion back on June 23 about the utilization of the infrastructure program. It is a program that has to be agreed to by the federal government and the provincial government. We did agree that if a facility was going to be built, that is where we would draw some of our commitments from, certainly the first commitments, and that has been the basis of our advances to date.

In terms of any particular documentation, I will take that portion of his question as notice and pursue providing him with any additional documentation I can, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance referenced the Kenaston underpass project. I would like to table the program description and the contract between the federal government, the provincial government and the City of Winnipeg dealing with the Kenaston underpass project.

Will the Minister of Finance agree today to table a similar contract or agreement under the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure program pursuant to the guidelines that the government released as the guidelines between the federal and provincial governments? Will the minister agree today to table in this House—you have it in your files—can you table in this House that proposal similar to the Kenaston underpass proposal so that we can see all the disbursements that are agreed upon between the government of Manitoba, the Government of Canada and the City of Winnipeg under an infrastructure program for an arena that was never built?

Mr. Stefanson: Firstly, Madam Speaker—and the Leader of the Opposition refers to them—they are guidelines and just that, guidelines utilized in terms of the program. At the end of the day, in terms of the utilization of the infrastructure program from the strategic pot of \$84 million, those are decisions made by the federal government and the provincial government.

As I have indicated publicly and in this House, in terms of all of the funds utilized in terms of the development of a new entertainment complex arena

from the federal government, from the provincial government, from the City of Winnipeg, from the private sector, it is our intention that all of that information will be made public and will be audited by an independent auditing firm here in Manitoba. It will also be audited by the Provincial Auditor and the city auditor, Madam Speaker, and as soon as all of that information is in and is compiled, we will make all of that information available.

We have indicated we believe it is in everybody's best interest to see all of that information, to see how the funds were utilized in terms of the facility design, in terms of the preconstruction activities, in terms of the marketing activities and so on.

But in terms of where we directed our funds from, we have made it perfectly clear throughout the whole process that if we funded a new entertainment complex it would come from the infrastructure agreement.

I told the Leader of the Opposition that on June 23, 1995, and nothing has changed today. The advances that we have made towards that facility were made from that particular agreement.

* (1345)

The Pas Health Complex Funding

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, my questions are directed to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson).

I sit here day in and day out listening to the Minister of Health telling people, telling this House that everything is A-okay in the health care system.

Madam Speaker, The Pas Health Complex is facing a \$1.3-million funding reduction for the next two years. The board has expressed its concern to the government in that those funding reductions were strictly fiscally targeted and had nothing to do with the so-called health care reform that this government embarked on three years ago and for which Connie Curran received \$4 million to do. These reductions are strictly fiscally targeted.

What I would like to ask the minister is this: Why are these guidelines for those cuts in The Pas Health Complex based strictly on fiscal targets and not on the so-called reform plans that Connie Curran got a million dollars to do?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the changes that we foresee for The Pas Health Complex and other rural and northern facilities are in line with the staffing guidelines that we have taken a long period of time to develop and in consultation with health care providers in the facilities. An inordinately large representation on that review committee was from northern Manitoba.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, given the fact that the North is always behind in terms of program funding and services and so on, could I ask the minister to advise the House how those 26 positions, what impact will it have on patient care at The Pas Health Complex and surrounding area?

Mr. McCrae: We expect, Madam Speaker, by those guidelines to see health care delivery in overstaffed areas equalized with care delivery delivered in what were previously understaffed.

What the honourable members opposite forget is that what we have here, in some cases, the guidelines in some facilities were not being adhered to, and the staffing levels rose above the requirements for health care in those places. So the guideline review resulted in a more equalized sort of treatment throughout the province.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, since this government and The Pas Health Complex are at odds in terms of what is the level of funding reduction that should take place, will the minister agree to put the funding reduction on freeze and go back to negotiating with The Pas Health Complex?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, that is what we did in the fall of 1993.

We put on hold the requirement that hospitals adhere to the staffing guidelines. We undertook a year-and-a-half-long review of the staffing guidelines using the

process that I referred to involving bedside nurses in the process, involving the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses, the Manitoba Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, hospital administrators and caregivers at the hospitals, and as I said, representation from northern Manitoba was inordinately high on the staffing guidelines committee.

Health Care System Role of Licensed Practical Nurses

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, LPN nurses have been completely eliminated at St. Boniface, heavily reduced at Health Sciences Centre and are in the process of being either eliminated or greatly reduced at Seven Oaks Hospital.

Can the minister explain how the elimination of front-line nurses, who provide the majority of patient care and have contact with the patient, can possibly improve the quality of health care in our hospitals?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I have been involved in numerous meetings regarding this particular issue. The licensed practical nurse is facing the same pressures as other nurses in some of our institutions.

Their services are very valued in many health applications, Madam Speaker, so much so that I am hearing complaints that facilities and others cannot find enough LPNs to get the job done.

* (1350)

Seven Oaks Hospital Health Care Aides

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my supplementary to the minister: Is it government policy that the LPNs who are being eliminated specifically at Seven Oaks Hospital are going to be replaced by health care aides who will then provide that care, and what effect will that have on the quality of patient care?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Each institution, Madam Speaker, sets up its staffing mix

based on the requirements of its patient load and its budget. There are applications where you will see more LPNs in some places than in other places. That is a fact of life in our health care system. It is a reality. In some places, there is a higher level of LPNs than in other places. Certainly in long-term care there is a need for LPNs. The challenge here is, and the honourable member did not mention it, but the challenge is to ensure that we have enough LPNs in the marketplace to provide the services that are required.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, can the minister confirm what I have in writing in a letter from the vice-president of nursing at Seven Oaks Hospital that the LPNs who are being eliminated at Seven Oaks Hospital will have the opportunity to apply to be health care aides after they have taken a course at Red River Community College to qualify to be health care aides, to maybe have the possibility of working in the health care system that the minister says there are so many positions for LPNs in?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the honourable member will understand that it depends upon where and what facilities and what functions are required to be carried out where the demand for LPN services is going to exist. The honourable member knows that.

Apprenticeship Training Federal Funding

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, there are concerns on this side of the House that the federal government proposes to phase out its support for apprenticeship over the next few years.

I want to ask the Minister of Education to tell us whether she has been informed of this, and can she tell the House what the impact of this will be on the already declining numbers of young Manitobans in apprenticeship?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for her question and her interest in this particular topic.

I have not received information from the federal government in terms of specifics on details on many

items that I would like to have more detail on. The major overriding concern, of course, for those of us involved in education is the impending impact of the cut in transfer payments which will impact everything that we do.

We have been working very hard in the department and in collaboration with those federal officials with whom we interact on a daily basis to make apprenticeship more relevant and to enhance opportunities for journeyman training and so on.

Ms. Friesen: Can the same minister confirm that developing federal policies on training will require the province to take greater responsibility for young people new to the labour market, women returning to the labour market and new immigrants, exactly the same people, Madam Speaker, who have been seriously hurt by this government's cuts to Access, New Careers, youth programs and Student Social Allowances?

Mrs. McIntosh: I have to indicate in terms of Access that we have more students enrolled now than before, so the take-up on that has not decreased, has increased, because we believe it is a good program and so do the students who enroll in it.

In terms of the dealings with apprenticeships, new apprenticeship registrations have increased by about 35 percent in the past fiscal year. In large part, that has to do with continuing emphasis in our department on preparation skills for the marketplace in community colleges and through apprenticeships, workforce training and so on.

Ms. Friesen: Would the minister undertake to be in contact immediately with the federal government to bring to the House the details on this withdrawal of support for apprenticeship and underline to the federal government that this is in fact flying in the face of the very means to post-secondary educational success that every one of our international competitors has?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, we on a regular basis communicate our concerns on these types of items to the federal government. We have also had discussions on these types of items with the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada meeting which was

just recently attended last week in the Yukon where all ministers across the nation expressed concern about federal offloading, federal cutbacks in terms of post-secondary education in particular as it affected our particular jurisdictions. We are committed to working together with other ministries to ensure that the federal government lives up to its responsibilities in the terms of education and training component. I thank the member for her support on that issue.

* (1355)

**St. Germain-Vermette
Secession**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Urban Affairs.

There has been a lack of good will from the provincial government to work with the City of Winnipeg in co-operation in trying to resolve the whole issue of areas of the city that are looking at secession. In fact, in the most recent edition of the Manitoba Taxpayers Association, I would quote the minister where he has said that he will allow taxpayers in south Winnipeg, in sections of St. Germain and Vermette to vote on secession, as Headingley did last year, and he will abide by their wishes.

My question to the minister is, has he set a date for a referendum to allow these two communities to secede from the city of Winnipeg and, if not, what are this government's intentions on this particular issue?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): I would like to point out to the member for Inkster that the procedures and the chain of events that are unfolding regarding the St. Germain-Vermette situation are identical to what was happening in the position that Headingley put itself through a few years ago. The one thing that has come about even to a more thorough position regarding St. Germain-Vermette was the fact that every resident in that area was given a copy of the study.

The study was there for them to peruse, to look at the consequences of secession, amalgamation with the municipality of Rosser, I believe it is, or staying within

the city. Those are the parameters that the residents of the area are looking at now. To the best of my knowledge, they have not had a public meeting to discuss this. They have not come back to this office or to me in regard to what their preference is or what direction they would like to take, so at this time it is hypothetical whether there will be a vote or whether there will be secession or whether there will be amalgamation, because nothing has come back to this office regarding their wishes.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask the minister, does the minister or his department have any time schedule when they would anticipate that a referendum will in fact be allowed? We do know that the minister has been having some meetings with both the municipality that is adjacent to it and no doubt some of the residents in the community.

Does he have in his mind or does the department have any idea when there is going to be a referendum in this area?

Mr. Reimer: Madam Speaker, I have to remind the member that that is a hypothetical question because he is anticipating that something possibly could happen or the direction that may be taken. To anticipate whether there is going to be a vote or when or anything like that, I just cannot speculate that way as to what he is asking.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as the minister said and I would ask, his commitment was that he will abide by the wishes of these two particular communities.

Is the Minister of Urban Affairs trying to say to any community in the municipality of Winnipeg that if they so choose, that they feel it is in their best interests to secede and leave Winnipeg for whatever reasons, that this particular government will abide by their wishes, whether it is St. Boniface, St. Vital, Meadows West—

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

Mr. Reimer: Madam Speaker, I was not sure whether you were ruling whether that was a hypothetical

question or not because in my expectations that was another hypothetical situation that really cannot be answered until the situation is presented. Once the situations are presented, there is an evaluation of the procedures, decisions are made and then it becomes a direction. Until that time, everything is hypothetical.

**Social Assistance
Food Allowance**

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, Manitoba has the most disgraceful record on child poverty of any province in Canada, 10 out of 10, the worst record in Canada, and this can be directly attributed to the cutbacks of this government. Sister Lesley Sacouman, the co-director of Rossbrook House, says that poverty is structural violence.

In view of the fact that structural violence is increasing in Manitoba and that one out of 11 people in the city of Winnipeg are on welfare, how can this minister justify cutting back the food allowance for children on city social assistance?

* (1400)

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question because it does allow me to speak a bit to what we had some discussion on in the Estimates process.

I think we have to put things into perspective when we look at the issue of child poverty and the definition of child poverty because, Madam Speaker, if in fact the numbers that were developed by Statistics Canada today were available in the days when I was growing up, I would have been considered a child living in poverty. I want to say to you that I do not consider that I lived in poverty. I was loved, I was cared for and I was nurtured, even though we did not have the financial means to be above any specific income level.

I think we have to look at what true child poverty means. In my mind and I think in the minds of many Manitobans, it is those children who live below the poverty line but are also neglected and abused and not properly nourished, and those are the children whom

we have to focus on as government to ensure that they have the ability to thrive and flourish.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, will the minister comment on the context of the election campaign where the Filmon Vision, the Manitoba Strong document, promised a number of things including implementing recommendations on the health of Manitoba's children, one of which recommendation was to increase the food allowance for children on social assistance?

Why is she cutting the rate of food for children on social assistance, contrary to their election promise?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Again, I thank my honourable friend for that question, because we did make a commitment, a very strong commitment to children and families during the election campaign, and we continue to work very aggressively on those commitments that we made.

Madam Speaker, we are not in the situation where we are today overnight, and we are not going to get out of that situation overnight. It is going to take a lot of thought and energy and co-ordination of effort and resources to ensure that we move forward in a new direction with a new reality.

We are not the only province that is looking at changes in the way we support families and children. At the ministers of social services annual meeting last week here in Winnipeg, provinces of all political stripes are struggling with this specific issue, and we have indicated that we are going to work together in a very unified way to share information and to share ideas on how, in fact, we can change our focus and the dollars that we spend to put money into early intervention, early child development and nutrition, and, Madam Speaker, those things will be happening, and as we move in that new direction, I will share all of that information with my honourable friend.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, this election promise is worthless.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Burrows, this is not a time for

a demonstration. This is a time to pose a final supplementary question. Final supplementary questions are to have no preamble, no midamble nor postamble.

The honourable member for Burrows, to pose his question now.

Mr. Martindale: My question, Madam Speaker, is, what is the Minister of Family Services going to eliminate from the allowance for children on city welfare, since it is based on a market basket of groceries. Is she going to eliminate lunch or supper or protein or milk? What is she going to eliminate from this food allowance?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There seems to be a disease on the opposite side of the House today in asking hypothetical questions and wanting answers to decisions that have never been made or have never been articulated.

Indeed, I indicated last week that there would be standard rates for social allowances when the City of Winnipeg is amalgamated with the Province of Manitoba in a one-tiered system, Madam Speaker. There was no mention of what those rates might be. As we move towards that process, the rate will be set, and it is set on a yearly basis for families and for children.

Public Housing Property Tax Credit

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Statistics show that 56 percent of families and seniors living in public housing have incomes of less than \$10,000 a year. These are the same low-income families that are having their cupboards raided by this government in changing the food allowance for people on social allowance.

I want to ask the Minister of Housing if he can confirm that last year, by including the property tax credit for these people renting in public housing, the same property tax credit that was used to buy eyeglasses, hearing aids, home care supplies, that it netted over \$300,000 for this government. Can he confirm that? I asked the question in Estimates, can he confirm it for the House today that this has been a tax grab—

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

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): I believe what the member is referring to is something that was allowable in the sense that the people, if there was an objection to the issuance of the taxed rent, there was an appeal process put in. Their situations were analyzed. In fact, I believe they are still going under an appeal process for any type of hardship that was realized by these people.

There was a realization that if there was a need, it was recognized. There was an appeal process so the people were able to come back to this government for recognition.

Ms. Cerilli: The minister has not answered the question.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Cerilli: The grab by this government on low-income Manitobans, \$300,000 or more—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Radisson, with a supplementary question.

* (1410)

Ms. Cerilli: Can the minister answer the question that I asked in Estimates? Has the government netted \$300,000 or more from low-income tenants in public housing by adding their property tax credit into their rent geared to income?

Would they not admit this is balancing the budget on the backs of those least able to pay?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Radisson that a supplementary question is to consist of one succinctly worded sentence. One question.

Mr. Reimer: No, it was not a tax grab.

Ms. Cerilli: I would ask the same minister, can he tell the House how much money has been collected by

adding this property tax credit into the rent geared for income and if that money is at least going to stay in public housing going to repairs and maintenance? Can the minister answer that question for the House?

Mr. Reimer: Madam Speaker, let it not be said that this government does not have a commitment to the maintenance and improvement of public housing. If we are looking at the expenditure of what this government—as of March 31, 1995, total expenditures are well over \$113 million towards maintenance and improvement of this. The commitment, the conscious decisions towards maintenance and improvement in social housing in Manitoba has been recognized and consistent with this government and will continue to be of a priority.

Infrastructure Works Agreement Entertainment Complex

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance has confirmed finally, although he did not see fit to put out a press release on the issue congratulating the government on infrastructure grants for the Winnipeg Jets, he has apparently confirmed that the \$3 million of total grants that were to be made pursuant to the meetings in January were flowed during the spring and early summer period.

Will the minister then confirm that an agreement does exist that he will table very shortly in this House, since under the infrastructure agreement such agreements must be completed before the project is entered into?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, the member for Crescentwood seems to be functioning from a selective memory because he, I believe, participated in some of the discussion during Estimates of the infrastructure program and other initiatives that fall under my areas of responsibility. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) was certainly there. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was there, and we discussed that any funding that we would be providing towards a new entertainment complex, new arena, that the initial allocation would come from the infrastructure program. We said, out of this year's budget of some \$34 million, approximately \$11 million

was available to be utilized for an entertainment complex.

In fact, they opposed trying to find a solution so much that they introduced a motion to remove that allocation from the infrastructure program. It was moved by the member for Thompson. We came back in this Chamber, and we defeated that motion.

That is in keeping with their whole objective through this whole issue. They have never tried to be constructive. They have never tried to be a part of a solution. They have never tried to help the community and the people that have wanted to keep the Jets here in Manitoba, Madam Speaker—

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the official opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, you have pointed out to members in the opposition asking questions that they must ask questions with one short sentence on a supplementary question.

Similar instructions should be issued to the ministers of government not to debate issues. If they cannot table the agreement they should just sit down, rather than entering into the debate as we have seen from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). This is totally off the mark from the question raised by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale).

Madam Speaker: On the point of order, I would remind the honourable minister that the response should not provoke debate, Beauchesne 408(2) and Beauchesne 417.

* * *

Mr. Sale: Could the minister confirm that under the infrastructure agreement the province ensured that the project that was discussed in January of 1995, approximately the 19th or 18th of that month, was structured so as to ensure that the ongoing operating costs are borne by the project proponent and that

satisfactory financial arrangements were in place and were approved by the province at that time, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, in terms of the infrastructure agreement, as I have indicated, it was agreed by the federal government and the provincial government that if a new facility was going to be built, that that would be one element of providing some of the funding.

I should again remind members that if you go back to the first element of funding that occurred in terms of finding a solution to keep the Jets in Manitoba, that goes back to 1994 when there were some amendments to the interim funding agreement, Madam Speaker.

But this project was agreed to by the federal government and the provincial government, that the infrastructure program would be a portion of the funding if it were to be built, not unlike other projects, not unlike, as I mentioned to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) yesterday, the Kenaston underpass, that was a project that was started. Certain costs were incurred and then for various reasons that project was not proceeded with.

But in terms of the total utilization of funds, Madam Speaker, I have indicated that that information will be made available. It will be audited and it will be subject to scrutiny not only here in this Chamber but by Manitobans.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, is the minister then saying that no such agreement was ever drafted or exists, or is he going to have to create one and backdate it?

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, clearly the member for Crescentwood in posing that question imputed motives to the Minister of Finance which are highly inappropriate, and he should be asked to withdraw them immediately and unconditionally.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order, I will review Hansard, and I will check the

wording of that question very carefully and report back to the House.

But at this time, I want to remind all honourable members that I know emotions run high, but I would prefer and I insist that you select and choose your words most carefully, as well as the context within which those words are said.

* * *

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the creation and backdating of agreements may be the style of the member for Crescentwood or the party that he is associated with, but I want to assure you it is not the style of this minister or this government.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. James, with one short question.

Immigrant Referral Centre Funding

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): My question is to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

Madam Speaker, in response to a question that I asked the minister last week, he indicated his department and his government was committed to providing settlement services for immigrants. Given that the project for the recent immigrant centre is on the verge of collapsing because this government has not made a commitment and the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has refused to fund ESL for that project, will this minister make a commitment and ensure that that project goes ahead?

* (1420)

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I do have to point out that the honourable member is factually incorrect. This government and this department have been involved and we have committed some staff to that project. I know that the member has a strong affiliation with Winnipeg No. 1 School Division and it is really their project that the member is here promoting.

We have dedicated some staff time to that and are working with the group to see if this project is doable.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin); Wellington (Ms. Barrett) for Transcona (Mr. Reid); Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), for Thursday, September 28, 1995, for 10 a.m.

Motion agreed to.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENT

Royal Canadian Legions—Korean War Plaques

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

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

Mr. Helwer: Madam Speaker, this past Sunday, September 24, I had the opportunity to represent the Province of Manitoba at the unveiling of plaques recognizing the Korean War. I had the privilege to witness the Royal Canadian Legions of Gimli, Winnipeg Beach and Selkirk unveil a plaque, a Korean plaque, on their respective war-cenotaphs.

As well, I had the honour of laying a wreath at each cenotaph on behalf of the province and on behalf of all Manitobans. The plaques recognize the contribution of 26,791 Canadians who served during the Korean War from the 25th of June, 1950, to July 27, 1953. When Canada decided to assist South Korea in resisting invasion by the forces of North Korea, we had only a limited idea of what we were becoming involved in. However, the sacrifice of the 516 individuals who

perished and those who served allowed one more nation to live under the flag of democracy.

I hope all Manitobans join with me in extending our thanks to those individuals who made this sacrifice and to also congratulate the Royal Canadian Legion branches of Gimli, Winnipeg Beach and Selkirk for recognizing this. I know that other legions throughout Manitoba have done the same. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I intend to introduce at this point, by leave, two motions related to the visit of the Governor-General next week.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave to introduce two motions relating to the visit of the Governor-General? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), that the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, invited guests and officers in the service of the Legislative Assembly are requested to take their places in the Assembly Chamber and the galleries thereof at 10:55 a.m. on Wednesday, October 4, to receive the address of the Right Honourable Romeo LeBlanc, Governor-General of Canada.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), that notwithstanding subrule 3(1) of the rules of this House, the ordinary daily sitting of this House on Thursday, October 5, shall commence at 2:30 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill 2, Bill 5, Bill 27 and then the balance of the bills as listed in the Order Paper?

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 2—The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second readings, Bill 2, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, le remboursement de la dette et la protection des contribuables et apportant des modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Stand? Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, in many ways, I am sorry to have to rise on a bill that is destined to make Manitoba the laughing stock of the financial management world.

This is a bill that is designed, Madam Speaker, to take us back to the Dirty Thirties, which seems to have arisen out of some baleful memory of times long past on the part of the members opposite. I can just imagine that some time—about a year and a bit—ago, when the government thought it was facing defeat at the hands then of another party other than our own, they had to figure out some strategy that might appeal to the far right. So they said let us balance our budget, not only let us balance our budget, let us allow ourselves to sell our assets to balance our budget. Let us balance our budget every year, even if economic conditions are so bad that it requires that we go deeply into people's pockets and create more and more poverty. This is a bill from the 1930s.

I would remind the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the older ministers opposite that R. B. Bennett used to get letters from poor people on the prairies, including poor people from this province. He would get letters begging that something be done to relieve their deep, deep poverty, their starvation in some cases. R. B. Bennett was a wealthy man, and he used to take \$5 out of his pocket, and he would put it in

an envelope and send it back to the person who had written requesting some kind of assistance, at the end of their rope. He never seemed to realize that it was his preoccupation with balancing the federal budget at the time of the deepest depression since the 1880s that was causing those letters to arrive on his desk in the first place.

The bill seems to ignore the fact that Herbert Hoover was driven from office in the United States for precisely the same kind of narrow-minded annual preoccupation with balancing the budget, that it was only when, under some significant pressure, President Roosevelt introduced the New Deal and began to invest in the people of the United States and began to allow them to pull themselves out of the depths of recession.

Like the Health minister (Mr. McCrae) opposite who would ask us to tell him about each case that is going wrong in the health care system so he can fix the case, on a case-by-case basis, the government seems not to realize that when you impose this kind of legislation you create hundreds of cases, and you cannot solve them case by case, you have to solve them with good public policy, and this bill, Madam Speaker, is bad public policy.

I am sad to have to talk about such elementary ideas as the business and financial cycle to my honourable friends opposite, but it seems that they have failed basic economics again and they need to repeat the class. The problem is for Manitobans that, while they may be bad students of economics, they also happen to be in charge of the public purse. So for a short while yet and perhaps through this baleful bill, they are going to do great damage to the province, to our people, our businesses and to the health and education of Manitobans.

* (1430)

Madam Speaker, through this bill, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and his wizard, the Finance minister (Mr. Stefanson), would try to stand on Manitoba's financial shores like some maniacal King Canute and rebuke the financial waves which characterize global capitalism. It is well known to even the most elementary student of capitalism that it is characterized by extreme booms

and busts, but even its great defenders call for a moderating influence on the part of government to moderate those cycles so that the depths of despair are not so extreme as to cause the overthrow of the state, which is one of the points that a number of historical capitalist writers make.

The members opposite, Madam Speaker, would say to the business cycle—be still. They would say to the depths of poverty created by the business cycle—wait. But most fundamentally they simply do not seem to understand public finance. Opposite we have business people who have been more or less successful in their businesses. I would ask them to think through their own business history. Have they never taken out a loan? Have they never had a year in which they lost money and were unable in that year to balance their business's budget? Have they not met their farmer friends who had loss after loss because of world trading predatory policies of the United States and the European community?

Have they never understood that in order to make money as my Tory friends often tell me, you have to invest money? You have to go to the bank, that it is possible to pile up a very successful business, but it is almost never possible to do so without having years in which the losses overwhelm the revenues in which there is a need to make a substantial investment in new equipment or training for your workers or the plant in some form or other. It is simply not possible to manage major enterprise without cyclical investment and without from time to time having years which your banker gets kind of concerned about because you lost money.

Madam Speaker, we have ministers opposite who are partners in business, whether they are funeral homes or whether they are inns or whether they are farms, whatever businesses we see represented by members opposite. I would ask them to at least in the privacy of their caucus ask the Finance minister how you could run their business under this legislation. How could you make it possible to do business if you can never have a loss, you can never borrow money if it puts you in the hole, you can never have a long-term view of your business? How is it possible to stay in business?

Madam Speaker, Manitobans are often told by this government that government is like a family. It should balance its budget and live within its means. In simple terms, none of us would disagree with that. It is what I try to do every year. It is what I am sure you try to do and what other members opposite try to do. That is one reason, of course, why we left government and were happy to have a \$58-million surplus in the year that we left, not of our own accord naturally, but nevertheless we left with a budget that produced the only surplus for provincial governments during the 1980s.

But unfortunately the government's balanced budget legislation would cripple most families if it applied to them, just like it will cripple the government's ability to meet our needs for health care and education and special projects like, for example, the Winnipeg floodway which could not have been built under this legislation unless the government resorted to a financial trick, that is to borrow the money for the floodway off budget. Is that what they are going to do? They are going to take whatever capital needs they have that cannot be accommodated within the annual cycle and suddenly we will find them being borrowed off budget so that they can continue to do what they want without being constrained by their own legislation.

Let us assume for a moment that both spouses in a family are working, and they have a small total income, only \$30,000, which is not unusual for families today and the kind of poverty that families have to suffer under the kind of government that we have. A \$30,000 income from two people working full time. One needs a car to do her job. One has got some student debts to repay.

So they borrow to buy a car. Not a big car, just a car. And they start paying off the student loan. Are these bad things? Your legislation would say so. Under the planned legislation our family could not buy their car. They could not have even taken out a student loan in the first place because their budget would not have been balanced in the year that they did it.

What happens if they decide to take a break from the work force and have a baby? What happens in that situation? Well, anybody who has had a child arrive in their home recently knows it is not cheap. But, after

all, they are young, reasonably educated, committed to hard work. So for that year they decide that perhaps they are going to take on a little more debt. They are going to buy some things they need for the baby. They are going to buy a crib. They are going to decorate the kid's room. They are going to buy some toys. Do you know what? Their budget would not be balanced for that year.

So what are we telling them? Do not have any babies? Are we saying that you cannot go into debt to invest in your family? That is what this legislation would say.

* (1440)

What about buying a home? That is a favourite thing that most people like to do. How many in this Chamber have mortgages? I venture to say, Madam Speaker, a good number have mortgages. The mortgage is likely much greater than the annual income of the family. Often it would be two or three times the annual income of the family. Could not do that under this legislation. Could not buy a house because there is no ability to borrow for capital under this legislation.

Under this legislation you have to balance your capital and your current account every year. Silly legislation. If you applied it to a family, families could not buy houses, could not buy cars, could not do any of the things that sustain and stimulate our economy that build employment, that build communities. Not possible under this legislation because it says you have to balance the capital and the operating account.

What about investing in education? What about if the family decides that their child needs a university education or a community college education or technical school education? What happens if they decide that, like a constituent in my area who happens in fact to live on Wellington Crescent, has a daughter who is totally deaf, profoundly deaf? He is putting \$20,000 this year into that child's education so that she can go to Gallaudet college, the only university in North America that will deal with totally deaf people.

He could not do that under this legislation because he has to borrow the \$20,000. He does not have the

income. His budget is not balanced, so his daughter could not go to university.

If this legislation applied to families, they could not buy houses, they could not buy cars, they could not invest in their children's education. They would have difficulty taking time off work to have a baby. This is not good public policy.

Today, Madam Speaker, Manitobans pay only about 11 cents of each dollar of provincial income to service our accumulated debt. That picture has not changed much in the last eight to 10 years. It has been pretty stable. This government has managed its finances tightly. The previous government managed its finances tightly. We have not had a great escalation in the public debt in this province. We are not in bad shape, as the minister opposite likes to keep reminding us, but, in fact, we are second or third in Canada.

There is no debt crisis in Manitoba, Madam Speaker. There may well be in Canada at 38 cents on the dollar, and who accumulated those debts? Not New Democratic Party governments. Conservative governments and Liberal governments piled up that debt.

Madam Speaker, who piled up the worst debt in the province's history? This government—\$819 million revealed last week in Public Accounts. The worst provincial situation in all of Canada was piled up by a Conservative government in Saskatchewan, the Devine experience of the Saskatchewan people. It piled up the worst per capita debt in Canadian history.

Madam Speaker, when a family's income rises, many families decide that they are able to expand their standard of living. Many of the families opposite, I am sure, have done that very thing. In fact, during this debate today, the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), the member for River East, stood up and said, when I was a child, I was poor. I lived below the poverty line.

Well, Madam Speaker, she does not live below the poverty line anymore. She has a house. She has a car, and she got those things presumably by investing an increasing proportion of her income. As her income

rose, she was able to do more. She could service more debt. There is nothing particularly strange about a family deciding that it will invest more in its house or its standard of living as its income rises.

The Government of Canada, through Statistics Canada, makes available what is called the fixed capital flows in stocks. This is essentially the record of the public assets of Manitobans. It is not an overstated amount of money. It is stated on the basis of depreciated approaches, depending on your choice. You can have any one of three depreciated choices. But the gross fixed capital stock of this province in 1995 was \$66 billion. Sixty-six billion dollars was the gross fixed capital stock in Manitoba, about 10 times the general purpose debt, about five times the total provincial guaranteed and general purpose debt.

We are wealthy, wealthy Manitobans, Madam Speaker, all of us. I would just recall the conversation that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the former Finance minister had on the occasion of our Leader's welcoming his new child into the world in which the former Finance minister talked about the burden of debt the child had inherited. Our Leader correctly pointed out and obviously knew these numbers, that there was also an enormous asset and that the assets far outstripped the debt.

Do we like to have more debt, Madam Speaker? No, we are not arguing for more debt, but we are also not arguing that investment in public infrastructure, investment in hospitals and roads and education—in fact, we would love to see some investment in northern roads. That would really be a new thing. We are not arguing that we should not invest in those kinds of things, as this legislation is arguing. It is saying that something is wrong with public investment. There is something bad about it.

Why is it that Tories, Madam Speaker, think that public investment is such a bad thing and private investment so good? What is this dichotomy that allows us to say public investment is evil, private investment is good? Do Tories not drive on public roads? Do they not benefit from public parks and hospitals and schools and universities? Do they not enjoy the same clean air that is secured by reasonable

environmental standards and air quality protection? Do they not fly out of public airports with safety standards that are unparalleled anywhere in the world? Do they not enjoy the public infrastructure put in place by their and our taxes and use it and benefit from it? How can it be a bad thing to have public infrastructure, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker, virtually every economist of any persuasion, even the most right wing, would understand that in a modern economy governments invest in productive assets and supports for their citizens so their citizens can invest and work creatively in both the public and private sectors. When it suits their purposes, the members opposite are very supportive of public-private co-operation. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) hosted an event this week at which eight or nine Manitoba companies of various sizes and ages came to try and find a way to meet with Manitoba capital so that they could expand.

Now, Madam Speaker, I assume the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism was promoting the idea that these companies needed access to capital. In fact, the minister has supported the notion that access to capital in Manitoba is inadequate, that the private sector needs to find ways of getting and keeping more of Manitoba's capital in Manitoba. We applaud that initiative and we support it. We spoke in our election platform of the need to find creative ways of keeping our pension funds in Manitoba. We see no virtue in allowing those who hold RRSPs to get a tax credit for 20 percent foreign holdings, investing their money someplace else than Manitoba or Canada.

Madam Speaker, it seems that when the government's agenda is served by having public-private co-operation, this is a good thing but whenever we talk about the need for the public to invest in Manitobans' education or their health or their roads, this is somehow seen as second-class investment, something not to be supported by legislation.

The fiscal cycle seems to have totally escaped the minister in proposing this legislation. Most economists would suggest that the fiscal cycle is somewhere between six and seven years long, five to seven, let us say. Occasionally it is a little longer, sometimes it is a

little shorter, but it is certainly more than one year, Madam Speaker.

I would just remind him that we can see this fiscal cycle from the beginning of the Lyon government through to the present day. The Lyon government began in a time of relative buoyancy in 1977 and moved into a time of recession. When government changed in 1981-82, the Pawley government inherited from the Lyon government a \$250-million deficit. So when the members opposite talk about how much debt was piled up in the Pawley years, let them remember that we started from \$250 million in the hole.

Yes, there were debts added during those years. Canada was in a deep recession. Manitoba suffered the least, came out of it fastest, suffered the least loss of people and built some very important infrastructure, which these members are now enjoying the fruits of, namely, the exports from Limestone. They talk about the growth in exports, Madam Speaker; a good chunk of the growth in exports comes from the export of hydroelectricity produced by the Limestone Generating Station.

Madam Speaker, the length of the fiscal cycle, if we think of the Lyon years starting in '77 from relative buoyancy to the depths of the worst of the 1981, '82, '83 recession, that is four and a half years into the recession, by the time the economy had recovered in '85, '86, '87, that was almost 10 years from peak to peak or trough to trough. There is simply no way that you can rebuke that financial cycle with a piece of provincial legislation.

Madam Speaker, let us take a look at the situation that this government inherited when it came to power in 1988. It inherited a situation which, through a combination of events including transfer payment changes, taxation changes, economic recovery, led to a surplus of \$58 million. I am not claiming that we produced a budget with a \$58 million surplus. I am simply saying that at the end of the year things had conspired, events had conspired, to produce a very substantial improvement in what was forecast, to the point where there was a \$58 million surplus. They took that \$58 million surplus at the end of a relative time of prosperity, and they ran it to an \$819 million loss in

1992-93 at the deep part of the recession—that is, from their best to their worst they went \$877 million in the hole. That is a record that no Manitoba government should ever be proud of, should ever want to repeat.

Let them not talk about fiscal probity, fiscal restraint, fiscal management. They are the government with the largest single deficit. They have managed to produce significant accumulation of debt on behalf of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, there is in this legislation a promised referendum on various tax increases. Like Quebec's referendum, this is a phony referendum, a referendum based on false promises waged at great cost, but which is never likely to be heeded. As Monsieur Bouchard says, no simply means we will have another referendum. Does the government intend never to offload costs on municipalities as it has done for years now? Does the government intend to run a referendum when it harmonizes the PST and the GST? Does the government intend to run a referendum when it reduces tax credits again? Does the government intend to run a referendum when it broadens the PST tax base?

*(1450)

How many ways there are to raise revenue without raising tax rates? As a former civil servant who participated in the exercise, I can tell you there are many. The government has closed for itself some avenues which, in fact, might be very attractive to the government's own constituency, but it leaves open to itself some avenues which I think it would not want to defend to any reputable economist. For example, Madam Speaker, last year the government sold a Crown corporation, McKenzie Seeds. It then had the unmitigated fiscal gall to apply the proceeds of that sale to this year's budget. So we are going to sell off the family car, sell off the family house, and we are going to take the money into next year's income and call the budget balanced.

This government accumulated \$140 million in a lottery sock, in a trust fund outside Volume 1 of the Public Accounts and said, this lottery sock will be useful, come election time. Indeed, it was because they

proposed a budget which took the lottery sock and dumped it into 1995-96 operating revenue and said, presto, a balanced budget. And presto is the right name, Madam Speaker. These people are more akin to Preston Manning than they are to any Progressive Conservatives.

When you balance a budget using the English language in its normal meaning, you balance it with your current revenues against your current expenditures. You neither accumulate capital and pour it in; nor do you defer expenditures that have really already been made. That is why the Provincial Auditor has expressed a serious reservation on the books of Manitoba, has said that the books misstate the reality of the government of Manitoba, and this is the government we are supposed to take seriously about balanced budget legislation, about fiscal probity. I think not, Madam Speaker.

Does the government have any reputable economist ready to rise and defend the idea of annual balancing of the budget? Could the government find any reputable economist who would say that governments ought to balance their budget each and every year? It will be interesting to see if they can do so.

A responsible approach to budgeting would recognize that budgets can play an important role in stabilizing the provincial economy, in helping promote long-term growth of income, not short-term, long-term growth of employment. The stabilization function of budgets is important because private sector spending is notoriously unstable. That is the whole history of capitalism. It, by its nature, runs boom and bust cycles. Without the hand of government to stabilize that, the suffering that people endure in such a boom and bust economy is extreme. Governments can and should reduce those cyclical fluctuations by running budget surpluses during booms and by allowing deficits to occur during slumps.

This government came to power with the capacity to run surpluses, and it did not do so. Instead of letting surpluses be run in the first one or two years of its time in office, what did it do? It gave up tax breaks to its friends in industry. It gave up tax breaks to its friends in corporations, and it defended these tax breaks as

investments in the economy. No doubt, but they have not been very good on the running surpluses side of the ledger, Madam Speaker. Their record speaks for itself.

Responsible approaches to budgeting would permit government the ability to stabilize the economy, to stabilize the level of employment, but government also has a responsibility, in our economic system, to provide human and physical infrastructure, without which the private sector, that they are so defensive of, they are such champions of, without that human infrastructure, the private sector would wither and die. Because all modern economies are based on an intelligent, educated workforce, all modern economies are based on a sound health care system, on sound environmental policy, on sound roads and bridges and infrastructure, clean water. There is not a modern economy in the world that does not depend on public infrastructure being excellent.

Madam Speaker, the role in providing that infrastructure requires that government make investments that have a lifespan of many years. In the case of the Winnipeg floodway, that is an investment which probably, save for the gaskets on the dams that come up out of the river bed, save for an occasional replacement of those gaskets, that is an investment that is essentially an eternal investment. That ditch will still be here after all of us in this House are long gone, and it will be protecting the people of Winnipeg from floods in a way that was achieved through a responsible government, a government led by a former Conservative Premier, Premier Roblin. He understood the need for long-term investment, and he made it when it was demanded.

The private companies, which are so much the beloved of the members opposite do not normally purchase their factories or buildings or infrastructure out of their current income. A rare few are able to, but usually not through their whole history as a company. They usually borrow. They usually issue debentures or stock. They do that because they know that the investments they are making are productive.

When we are talking about private debt, let us remember that the stock of private debt far outstrips the public debt, that the stock of consumer debt far outstrips the public debt. The public debt is the

smallest of the three sectors, both in Manitoba and, in fact, in Canada. Manitoba does not have a huge debt problem.

This essentially is also deceitful legislation in that it proposes a Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which, by the way, does not exist at this point. It is virtually empty. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund is proposed to have a level of \$250 million. It is a nice round figure; it sounds okay. But in one year the government of this province ran an \$819 million deficit—in one year. What good would a \$250 million stabilization fund have done for them in 1992-93? This government piled up over \$2 billion worth of debt in its time in office from the late 1989 period to 1994-95—over \$2 billion. What good would a \$250 million stabilization fund have done?

Madam Speaker, we have estimated that it would be a minimum of over \$700 million required to stabilize Manitoba's economy from trough to trough, and I do not think many economists would think that that was enough. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund is simply a symbolic stalking horse that allows the government to say that it recognizes the cyclical nature of the economy without ever having to really take it into account in a true macroeconomic sense.

The opportunities in this situation for playing games, as the member for Brandon says, are enormous. The reality of a \$250 million stabilization fund is that in the first year of any reasonable economic downturn that fund would be entirely exhausted. So, Madam Speaker, we have to ask what the true purpose here is. I think it is clear that the true purpose is to so arrange the finances of Manitoba that further cuts to the public sector are inevitable, that they will say with great sorrow, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is empty. We are constrained by balanced budget legislation. We therefore must cut our hospitals, cut our schools, cut our universities, cut our roads to fit our fiscal cloth.

They will use this legislation, they will cloak themselves in it, in order to continue their attack on the public sector which they have waged with great effect for the last six or seven years, unemploying hundreds of skilled Manitobans, thousands, cutting health care, cutting education, cutting universities, cutting

infrastructure, all in the name of some mythical idea that cutting spending in the public sector is the way to health.

I remind the members opposite that those who do not read history are doomed to repeat it. The history of governments attempting to rigorously balance their budget every year leads to stagnation and further decline of the economy. That is what happened in the '50s, late '40s under the Campbell government in this province, a very right-wing Liberal government. That is what happened in the '30s, in the Bennet and Mackenzie King governments of this country. When you try to balance your budget every year, the economy stagnates. That is not the role of government every year, Madam Speaker.

It is the role in good times. It is the role in balanced times; it is not the role in bad times. Balancing a budget every year cannot be defended on any economic grounds. Families do not do it, businesses do not do it, and the truth is, governments do not do it either.

This is deceitful legislation on another ground and a very important ground. That is that this government knows full well that this act does not even bind it. It cannot bind it because government cannot bind itself. Government, so far as we at least still have it in this country, is a representative democracy, and in this democracy government makes the rules, they make the laws. This law can be made, can be held up, but ultimately it is a paper law. If the government decides to ignore it or to repeal it or to change it, it can do so.

* (1500)

The Premier opposite has said at various times in the last several years, governments are elected to make decisions. Governments are elected to manage. Governments are elected to make tough choices. People elect governments in order to manage their economy. Now suddenly under this legislation such responsibility ends, Madam Speaker. The government goes on autopilot into an uncertain future. The people of Manitoba deserve better. They need a government that understands public finance, a government that understands the simple first-year university macroeconomics of finance. This government does not

apparently do so.

They need a government that does not try to rebuke the economic ways, the cycles of government, the cycles of the economy. If they want to balance the budget, Madam Speaker, they can do so. If they want to call this year a balanced budget, they can do so though that will not make it balanced. If they want to balance next year, they can do so. That does not require legislation. If the times require substantial investment in a floodway, they should do so. If the times allow a surplus to be applied against past debts, they should do so. If the times require investment in Manitobans because of a recession, they should do so, Madam Speaker. This legislation neither adds to nor detracts from their ability to manage the economy. It is simply a chimera. It is simply the appearance of something which is not real and they know it is not real. They are caught with an election promise they would rather not have to fulfill.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned that Manitobans are being asked to approve legislation which I think they do not understand, because I think the government opposite is not prepared to make it plain to them. I think the government would like them to believe that it is just balance your budget in general, that in terms of the broad structure of public finance we should balance our budget. Well, we should, but they are not telling Manitobans the truth about this legislation.

Let them tell Manitobans that if this legislation applied to companies or families, companies could not invest, could not lose money in a given year, could not buy a car, could not buy a house. Let them tell the people the truth about this legislation. Let them tell the people that they could sell one of their four new divisions of Manitoba Telephone System to Faneuil or some other off-shore corporation and take the money and put it into their operating income and call it revenue. Let the government tell the people of Manitoba what this legislation actually says and it says we can sell our assets for the moment. We can draw down those things that generations of Manitobans have built up and throw them into a Tory balanced budget. We can sell off the family assets to pay for food. This is bad legislation.

I would say to the members opposite, someone once said be not afraid and I think we need to say that. Be not afraid. Be not afraid to take your responsibility to make hard decisions. Be not afraid to balance the budget if that is what is called for, but be not afraid to invest in Manitobans if that is what is called for. You do not need this cloak. It is not a cloak that binds you and you know that.

Madam Speaker, the positive harm that this legislation is going to do will be seen in the future. The positive harm will take the form of further cuts to health care, cuts to education, cuts to our infrastructure. The people of Manitoba deserve much better and in time, in four years specifically, they will get much better. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Bill 5—The Education Administration Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading Bill 5 on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh), The Education Administration Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire), standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), who has 16 minutes remaining, and standing in the name of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), who has 19 minutes remaining.

Stand? Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave? Leave has been granted in all three names.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on an education bill today. This subject is something that affects almost all Manitobans because either we have children in the

school system, or we are paying for other people's children in the school system through property taxes.

I did not have time to look up the government's throne speech, but I think there are many problems in society that this government should be addressing that have a major effect on education, and I would like to briefly dwell on some of those before I get into the bill, understanding, of course, that at this stage I cannot talk about the bill clause by clause anyway.

For example, what is this government doing about poverty issues? We know, for example, that poor children do not do as well in school, and there are many reasons for that. For example, in the inner city, many children move, and move frequently, including during the school year, and it is not uncommon for inner city schools to have a turnover rate of more than 100 percent. We know from studies on these children who move that, if they move more than twice in one school year, they almost inevitably fail that year.

We have many children who have moved 10, 15, 20 times. Now, that is very hard to believe for people who live in the suburbs or live in stable families or in owner-occupied homes, but we have a very large transient population, mostly children of parents on social assistance concentrated in the inner city and in public housing projects who are constantly on the move to find safer housing or better housing or cheaper housing or housing that does not have cockroaches or mice or other problems, like violations of the health act and the maintenance and occupancy by-laws of the City of Winnipeg.

This takes a toll on their education and their achievement in schools, and Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has instituted a program to follow these children. In fact, it is called something like a migrancy program, because the migrancy teachers assist the schools and the children by taking their work from one school to another, so that they do not have to be retested and to help these children to get integrated and get the services they need in the new school as soon as possible.

But in spite of this we still have schools that have more than a 100 percent turnover rate in one year,

which is really quite amazing, and it may be that only 25 or 50 percent of those spaces are turning over, but they are turning over more than once, so that the total number of moves is greater than the school population in September.

This government has some very good recommendations that I referred to today in Question Period in a document called the Health of Manitoba's Children. It was the result of input from many people and many committees, but it is submitted by Dr. Brian Postl on behalf of the Child Health Strategy Committee, and it is dated March 1995. It has recommendations on poverty which I referred to today, saying that the food allowance for children should be increased, and the food allowance for infants should be increased.

* (1510)

We know that if children have adequate nutrition, it improves their brain function and brain capacity. This, of course, has a direct bearing on their education and on their ability to learn. There are things that this government could be doing to help with the education of children by, for example, implementing the recommendations of this very good report, a government-commissioned report.

Also, there are recommendations about teen pregnancy. For example, No. 11 of the recommendations is on teen pregnancy. It says that renewed emphasis should be directed to the prevention of adolescent pregnancy. This is something that is a problem in the educational system because, first of all, many adolescents when they become pregnant drop out of school or, as is more and more common now, there are daycare centres in the school and the teenagers are having their babies with their education, either at the parent and adolescent centre run by Winnipeg No. 1 or in many, many different schools in a number of school divisions. Of course, there is an increased cost to their education, and it is very difficult to balance one's obligations as a student to study and one's obligations as a parent to raising a child.

It is rather interesting, Madam Speaker, that in a report I received from the Children and Youth

Secretariat, and I would like to thank Mr. Reg Toews for this, there are requests that he has received. One of these requests was for a River East community workshop. The reports says, this is a Family Services' initiative to develop local responses to teen pregnancy and parenting. Is it not interesting that this request comes from the same neighbourhood, even by the same constituency name as the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson)? Of course, she has talked many times about her concern for teenage moms.

There is really a need for the Children and Youth Secretariat to co-ordinate a program for all communities in Manitoba, not just the community in which the Minister of Family Services happens to represent in this Legislature. We hope that, as the result of Family Services being a part of the Children and Youth Secretariat, she will not get services and programs that are not made available to all members of this Legislature or all communities in Manitoba.

We also have a very high dropout rate, and we think that the government could be doing more to stem the flow of students dropping out, particularly before they have finished Grade 12 and even Grade 12 is not sufficient these days. I have talked about this with my son who graduated from Grade 12 at Sisler High School last year, and he was the valedictorian. I presented an award to two students at Sisler High School. They had a safe grad, as most schools have a safe grad, and my wife and I as parents volunteered for security at the Fort Garry Hotel where they had their dinner and dance. Their dinner tickets cost about \$40, and some of the students including, I am embarrassed to say, my own son, rented a limousine and many students rented tuxedos.

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

At his graduation I wanted to stand up and say, before I presented my award, I think that having this kind of a celebration for the graduation of Grade 12 is really quite unnecessary because this is not the end of your formal graduation. This is really only the beginning. Education is a lifelong learning process. I do not think that the kind of celebration that people have at the end of Grade 12 really reflects that. It

suggests to me that a lot of them do not intend to continue with their education.

I was going to say that when I presented my award, and my son said, please do not, you will embarrass me, Dad. So I had decided I would not. But when I presented my award, the ceremony happened to be at Calvary Temple, and I stood up and I said, this is a pulpit, and I am a minister, and I feel a sermon coming on. And then I said, just kidding, son. Poor Nathan almost had a fit. But he got in a good shot at me before he gave his valedictorian address. He got up and before he even addressed the audience, he said, this is going to be a short speech, unlike my father's long and boring sermons. He got an even better laugh than I did.

But the dropout rate of children in high school in Manitoba is really a disgrace. We really need to work on that. But what is this government doing? Well, one of the things that they did was, they eliminated the Student Social Allowances Program. This was an excellent program, because it allowed students who might otherwise have dropped out to stay in school. For example, students who could no longer live at home because the home life was either violent or disruptive or they have been kicked out or for some reason qualified for social assistance were allowed to rent an apartment get a small amount of money to live on on the condition that they were still enrolled in school.

This provincial government eliminated that kind of funding, and I would really like to know what happened to those students. Did they drop out of school? My guess is that many of them probably found it far too difficult to work part time and continue in school and at the very least became part time students.

Adult literacy—I think this government could be doing a better job in adult literacy. It is something that I know a small amount about, because I am on the advisory committee for Open Doors Adult Literacy Program at King Edward School in my constituency. It is really quite wonderful to be involved with adults, many of whom have been out of school for 10 or 20 years and have now gone back to school in adult literacy programming. Some of them are immigrants. Some of them are people for whom English is not their

first language, including from Manitoba. Many of them are individuals who did not do well in the educational system when they were enrolled there as children, but now they have got the motivation, they have got the desire to learn. They make very good students because they are keen. But we need to get many more adults enrolled in literacy programs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill has I believe three main parts to it. It refers to a definition of a role for principals, and it talks about teachers, and it talks about advisory councils. So I would like to deal with each of those in turn.

This bill defines the role of principals. This is something new, and principals obviously have a very important role in the education system, particularly in the schools where they are principal, because they are leaders and they set the tone for education in their local school.

My father was an elementary school principal for 25 years. Even when I was a student I had a lot of familiarity with principals because I spent a lot of time in their office. In fact, I can remember in Grade 6 being called into the principal's office for a consultation. I remember there were many complaints from myself and other students about a particular teacher in Grade 6, and the principal asked me if he thought that the teacher was being too strict. I remember my response was to quote Scripture and say, spare the rod and spoil the child, not something that I would agree with today even though it is Scriptural. I would say, spare the discipline or the structure and spoil the child, but I would not say, spare the rod and spoil the child.

In high school, I also became familiar with several vice-principals since they were in charge of discipline. I remember quite well the policy in my first year of Grade 9 was that every time you got sent to the office you got one detention which was not really a very effective deterrent, but the next year they changed it to a week's detention for every time you got sent to the office and consequently there was a deterrent, and I got sent to the office many fewer times, I must say. [interjection]

The member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) observes that I have trouble obeying rules. Maybe he has a point there. Perhaps also I have redeemed myself. I have reformed because now I have a very good relationship with principals including my father. I think he was quite proud of me because I eventually did graduate from high school and from university with two degrees.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I had a few little problems myself.

Mr. Martindale: Probably the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) and I are not the only ones who had problems in school. Now I enjoy a good working relationship with a number of principals in Burrows constituency and in the north end.

An Honourable Member: Did they teach you to tear up paper for public coverage? Is that what they did, did they teach you that? To throw a tantrum?

Mr. Martindale: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) probably would not understand what it is like to represent poor people not only for five years in the Legislature, but to work on their behalf in the community for ten years, and to knock on doors and visit them in their homes, in their kitchens, and in their living rooms and to hear their stories and to have them phone me every day with their problems that they are having on social assistance and with Child and Family Services and other agencies. I do not think the Deputy Premier gets phone calls like that, but I wish he would. I always encourage people to phone the government caucus with their problems so that they know what is happening on the ground on a day-to-day basis.

In this bill the power of the minister has really been increased over principals, and there is an appearance in this bill that more control is given to local schools and to parent councils, but in fact by defining the role of principals and by being able to write the regulations there is an increase in the power of the minister. There are a couple of other examples that I will come to later, but they really amount to a decrease in the role of local authority.

* (1520)

This bill establishes advisory councils in schools; however, about 80 percent of schools in Manitoba already have advisory councils. In Winnipeg School Division No.1, 100 percent of schools have advisory councils and this is based on a policy—the document for which I have here, it is dated June 1, 1988, and I have been a member of a number of those advisory councils—the Winnipeg School Division policy establishes and supports advisory councils in schools, and it gives them some interesting roles.

It is important that parents in particular, not just teachers and principals, feel that they have responsibility, because if they do not, there is no reason for attending parent council meetings. In fact, many schools have very poor attendance at parent council meetings. I think the reason is that they are not given any real decision-making power.

Fortunately, in Winnipeg No. 1, they are given some power, and one of those powers is to interview and to assist in the hiring process of principals. I have been involved in that process, and parent council certainly appreciate being consulted on that. Now, we do have a problem in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 because the date at which principals resign is too late in the school year to allow for adequate consultation. I understand that in Fort Garry School Division they requested a number of years ago that the date be moved up, and that was done. I believe Winnipeg No. 1 has made the request and are still waiting for a reply from the Minister of Education.

Another example of the role of advisory councils in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 is to have input on capital building projects. In fact, when I was on the parent council of Ralph Brown School, parents met with the architect to talk about the design of the new school, and I remember what I said. I said, since this is an English-Ukrainian bilingual program school, why do we not take some of the architecture from Ukraine and see if we cannot incorporate it into the school. I also suggested that most schools look like cardboard boxes and shoe boxes and they are quite unattractive; why do we not design something more attractive? Why do we not have a school with a pitched roof, for example? I

was quite surprised, when the school was actually built, that some of the—[interjection]

Well, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) talks about money. That is really quite irrelevant to my example because the architect could only spend the amount of money that he was allowed by the provincial—what do you call that?—Public Schools Finance Board. They tell the school division how much money they have for the school, and the architect has to design the school within the parameters of that amount of money. In this case, the architect did. He listened to the parents that he consulted with. The architect, Dudley Thompson, listened to the input from the parents, and that was reflected in the design of the school. If you are to drive down McGregor or, even better, to drive by the front of the school on Andrew Street, you would see a very attractive elementary school that was completed about 1989, I think.

The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 policy also refers to consultation with native and ethnic groups, that there should be liaison with native people and with their organizations. There is a great need for this input, because Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has a lot of students who are First Nations or aboriginal. We also probably have the highest proportion of immigrant students of any school division in Manitoba. So we have a Multicultural Advisory Committee, and they play an important role in advising the trustees and the administration. So when the advisory councils are given responsibility and when they assume this responsibility and when they are taken seriously, then they have a reason for participating in advisory council meetings, as many of them do.

In fact, people have to get elected to local advisory councils, and so I was a representative from Isaac Newton School to the St. Johns Advisory Council. One of the things that we did was we reviewed the budget information that was put before the trustees. I have here with me the pile of documents that was handed out to all the parents and the staff representatives and the support staff representatives on the St. Johns Advisory Council, and we were expected to read this and to review it before we went to the advisory council meeting, which we took seriously. Our recommendations were written up and went before

the trustees, and it is a very interesting process because the results of these budget consultations determined how much people's property taxes would go up or down or stay the same.

The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and I have both attended parent council meetings at Sisler High School, which my son attended for three years and now our daughter is in attendance at. We quite often discuss province-wide educational issues, for example, the school boundaries review, and we also discuss bills that the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) tabled in the House.

That was an interesting experience, because we had a chairperson who did not really understand the role of the government and the role of the opposition. On several occasions she said she pointed her finger at the member for Inkster and myself and said, you guys did this, what is the matter with you?

I interrupted her on one occasion and said, Madam Chairperson, I had nothing to do with this bill. I was not consulted about this bill, neither was the member for Inkster. We had no input into this bill. We did not see it until it was tabled in the House, so please understand the difference in the role of the government and the role of the opposition.

Many people do not understand that. They blame the opposition for things that are really a government's responsibility. Of course, we feel—[interjection] The chairperson, Emily, is a nice lady, as the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says. The member for Inkster and I have gone with the legislation to the parent council and helped to facilitate the discussion. It is interesting to have two roles: to be there as an MLA having a little broader understanding of the legislation that is before the House; and to be a parent and be very concerned about the quality of education.

The final thing that I would like to comment on this bill is that it authorizes teachers to suspend a pupil from the classroom. This is a departure from the bill that was before the House in the Sixth Session of the Thirty-Fifth Legislature, I think it was, where the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) wanted to give

teachers the power to suspend students from the school, not just the classroom.

We are glad that the Minister of Education occasionally listens to the opposition parties, that occasionally she listens to parents, that occasionally she listens to school trustees. On this occasion she listened to the public and all the input that she got, and when she tabled a new bill in the First Session of the Thirty-Sixth Legislature, lo and behold, here was this change.

We should give credit where credit is due and say, we are grateful that the minister for once listened to the public and listened to the opposition, because the old clause was really quite unworkable, because it would have led to terrible inconsistencies across the province. There would have been ad hoc rules depending on who the teacher was and how strongly the teacher felt about a particular issue.

I understand that, in spite of this change, it still does not say why students can be suspended from a school. Apparently, the old bill used the expression, for the welfare of the school and the community, and perhaps that should have been left in. I would be interested in knowing what the rationale of the minister is. I guess I will have to read her speech to see if she referred to why that change was made. Perhaps it will be apparent when the regulations are made public as to why that change was made.

* (1530)

From time to time, there are requests from principals and from teachers. For example, I am a member of the Selkirk Avenue police advisory committee, and they say they get calls from schools where people come into the building who are intoxicated, either on alcohol or on sniff, or who are violent, and the school wants to phone the police and have them removed immediately. In the past, there has been a problem with inadequate authority, so we hope that the bill may address that problem.

With those remarks, I will conclude my speech on this bill. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), and the honourable members for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

**Bill 27—The Cattle Producers Association
Amendment Act**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), Bill 27, The Cattle Producers Association Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Association des éleveurs de bétail), standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). Stand?

Is there leave that this matter remain standing?
[agreed]

An Honourable Member: What are you holding this up for? Get it passed.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): The member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) wants to know why we are holding up this bill. I want to tell him we are waiting to hear his comments, when he is going to stand up and put some comments on the record on his position on where he stands with supporting farmers, because we have not heard it from this government very well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 27 is the bill that deals with the compulsory checkoff legislation for the cattle producers and also with a clause with vendor insurance. This bill is very similar to Bill 15, which I spoke to earlier on with regard to the checkoff for farm organizations and for commodity groups.

In both bills the checkoff becomes compulsory. The funds go to the organization, in this case, the Keystone Agricultural Producers, and the farmers then have to apply back for their funding. This is a negative option checkoff legislation. It is legislation that has not been petitioned to the farmers to see whether they want it, and it is not legislation we can support.

I want to go back—a little bit of a history on these bills. Although I am speaking on Bill 27, I will refer to

both bills that are agriculture bills. Going back to the predecessor bills, that is, Bill 29 and Bill 28, which is the agricultural producers bill that was introduced in 1988, I believe.

At that time, commodity groups, if they wanted to have checkoff funding, they had to petition their members, and some 60 percent of the producers of the commodity had to have voted in favour of it.

That is going to be changed in the present legislation, on the agricultural producers bill, but the predecessor of Bill 27 is Bill 29, the cattle producers bill, and in that bill when the government introduced it they gave a checkoff to the cattle producers without having first canvassed their membership. So they had two bills on the record, one in which a commodity group had to have the support of the members before the group could have their checkoff, and then the cattle producers had the legislation which contradicted the other bill but gave the cattle producers the opportunity to have checkoff at point of sale.

* (1540)

Farmers over the past few years have spoken very clearly on this bill, because they have taken the option that was given to them and they chose not to pay their membership fees at the point of sale. That has been quite clear. Now, the government is bringing in legislation which will make it compulsory, again without canvassing the farmers, the cattle producers, whether or not they want this. Now when we talked to the cattle producers about this we said, you know, there should be a vote by the farmers. We talked about the same thing to the canola growers. We said, you know, if you want this kind of legislation there should be a vote by the farmers. They said, well, you know, if we do that it is going to cost us a lot of money, and they said, well, which farmers should have the vote? Is it farmers that have been raising cattle for a few years or is it farmers that have been—whatever.

Well, I think it is quite simple. If you are going to collect their fees, they should have a vote. There should be no problem with that, and I think it is very undemocratic to legislate that people have to support a particular organization without having first had the

opportunity of having had a vote on it. That is the real problem with this legislation.

We have talked about this to the producers, and we have talked about it to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns). I have discussed this with him, and I have informed the Minister of Agriculture that we will be bringing an amendment into the legislation that, when we get to the stage where they can be heard, will allow for farmers to have some say, in particular if there is a percentage of the farmers—we are looking at these amendments now—if there are a certain number of farmers, say 30 percent of them, who choose to have their funds taken back, that is an indication that they do not support it, then it should go to a vote. Perhaps if farmers get a petition and a percentage of them again, 25 or 30 percent of them, say they do not support this, then the organization has to take it to the vote of the membership. I think that will bring back some democracy into this, because as it is right now, this legislation is not democratic and would not apply to other organizations. They would not be able to have a checkoff or collect dues or fees to their organization without first talking to the people that are involved in it.

We have heard, and I have to agree, that farmers do need a strong voice. In the farming community people are going through a very difficult time right now; we are having some dramatic changes in the agricultural industry. Certainly, I agree with the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), there is a challenge there and we have to work with producers to meet that challenge, and we will see very, very great changes over the next few years in agriculture.

When I talk to producers, they say that they need a strong voice when it comes to lobbying on different issues with the federal government, and I agree with them. I agree with producers. There has to be a strong voice, but that voice has to be the choice of the producers. The producers have to have some say in it, and that is what we have, but what this legislation is doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this legislation is forcing auction marts to do the work of the cattle producers and that is collect their membership fees, just as the other legislation is forcing grain companies to do the work of

the farm organizations, and that is a problem. They are being forced to collect the membership by legislation.

Grain companies do have a concern about this, taking money from grain producers; the auction marts have a problem with this. The government sees the way of addressing it is by forcing it through by legislation. My feeling is that if a farm organization, if a commodity group such as the cattle producers is doing a good job in representing the cattle producers of this province, that the producers will voluntarily pay their membership dues.

As it is right now, there is obviously a problem because producers are opting out. They are taking the option of not funding the organization, so that organization has the responsibility of going out there and talking to the membership, talking to the cattle producers and listening to what it is that they want, and in that way build a strong base, just as any other organization would. They build a strong base and then they will have built the organization that farmers want, but obviously there is a concern there right now that has to be addressed. Certainly, we feel that commodity groups should have the ability to collect fees to promote their organization.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the second part of this legislation deals with vendor insurance, and what is being suggested is that part of the fees that will be collected from the checkoff money will go towards buying what, according to the minister, will be an insurance policy that will go towards topping up the bonding provision. What we have right now is a bonding requirement for livestock dealers.

There have been a few incidents in this province where livestock dealers have bought cattle and then they have not paid the money to the producer, and as a result the person who did the most work ends up with the most money out of pocket. There certainly has to be—and there is in place a bonding policy right now, but this is going to require farmers to pay an insurance. I question that because, does that mean that every other person who sells a commodity has to take out an insurance to carry it through to market after it has left their hands? Do the grain producers have to take out insurance to carry them through? [interjection] The

member says they are bonded, and that may cover it off, but I think that the cattle buyers should be the ones that should be bonded to the full degree to cover this off.

Now, if this policy will cover some extra insurance, that is fine, but we have to be sure that it is not a policy that is being put in place that will let the cattle buyers off the hook. We have to have insurance in place. The cattle buyers are the ones that are buying the livestock, and the insurance should be in place at a level that will cover all the purchases that they make. We should not be bringing in legislation that will reduce the responsibility of the cattle buyers who are the ones who have been at fault in a few cases here in Manitoba and left the farmer, the livestock producer, out of pocket money.

I want to mention a couple of things here as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I spoke the other day I made reference to this, asking where next the government would go as far as checkoffs went, and I referred to this. I made a comment, and I do not have my comments in front of me here, but I said, you know, what is the next thing the government is going to do? Are they going to then say that everybody has to belong to a particular political organization? And I offended them.

From a letter I got, it appears that I have offended the Keystone Agricultural Producers, and I wanted to put on the record that I was not implying that they were a political organization, although there have been many comments that have been made saying that, you know, the philosophy of the Keystone Agricultural Producers is quite right wing. My feeling is that if people want to change the philosophy of that organization and want to get involved, they should get involved and bring their views to the table. So if the Keystone Agricultural Producers took offence to the comment that I was making about forcing Manitoba citizens to join political—that this amendment was similar to forcing Manitobans to join political parties, it was not meant in that way. I was using it as a comparison of where I could see legislation should be going, where the government was going on some of its legislation.

Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the concept of farmers or any producers having to join an organization by legislation does not sit well.

An Honourable Member: Does that apply to unions as well?

Ms. Wowchuk: Now, the member across the way—I have just been waiting for the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) to get into his rant about unions—he always gets on this rant about unions. I do not know why he has such a bad feeling about unions, because what are unions? Unions are representatives of working people. Working people make a decision that they want to belong to an organization, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have a vote. If 51 percent of them vote for it, they have an organization to represent them, but this government is scared to take that vote to farmers. They are scared to give farmers the vote because they are afraid the organization that does hold their views, the organization that promotes right-wing philosophy, is not going to win that vote, so instead of giving the farmers a voice, they are going to legislate it.

Well, my goodness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure there are many other groups of working people across this province, across this country, who would like to have that kind of legislation but then that is not the way democracy works. The democratic process is that people who want to belong in organizations, people who want to become organized, workers who want to become organized come together, put their policies together and have a vote. That is what we should have here, but for some reason this government is afraid of that, and instead they are choosing to dictate what it is.

Now, the minister has said that he feels it is quite democratic because the farmers are having a choice because they have the ability to opt out. [interjection] My colleague for Transcona (Mr. Reid) raises a very good point, the farmers do not have the opportunity to opt in. They are being given a negative option. It is a negative option, and it does not work. You will see that farmers will be opting out because they are being forced. I guess on this legislation, as well, I would like to encourage the minister, as I did on the previous bill, to hold hearings on this bill in rural Manitoba.

This is legislation that does not affect the people in the city of Winnipeg. I think it would do the government a lot of credit if they were to recognize us and listen to the people. [interjection] The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) wants to know whether they should get more credit. I would give them credit. If they would take the hearings on this legislation out to rural Manitoba, I would give them all the credit that they deserve for going out there and looking. [interjection] The Minister of Industry and Trade (Mr. Downey) says this is more expense. Has he considered the expense this is going to be to farmers at a time when farmers are facing real difficulty because of changes that were begun by the federal Conservatives and carried through by the federal Liberals, changes to the Crow benefit, cutbacks to research and agriculture? Farmers are having a really tough time.

Now they are going to have a checkoff, that they have a hundred dollars for the organization, which will be Keystone Agricultural Producers. They are going to have a hundred dollar checkoff for canola growers. They are going to have a hundred dollar checkoff for cattle producers, if they happen to raise cattle as well. You wonder what other commodity group is going to be next that this government is going to legislate that farmers have to become members of without any say.

They have not consulted; they are legislating. This is very undemocratic. I say to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that he would do a great service to the farmers if he would make a commitment that he would hold hearings in rural Manitoba and take the suggestions, or if he does not want to take the hearings to rural Manitoban, then just give them a vote. Let them vote, whether or not they—I would say that that is pretty democratic. Give them all a say, and they are going to say this costs too much money. How much money is it going to take into the hands?

* (1550)

When we look back, when the checkoff was in place, before the checkoff, the cattle producers used to get some \$20,000. With checkoff legislation, they were getting some \$200,000. That is a lot of money being drained out. When you look that only about a quarter

of the producers belong to the Keystone Agricultural Producers, so there is another maybe 15,000 producers who are going to be paying out \$100. That is a lot of money going out of the rural economy.

The canola growers, I believe, said that their membership is not even a quarter of the producers. Again, that is going to be a lot of money. Farmers do have to have a responsibility of contributing towards research and even more so now since we have had the cutbacks in research by the federal government and lack of commitment from this government towards research in agriculture. Farmers do have the responsibility to addressing some of those, but, again, it has to be by their own choice. They have to decide who it is, that they want this organization, and they want to have input.

Now, we hear them say that they have held meetings, and this issue has been taken to the people, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been at some of these meetings, and the attendance has been very low. People are not aware. I have called many producers in this province, and they are not aware that this government is bringing in this legislation. They are not aware that they are going to be forced to belong to an organization—completely undemocratic.

Again, I want to say that we do not support the legislation in its present state because it is undemocratic. It assumes that all farmers have the same philosophical views and want to belong to one organization. It does not give the farmers a choice. So we believe that, if there is going to be a checkoff for commodity groups such as the cattle producers, then a vote should be taken. We do not accept the excuse that it will be too expensive to hold a vote because, if the farmers vote in favour of it, if this organization is so confident that this is what the people want, the producers want, then they will have a checkoff in the end, and they will not have to worry about the expense of sending out letters to every producer. So that is a weak excuse to say that it is too expensive to cancel the membership. If this is what they want, they should move forward and have a vote on it, and it is wrong that the government is making changes to legislation to bend to the will of a small number of people who have not taken the initiative to canvass all the members.

We do believe that commodity groups do have the right to have a checkoff but, first, have a voice taken, have a voice. We do believe that the government should go out to rural Manitoba with this legislation and hear the views of farmers. If they are not going to go out to rural Manitoba, then I would encourage them to hold off hearings on this legislation to the point where farmers—as you realize, farmers are very busy at this time of year trying to make a living bringing in the harvest, which is very important to the economy of this province. I would hope that they would hold the hearings off until such time that farmers can participate in the hearings.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that the minister will consider the amendments. We have had some discussion on this with respect to what opportunities the farmers will have, cattle producers, canola growers, with the other legislation, what opportunities they will have to opt out. We are drafting those amendments, and I hope that he will consider them seriously. Again, I want to say that with respect to the vendor insurance, we feel that the—it is our view that the vendor insurance should be strengthened. The bonding requirement for livestock dealers should be strengthened so that farmers would not have to carry their own insurance on livestock.

So with those words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that the government will consider the suggestions that we are making and will consider the fact that this legislation is undemocratic. It is taking away the ability from farmers to have a choice. Most certainly, we support the idea of any group of workers to be able to organize and have an organization speak out for them. There is need at the present time, considering all the changes that we have gone through, that we do have a strong voice to speak up for us.

When I read this letter from Keystone Agricultural Producers, again, they talk about the need for a strong voice, and I agree with that. We do need a strong voice. We need somebody to lobby on behalf of farmers, but the organization that speaks up for farmers has to be chosen by the farmers. We have to recognize the diverse view of farmers that we have. Not all of them have the same view. We have to recognize the

diverse views of different commodity groups that we have, because there are different views that have to be recognized, and farmers have to have that ability to choose.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Swan River has the floor.

Ms. Wowchuk: There are many commodity groups who have organizations that represent them, and those farm groups have benefited, but, in each of those cases, the farmers who were involved in that organization had the ability to choose the organization that would represent them. They had a choice in whether or not they wanted to fund it. That is not happening here. They are being forced to have their funds checked off. They have to apply back for their funds. This is a negative option. They are not given the opportunity to opt in if they so choose, and this is wrong.

As I say, this is important legislation, and we have not heard the government members speaking on it. I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard very little about this in the election. Someone said it was in the platform, but I have to say that was not the case. The only place I heard about this was in one debate I believe in Brandon, but I saw no literature in my constituency from the Conservatives when they were running, saying that they were going to impose legislation that would force people to join organizations.

* (1610)

I think that if that is what this government's policy was, if this was what they were proposing to do—they say the people voted in April and this is what they gave them the mandate to do—that is not true, because this was not in the platform. They did not take this to the people, and they have the responsibility to go to the people and hear what they have to say. It is very important that the legislation be improved on, that we have the opportunity to hear from farmers on this. I hope that the government will—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 4 p.m., now is the time for private members' hour.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 12 minutes remaining.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 201—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), that Bill 201, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie) be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister—the honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you almost made a bit of a foresight mistake possibly, never wanting to be somewhat presumptuous, of course. You never know five years from now what the situation could be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is in fact with great pride that I introduce Bill 201. I think it is a bill that is long overdue. In fact, we have as a Liberal caucus attempted to introduce it in the past, and most individuals, at least on this side, would indicate to me that in fact this is a bill that is long overdue, and people tend to be very supportive of Bill 201.

Now that Bill 201 is before us and we have plenty of hours in the future to debate it if it is felt that it is necessary—ultimately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would argue that we do not necessarily need to debate it too much at length but, in fact, to allow it to go to the committee stage, and I am somewhat hopeful, maybe some would say an eternal optimist, that at some point in time, this session, we will see Bill 201 go to the committee stage, where we will be able to just see what

sort of support is out there from Manitobans for this particular bill.

I personally believe that the support would be overwhelming. I say that because health care is an issue in which, since I was first elected, time and time again, people bring up the issue of health care. They feel very strongly about it and passionate. Ultimately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would argue that it is a part of that Canadian identity, if you like. That is what makes people feel good about being a Canadian.

They will often, when you say, well, what is the difference between the United States and Canada, many people will make reference to medicare and how fortunate we really and truly are to have such a wonderful health care system in the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do believe it is important that we acknowledge that there is a change that is necessary, that we cannot just live with the status quo, and, if we do not rise up to meet that change, our health care system will not be as good as it is today. I look forward to having many different forums to debate, forums to question the government, to ensure that the government is, in fact, not necessarily supporting just the status quo, but it is looking in terms of what is in the best interest of health care into the future.

But I would like to start off any sort of discussion that we have regarding health care with one premise, and that premise is that there is a general agreement from all members that those five fundamental principles of our health care are public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility, that those five principles are really the starting point so that, whenever we enter into any form of dialogue, we are in agreement with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few years back, my former colleague for The Maples, Dr. Gulzar Cheema, introduced, I believe it was, either Bill 50 or 51 at the time, a bill that, in essence, is the same as Bill 201. The Minister of Health then, Mr. Donald Orchard, indicated that he did not have too much of a problem, other than the fact that there were some concerns which he would have liked the Department of Health to have

looked into just to make sure that it was not going to cause any problems if in fact we passed this legislation.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the concern was that we just did not allow for enough time for the department to do its work. The government, at the time, was a bit unsure, and what ultimately ended up happening is that there was a consensus. I like to believe I had something to do with the consensus in terms that we had a resolution that was introduced, and I believe even a government member was the seconder of it. The member for The Maples was the mover. We saw the legislative Chamber unanimously support a resolution that was supportive of the five fundamental principles.

I believe that the Chamber could be well positioned to take the next step, and, ultimately, that next step is to affirm those five fundamental principles in The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act. I believe what we would be doing is, we would be sending a very strong message to all Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that message is that no matter what one's political stripe, at least of the three major political parties that are inside the Chamber, they do support the five fundamental principles of health care.

We might agree on some areas. We might disagree on other areas in terms of direction that government is coming from. We could use all sorts of examples of how maybe this government is trying to create user fees. There is no doubt in my mind that you can virtually go across from one province to the other across Canada and you will see that there are all sorts, and many different forms, of what could be labelled as user fees. I think that, in order to at least achieve some sort of good will, if you like, or the long-term best interest of health care, it is to try to accomplish a definition of what we feel is essential health care services that we believe Manitobans should have, and those five fundamental principles have to be applied. It does not matter where in the country you happen to live.

I have something that is a bit outdated, but an excellent article that was given to me when I had spoken on this matter a number of years ago. It was with respect to insured eye care. It really shows the difference from province to province. It seems that

every province has a different level of payment and so forth. So there is no doubt that the federal government does have a responsible role to play. I hope and trust that, in the future, the federal government will play that role.

The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), the Premier (Mr. Filmon) I have heard in the past talk that in order for the federal government to have that role, they have to be able to contribute dollars into health care. It is a very legitimate concern that has been expressed, but I have found in time that there is a certain amount of exaggeration that goes on, that in fact the federal government does have the potential to have incredible clout at ensuring that those five fundamental principles are followed. All you need to do is to look at the financial Estimates of this government and the commitments that are, in fact, being made by both the federal Minister of Health and the Prime Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be someone that would be, very much so, critical of the national government if for whatever reasons they started to abandon their responsibility in terms of ensuring that we have medicare from coast to coast. I would like to see, not only this provincial government, all provincial governments doing what they can to try to harmonize those sorts of services. The best way in which you can do that, and Manitoba could be at the forefront of this, is to deal with the whole question of a definition of health care.

Through the Health Estimates, I had many opportunities with the Minister of Health and asked questions about health care, and what is believed to be essential services and what some might not determine as essential services. Depending on what province you are in, for example, in vitro fertilization might be a service under medicare fully paid in one province, but not in another province. Achieving what is that core essential health care services has to be a high priority because once you have established that, then you are in a better position in which you can talk about the concepts, such as what is a user fee. For example, some provinces, you would pay an up-front premium, a monthly premium. To me, and there is no real discretion, that is, in fact, a user fee. Other provinces

have talked about having a fee in emergency services. To me, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that would be a user fee. The question in terms of going to the eye doctor. Now it is every two years you are allowed to go.

These sorts of discussions need to take place. The most appropriate forum in all likelihood is inside this Chamber. One has to be extremely careful what you say inside the Chamber.

An Honourable Member: That is right. That is true.

Mr. Lamoureux: As much as I would like to believe what the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) said in terms of this providing us the opportunity to say whatever we would like to say as an independent, quite often what will happen is that, if you say something, it could come back to haunt you, especially when you are dealing with an issue of great substance such as health care. It is important that individual members are very clear and they are concise on what it is they believe and what it is they are fighting for.

The underlying important issue for me when I talk about health care and the services of health care is, in fact, first and foremost, the patient; that has been, always will be. I believe very firmly in the five fundamental principles. I believe governments of all political stripes throughout Canada need to sit at a table to achieve that definition of services so that we can take it to the next step, if you will.

I like to believe that on behalf of the Liberal Party provincially this is the starting point at which I would advocate from, and that is why I feel fairly passionate about the issue, for example, of the emergency services and the strike that is going on. When I look at the emergency services, I believe and the Liberal Party provincially believes, that is in fact a part of the core health care services that have to be there. What is more important than an individual if they are suffering pain and they want to be able to get that pain or discomfort addressed, so they go to emergency services, that they should be able to receive treatment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That, to me, is probably the most important aspect of health care.

Then it could go down from there, if you like, and that is why when we look at it, we are now entering what I believe is the fourth week, it will be at the end of the month before you know it.

Services in our emergency wards have been stressed. I brought up the other day about an individual who had to go to Winkler. There have been other cases where medical professions have been—additional stress has been put on. If there is a need to rectify a particular problem, I believe this is one of those areas.

I think there should be consensus virtually from all members that that is one of the services that should not be allowed to have the ability to strike, quite frankly. It is extremely rare that I would take such a dramatic position because I very much so believe in the worth of the free bargaining process. I was there for the final offer selection, the many debates that occurred there. It is something in which I would very rarely ever advocate in terms of back-to-work legislation, but given the importance of emergency services to all Manitobans—and I look at what I have been talking about, what the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has been talking about, what the New Democrats claim to talk about, and that is to put our patients first. That is the reason why the party has taken the position that we have.

Hopefully, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will see this issue resolved in the short term if the government decides not to, but ultimately the government is going to have to reflect on the length of this particular strike and, if necessary, bring in the back-to-work legislation. From our point of view, it has gone on for far too long. Those are the types of essential services that I think in the future Health Estimates that we would like to be able to enter into to try to get a better idea in terms of what are the types of services, whether it is personal care homes, residential homes, our community health clinics. No doubt that is where the future really is in terms of health care reform, is our community health clinics.

Government and opposition have to recognize that and start working co-operatively. Let us put the patients first. Thank you very much for being able to say a few words on this issue.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): I move, seconded by the member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), that the debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 13—Crime Prevention Foundation Act

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that

WHEREAS the former NDP government of Manitoba introduced and this Legislative Assembly enacted The Crime Prevention Foundation Act, ("the Act") in 1987; and

WHEREAS this act, the first of its kind in Canada, provided for the establishment of the Crime Prevention Foundation, a charitable nonprofit corporation; and

WHEREAS the act further provided for a fund to be used for co-ordination and organization of crime prevention through community organization and the development of crime prevention programs; and

WHEREAS the act provided for a foundation to act as a research resource in all areas of crime prevention; and

WHEREAS crime prevention is the most effective, proven method of ensuring greater community safety; and

WHEREAS Manitobans want and must have safer communities; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has not proclaimed the act and thereby has failed to take the most immediately available means to deal with rising crime; and

WHEREAS the need for this legislation is urgent, particularly given the Conservative government's attack on education and employment opportunities and its withdrawal of support for programs that can reduce crime; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has failed to comprehend that six years of bestowing greater benefits on the privileged in our society while ignoring the needs of the disadvantaged leads to a more violent community.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider immediately proclaiming The Crime Prevention Foundation Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the provincial government to consider adequate funding for the foundation.

Motion presented.

* (1620)

Mr. Mackintosh: We are introducing a resolution today that speaks even to the headlines in today's newspapers which proclaim: break-and-enter stats down, nation gets relief but not in Manitoba, and the headline, "Burglars cash in on Manitoba."

The report states, "Manitoba has one of the highest rates of break and enters in Canada, . . .

"Worse, it says Manitoba is bucking a national trend to fewer break-ins, and the rate is increasing."

It is only Manitoba, of the provinces in Canada, that has had an increase in break and enters between 1991 and 1994.

Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is one small part of the story. We have the dubious distinction of leading the country in increasing crime. Manitoba had the largest increase in criminal code offences in 1994; the highest rate of violent crime, including the highest robbery rate; the highest rate of assault as well as the largest increase in property crime, including break and enter, as well as the highest rate of motor vehicle theft. Finally, we had the highest weapons offences rate in all of Canada.

We can no longer afford to allow the status quo to continue. There must be real and meaningful efforts on

the part of all Manitobans to deal with this crisis, and it is time that the provincial government, as I said yesterday, being I think the most effective single agent in empowering community action, co-ordinating community police and school response, to take a very active role.

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

We are talking today about crime prevention. We have from time to time and indeed in Question Period yesterday talked about consequences for crimes already committed. I know the member for Riel (Mr. Newman), for example, yesterday in his remarks acknowledged that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, that if we are truly to respect the rights of victims, then it is our obligation to prevent the creation of victims. We have to reduce the victims in Manitoba, and it is a big job ahead.

Unless we can prevent crime from arising in the first place we know that it is difficult to change the behaviour of offenders for the better. It is a very expensive, time-consuming task and one the records show that has been questionably successful.

Now, when this legislation was introduced into this Assembly in the spring of 1987, it was the first of its kind in Canada. The legislation established the crime prevention centre. The centre was to be accessible to crime prevention organizations. It established a crime prevention foundation which was to use the crime prevention centre as the head office of the foundation as a meeting place for crime prevention organizations and as a location for crime prevention resource materials.

The act provided that the foundation, by providing funding and acting in its own right, was to encourage and promote public awareness of crime prevention; crime prevention research; the development of crime prevention programs; the collection of crime prevention resource materials; the co-ordination of activities of crime prevention organizations; and the participation of private citizens in crime prevention programs.

The crime prevention fund was established and the funds were to be disbursed as the board considered

proper. The foundation was given the power to accept and receive any financial assistance made available to it, including gifts and bequests, and to encourage private contributions to the foundation, provided a role for the Provincial Auditor, but essentially this was not a government fund. It was an independent fund.

Finally, the foundation was empowered to receive from any person or organization submissions for funding as long as the funding went towards crime prevention programs or research. At the time of the second reading of the bill in the Legislature on April 29 of 1987, the then-Attorney General, Mr. Penner, stated a very important principle. He said, and I quote: The foundation should not attempt to replace in any way community programs but assist them to become more successful.

That is the key. It is not the government itself seeking to deliver crime prevention programs and to replace the tremendous involvement—and Manitoba has the best record of any province in that way with bureaucracies and with government-directed programs—is to lend support to crime prevention programs, assisting with support services, collecting and sharing information about crime prevention, promoting research, co-ordinating activities.

Mr. Penner again stressed: So that is the key, not for the government itself to attempt to expend money on the front lines of crime prevention. He went on to say: We must find a better mix between the conventional, institutional response and the community-based responses that are required for effective crime prevention.

The opposition at that time, the Conservative Party, put its position on the record when Mr. Mercier said: This, of course, is a bill that would be very difficult to oppose. In fact, it is certainly a proposal in principle that we have long supported in opposition.

Mr. Mercier went on to say: If there is anything the community organizations needed, they need some assistance in the way of a meeting room, in the way of helping them perhaps with secretarial work and helping them communicate with the residents of their

community. Hopefully, this bill will provide that assistance to those community organizations, some of which have been very active and very successful to date. Hopefully, other community crime prevention groups will be encouraged to develop in this city.

Then Mr. Ducharme got up on behalf of the Conservative caucus also supporting the bill. In fact, he said at the beginning of his remarks: I also rise and agree with this type of bill. It is one that is very dear to my heart.

The legislation went on to third reading and passed unanimously by the members of the Chamber. At the time of its passage, then Staff Sergeant Don Peters of the Winnipeg Police department said, the police department welcomes a program like this with open arms. It ties together a network of programs out there and makes them stronger.

It was interesting that Reg Alcock, then a board member of Project Prevention, which was a clearinghouse for smaller crime prevention groups and was a sponsor of Crime Prevention Month, and also an employee of the Corrections department, said, and this was reported in the Winnipeg Sun of April 30, 1987, that this foundation will supplement existing programs and not replace them.

* (1630)

The Attorney General of the time made a commitment of \$250,000 to enable organizations to fight crime more effectively. Then Mr. Penner is paraphrased in the Free Press of April 30, '87, as saying: While \$250,000 would hire only two or three police officers, it will help prompt thousands of citizens and community groups into a more active role against crime.

Mr. Acting Speaker, what happened to that unanimous consent? What happened to a proposal that was dear to the heart of people, particularly one member of the Conservative opposition of the day? What happened to the promise of a co-ordinated network of crime prevention? There are many crime prevention organizations, whether they be Neighbourhood Watch, Block Parents, Citizens for

Crime Awareness. There are patrol groups that are forming. There are parent groups that are forming. I was at a meeting just last Wednesday in my community, which formed very quickly in response to a threat being made against school patrols, a threat that was made by a youth carrying a gun.

These organizations need support. As I said yesterday, in response to comments from the member for Riel (Mr. Newman), observations like, well, crime is a community responsibility and solutions must be found in the community, cannot be used to excuse a provincial government from its essential role in spurring, promoting, whether it is through funding or leadership, those organizations. Just as we cannot say, well, a lot of the roots of violence and our crime rate can be found in the family, that statement cannot be used to excuse the role of the provincial government.

The Conservative government, when it was elected, did look at The Crime Prevention Foundation Act and the plans that were underway. It was estimated that the total costs of staffing the crime prevention centre with an executive director, a research officer and a secretary, as well as providing grants to community organizations, could total approximately \$350,000 a year.

When we look at what has taken place since the passage of that legislation, when we look at the devastation to individuals, when we look at the damage to property as a result of crime in this province, we cannot begin to add up the financial loss. Of course, it is much more difficult to add up the human loss, both in terms of lives, in terms of working capacity, in terms of healthy living, contribution to family, of lost working time.

I will not dwell on this, but lament that that legislation was never proclaimed by the Conservative government of Manitoba in all the years. The Conservatives never took the most obvious measure available to deal with crime. They did not even have to draft the legislation. They did not have to bring it through the House. It was there for them when they came to office. It is interesting, we come to the last provincial election, the crime rate has become notorious in Canada.

It is interesting, there are two notorious stories emanating from Manitoba over the course of the summer. One was the fiasco of the Winnipeg Jets and the other is the tragedy of our crime rate. I am sorry that those stories come from my province, but surely in response to the demand by the public for some meaningful action by this government, the Conservatives went on the election hustings and they made this amazing pronouncement. They said the provincial Crime Prevention Council will continue to seek the advice of experts on the development of community crime prevention initiatives. I read that and I thought—the provincial Crime Provincial Council—never heard of it. There has never been a crime prevention council. It cannot continue to do anything. It is a secret. It is one of Casper's councils.

Obviously there was this need for some kind of a crime prevention council. They wanted to let Manitobans think that there was such a body. Maybe that would just help them through that campaign, a few votes here and there maybe. Then the election material went on to say this: The Filmon government will create a centralized provincial registry of crime prevention and community safety programs and services. It will enable community-based organizations to have access to a wide range of crime prevention information thereby enhancing their effectiveness. They also went on to promise standard training programs for the crime prevention groups.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in conclusion, the Conservatives themselves promised what the crime prevention foundation was established to do. I ask them now, let us do it right, proclaim the act and in that way you can fulfill this election promise. Thank you.

Mr. David Newman (Riel): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to this resolution, not only because I am the successor MLA to the former member for Riel, Gerry Ducharme, who very proudly stated in speaking to the proposed legislation back in 1987 that the constituency of Riel and the whole broader community represented now by the Speaker, the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) and the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render) had created the first part of what is now called the Citizens

for Crime Awareness back in 1982. So if ever there was a grassroots evolution towards crime prevention, we know where it started. I am proud of that fact and proud of the people who were behind it.

A person named Hugh Coburn, a constable in the Winnipeg Police, retired at the time, I believe, was instrumental in making that happen in that particular community. He developed a group soon of 21 others and they began a movement, a grassroots movement, which has evolved, and these things tend to happen. If government does not get too involved in these things, does not interfere too much, things can evolve with support and encouragement of MLAs like ourselves to work positively in our communities to bring about positive change.

The evolution of that Citizens for Crime Awareness has now brought us to a point where we have representative units in each of the police districts and, beyond that, one of the districts with three zones has a unit in each one of those. These are all citizen-driven crime prevention programs, the most recent one formed, I might say, in 1994.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

So what has happened is, this Crime Prevention Foundation Act, which came along in the middle of this evolution and on its face was not regarded as a bad idea at all, addressed crime prevention, which was being addressed in the grassroots ways in the communities being nurtured and encouraged by this side of the House. But what happened was, other issues arose after that legislation was given Royal Assent and, I might say, not proclaimed by the NDP government of the day. When it came to this government to be chosen to proceed with the continued evolution in a positive way of the sorts of grassroots changes I have been talking about, issues arose, issues that are there to this day, which I submit deserve consideration, and I am going to identify them.

One is whether or not there should be central control of this crime prevention by government to the degree that the opposition is apparently asserting is correct by government, on one hand, or, as apparently asserted by the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh),

by an nongovernmental organization like this crime foundation which would be created by this bill.

The alternative to the sort of central control, that sort of trickle-down, the handing-out-grant system, would be a neighbourhood control system where there would be a breakdown by neighbourhoods along the lines of the Citizens for Crime Awareness, who would do their own fundraising, who would in effect take ownership in their community for that situation.

* (1640)

The second issue, which I think is still a current one, is whether or not the donations to those kinds of nongovernmental organizations should be tax deductible. Now, the bill that was passed, Bill 20, The Crime Prevention Foundation Act, provided for tax deductibility of donations to that sort of foundation. Well, again, that issue is still current because when you do that that takes revenue out of the coffers of government to be used for purposes like health and education and family services.

Let us assume that that is something that warrants consideration. I believe it does. I believe it does whether or not there should be tax deductibility of those donations, I think that is a positive feature probably of this bill, but what is even better, I submit, is if the communities themselves through their neighbourhoods, through their community organizations, through their volunteers, decide that they want tax deductibility, and they seek it, and they can obtain it.

In fact, I note with some interest that tax deductibility status was just granted to the one in my district, and when they now ask for funds, they want to help my community soar to new heights, and they make a donation, so that issue does not have to be solved, it appears, by legislation anymore.

So that is an issue. Do we need that sort of legislative interference to accomplish that sort of objective?

The third issue, I submit, is are current NGOs of this type working? I would submit that the evidence is—and

I think the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) has agreed with that. Certainly, in certain areas like community justice programs, I notice he cited programs which certainly would receive my endorsement and enthusiastically, and certainly the Citizens for Crime Awareness is one of those. He mentioned citizen patrols. All of these sorts of things are evolving and are working effectively in many different areas.

We have another issue, I submit, and that is what can be done to make them work better, and I submit without further cost to government? Again, it is so easy for the opposition and people on this side of the House to say, things are all wrong out there, and just in a general sort of way get headlines. However, if one looked at it and said, we are going to be accountable for this ourselves—I mean, we are members representing our constituencies. Let us look at our own constituencies. What are we doing to help our own constituencies, each of us in this Legislature? What are we as MLAs each doing to help our constituents help themselves with this issue?

Are we giving them the idea that government is going to provide the answer and the money and the resources and again cause them to become dependent and overdependent on government, or are we appealing to them to do it for themselves with our help and encouragement, knowledge and influence? Well, I am telling you what I am going to do. I am certainly going to do what I did before I was elected, and I will continue to do the same thing, and that is to work with volunteers and work with the community to help them help themselves.

Now, this resolution—once again, we have this kind of resolution that has 11 paragraphs to it, and three of them are simply taking shots at the government. The others have more thought to them, so once again, if this whole members' hour is to be made meaningful, it would be better to take the shots out of it and work to do something constructive. I am trying to enter into this debate and show some of the success stories and invite participation and ideas from other MLAs as to what is being done, what can be done, to make it work better, to address the issues that I have raised which are

worthy issues for consideration by all of us and not easy ones to resolve.

What gives me great comfort is that the grassroots of our different neighbourhoods are looking for solutions, and what they need is our support and encouragement and ideas, not simply rhetoric and not simply blame-somebody-else approaches.

To be more specific as to some of the programs that are happening, for those that do not know, the Citizens for Crime Awareness is an association of the five police districts and three zones in Winnipeg. These self-autonomous chapters that form the association are governed by a common constitution, and the affairs of the association are governed by a Memorandum of Understanding.

It was established for the following objectives: to co-ordinate and promote crime prevention activities within the city of Winnipeg in co-operation with the Winnipeg Police department; to promote citizen awareness and involvement in crime prevention programs; to evaluate crime prevention programs and educational materials to ascertain their effectiveness in implementing them within Winnipeg; to liaise with related organizations in other cities in order to maintain current information on crime prevention activities as practised outside Winnipeg; to provide guidance to chapters in developing and providing educational programs in crime prevention; and, when necessary, to co-ordinate and consolidate fundraising and promotional activities.

These are volunteers, sometimes supported by a part-time staff person working in conjunction with the local police, who do wonderful, wonderful work. They have specific programs in place which we identify. Probably one of the most noteworthy ones in terms of the public eye is our Neighbourhood Watch Program. That is the biggest program to administer on behalf of the Winnipeg Police Services. It is active in almost all areas of the city and is a program in which the residents of the community care and take an active interest in the well-being of their neighbours.

As examples, this may be done by looking after a neighbour's property while the neighbour is on vacation or by reporting to the community police office any

suspicious cars that may be parked or hanging around the area. Operation Identification is another program that is administered by them. This involves engraving personal property, TVs, VCRs and so forth. The number is given to the police. In the event that a break-in occurs and items are stolen, then police have an easy way to identify the articles if they are found or located in a pawn shop.

There are seniors' programs put on by the Citizens for Crime Awareness as well. Seniors are advised how to guard themselves while at home alone, how to safeguard their homes and property and so forth. There are bicycle rodeos put on by some of the chapters for the children of their community, done in conjunction with the police service. There is a fingerprinting service at some offices for children. There is a bike registry by at least one of the chapters. They have been instrumental in supporting the CAT Program or Combat Auto Theft, which I know my wife and I are involved in and many others are that are beneficiaries of these sorts of programs.

There are other programs all left to the imagination of the community and the particular needs of the community. Now it is interesting. They solicit support and they ask questions when they hand out materials—if I were interested in becoming more involved, how much time would I have to commit?

They approach volunteer organizations to get co-operation and liaise. Sometimes it involves, as a volunteer, three hours a week doing a particular thing, everything from organizing and manning mall displays or events such as bike rodeos. The time commitment may be intense, but it may be just for a short time, so it gives everybody a chance to get involved.

I single out that particular one for attention. There are many others, but these, I submit, are the constructive things that we can do without expending government money, without taking control and telling people how to run their lives in their own communities.

You are certainly going to have the support of the constituency of Riel and the MLA from Riel and, I submit, from this side of the House, from those sorts of endeavours which stimulate neighbourhoods solving

their own problems with our strong support and whatever we can muster in the way of communication of knowledge and encouragement. Thank you very much.

* (1650)

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this resolution, and I find it interesting that the member for Riel (Mr. Newman) concentrated a fair bit on community involvement and having the ownership of what is happening in your community happen with the people involved in that community rather than government always taking a lead. He mentioned that he did have a concern with, what he called, legislative interference.

I think the idea of the resolution is an interesting one. I think it warrants perhaps more discussion, but I really and truly believe that when people take ownership for the problems in their area, that is what is going to make something work. I find it most interesting that just last week the Norwood Grove Bulletin headline, front page, Volunteers—well, actually now, I think I have just backed myself into a corner. It said: Volunteers needed to help prevent crime in community. But actually the lead article is on the Citizens for Crime Awareness, and, as the member for Riel pointed out, it was the member for Riel who was very instrumental in starting this group about a dozen years ago.

Now the St. Boniface/St. Vital chapter is one of eight in the city. It is an active chapter, and I think what makes it work is the fact that the people are totally involved. It is a street-by-street kind of involvement. As the office manager for the District 5 chapter told me, she said, the program is based on the very simple concept of neighbours watching over other neighbours' property.

Of course, I think most of us have seen the Neighbourhood Watch block is identified with a sign at either end of the block which does serve to act as a deterrent to criminals.

One of the other programs which has also received a fair bit of publicity through the Citizens for Crime Awareness is the CAT program, and the CAT, as the

member for Riel I think explained, stands for Combat Auto Theft. I think that all of us, on our drive home today, just sort of keep a watch out, and you will probably see at least one car with a large decal at the back of the car, the CAT decal, the CAT sign. Of course, these are people who are enrolled in this program. They put the decal on the car and this signifies to the police that this is a vehicle that is rarely driven between the hours of one o'clock and five o'clock in the morning so that if this car is out on the road with the decal on it, the police will stop it and make sure that the person driving that car is in fact the owner of the car.

Not only was there a full page article in last week's Norwood Grove Bulletin, but there was also a very large article in the Winnipeg Free Press, September 20, and I am just reading from that. I think the bottom line here is that people are beginning to realize that government should not be the answer for everything, that they simply have to take the initiative and they have to become involved.

Now two weeks ago—coincidentally, I find it very interesting that these resolutions on crime and safety and violence have all come together in the Legislature just within the past week—I was out to the Citizens for Crime Awareness group speaking to the group. We were talking about what citizens can do. Very interestingly, not once during that whole evening that I was there did anybody say to me, will government give us more money? Will government do this? Will government do that? Rather the questions were, how can we raise even more public awareness in the community? How can we as residents of this community do more? So I think maybe this is the approach whether it is in crime or many of the other areas of government, whether it is health, and now I am going to be getting off topic so I will get back to the crime. Again, we come down to the bottom line that people have to be responsible.

One of the things—when I spoke to the group a couple of weeks ago—I said our approach to crime revolves around four principles: (1) criminals must be held accountable and pay the consequences for their

criminal acts; (2) the rights of victims are also of importance; (3) the justice system must be fair and accountable; and (4) families and communities have a role and a responsibility to make their area, their city, their province, a safe and good place to live. So those are some of the things that we talked about that evening.

This group of people who were involved with the Citizens for Crime Awareness agree. As I said, they did not come knocking on the door saying what more is government going to do. Their approach was rather how can we as residents of the area, what more can we do. Now our approach as the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) has said many, many times in this House, our strategy to fight crime has been a holistic approach.

The member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) talked about an ounce of prevention. Well, one of our strategies is prevention and we have put into place some very good initiatives; the Street Peace, the No Need to Argue program which was initiated just earlier in the year in March 1995.

Again, I think it is interesting to note that the project sponsors for this came from the community; Q-94 FM, the Winnipeg Free Press, Motown records, MTN and the Winnipeg Police Services, plus the school divisions throughout Winnipeg, and of course they also were highlighted with the international hit band, the Cranberries. In fact, the Cranberries provided the public service announcements for this program. It went into the schools and schools helped develop some very specific strategies to help fight crime.

Now, some of the other things that we have done is put in place the gang and youth contact line and this was established in June 1994. It is a pilot project. This province and B.C. are the only provinces in Canada that have such a service. This contact line was designed to provide youth and parents and others with a confidential method of providing and receiving information from the Winnipeg Police Services on youth gangs and crime issues.

Something else that we have done is we have put in place a youth secretariat, again, a co-ordination kind of

function to help co-ordinate, to help communicate between the various departments of Justice, Family Services, Health and Education. An antiviolence co-ordinator is another initiative. The community notification process for high-risk sexual offenders, another initiative. The zero tolerance policy, this was put into place by the previous Minister of Justice in 1991.

Now, I mentioned consequences. We believe that criminals must pay the consequences. They must be held accountable for their actions. It is one of the reasons why we brought in some of the—well, not some of, but the toughest drunk driving legislation in Canada.

Of course, a year ago we brought in the made-in-Manitoba boot camp concept. I know some members opposite like to say, what is a boot camp? All you are trying to do is toughen up things. Yes, we are toughening up things. We are trying to bring discipline to the life of the young people who are in the boot camp and deter them from further actions of crime.

But we are also trying to do more than just toughen things up for them. We bring in a community service program that they must be involved in, intervention programming that they must take, academics and work preparation, and a very stringent release preparation and supervision program. So it is not a matter of just the punishment only on one side. It is a balanced kind of program in the boot camps.

Of course, for a number of years now, we have been talking at various levels about toughening up the Young Offenders Act. Something else that we feel is very necessary is to make parents more responsible for the property crimes of their children.

The third part I would like to go to right now, Madam Speaker, as to how we see preventing crime, is the community. We very firmly believe that there has to be community support. It cannot be government working by itself. The community must be there along with the government.

* (1700)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Vital will have five minutes remaining.

As previously agreed, the hour being 5 p.m., we will now proceed with the next private members' resolution.

Res. 14—Minimum Wage

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that

WHEREAS the provincial government has a responsibility to ensure that all Manitobans are able to afford a decent standard of living, including adequate nourishment, shelter, clothing and income for some personal expenses; and

WHEREAS in May of 1994 there were an estimated 43,000 people in Manitoba living at or around the minimum wage income, and

WHEREAS the minimum wage in Manitoba provides full-time workers with an income that still falls well short of the poverty line, and does not allow them to provide any sort of quality of life for themselves or for their children; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has only increased the minimum wage in Manitoba once since 1987; and

WHEREAS the minimum wage in this province is insufficient to the extent that an estimated 11,000 working families are forced to use the Winnipeg Harvest food bank; and

WHEREAS the current system of changing the minimum wage abruptly and sporadically at the discretion of the Minister of Labour leads to uncertainty on the part of business—both those already established in Manitoba and those considering investing in our province—as well as on the part of workers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider immediately raising the minimum wage in Manitoba to \$5.75 per hour, followed by an increase of a further 25 cents after six months; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the provincial government to consider tying the minimum wage to the average industrial wage in Manitoba in order to ensure that the well-being of minimum wage earners is not subject to ad hoc decisions by the Minister of Labour.

Motion presented.

Mr. Reid: It is my pleasure and honour to rise in the House to speak to this resolution and to introduce it for consideration by members of this Chamber.

This has been a topic that has been much on the minds of working people in the province of Manitoba. I know I have had the opportunity to talk with many of my own constituents throughout the last five years, many of those who are currently searching for work, a good number of them who are lucky enough to have work and are working at minimum wage jobs, but, unfortunately, are unable to make ends meet to either support themselves and/or their families.

Of course, as the resolution has already indicated, we have not seen an increase in the minimum wage in this province but once in the last five years. That is unfortunate, considering that there has been a significant increase in the cost of living for the people of this province.

It was interesting to note, too, Madam Speaker, that the government chose to only raise the minimum wage once in the last five years and that they chose to do this a very, very short time before the provincial general election this year. They have convened the Minimum Wage Board, and the Minimum Wage Board, of course, came back with their report, which was dated February 20, 1995, and then it was just one month before the election was called that the then-Minister of Labour indicated that he was going to change the minimum wage in this province in two steps.

Now, many might think that this was done for the purposes of electioneering and that it was only going to be tied to the provincial general election that was just around the corner, since the minister only made the recommendation or the change one month before the election. Maybe members opposite do not believe that or they try to think that the public does not believe that, but it is pretty hard to disguise that fact. [interjection]

Well, if it was good government, then why does this government make an ad hoc adjustment after five years instead of having an orderly adjustment in the minimum wage over a period of time? Perhaps my view of the world is somewhat idealistic in that I would like to see an orderly fashion of adjustment to the minimum wage, but then again, if you talk to the people who are working at minimum wage jobs and trying to support themselves or their families, they find it very difficult to do, and in a few moments I will give you an example of some of the costs that they would incur and how it is difficult, so that members opposite who are earning the income that they have and are driving government cars will realize that the working poor of this province living on minimum wage—[interjection] You charge your own to us, exactly, so you are still being compensated. [interjection] You are right. That is the case. But at the same time, I am willing to admit that there needs to be some adjustment in the minimum wage to allow those people to have a decent standard of living, something that you are not prepared to do, Mr. Minister.

So what we need to do, Madam Speaker—the previous Minister of Labour has indicated that one month before the election call, he was going to change the minimum wage in this province and he was going to do it in a two-step fashion.

Of course, we have before us the report from the Minimum Wage Board, the report that they brought back and that there was not a consensus of that board.

Some of their recommendations ranged from \$5.15 an hour up to \$5.75 an hour for the minimum wage. That was the range of recommendations. Now, one does not have to be a rocket scientist to understand who was proposing the \$5.15-an-hour. It is very clear where that recommendation came from, and it is very

easy to see that the \$5.75-an-hour recommendation was coming from representatives of working people. That is very obvious and clear to see for everyone who would look at this.

One of the things that I notice is that this government brought forward, as I said, Madam Speaker, recommendations to increase the minimum wage from \$5 an hour up to \$5.25 an hour on July 1 of 1995, and then on the second step, they are going to take the minimum wage from \$5.25 an hour, and on January 1, 1996, increase it to \$5.40 an hour. That still leaves the minimum wage earners of this province at 70 percent of the poverty rate. So earning minimum wage and trying to support yourself and/or a family, you will still be at less than poverty income for the people living in this province.

Now, I do not think that is any kind of recommendation for the people in this province to say that Manitoba treats their working people fairly. Since this government was elected, in the last seven to eight years, inflation has gone up dramatically, and it is only just recently that the inflation has been wrestled under control as the federal government likes to talk about. Mind you, we have seen a much higher level of unemployment in this country than we had previously, but we have got inflation under control; we just do not have as many people working.

I do not know how we are better off in a situation like that, but I guess that is the wisdom of the federal government. At the same time, while the inflation was going up some 40-plus percent, the minimum wage, by the adjustments of this government, went up just over 12 percent. How are the working people of this province that are living at minimum wage going to earn or keep up with the level of inflation in this province with an adjustment that this government has made in the two steps up to \$5.40 an hour.

Now, I took a look at some of the comments that were made. Working people thought it was unfair and unrealistic of the government to tie the minimum wage to the level that they did into the two steps. I thought for a while that there was going to be some hue and cry from the business community to the government's adjustment. But if you take a look at the comments

here, the then-executive vice-president of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce says, and I will quote, that this increase is not of great concern or a moment to the business community.

So it is obviously not onerous to the business community. The question that I have in my mind, if it is not onerous to them, and there was a recommendation to a level that would ensure more fairness, then why were they not asking for it, in the Minimum Wage Board, something that would be more realistic to allow the working families and the working poor of this province to achieve a decent standard of living? Now, that has not occurred. So the business community is already saying that they could have withstood and were able to pay for something that would have been more substantial and more fair for the working people.

I take a look at some of the statistics that we have got here relating to the number of working poor families. I mean, Manitoba has got the distinction, the unfortunate distinction, of having the highest child poverty level rate in the country. I believe it is 64,000 children living in poverty. That is a pretty sad statistic and damning statement for the province, and the efforts by this government or lack of efforts to try and do something about the problems. It is not the children that go out and work at the minimum wage jobs, but it is the parents that go out and work at the minimum wage jobs and try and support these children.

One also finds, when looking at statistics in this province, that of the people holding down the minimum wage jobs in this province, 67 percent of those people are women. A lot of them are working mothers, single parents, getting paid minimum-wage jobs, trying to support their families.

If one takes a look at the National Council of Welfare, they have guidelines, and I will read them into the record, that state that a single person in Manitoba is at the poverty line if they earn \$7.42 an hour, and this government comes in with a recommendation, a two-step change, that will only increase the minimum wage to \$5.40 an hour—[interjection]

* (1710)

Now, these are not my figures, Madam Speaker. This is the National Council of Welfare. The Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) thinks that this is a joke, and he has absolutely no compassion and understanding for the working poor of this province. That is \$2 an hour that this province has set as the minimum wage level—\$2 an hour lower than what the National Council of Welfare guidelines state is required to live at the poverty level in the province of Manitoba. [interjection]

We have said, for the interest of the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), whose own former leader, who used to sit in this Chamber, said during the recent election campaign that he, too, would raise the minimum wage and that he would raise it up to about \$5.50 an hour. So he gave 10 more cents an hour. He was pretty generous.

Now, for an individual that is making \$70,000 a year—he gets a small stipend from the party to pay for his dry-cleaning expenses, and he has, obviously, other sources of income because I know, Madam Speaker, that while he was sitting in this Chamber, he was also working as legal counsel, obviously getting other income and then says that the minimum wage rates of this province should only be raised to \$5.50 an hour. That is pretty generous of him, I must admit.

Now, we have said through the election campaign—[interjection] It is the National Council of Welfare. What we are saying, what we said during the election campaign, and let me be very clear about this—[interjection] You hold on a sec. Let me be very clear and explain. We have said that we want to take the minimum wage and establish it at \$5.75 an hour. That is the starting point. After six months, we would increase that by 25 cents an hour.

We would then take the minimum wage of this province, and, instead of making ad hoc adjustments through the Minister of Labour and the Department of Labour at his or her call, whoever that person may be, we would tie that to the average industrial wage for the province. So as the average industrial wage of the province made adjustments, the minimum wage would follow accordingly. [interjection]

Now, I do not want to have to do the research for the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). He can sit here, and he can ask questions. Now, if he does not have the ability to go back to his research staff and do some of the research on the topics, maybe he should spend some of his time not only talking to his constituents but researching the impact of the minimum wage.

I listened to members opposite, Madam Speaker, when they were referencing the fact that there would be spiralling unemployment as a result of this change that we have proposed. There were studies that were done that said that the review has turned up evidence that the minimum wage increase would have no significant impact on unemployment so that there would be no—[interjection] No, these are not my words. These are studies that were done saying that the changes to the minimum wage rate of this province would have no significant impact on unemployment in this province.

Therefore, I suggest that, based on the studies that independent sources have done, it would be reasonable to assume that we could raise the wage rates in this province without having significant impact. At one time, Madam Speaker, Manitoba's minimum wage rate was at 110 percent of the poverty line for this province. Now that has significantly dropped so that we are at less than 50 percent of the funds that are required to live at the poverty level. So we have seen a significant erosion or decline. There are other figures that are available looking through the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics too, so there is other information that could be available.

I am sure that if the members opposite, and I know the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) may have an opportunity here in a few moments to add his comments, how he himself or other members opposite that think it is so great and wonderful to live on the minimum wage, how you could support a family on \$216 a week working a 40-hour week. Then how can you say in good conscience that the minimum wage is adequate at \$5.40 an hour?

Madam Speaker, \$11,232 a year would be your income working full time at this province's minimum wage rate of \$5.40 an hour. You have \$500 a month

for rent if you are living on your own; your food could be in the range of \$330 for a single person; clothes, \$50 to \$100 a month. Your expenses could range from a thousand to \$1,300 a month on an income of \$864 gross. How can any member of this House live on that and in good conscience—

* (1720)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak to this resolution. Clearly, members on all sides of the House, including the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), wish to take meaningful and effective steps as may be necessary to minimize poverty. Clearly, none of us want poverty. We want to minimize poverty. We want to reduce it, and we want, hopefully, one day to eliminate it, even though—as one of the members across the way who was a minister or still might be a minister, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), may well be familiar with the Biblical statement, the poor you always have with you. In spite of being Biblical, I still think that we have an obligation to try to rid our society of poverty. I think the member for Burrows would agree with that as well. That is right.

This challenge to reduce poverty is particularly important because of the innocent people who are affected by poverty, and no one takes that lightly. The question, however, that this resolution poses for me is whether this resolution and the measures proposed will in fact effectively deal with ensuring the well-being of minimum wage earners.

My concern with the resolution is twofold. The first is the statement in the resolution, whereas the current system of changing the minimum wage abruptly and sporadically at the discretion of the Minister of Labour leads to uncertainty. Now, I would suggest that that statement is an insult to the many people who took part in the current system of changing and recommending changes to our minimum wage laws. There are many individuals who came to the hearings and made representations. There were individuals on the

Minimum Wage Board representative of the views of employees who considered those representations. There were members representative of the views of employers who considered those representations and, finally, there was a chairperson who considered those representations. Many took part in that process.

Just for the record, to dispel the illusion that this is somehow done on a whim, perhaps the record should be set straight. What in fact is the process? Well, in this particular case, the former Minister of Labour requested the Minimum Wage Board to convene as soon as possible to provide the minister with its recommendations. In his request, the minister said, I trust that the board would be sensitive to both the needs of workers and the—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty in hearing the honourable Minister of Labour.

Mr. Toews: I must say, Madam Speaker, that members of the opposition were in fact listening attentively. I know. I am not above pointing a finger in the other direction from time to time either. In this particular case, the members of the opposition were sitting and listening. Now, whether they understand what I am saying is another thing. Anyway, I am not passing judgment in that respect.

The minister at that time indicated, I trust that the board would be sensitive to both the needs of workers and the ability of the economy to support wage adjustments in an increasingly competitive business environment. In carrying out its mandate, the board is required to look at sections of the statute that give it its jurisdiction.

In particular, subsection 28(5) of The Employment Standards Act provides: "A board, in settling the recommendation it makes to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, shall take into consideration, and be guided by, the cost to an employee of purchasing the necessities of life and health."

So the recommendations or the request by the minister to the board is governed by legislation which

sets out certain parameters or concerns that the board must be mindful of.

In this particular case then, after hearing from over, if my notes are not incorrect, 100 representations—[interjection] 115, I am advised by the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) who is paying close attention to this. So what was the outcome?

Well, the employees' representatives suggested to the Minister of Labour of the day that the minimum wage be increased by 75 cents to \$5.75 per hour, effective July 1, 1995. They suggested that future increases in the minimum wage take place annually on July 1 of every year, based on 45 percent of the Manitoba average weekly earnings industrial aggregate, among other recommendations.

Then the members' representative of the views of employers made certain recommendations, and they submitted those recommendations to the chairman of the board, the recommendations made by those who—let me see here—recommended that a new employment wage of \$5.25 be introduced in two increments: July 1, 1995, at \$5.15 an hour and December 31, 1995, at \$5.25 an hour. [interjection]

No, there was no consensus in that. That indicates the very, very complex nature of the consideration. Those representative of employee views had one view. They brought that to the table, and they brought that to the attention of the minister. Those representative of the views of employers brought another view, and there were various submissions that they summarized.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business recommended that the increase be 10 cents an hour. The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce suggested among other things that there be a flat rate of \$5.25 for all workers. The Manitoba Restaurant and Food Services Association indicated that the industry cannot bear additional costs of an increase. So there were many representations considered by the board and ultimately then it falls to the responsibility of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to consider all the recommendations and come up with a conclusion that is fair, and it did in fact make those considerations.

Now, the resolution states that that is an arbitrary artificial process and yet the solution is an automatic tying to an average wage rate. So whatever that average wage rate is, it is tied to that. It gives absolutely no discretion to people or to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to say in view of all the facts, in view of concerns with inflation, in view of concerns with unemployment, in view of all those things—

An Honourable Member: But you are abdicating responsibility through balanced budgets and now you are saying the minister should have it, the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council.

Mr. Toews: Well, my learned colleague across the way states that we have abdicated responsibility in respect of balanced budgets and that is another issue which is being debated in this House. On that issue I prefer not to mortgage my children's future. The honourable member does not mind mortgaging his children's future and the peoples of Manitoba's children.

In any event, so we have a proposal that is fraught with the difficulties that he seeks to cure, and I would suggest there is nothing arbitrary about the democratic process. There is nothing arbitrary about citizens coming before a board making recommendations and giving the decision makers the information that they must use to make a decision. We do it in our judicial system. We do it with our administrative tribunals. We do it in every facet of life, and that is in fact the best way to ensure that a minimum wage is responsive to every concern in our community.

* (1730)

Minimum wages are necessary and we accept that and that is why in fact we made the proposal that we did. Minimum wages can go to some extent to assist people in poverty, but we are not naive enough to believe that minimum wages cure poverty. It is the same as saying laws create money. Regulations create jobs. They do not, they do not. I would suggest that the overall thrust of this government's policy in creating jobs, in creating investment, in creating the opportunities for people to be employed, that is the way

we are going to break the poverty cycle. Clearly, economic initiatives by themselves are not sufficient. I agree with that. Social programs are important to assist those who cannot assist themselves. We agree with that. We agree—well, most of us anyway—[interjection] Most of us in this House. Unfortunately, the people across the way may not. As I look around my side of the building here, I think we can say "we here," or I can say "we," Madam Speaker.

In any event, we do not want to regulate jobs out of existence. We do not want to set up roadblocks to investment. We want laws that encourage investment, that protect workers, that reduce the level of poverty. That is the aim of this government. That is the aim of considering what is an appropriate minimum wage law. I think we have accomplished that. Sometimes the process does not work perfectly; in this particular situation, I believe it worked very well. But there are other initiatives that we have to be mindful of, that we must in fact ensure that—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise this afternoon to echo the remarks of my learned friend the honourable Minister of Labour.

I would like to put a few other remarks on the record at this time. I believe that the honourable minister has outlined in very good detail the due process which the department followed in establishing the limits that they did. I would suggest that this is one more point where it shows that the Filmon government is truly listening to the representations that are coming from the people of Manitoba.

In order to truly understand the resolution that the honourable opposition member has raised, I think some attention should be focused upon the preambles of the resolution. I would suggest, with the greatest of respect, that the preamble which reads, "in May of 1994 there were an estimated 43,000 people in Manitoba living at or around the minimum wage income," that those are challengeable figures. In fact,

the opposition member is fudging the question by saying "an estimated 43,000."

An Honourable Member: Is he stretching the truth?

Mr. Radcliffe: Well, they have been known to do that.

The labour figures which come from our department indicate that there are approximately 8,000 people in Manitoba in 1994 working at the minimum wage level and there may be a further 22,000 people near that level, but 43,000 is gilding the lily, I would suggest, with the greatest of respect.

The next point, I think, which deserves some attention is the next preamble, where my learned friend, the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), suggests the minimum wage provides full-time workers with an income that still falls well short of the poverty line.

Well, is this the poverty line again in Toronto? Has the opposition been trying to be deceitful and take figures from—[interjection] I am just saying "trying to be deceitful," and taking figures from the statistics from the streets in Toronto and applying those to Winnipeg levels?

Madam Speaker, I would suggest that in fact this may also be a misinterpretation of the reality:

Point of Order

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, in view of the fact that Beauchesne's has ruled "deceive" and "deceived" unparliamentary, I would ask the member to withdraw the word "deceitful."

Mr. Radcliffe: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, what I was saying was that if the learned opposition was trying to be deceitful—and I was in no way saying that they were deceitful, but I was saying that the information could be misinterpreted and that in fact it was my duty as the member of this Legislature from River Heights to suggest that in fact I had to correct the record. [interjection]

Madam Speaker, if in fact I have caused any offence to the honourable members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, I would certainly be more than pleased to withdraw the reference to deceit, because I would in no way want to imply that any member on this side of the House was deceitful.

Madam Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I have recognized the honourable member for River Heights on the point of order, and I have not made a ruling on the point of order at this point in time.

On the point of order, the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) is correct. Both "deceit" and "deceived" are indeed on both unparliamentary lists. However, it is difficult to know without seeing the exact citation in which context those words were used. However, I would like to caution all honourable members to pick and choose their words carefully, and we now, I think, are very cognizant of the fact that there is not to be any direct utilization of unparliamentary words directed to a specific member or all members. All honourable members in this Assembly are referred to as honourable members.

Point of Order

Mr. Reid: On a new point of order, Madam Speaker, I need some direction.

When the point of order had been raised by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and asked for your guidance and direction on this matter, the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) continued with his dialogue, and I am wondering if it is appropriate, Madam Speaker, to have this contained within the Hansard or whether or not you had indeed recognized the member for River Heights to allow him to continue and that there still has not been an apology and that the reference had been made directly to the member for Transcona.

I ask for your guidance and direction on this, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the member for Transcona's point of order, it is not a point of order. All comments on record remain on record. If indeed

the ruling was that the member had cited an unparliamentary remark, the Speaker would, if I had ascertained without doubt that the speaker had made an unparliamentary remark, the Speaker would have asked the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) to withdraw that comment and the remarks then that would be contained in Hansard would be: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

I am seeking the recognition by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) that indeed that is clarification on the point of order.

Mr. Reid: I am just concerned that there has been a fair degree of latitude given to the member for River Heights here to allow him to continue making remarks on the record without being recognized by the Speaker and that that was while you were taking under advisement and dealing with the matter on the point of order raised by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

Now, Madam Speaker, I want to ensure that if that is the case that the same rules will apply to members on this side, that we will have the opportunity as well.

Madam Speaker: I understand fully what the honourable member for Transcona is saying, and I would remind the honourable member for River Heights that once I recognize him for a point of order, he indeed speaks only to the point of order addressed, then sits down and awaits the ruling by the Speaker.

I thank the honourable member for Transcona for his advice.

* (1740)

* * *

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, I was addressing my attention to the preamble contained in the ill-founded, I would suggest with the greatest of respect, resolution which has been advanced by the honourable member for Transcona.

The next preamble which I think deserves some attention is the clause which says, whereas the

minimum wage in this province is insufficient to the extent that there are an estimated 11,000 working families forced to use the Harvest bank.

I would suggest, with the greatest of respect, that what the language is saying here and the type of thinking that is trying to be presented is that the motion is saying, the people who are using the food bank are the people who are drawing the minimum wage. I do not think that there is any substantiation to that fact at all.

In fact, Madam Speaker, there has been a scholarship prepared which are characteristics of the minimum wage earners of Manitoba which shows, and I believe we have heard that figure today in this House, that 1.8 percent of the employed workforce in Manitoba are estimated to earn the minimum wage. These figures show that there are many female people involved in this. They are people who are in the restaurant industry, they are people in the accommodation industry.

These are people who are largely—I would suggest that up to 60 percent of these people are students and they are part-time employees. I would suggest that if the minimum wage is going to be raised to the level which the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) has suggested that what that will do is have the effect of cutting off this opportunity for employment. Employers will look at the situation and they will see that this has put this category of employees beyond the reach of their type of business.

Another point I think which deserves some significant attention at this point is that there would only be a small proportion of what we classify as the poor who would benefit from this raise. The poor can be categorized regretfully as those people who are on assistance, the unemployed, the people who are unable to find work and people who are perhaps on fixed investment income or pensions or things of another nature.

These are people who are unrelated to the minimum wage. So therefore to equate poverty to the minimum wage is a misnomer and I believe is not properly representing the facts as they actually exist.

Another very significant issue is that the low-paid may not necessarily be poor. Those recipients of the minimum wage may in many, many cases be people who have access to a second income, may be people who are seeking a higher level of study, a higher level of qualification and are resorting to minimum wage jobs in order to fulfill their educational needs. They are people who may be involved in long-term relationships of one kind or another and have access to a partner who has a significant income.

Another point which I believe the honourable minister made reference to which was considered during the deliberations of the Minimum Wage Board was that minimum wage legislation has the effect of reducing employment. There are many, many businesses in this province, and we know that the majority of the employers in this province are small-business people employing 10 or fewer employees, and if the minimum wage is raised to such a height that these people are put beyond the reach of small-time employers, then those jobs evaporate from the market.

One last point, Madam Speaker, is that the effect of raising the minimum wage will have an inflationary aspect on the economy of the province, because there will tend to be a corresponding reflection of a rise in the general overall wages which would not improve the employment of the people of Manitoba.

I thank you very much for the opportunity of addressing these few remarks to this topic.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I rise because members opposite said they have not heard my voice for a long time, so they wanted to hear me, so here we go. [interjection] Now the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) regrets he said that. I thought I was giving them a treat by being quiet.

I just want to say a few words. Maybe somebody else wants to speak. I have a few words to say, because it is an interesting topic, and it is an old topic. These arguments we have heard on both sides have been heard in this House for years. I have been here 25, 26 years; the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) has been here 29 years, but I am sure he will say this too, that we

have heard these arguments on both sides for a long time.

It maybe comes down to a value judgment as to what you think is the right wage, what is the proper wage, but I want to tell the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), his description of the process of a Minimum Wage Board hearing representation from all sides, from unions, from poverty groups, from business and so on, is not a new story; I mean, this has been going on for a long time. We have had a Minimum Wage Board in this province for many, many years, and this is the process.

Then, of course, the process is that the board makes a representation to the minister or gives him a report, and the minister goes over it and then he goes to his cabinet colleagues and they bat it around. You finally have to make the judgment as to what you think is fair and is adequate. Like all matters of judgment, we have differences of views. I would be inclined to bring it up a little faster than the members opposite, and I think one of the reasons why you find so many businesses today paying above the minimum wage is that your minimum wage increase has not really kept up with what is expected to be an increase in minimum wage, which, in turn, partly reflects the increase in the cost of living.

* (1750)

So it is not unusual to find a lot of small employers today saying, hey, we pay more than minimum wage. The reason for that is, as I said, I do not think the government has kept up with its increases. As the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) has said, this is the first we have won since 1987. And now the proposal is for \$5.40 an hour, which, when you consider other provinces are adjusting right now, puts us not in the middle but towards the lower end. B.C., I am told, is going up to \$7 an hour, shortly.

Now, admittedly, wage rates are higher on the coast. Our wage rates here tend to be a bit lower, and so one can understand that. But the fact is, I just could not believe my ears, the last speaker when he was saying, well, one of the arguments against raising the minimum

wage is that was going to be inflationary. Surely, you do not mean that, because you just told us that there was a very small percentage of the workforce that was affected by the minimum wage, and really I cannot accept the argument that suddenly the demand for consumer goods and services is going to expand so dramatically because we raise the minimum wage by a few cents that suddenly we are going to get massive inflation in Manitoba. I just really cannot accept that kind of an argument.

You know, people are hurting out there. I know the figures are showing more people being employed in Manitoba. I might say that that is a relatively recent phenomenon because up until the last six, seven, eight months Manitoba was lagging very badly in terms of job creation; in fact, we were going backwards. We were getting fewer jobs. The longer this government stayed in, the fewer the jobs we had. I have got all the figures here if anyone wants to argue. I will show you the tables and you will see how the level of jobs did decrease, but we have some expansion now, for different reasons, incidentally, Madam Speaker, because of a relatively cheap Canadian dollar vis-à-vis the American dollar. That is expanding our exports which, in turn, are creating the jobs in this province, plus the healthy agricultural industry—that helps too.

There are many factors at work in job creations. We want Manitobans to work. Unfortunately—[interjection] With all due respect, I doubt very much if the taxation regime in this province has much bearing on job creation. Really. There are more important things than the schedule of taxation, far more important. If you were setting up a business, the more important thing is, you look at all your cost factors. Certainly taxes are one. It is not the most important, especially if you are talking about income tax because, if you do not make any profit, you do not pay any tax.

The fact is, if you are going to go into business, you are going to look at: Is there a demand for your goods or your services? Is there in fact a demand? Can you sell the products? Can you sell your services? That has to be critical. What is the market like in Manitoba? Then you want to look at your labour costs. You want to look at your transfer costs. There are all these things

that you have to take into consideration. With all due respect, there has not been that much of a change in taxes in Manitoba that would make any significant difference.

In my judgment—[interjection] Since you have been in government—that would make any significant difference to job creation. There are factors out there beyond, and I would say, I mention a couple of them, the health of the agriculture industry and certainly the value of the Canadian dollar.

The member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) suggested a different approach, and this has been proposed years gone by, and what it does is it takes the arbitrariness out of it. Once you made a decision as to what you think is a fair minimum wage, a reasonable minimum wage, one that we can afford, that is fair on both sides, then you tie it into the aggregate average industrial wage, and you get automatic indexation year by year if the wages go up. So if the wages go up by 1 percent or 2 percent in a given year, that will be reflected in the automatic increase in the minimum wage. I would say that that process is fair.

The biggest challenge is deciding in the first place what the level should be when you begin this process. The member for Transcona was talking about the NDP position of raising it to \$5.75, then another 25 cents and in six months time to bring it up to \$6. He also referred to \$7.42 being the poverty line. It is rather interesting that if you take Manitoba's average industrial wage and the latest figures we have available from Stats Canada and published in one of these Manitoba statistical reviews, \$503.01, if you divide that by 40, you get an average of \$12.57 per hour in Manitoba. So that is the average industrial hourly wage in this province as of March 1995. That is the latest we have here.

If you were to decide that you take 60 percent of it, that 60 percent brings you to about \$7.55 an hour, which is just above the \$7.42 an hour that the National Council of Welfare guideline state that a single person in Manitoba is at if it would be deemed to be at the poverty line. The poverty line in Manitoba is deemed to be at \$7.42 an hour. According to the National Council of Welfare—[interjection] I do not know how

they figure this; I am just telling you that is what they report.

If we did go to 60 percent of the average industrial wage, \$7.55, we would be just above the poverty line. I do not know whether we would want to go immediately up to that amount, to \$7.55, whether we could manage it that quickly. Maybe a government would have to say, well, we will do it in stages over two or three years or whatever and then get to that 60 percent level.

The point I want to make, Madam Speaker, is that it is not just the 1.8 percent of the employed workforce that is estimated to be earning the minimum wage. This is from a press release put out by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), so I presume it is correct.

It is not just that, but it is the fact that there are many workers in certain industries that are impacted by the minimum wage. One that comes to mind especially is the garment industry or the fashion trade or fashion industry, however you wish to describe it, because those people are mainly on piecework, but the minimum wage is a base. So the employers in that industry are very, very sensitive to what governments do to minimum wage. So it is not just those people who are on the minimum wage, but it is all those people working in industries whose employers have a payment schedule, primarily the piecework, that is directly impacted by the minimum wage.

That has been my experience. If our government when we were in office in years back was considering that, the garment industry was in there. I would be surprised if they did not make representation to the Minimum Wage Board this time stating their case for not raising it very much if at all.

I just want to make this comment in closing, because we are running out of time, and that is that there are, regrettably, too many people even at that percentage that is quoted here, 1.8 percent. There are just too many people out there that are having to work and live on the minimum wage. I recall not long ago in Brandon running into this young woman who was serving me in the restaurant, my wife and me in the

restaurant, in the morning. She was at the minimum wage in a restaurant in Brandon. In the afternoon we went to one of the supermarkets and here she was at the cash register working in the afternoon. That woman had to work at two jobs and she could not survive just working part time on the minimum wage. That is true of so many, many people.

During the election I, indeed, ran into a lot of young people in particular who were really concerned, and they asked me, what about the minimum wage? What will you guys do if you get in? What will your party do if you get in with the minimum wage? I told them, we would look at it very favourably and generously and fairly. The other point I want to make—well, I actually quoted our platform. The platform are the numbers that the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) mentioned. I quoted that and I said also that we would also like to tie it into the average industrial wage.

Another point I want to make which is very critical, when you make a decision, when the Minister of Labour and government make a decision on this, you also have to compare what we are paying for welfare. What does the social assistance person get on welfare? You have to compare it. If you do not bring your minimum wage up satisfactorily or fast enough you will find that people do not have an incentive to get off of welfare and work. You remove that incentive, and I am not saying that people do not want to work. I think most people want to work, but that is a reality that you have to take into account. So please be concerned about that.

I really did not plan to speak, Madam Speaker, until the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) suggested that he would love to hear my voice. I think maybe we can sit down. Maybe people would like to vote on this because I think it is an important issue, and we would like to have a vote on it. Maybe we have 30 seconds, and perhaps the Speaker will call the question.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Madam Speaker, because we have such a short time I would just like to, for the record, correct a couple of the items expressed by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). As of January 1, 1996, when the

minimum wage in Manitoba rises to \$5.40, the adult minimum wage rates in Canada, that puts us ahead of Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and the federal minimum wage. I would like to suggest that is not in the lagging or the bottom end—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Turtle Mountain will have 14 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, September 26, 1995

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