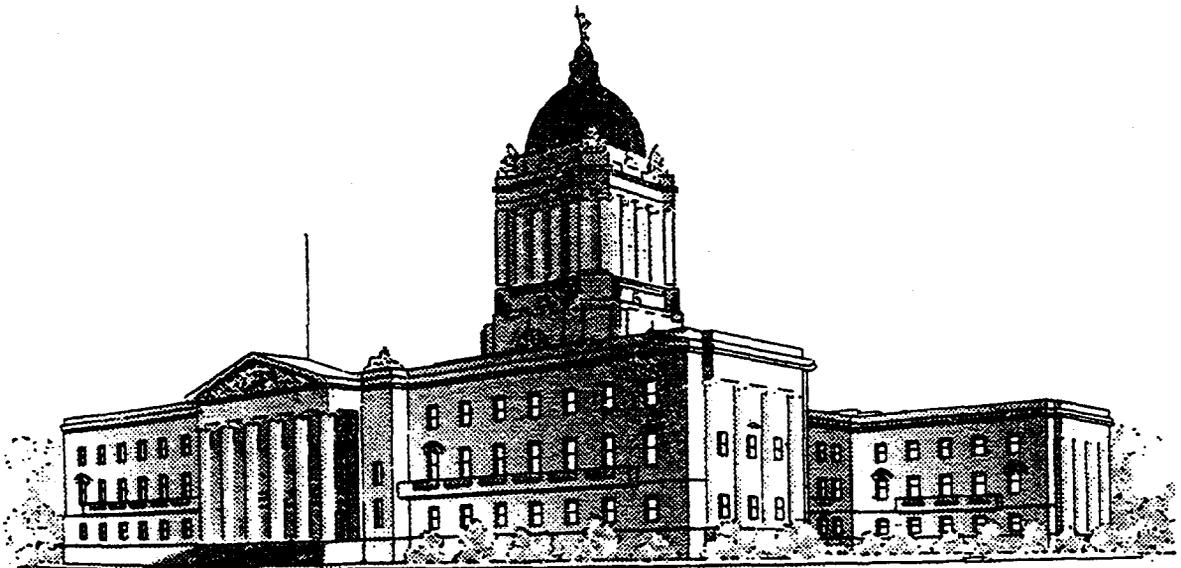




First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)

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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

Thursday, September 28, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.**PRAYERS****ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS****Federal Immigration Policies**

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos). 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: 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. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to table the Annual Report 1994-95 of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to present the Annual Report for Manitoba Health for the year 1994-95.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): There are two reports I would like to table. One is Venture Manitoba Tours Ltd., the Financial Statement from March 31, 1994, to March 31, 1995, together with the Auditor's Report; and the Annual Report of the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation 1994-95.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I am pleased to table the Quarterly Financial Report for the three months April to June, 1995.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I am pleased to table the Annual Report for 1994-95 of Manitoba Family Services.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us this afternoon 14 English-language students from the University of Manitoba under the direction of Mr. Jim Badger and Ms. Cindy Reimer. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mrs. Vodrey).

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

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Pharmacare G-CSF Coverage

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier.

Madam Speaker, we have been concerned for some time now about the cuts that the government has trickled into our institutions after the election dealing with health care. We are very concerned about a decision we have heard that has been made by the government to eliminate, effective September 4, the use of a drug called G-CSF, a drug that is used for the treatment of children that have cancer, a drug that is used for children that are diagnosed with cancer, and a drug that is considered to be very, very important for the families and for those children that need that treatment.

I would like to ask the Premier whether he will reverse the decision of reducing this drug to kids that need it, that have unfortunately been diagnosed with cancer, after September 4.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): As the honourable Leader of the Opposition knows, the government of which he was part and the government of which I am part receives advice from the Drug Standards and Therapeutics Committee, a committee composed of pharmacists and doctors, with respect to the drugs that are covered under our programs.

I will take specific notice of the particular drug the honourable member is talking about, but the advice we get is advice based on health care outcomes and the economics of the various drugs that are listed, and as I say, I will bring back further information for the honourable member.

Mr. Doer: I would like to table a newsletter called Jeffrey's Folks. It is a newsletter sponsored by families that are touched by childhood cancer that indicates specifically that the government is reducing this drug effective September 4.

Madam Speaker, I do not believe the government and the minister and the Premier have to review this decision. How can we justify to families and children that one child sitting on a bench needing cancer treatment before September 4 would receive support from their own provincial government for the provision of this drug, and after September 4—because allegedly the program has run out of money, this after we have looked at the first quarter report where it has an \$8-million shortfall, or surplus in the Department of Health. How can we possibly say we are going to review this?

Can the minister and the Premier take a lead position today and say that decision is off, and they will provide that drug to kids that are diagnosed with cancer, notwithstanding the date of September 4? It is needed, it is preventative, it is absolutely essential, and please will the government take a leadership role and cancel that decision?

Mr. McCrae: As I said, Madam Speaker, I certainly will look into the particular drug the honourable member is talking about and review the situation.

The honourable member should be under no illusion; these decisions are not driven by some bottom line that the honourable member might like to suggest. It has nothing to do with—you need only look at the budget for our drug assistance programs to know that this government has been very, very committed to providing whatever assistance we possibly can, and a decision like this has nothing to do with the motivation attributed to it by the honourable member whatsoever.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, this drug is being cut by this government and this Health department for those children.

If you read the newsletter—and the minister has received letters on this issue before and we know that. There are letters written to this minister. He should be aware. This government should be aware of what is going on. This drug is a preventative drug which reduces the number of admissions and the length of stay in readmissions by strengthening the white cell count and allowing chemo treatment to proceed more quickly.

I cannot understand a government that has funds available for every pet priority of the Conservative Party, that has money available, as we have identified all week for the Winnipeg Jets hockey team through the infrastructure program, but cannot find it in their soul, cannot find it in their heart and cannot find it in their minds to make sure that kids that are diagnosed with cancer get the proper treatment and get the drugs, Madam Speaker, that will help them out in this very, very difficult situation.

* (1340)

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I have heard what the honourable Leader of the Opposition has had to say and I have listened very seriously and have made certain undertakings.

I remind the honourable member that year over year, I can tell him that far more new drugs are brought under the assisted category than are ever delisted, and those that are delisted are delisted as a result of the advice we get from the Drug Standards and Therapeutics Committee which is made up of the experts in the field. So the honourable member would pretend that this program is operated differently today from the days when he sat around the cabinet table. Such is not the case.

Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Report Costs

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, this morning we had the first committee hearings on Manitoba Lotteries in more than two years. We finally got the detailed information on a number of issues including the delay of the release of VLT revenues, and also the reports that we had requested copies of were released this morning by KPMG and Ernst & Young.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon), in light of the fact that today at committee his Minister responsible for Lotteries indicated the Ernst & Young report cost \$43,000 and that the KPMG study cost \$75,000, a grand total of \$118,000, whether the Premier views it as acceptable that the Lotteries Foundation has spent that amount of money to go and conduct a study into a report done by Dr. Cyrenne, the

only objective report that has been done in Manitoba, that just happened to appear in the Free Press during the election. Is that an acceptable use of public money to spend \$118,000 on two consultants' reports to attack the only independent study that has been done in Manitoba?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, the member for Thompson is picking up where he left off this morning in committee by not listening to the answers that are being provided.

If he goes to page 9 of the KPMG report, he will see that there are four study objectives. The first one is to respond to the Crown Corporations Council's recommendation that an independent and objective study be conducted of the economic impact of gaming in Manitoba. The second is to provide the Manitoba Lottery Policy Review Committee with current and objective information.

Number three is to assess and summarize quantitative and qualitative information concerning economic benefits and costs of gaming in Manitoba, and four is to critically review the recent report that he refers to by Philippe Cyrenne.

There were four objectives. On the one hand, they call for more information, more independent assessment, more information of the economic impact. Here you have an international accounting firm, has done an economic analysis on behalf of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. We have provided that report to all members here in the House, or made it available to all members here in the House, and it is the kind of information that the Lotteries Corporation will require as it makes future decisions affecting gaming here in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

* (1345)

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier, once again.

I would like to ask the Premier whether he considers it acceptable that this amount of money was spent on

studies that according to Ernst & Young were to comment on Dr. Cyrenne's report and according to KPMG was to undertake a critical review of the Cyrenne report. Is this what the government's priorities are, \$118,000, because some academic conducted a study that did not like everything they are doing with lotteries and the Free Press ran a series of articles in the election? Is that how low this government is stooping, that it has to conduct a vendetta against the Free Press and academic consultants?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, a report was done by one Philippe Cyrenne. It did receive extensive coverage through one of our media outlets, the Winnipeg Free Press. As a result of producing that report, the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation wanted to determine whether or not it was a report that they could put credibility in and utilize in terms of future decisions. As well, other jurisdictions have asked for copies of that report.

Obviously the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation has a responsibility to ensure that all data utilized is accurate, reliable information. I think that is fundamental. That is certainly how the Lotteries Corporation should function. That is how this government functions.

I know that is not how the government functioned that the member for Thompson was a part of, but quality, reliable information is important to the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. That was the purpose of that study. One element of it was to assess a critique that had been done or an analysis that had been done by this Philippe Cyrenne, and it was an important part of the study.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a further question, once again, to the Premier.

I would like to ask, if this government does not see anything wrong with conducting this at the cost of \$118,000, does it not at least consider it to be somewhat questionable that one of the firms that conducted one of these studies also happens to do auditing work for the Lotteries Foundation? On what basis is that considered objective, and how does the government feel it is getting its money's worth for the \$43,000 it spent on the supposed objective study when

it was done by a firm that has direct ties to the Lotteries Foundation?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, that assertion is absolutely unbelievable. Are you calling into question the professional integrity of Ernst & Young? Is that what the member for Thompson is doing? Ernst & Young are an international, reputable auditing accounting firm that do the audit for Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. It is not uncommon—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Finance, to complete his response.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, for businesses or various organizations it is certainly not uncommon to ask your own auditor to perform additional work on your behalf. It happens. The members across laugh. Obviously none of them have ever had experience either in a business entity or in any organization that has utilized services. That is all their laughter indicates.

It is common practice that auditors perform work on behalf of entities, not uncommon in the business world, not uncommon with nonprofit organizations. Ernst & Young are an international, reputable auditing firm and certainly would not jeopardize their integrity or their reputation by not providing a quality report. I really find the comments from the member for Thompson absolutely unbelievable, Madam Speaker.

Winnipeg Jets/Arena Funding

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance has confirmed that no formal written agreement exists which established the MEC arena plan as an infrastructure project.

Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge that on Tuesday of this week, while seeking responses from the Minister of Finance, I used language which I regret and for which I now wish to apologize to the minister and to the House. I withdraw the words to which the honourable government House leader objected in his

point of order, and I trust that this will resolve this matter.

* (1350)

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable member for Crescentwood for his withdrawal. That will conclude that matter.

The honourable member for Crescentwood, to quickly pose a question.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, the minister has confirmed that \$1.1 million of the \$3 million spent has come in the form of cheques issued by the government, that a further \$750,000 came from the Jets private sector inc. Could the minister tell the House where the remaining \$1.1 million has come from?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, firstly, not all funds have been advanced to the Spirit of Manitoba. We are still waiting final documentation, final invoices, final costing as they are winding down their operations. So in terms of the distribution of the funds, all funds have not flowed.

I have indicated on many occasions there are commitments from all three levels of government and from the private sector which will total about \$7 million.

As I have indicated in this House and publicly on many occasions, we are expecting that full accounting sometime fairly shortly from the Spirit of Manitoba. That accounting will be audited by the independent auditors of the Spirit of Manitoba. I believe that is Price Waterhouse. As I have indicated on many occasions, we also intend to have our own Provincial Auditor do a review of the entire issue and the transactions. I expect all of that to occur over the course of the next several weeks.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Finance whether he and/or his officials were aware of the \$533,000 Industrial Adjustment Service Program grant from Minister Axworthy, the Minister of Human Resources Canada, to MEC before it was made public earlier this week, a copy of which I would like to table

now with the House. Was the minister aware of this agreement, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, we were aware of a federal commitment to provide \$500,000 to support the initiatives of MEC, ultimately Spirit, back early in 1995 at the same time that we were making our commitment to advance up to a maximum of \$1.5 million against our \$10-million commitment under the infrastructure program.

So we were aware of a commitment from the federal government in terms of their funding source. Where they would derive their funds, their process of distributing that to the MEC at the time and so on, was obviously something that they would be determining.

Mr. Sale: Will the minister then, given the tabling of the federal IASP grant for the House, will he table for the House the letter from his government in March confirming the granting of \$3 million in infrastructure funding for certain expenditures of MEC/Spirit? Can he tell the House how many other infrastructure grants have no formal approval mechanism in place?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, as I indicated the other day when similar questions were asked, what was being done here is funds were being advanced against an infrastructure commitment made by the federal government and by the provincial government.

If the members opposite were to follow how the infrastructure program has functioned here in Manitoba, particularly in the early months of the infrastructure program, notification was given on many occasions to municipalities that their projects had been approved and to go ahead and start putting out public tenders and getting their costs in and getting ready to get their project started well before contracts and agreements were entered into.

Those kinds of approaches have not been uncommon. The reality is a commitment was made by our government and by the federal government to provide some funding under the infrastructure agreement, and those funds were then advanced against progress statements and against invoices that were submitted, Madam Speaker.

In terms of the specific request about the letter sent in March, I will take that as notice. I do not see any reason that it probably cannot be provided, but I will take it as notice.

Disaster Assistance Flooding Compensation

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, farmers below the Shellmouth Dam are very frustrated because their concerns with respect to the flooding this spring are not being addressed.

I want to ask the minister responsible for disaster assistance, who says there will be money for irrigation projects, why there is going to be money for irrigation projects in the Portage area when there is no money to address the concerns that have been raised by the people below the Shellmouth who were flooded because of mismanagement by this government.

* (1355)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): The member for Swan River speaks in error. Certainly there is a great deal of money available in the form of assistance to residents of that area and to other unfortunate victims of flooding along the Assiniboine Basin. As a matter of fact, we estimate approximately \$6 million available, not an amount of little consequence to those people. So certainly in terms of assisting the people who were victims of flood to get back on their feet and to restore their farms and their business to their previous state, we are doing everything in our power to do that with compassion and even-handedness.

Ms. Wowchuk: Since the minister has said in a statement that there will be money to support irrigation projects, I want to ask the minister where this money is going to come from and to give us assurances that other agriculture projects are not going to be sacrificed at the expense of irrigation projects.

Mr. Pallister: Well, as the member realizes and has alluded to in the House on numerous occasions, agriculture in our province and elsewhere in western Canada is undergoing radical change, radical reform,

and there are great opportunities presented to us as a province by those reforms.

Certainly I know the member would realize that her constituents and the constituents throughout rural Manitoba who engage in the agricultural enterprises benefit from a proactive approach to addressing those opportunities. That is precisely what people on this side of the House are doing, collectively, and I know that she would be supportive of those endeavours.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Rural Development why during the election he promised the people in his constituency that they would be compensated 100 percent for their losses, and after the election he met with them and told them he was not quite so sure that money would be there for them. Why have they broken another election promise?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, as my colleague the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pallister) has indicated, this government has been more than generous in terms of dealing with the disaster impacts of the flooding of the spring of 1995.

In meeting with many people throughout the Assiniboine area during the flood, we indicated that disaster assistance would be made available to the farmers who were suffering because of the flooding damage that was occurring to their property by the water that was coming in from the Shellmouth Dam and also from the drainage in Saskatchewan.

We also have met with people and officials in Saskatchewan to try and get an agreement whereby the situation with the water coming in from the Saskatchewan into the Assiniboine Basin could be dealt with in a fair way. I have also met with my constituents recently to discuss how we can manage the issue of water damage in the area below the Shellmouth Dam.

So, Madam Speaker, let not the member for Swan River think that this is a new issue for her because we have been dealing with this since early spring of this year.

Emergency Physicians' Strike Back-to-Work Legislation

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

I was pleased to read in an article in one of our daily newspapers that the minister and this government have not ruled out the possibility of back-to-work legislation. Negotiations on emergency services have in fact reached an impasse. Since Day One of this legislative session the Liberal Party has been advocating that we need to have back-to-work legislation.

I am wondering if the Minister of Health today would concede that maybe now is the time to bring in back-to-work legislation so that we can have our emergency services in our hospitals back fully serviced prior to this weekend.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, we are expecting a report from the mediator no later than next Tuesday. It would seem to me that to accept the honourable member's advice today would be quite an insult not only to the mediator but also to the MMA and to the Manitoba Health Organizations who have been working to try to resolve this matter in another way.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, can the Minister of Health indicate if in fact his department, or if he has requested the department to request Legislative Counsel what would be involved in terms of bringing into the Chamber back-to-work legislation? Has he had any contact with them?

* (1400)

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member and his colleagues on that side of the House, and indeed this side, know how the work of the Legislative Counsel goes forward and the honourable member knows how that process works. He has brought legislation before the House. He has a bill before the House right now so he knows how that all works.

Madam Speaker, the question is basically the same one as the first one, which is, will you move in that

particular direction? I say to you that would be, in my view, an inappropriate thing to do while we are awaiting the report of the mediator.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the minister is quite right. I do know how it works and that is why I asked the question.

Has the Minister of Health put in any form of a request for Legislative Counsel to come back with a draft proposal on back-to-work legislation, or will in fact this minister start on Wednesday from fresh if he deems it is necessary at that point in time to bring in back-to-work legislation? Is the minister doing any work leading up to Tuesday?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, we have not viewed the legislative option to this point to be the option to be followed.

University of Manitoba International Students

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, two years ago when the government chose to introduce differential fees for international students in Manitoba, the then-Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism assured the House that his government had conducted studies, and I quote: We will maintain the same level of international students that we have now.

My question is for the Minister of Education. Can the minister confirm that over the past two years, as we predicted on this side of the House, the numbers of international students at the University of Manitoba have decreased by 70 percent or more?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I do not have the figures here. I will take the question as notice and come back and let the member know.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I look forward to the minister's confirmation of that.

At the same time, can I ask the minister to explain how her government is prepared to make up the loss of \$7.3 million that those international students,

essentially long-term-stay tourists, have contributed to the Manitoba economy every year?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I find it rather interesting because the member has presupposed the answer to the question. She asked me to bring her some information that supposedly she did not have, and then she makes another question based upon an answer she presumes would be the answer to the question she had to ask me because she did not know the answer to. I find it rather an interesting exercise in logic. She asks a question and then asks a subsequent question based upon what she assumes the answer to be.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, Beauséjour is very clear about answers relating to the matter raised.

Quite frankly, that whole one minute, if someone can actually decipher it and determine if it is an answer, I will sit down. I think it was not an answer and I would ask that perhaps the minister would try and come up with at least some sort of an answer rather than that one-minute—I was going to call it a preamble to an answer but I do not even think ministers are allowed preambles. We certainly get ruled out of order when we give extensive preambles on our side.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order, indeed it is a point of order. I would ask that the Minister of Education respond to the question asked.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, just to make certain I am correct, the question asked was to ask me if I could please respond to a figure that the member presumes will be the answer I bring to her first question.

I find that, as I said before, kind of an interesting thing. However, I would indicate that the government of Manitoba has been funding universities to the tune of some \$20 million more and she is—[interjection] Well, you do not want the answer to the question? Madam Speaker, the member has indicated that a

certain amount of money is going to be lost to the university and—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister how she anticipates that our major university, the University of Manitoba, can continue to compete as an international university when the numbers of international students are declining, and yet our main competitors—Calgary, Saskatchewan—are maintaining their international student enrollment.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I presume by the preamble in the member's question that she knows the figures she asked me for in her first question.

I would say this, Madam Speaker, we have maintained linkages with University of Manitoba alumni around the world, thriving linkages, and we do have an international presence through a wide variety of venues. We do have international students on campus.

If the member is concerned that international students are now paying a larger fee than they used to pay, she should be concerned about other universities across this country as well, because that trend of trying to make sure that the per capita enrollment figures reflect more accurately the cost of the university is nationwide.

Social Assistance Food Allowance

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, when the ministers of social services met in Winnipeg last week they issued a news release on September 22. In the news release, in fact in the first paragraph, they said that they would give priority to the well-being of children and families and they would continue to support Canadians most in need and reinforce Canada's record as a fair and caring society.

I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services if she plans to live up to this commitment of this news release that she helped to write and assure this House and assure families on city welfare that she will not cut the food allowance for children on city welfare. Can

she provide us that assurance which is implied with this communique? Will she do that?

* (1410)

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, being as how my honourable friend the Opposition House Leader wants to rise on technicalities related to questions, I also would like to draw your attention to Beauchesne's Citation 409(8): A question that has previously been answered ought not to be asked again.

The member for Burrows asked that question twice yesterday.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the honourable government House leader's point of order, I have been advised that tradition in Manitoba has been that a question can be repeated continually. It is your members' question time, and the response is entirely up to the member to whom it is being asked and that member also has the option of not responding at all.

* * *

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I do thank my honourable friend for that question because indeed there was a consensus right across the country that children should come first, children and families. We wanted to seek the support from all Manitobans to help in that process.

I want to clarify for Manitobans that today there are two levels of support for children in the city of Winnipeg. There is the provincial rate and all of the single parents who are on social allowances are on the standard provincial rate today. In fact, the City of Winnipeg has a rate that they pay to families with children that is the highest across the country.

Madam Speaker, I believe that we could increase significantly the amount of money for food but there is no guarantee that the dollars that are provided for food and for proper nutrition for children in fact are going to go to those children's nutritional needs. That is an issue

that was discussed by all governments of all political stripes right across the country. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Family Services, to complete her response.

Mrs. Mitchelson: If every dollar that was provided for food and nutritional support for children was going to children we would not find ourselves in the situation we are today where children need major use of our health care system, of our child and family services system, and experience neglect.

The reality is we want the dollars that we spend for children to go to those children. We are examining alternate ways of ensuring that the nutritional support that is provided to children indeed goes to them.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services if she would reassure the parents of 7,000 children on City of Winnipeg welfare that she is going to not only not reduce the allowance for food but implement a request from her office, from her personally, to the Children and Youth Secretariat, that they examine ways to address child poverty and a request from Treasury Board of her government to the Children and Youth Secretariat to ensure that children get proper nutrition.

Will she follow up on those requests from her government and her department on behalf of children in the city of Winnipeg?

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: I absolutely will confirm that that is the direction our government is taking and that is some of the work that the Children and Youth Secretariat is doing presently today. We see on a daily basis children in the province of Manitoba that are not properly fed and nourished. That is a reality.

The issue for us as government and the best use of our taxpayers' dollars is indeed to ensure that proper nutritional support and education of parents, whom I might say have the most important responsibility any individual undertakes is that responsibility of parenting,

to ensure that the tools are in the hands of those families and those parents, to ensure that they feed and nurture and love their children. That is the focus we are taking and the direction we are looking at in all of the programs that are being looked at through the Children and Youth Secretariat.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the minister how she can justify blaming the parents of children on social assistance for not feeding their children, when at the same time she has a decision to make about whether or not she is going to reduce the rates. Can she assure us that she will not reduce the rates, instead of blaming the parents of these children? Why will she not answer this question?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Burrows that a question should consist of a single question and be brief. This was the final supplementary question and should not require a long postamble.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Obviously the system that we have in place today and the dollars that we are providing, some \$320 million in the province of Manitoba for social allowances, does not guarantee that children are going to be the recipients of proper nourishment. We see evidence on a day-by-day basis.

I do not want to blame any parent. What I want to do is encourage, support and provide the opportunity for every parent to learn to parent, to accept that responsibility. We will help them with the tools and the support. More dollars into the hands of parents does not necessarily mean better nourishment for children.

Social Assistance Housing Costs

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I want to begin by tabling for the House two pages from the government's report, *The Health of Manitoba's Children*, which clearly indicates that the costs for food are below what is given to social allowance recipients for their food allowance. I will table those two pages for the minister's information. The cost for food is greater than the allowance that they are given.

On the same issue, when I raised this in the House yesterday I asked the minister about the number of Manitoba families on social allowance that are using their food budget to add to the cost of paying for their rent, and that may be one of the areas that the minister is referring to. At that time, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said, those are choices that the people have to make.

I want to ask the minister to confirm if she is taking her cue from Mike Harris in Ontario and if she agrees that it is acceptable for families to have to pay their rent using the food allowance because neither are high enough to cover the costs in this province.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I want to indicate again and let all Manitobans know that the rates for children in the city of Winnipeg are the highest rates across the country.

When I listened to the minister of social services from the province of British Columbia talk about the major welfare reform that was being undertaken in that province, their rates are going to be reduced.

I question where a New Democratic Party would come from asking questions of Manitoba, when, indeed, their cousins in British Columbia are reducing rates and there is major reform of the welfare system taking place. I want to say that our—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Family Services, to quickly complete her response.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, we want to assure that the dollars that we are providing for nutrition and the way we provide that support in the province of Manitoba assures that children are being nourished and loved and nurtured.

Ms. Cerilli: I would like to ask the minister to confirm the figures in the Postl report that do indicate that the cost of food in Manitoba in all the regions that the report details, for the differences in all the regions of the province, that in all the regions the cost for food is higher than the allowance being given by this government.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, I want to repeat again that the rates in the city of Winnipeg are higher than the rates in the city of Vancouver or in the city of Toronto, and I know that the cost of living in Manitoba, in Winnipeg is not as high as those jurisdictions.

We will be changing the whole way we deliver social allowance in the city of Winnipeg as a result of developing a one-tiered approach to providing support.

Our support and our focus will be ensuring that there is proper nutrition and nurturing and support of children and families throughout the city of Winnipeg with any new program that is put in place.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that is not happening—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I have recognized the honourable member for Radisson for a final supplementary question with no preamble.

Would the honourable member please pose her question now?

Ms. Cerilli: Is the minister promoting a policy for this government, as one of my constituents has to do in spending more than 50 percent of her social allowance on rent, adding another \$20 from her food budget to supplement her rent? Is that the kind of policy this government is proposing, to have people choose between having food—

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, the policy that we are proposing as a government is a policy that is consistent with looking towards support for families and children and putting children first.

That policy will include a whole new way of delivering social allowance in the city of Winnipeg with a focus on proper parenting and nurturing and nutrition for children.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you call Bill 5, Bill 2 and then the balance of the bills as listed on the Order Paper?

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Education Administration Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading on Bill 5, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education (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 Broadway (Mr. Santos), who has 19 minutes remaining.

Is it the will of the House to permit the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River? Stand? Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I would like to speak briefly about the triangle components in the educational process, consisting firstly of the teachers, secondly of the students, and thirdly of the school administrators.

The first issue I would like to tackle is this question: Are our public schoolteachers really underworked and overpaid? Are the public schoolteachers really fat cats in our society who deserve no public sympathy whatsoever?

I believe that teaching is the greatest and the noblest of all human professions. Indeed, it is and can be considered as the mother of all the other professions including medicine, dentistry or law because you have to train and to teach your physicians in the medical schools. You have to train and teach your future dentists in the schools of dentistry, and you have to teach your student lawyers in the law schools before

they can even access these elite professions in our society. But depending on one's potentialities, I could say that there are three different categories of teachers: First, the mediocre teachers. They simply tell the student. Second, the good teacher. They are the ones who explain. Thirdly, the excellent teacher. The excellent teachers are the ones who inspire.

* (1420)

If we look back to our student days when we were young, we could hardly remember any teaching methods. But we do remember and we do recall teachers who inspired us, teachers who inspired us to excel, to achieve. We excel when we do better than we did before. The best teachers I would say are those who teach by what they are. The best teachers are those who teach by what they do, not necessarily by what they say.

The more experienced the teacher is, the better the teacher becomes. Why?

An Honourable Member: Not necessarily.

Mr. Santos: Well, the honourable minister said, not necessarily. Well, if you have a mediocre teacher who had experienced 20 years in the teaching profession, it is simply mediocrity multiplied 20 times. There might be a point in there. Who knows? It is a matter of judgment. If you like me, you will not agree; but if you dislike me, you would say so.

Experience is the best teacher because experience is always there on the job. But let me point out to the honourable members, whosoever is there to teach must never cease to learn. Let me repeat that. Whosoever is there to teach must never cease to learn, because the moment the teacher stops adding to his learning, he or she diminishes that learning.

An Honourable Member: Are you still learning?

Mr. Santos: Yes, every day.

For example, a teacher who we think imparts knowledge to his pupils and students, that teacher learns from interaction with his students as much as the

student learns from interaction with the teacher and with each other. Even the wisest minds still have yet something to learn. Therefore, one does not stop to study, to observe, to inquire. As Solomon said, to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment and equity, to give prudence to the simple, to give to the young men knowledge and discretion and wise men will hear and increase learning and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.

To be an inspiring teacher, it is not enough to be just a good person. The teacher must realize his full potential as a human being. He must be willing to give his time and his self to others, particularly to his pupils. He or she must be eager and anxious to do something for others for which the teacher gets no reward, simply the privilege and the satisfaction of doing it.

However, Madam Speaker, given the numerous cuts in education financing in the public school system of this province, aggravated by the undue increase in the grants to the elite public school system, the cuts in the professional development time of the teaching staff, the increase in the size of class in the public schools, the growing conditions of physical and emotional insecurity among public school teachers, I have come to the conclusion that the public school teachers are among the overworked and underpaid public service groups in our society.

As a humble member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, I consider it a great privilege and a unique opportunity to speak on behalf of the public school teachers whose contribution to society in the teaching and the training of youth, although tremendously great and almost incalculable, are often not appreciated, but they are essential for the teachers as the bearers of culture. They are the transmitters of civilization from one generation to another.

Now, let me go to the second triangle, the second component of the triangle of the educational process, the students themselves, the children, the pupils in the triangle of the educational process. We must always bear in mind that no matter what we do, no matter what policy you undertake, no matter what program we conceive, we should always uphold the welfare of the

children as first in any discussion of reforming our public school system. Always bear in mind that is the highest value, promoting the welfare of our children.

According to Francis Bacon in his essay entitled, *Of Youth and Age*, youth are fitter to invent than to judge; they are fitter for execution than for counsel; fitter for new projects than for settled business. Particularly young men, in the conduct and manage of action, they embrace more than they can hold. They stir more than they quiet, they fly to the end without consideration of the means and degrees. They pursue some few principles which they have chanced upon absurdly, care not to innovate which draws unknown inconveniences, use extreme remedies at first and that which doubles all errors will not acknowledge or retract them like an unruly horse that will neither stop nor turn.

The youth, I am inclined to think, seem to believe that they know everything. As Lord Chesterfield observed, young men are apt to think themselves wise enough, as drunken men are apt to think themselves sober enough.

Young people, they are impulsive.

Samuel Johnson once said, it is very natural for young people to be vehement. It is very natural for youth to be acrimonious. It is very natural for youth to be severe in their judgment. Why? Because they seldom comprehend all at once the consequences of an action. They form their conclusions with great precipitance. Seeing that nothing can embarrass the question, they expect to find their own opinion universally prevalent. They are inclined to impute uncertainty and hesitation to want of honesty, rather than want of knowledge.

* (1430)

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

Teachers who interact with students must ensure that the young men and young women continue to believe in themselves. These teachers must ensure that these young men and women must keep their dreams alive,

keep their idealism vibrant for as Benjamin Disraeli said: the youth of the nation are the trustees of posterity. The youth are the hope of the country.

Young men and young women of today are not any worse than their own elders, when their elders were still young. The young people of today are simply different in making a fool of themselves sometimes. Come to think of it, it is really wonderful to be young enough to know everything, or, more precisely, almost everything except how to make a living. I noticed that the young people of today are always ready to give their elders the benefits of their inexperience.

I think it is really wonderful to be young. We can only be young only once. That is the time in our lives when we really appreciate things to the fullest. After the stage of youth, we can only think we are young, but that is all right. As Samuel Ullman said: We are as young as our faith, but as old as our doubts; as young as our self-confidence, but as old as our fears; and as young as our hope, but as old as our despair.

What we should remember is that whether young or old, we must incline our ears unto wisdom, we must apply our hearts to understanding, then we shall understand, according to the good book, the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of knowledge. For the Lord giveth wisdom; and from His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Now let me come to the third component of the educational process, the school administrators. Of course, the school administrator includes the highest officials in the Department of Education and the superintendents and the principals.

Going back to the past, how did hierarchical organization come to be? Let us go as far back as the olden days of Moses. When Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses observed that Moses had sat alone in judging the people from morning until even evening, and there were so many problems, the father-in-law made a suggestion and said: you shall teach the people the statutes and the laws, and then show them the way in which they must walk and the way they should do their work. Moreover, you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating

covetousness, and place them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens and let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter let them judge themselves. So it will be easier for you, but they will bear the burden with you.

In the organization of our public school system, necessarily the organizational design would include the hierarchy of the organizational setup for the school administrators, from the deputy minister of Education, assistant deputies, superintendents, principals, head teachers.

Whatever their name or designation or appellation, what is needed, what are the essential qualifications for good administrators? I would say they should at least possess these three Cs, three letter Cs, the qualification of a good administrator. The first C is competence; second C, character; and third C, courage.

An Honourable Member: Courage.

Mr. Santos: Yes. Competence—what do we mean by competence? Competence refers to the ability to productively use resources of time, material, money, personnel and devote them to the task to be done in pursuit of desired objectives involving the use of interpersonal skills, working on with teams, negotiating, persuading, inspiring, in acquiring, evaluating and processing information and the use of whatever available technology and with the understanding of organizational ethos and group values that had developed in the organization itself

The second "c" refers to character. Every administrator must possess this as an indispensable quality. Character refers to personal integrity. It refers to honesty, trustworthiness, dependability, a sense of fairness—

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

Mr. Santos: I would like to conclude in saying that in the administration of the public school system, the welfare of the child comes first as the component. The

teachers sustain him, and the administrators sustain him. Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), Bill 2 (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).

Order, please. Is there leave to allow the House to revert to Bill 5? [agreed]

**Bill 5—The Education Administration
Amendment Act**

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): I am thankful for this opportunity to speak on Bill 5, The Education Administration Amendment Act.

On a personal note, I have a vested interest in the fate of Bill 5 which apparently is a recirculated version of Bill 3, prior to the election, a vested interest in the sense that for many years I have been a teacher by profession. Fortunately, my wife had the good sense to direct me to Manitoba in the early 1970s, and I have remained happy with and loyal to the Frontier School Division ever since that time as educator, teacher, lecturer and consultant. Frontier School Division was and still is an excellent system within which to work, and I am sure that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), who has also worked for the Frontier School Division, would fully endorse this view.

I cannot speak of education without bringing my personal experiences to bear. These personal experiences are what make education real. As well, I believe that I have learned as much from my students

as my students have ever learned from me. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I pay tribute to those thousands of students who made teaching not just a job but an exciting experience, a learning experience for me.

It saddens me when I look at the narrow scope of Bill 5, when I see education reduced to a power formula, to a recipe in which the minister's power is the main ingredient. It saddens me because what is left is the caricature of education, it is a body without a soul, an anemic corpse with power but no feeling or conviction.

* (1440)

But it does not surprise me, it does not surprise me. The last four ministers of Education have given contradictory, mixed and confusing signals to education in Manitoba. Some of my more sarcastic friends in the teaching profession refer to them rather ungraciously, I might add, as the four headless horsemen of the Apocalypse madly galloping in four different directions. That is an uncharitable view, and I do not subscribe to it myself.

Still, during the election campaign it became quite obvious that teachers were not enamoured with this government, and it was not for simplistic reasons such as money, either. Tories and education have always had a tough time mixing. Critical thinking always has a nasty habit of turning people to the left.

But back to Bill 5 and the three proposals contained therein. First of all, the first proposal allows the minister to establish rules and regulations regarding the creation of school advisory councils. This is hardly a new idea. Advisory councils already exist. Secondly, the bill deals with regulations concerning the duties of school principals, expanding and perhaps splitting the accountability of principals. Thirdly, the bill deals with regulations regarding the authorization of suspension of students.

Now, regarding the advisory councils, that is nothing new because as many as 80 percent of the schools in Manitoba already have some sort of advisory council. Many of those councils are working very well. I am not sure why the minister is reinventing the wheel. I am also not sure why the minister needed to be so

directly involved in the formation, composition and mandate of such councils.

In the smaller and remote communities, such heavy-handed intrusion by government was unnecessary. At least the minister has relented from her earlier position which prevented teachers from sitting on the school advisory council at all.

I presume the earlier view was based on the belief that teachers would unduly sway advisory councils into unwanted directions, directions not consistent with those of the parents on the council. This of course is based on the paranoid view that teachers do not want what is good for education. I do not share that view. Teachers do want what is good for education before an election, during an election and after an election.

Now there is the odd government that starts a war with teachers, and there might be short-term political gain in it but there can never be a good thing coming out of it in the long run. The silliest thing a government can do is to underestimate the commitment, the dedication and the long-term memory of the teaching profession. That is what Ross Thatcher did in Saskatchewan, and it came back to haunt him.

The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. That is true, but also the hand that holds the chalk needs to be respected. My honourable friend alluded to that before. Teachers have worked too hard and too unselfishly to be treated otherwise. No government has the moral right to treat teachers as the enemy. Any teacher worth the name will fight for what is right, for what is best for the student.

If teachers honestly believe that right wing government is hacking and slashing and cutting in education, do they not have the right to fight with all that is in their power? If they did otherwise, if they became doormats for every ruling ideology that happens to form government, they would be cowards. Teachers stand for something, and they are doing an incredibly good job in difficult and stressful times.

They need our full support and if teachers are an integral part of school advisory councils, parents should be even more so. After all, teachers are considered

substitute parents when teaching, or in Latin, in loco parentis, whereas the teachers are the natural teachers, not the substitutes designated by society.

Most school divisions, certainly Frontier School Division, have attempted to involve parents directly in the children's education. In fact, Frontier's slogan is partners in education. This partnership involves administrators, teachers, students, parents and other community stakeholders.

In remote and isolated communities, teachers often play a central role in bringing the reality of the outside world, with its challenges and its ruthlessness, to more traditional communities. The teacher becomes a mediator between two worlds, the world that is represented by modern downtown Winnipeg and the world that is represented by the elders. Hopefully, in northern remote and aboriginal communities, elders will be key participants in the school advisory councils. In fact, elders are even now very much involved in education in such diverse communities as Norway House and Moose Lake.

I once had the privilege of spending some time with an Australian educator, Sister Pat Radigan [phonetic], who was superintendent of education for aboriginal children in a remote part of Australia. Sister Radigan pointed out that modern education for aboriginal children met with very limited success until elders were allowed into the classroom. Each elementary classroom, besides students, was assigned a teacher, a teacher's aide and an elder. Usually the elder was a woman. Often she did not even speak English, but her presence was a reassuring link to the past, as well as a definite commitment to the future.

Yes, even in this computer age, we have things to learn from the elders. Let us hope that in the North, at least, the wisdom of the elders, which is already in evidence at many schools, will also become a part of the school advisory councils as envisioned by the minister.

The second part of Bill 5 deals with the duties of principals. Principals are already the most overworked, harried and harassed members of school staffs. Why the minister would add to their burden in a rather top-

down manner, reminiscent of Stalinist centralizing tendencies, I might add, remains a mystery forever beyond the reach of all except a few who can penetrate the inner sanctum of the Tory cabinet. It is a mystery that I cannot fathom.

I am not sure if any real principals were consulted. I am given to understand that the bill will designate school principals as the primary instructional leaders. Well, you can designate all you want, but there are only so many hours in a day. When principals are spending endless hours on paperwork, putting out brush fires here and there in full crisis management mode, a staff meeting here, a parent meeting there, deadlines, speeches and so on, then these principals are more interested in just surviving. They are only human. They cannot leap tall buildings at a single bound. For heaven's sake, make their job easier, not more difficult.

A lot more clarification is needed from Bill 5 regarding the power relationship between the principal and the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) and between the principal and the elected school board. Suppose the school board or the advisory council become hostage to special interest groups. Theoretically, the principal could be in limbo, neutralized by three incompatible forces: the minister, the school advisory council and the elected school board.

I wish there had been less designating and more flexibility regarding the role of principal. For one thing, the role of principal changes dramatically in a large school. In a very large school, a principal may indeed have time to be an educational leader. In some schools, principals often teach classes and have little time or the necessary training to become instructional leaders.

I know of husband-wife teams who are the only two teachers in a small remote school. It would be absurd for one of them to assume the role of instructional leader. Of course, one of them will have to be designated as principal, usually the one who loses the coin toss two out of three times.

I am concerned that Bill 5 places too much power in the hands of the Minister of Education. There is too

much power over principals, whose authority would be weakened and made less flexible. Why should principals have to look over their shoulder to suit the minister's urge for expanding and centralizing power?

The bill increases the minister's power over school councils and school discipline policies. The bill reduces the role of local authorities.

Is it not ironic that Tories often accuse the NDP, falsely, in my opinion, of being cold and inflexible toward the business community? Well, the Tories are certainly being cold and inflexible to the educational community. Of course, one could muse that it must be easy to become paranoid about education if you have not had a whole heck of a lot of it yourself. Call it the fear of the unknown, Tory dogma being bludgeoned by educational facts and realities, but I would say to the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) and her cohorts, you have nothing to fear but fear itself.

Teachers and students and principals and parents are quite human. Trust them and work with them, do not lord it over them, and the results could be positive beyond your wildest dreams. But we need trust and consistency, not mixed signals. We do not need Filmon Fridays and reduced professional development days. We do need Canadian history and physical education taught in high schools, not that it is compulsory one minute, it is elective the next minute.

* (1450)

Either Skills for Independent Living is an important course or it is not. If it is—and I believe it is—then it should be taught. Students, teachers, parents want consistency so that long-range planning is possible. That means stable, predictable funding. That means putting an extremely high priority on education. There is no better investment than educating our people, young and old. All of us are lifelong learners—and the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) has already alluded to that. We are all lifelong learners.

It also means that the minister and the other members of the cabinet will not only have to really listen to what educators, parents and students are saying, but actually put into place policies and regulations that reflect what

has been heard and learned. Do not just talk the talk, walk the walk.

The third and probably the most controversial aspect of Bill 5 is what appears to be the arbitrariness authorizing suspension of pupils from a school. Superintendents and principals already have this power, so that is nothing new. However, the minister, by regulation, will catalogue all the reasons for suspending pupils from a school as well as the length of the suspension period. The minister becomes a one-person judge and jury.

Does the minister not trust elected school boards, superintendents, principals, to define discipline policy? Should the school advisory councils not have a role to play in suspension policies? Apparently not. The minister's word will be the final word, but at least the minister has backed down from an earlier position, which advocated a teacher's right to suspend a student directly from the classroom. This would have bypassed the existing disciplining authority of board and principal and superintendent and would have led to endless inconsistencies and jurisdictional disputes, disputes between principals and teachers and teachers and parents. I commend the minister for removing that contentious portion of the bill, and I assume it was done partly because the former member for Rossmere first drew attention to this aspect of the bill.

As a teacher, I am fully aware that occasions arise whereby a student must be removed from the classroom because a student's behaviour is detrimental to the welfare of the school community. But such occasions are rare or should be very rare. In fact, in my over 25-year teaching career, I can recall only one instance where I was involved in having a student suspended. Even then, the student suspension was the result of unacceptable behaviour, repeated unacceptable behaviour in a situation that was not typical.

The school at which I was teaching at the time, Rose Valley High School in Saskatchewan, I recall, was heavily involved in experimentation and innovative practices. So there I was teaching Shakespeare and Julius Caesar, I recall, from the stage in the gymnasium to three classes of Grade 10 students, some 85 students in all. There were no other teachers or para-

professionals present. Naturally, it was next to impossible to exert any form of discipline or control from the stage, yet 84 out of 85 students did learn, even in such a lecture-driven, low-controlled situation. Alas, there was one person that we could not reach. Only my friend, Brian—one student—did not ever pay any attention. His time was devoted entirely to paper airplanes and disrupting other students. I think he also had some hormone problem, but that is beside the point.

The principal, the board and myself had to become involved in removing Brian from the scene, suspending him. In a, quote, normal classroom, I am certain that I or any other teacher would not have needed to have Brian suspended. It was not Brian so much who was at fault, but the system, in this case, was at fault because we soon learned the limitation of one teacher using a lecture method to teach 85 Grade 10 students as one class. It just was not workable.

An Honourable Member: Eighty-five Grade 10 students.

Mr. Jennissen: There were eighty-five Grade 10 students. It was an innovation.

An Honourable Member: In a public school?

Mr. Jennissen: In a public school in Saskatchewan. It did not work very well.

The point I am making, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that suspension of a student is serious business. It is an implicit admission that we cannot reach this child or cannot teach this child at this particular time. For the good of the larger group—the class, the school—the student is suspended, but we cannot forget the suspended student either. We must ask questions about why the unacceptable behaviour existed in the first place. Secondly, we must be sure about the student's whereabouts and safety after the suspension. You cannot rehabilitate the student who is not there.

We must go beyond merely housekeeping matters, control and classroom management and ask penetrating questions about why some kids act the way they do. We must deal with causes, not with symptoms.

Chronic disruptive behaviour by a student should immediately signal to the teacher that there is something wrong, badly wrong, in that child's life. Merely turfing a student out of a class or a school does not solve the problem. We need to ask (a) what caused the problem and (b) how can we remedy the situation.

Some children live in abject poverty. Some children come to us from broken and violent homes. Some children never eat breakfast because there is no food in the home. Some children survive only because of secondhand clothes and food banks. It is mighty difficult to be a keen learner when there is no food in your stomach. It is not hard to become a rebel and a troublemaker if you have zero self-esteem, if you do not feel welcome in the educational system for whatever reason, if you feel that you will never get a meaningful job no matter how educated you become, no matter how hard you try.

In extreme cases, suspending a student is necessary, but it is never the preferred option, and it should always be as a last resort. Even then, the suspended student should not be ignored but carefully monitored and tracked. The idea is not to push the student out but rather to cool the student off so that he or she could be let back into the system. The idea is to get at the root cause for the student's disruptive behaviour and to change what is probably a negative context to a more positive one. This often means that principals, counsellors and especially teachers need to sit down and have a heart-to-heart talk with a problem student. That takes time, and that takes trust.

Where does a teacher find the time to have intensive one-on-one discussions when there are 25 or 30 other students who need help? Where does the principal of a small school find the time for counselling a student when he or she is teaching classes, running the school? That consumes all the available time. There are no easy answers to these questions, but, remember, a child's place is in the school, even though older children, older teenagers often do drop out. The system should not add to this unfortunate trend, yet there are principals still who suspend students for skipping classes. I have never been able to figure out the logic of that approach, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A student misses classes, and, as punishment, a student is

suspended and gets to miss even more classes. To my mind, that is like fighting fire with gasoline.

Kids belong in school. Let us keep them there. Let us not add to the negative forces that already keep children out of school. Let us be sensitive as educators, as parents, as legislators, as citizens of this province and this country to the fact that there are already enough dark forces such as hunger, poverty, hopelessness, conspiring against the education of our children without adding to this by top-down edicts.

The czar of Russia ruled by decree, by fiat; the Minister of Education should not do so. We should listen to our children. If we do not listen to them in these formative, difficult and stressful times, who will? If we do not give them hope, who will give them hope?

In 1989, the Frontier School Division commissioned a high school survey of student beliefs and attitudes and practices. The results of this survey contrasted sharply with a similar but much larger survey representing all Canadian high school students. The Frontier survey showed that northern teenagers were significantly different from teenagers in the rest of Canada in two main areas, self-esteem and job prospects.

Mainstream Canadian teenagers felt by an overwhelming percentage, in the high 90 percentage range, I believe, that their parents loved them and that their chances for a good job were extremely high. Northern teenagers, on the other hand, did not have that same optimism. I do not have the exact figures before me, but if memory serves me correctly, I believe that half or less than half of northern teenagers surveyed felt that their parents loved them. Half or less than half felt that they would actually hold a well-paying job at any time in their life after graduation.

* (1500)

The results of that northern survey has some powerful implications for all of us. Half of our children in the North are crying out and saying, we do not feel loved; we have little self-esteem; we are not worthwhile human beings; we will never be productive members of this society; we are doomed. Then we

wonder why the violence, why the suicides, why the substance abuse, why the acting out.

Now, that is frightening, that scenario, that is scary. Education now becomes much more than suspending a student, creating advisory councils or expanding the role of principals. Education now becomes, as the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) has pointed out using the words of Hannah Arendt, the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token to save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and the young, would be inevitable.

Are we indeed assuming responsibility for our broken world when thousands of our children are living below the poverty line? Do we love the world enough to enter into the world of the children as thousands of teachers do every day, to stand with them, to wipe away their tears, to take their hands and lead them forward? Do we show solidarity with those teachers who are fighting for the children, for the future of those children, and who do this even if they have to take on the establishment, the government, in that struggle?

As the member for Crescentwood has pointed out so eloquently, Manitoba has a great public education system. The system is not in need of dramatic reform. Manitoba has thousands and thousands of dedicated teachers and hundreds of thousands of diligent students. But there are dark and alarming clouds on the horizon.

One of those clouds drifting up from the south, I think it is from Newt Gingrich's back forty, is a notion that the world is a gigantic marketplace specifically designed by Providence for upper middle-class entrepreneurs. Everything is for sale; everything belongs to the highest bidder. Poverty and misfortune are the fault of the victim. The winner take all. The marketplace is the arbiter of destiny. The money markets, the IMF, the World Bank have become Moses and the Prophets all rolled into one.

That particular cloud, that particular world view must be dispelled. It is a very narrow view and a selfish view of reality. It does not mesh well with the Canadian psyche. We are a caring nation. We believe

in sharing. We hold specific Canadian values. We do not believe in two-tiered systems for health or for education. We believe in keeping the public education system strong and not expending more public largesse in these difficult economic times upon elitist institutions such as private schools.

I have heard the minister's arguments. Yes, private schools have the right to exist, they have a place in the sun, but should the public system, the people system, which is open to all students, take cuts while the private systems, which are very selective—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that we are dealing with Bill 5, and it has nothing to do with the funding of private schools. I ask the member to speak to relevance, please.

Mr. Jennissen: I am all for saving the taxpayer some money, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The point is that I think the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) is going the extra mile to support a system that competes with the public system and that they are not going the extra mile for the public system, which has to accept all children.

It is odd, in this case, that while Newfoundland is going away from denominational schools because of cost factors and duplication, Manitoba seems to be drifting in the opposite direction.

The vast majority of Manitoba's children attend the public school system, and that system should be the minister's first priority. By fully and openly and unreservedly supporting the public school system with both words and more cash, the minister can visibly express her preferential option for the poor, for the poor have access only to the public system.

Despite the demonstrable success of public education in Manitoba, there are obviously some weaknesses, some areas of concern. One area of concern mentioned over and over again by other speakers is a rapid succession of Tory Education ministers. This suggests a lack of vision about education. Each minister ascends the throne briefly, focuses on one direction and by decree hopes to remedy the perceived weakness in the system.

There does not appear to be a consistent vision or direction. Cutbacks create tension in the system and make planning ever more difficult. When a system is under stress, the participants dig in, become more conservative, that is, take fewer risks, and as a consequence, desperately needed innovation goes out the window.

Educators work best in a climate of teamwork and collegiality, not hostility, and some elements of this bill, I believe, will create hostility. It is hard to be innovative and collegial if your job is on the line. A consistent direction, stable, predictable funding and long-range joint planning by all the stakeholders in the system is what is needed. This is what teachers want, what parents want, what students want.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, schools should consider teaching citizenship. In this present callous, economic climate our students once again need to know what constitutes a good citizen, a productive citizen, a Canadian, a Manitoban. Canadians are envied all over the world, but we do a less than sterling job inculcating students with the rights and responsibilities that flow from being a citizen of this country and this province. Surely high school history of Canada needs to be taught to all students. The minister knows that now, I am sure; she has heard the outcry from teachers and parents when the former History 201 was deemed an elective rather than a compulsory high school course.

Our children desperately need to know what makes us uniquely Canadian. Canada is not just a junior copy of the United States, and schools have a serious role to play in strengthening Canadian identity in the aftermath of NAFTA and the cultural erosion that affects us daily. Our children are daily bombarded by American cultural icons. They watch American television by the hour. They pick up American values.

Some of that may well be healthy, but some of it is not in the Canadian tradition. Some of those things not in the Canadian traditions are solving problems with violence, jingoism, exaggerated patriotism, racism, arrogance, triumphalism, the notion that only money counts, the belief that technology will solve all our problems, the belief that militarism is a substitute for

diplomacy or that politicians are all on the take, that there are real easy answers. There are no easy answers.

These corrosive beliefs and values seeping north can only be countered in frank and open discussions in our classrooms, in our schools, and hopefully those discussions are also happening in our homes.

There are many other areas of concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Even though the educational system is working well and there is no place for undue alarmism, we need a provincial student information system—that has been mentioned earlier—a record system. We must be wary of quick fixes. Standardized tests may look like a good idea on the surface, but such tests are often very narrow, culturally inappropriate for immigrants or northerners and so on.

The teacher's own evaluation—the personal meeting, the anecdotal report—is much more effective. Often standardized tests are given for the sake of doing something because of departmental, administrative or parental pressures. Well, they have some limited values. The results of those tests are open to varying interpretations. Such tests have a centralizing tendency, however. Teachers tend to teach to the test. After all, we do not want to score poorly, now, do we? Those tests are of limited value but they often make governments look good because supposedly these tests will force teachers back to the basics.

In reality such tests, if raised to the status of the Bible, lead to uninspired teaching and lock-step education. May we in Canada never reach the absurdity reached in some American cities where real estate values, house prices, are keyed to SAT scores in the nearby schools. This obviously leads to the possibility of manipulating scores and gives further emphasis to two-tiered educational systems.

We do not need the American educational system, in which one side of town has a school full of upper middle-class preppies in Ivy League jackets and the other side of town has a school with metal detectors at the door and bodyguards for teachers.

I believe as Manitobans and as Canadians we believe in one good, solid public educational system. This

system may vary slightly from province to province, but each province has a workable system, a good system.

Lastly, I think our schools should be open to more than the so-called average students. Manitoba has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the country. These pregnant teenagers should be encouraged to stay in school. Teenage moms should be encouraged and enabled to attend school. Adult education ideally should be part of every high school. Dropouts should have incentives to return and finish their education.

There are many things that the stakeholders in the public education system can do to improve a system that is already doing a very good job. There are many things the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) can do to make a good system even better, but I have reservations about Bill 5.

Working together in an atmosphere of collegiality and trust is critical to this process. There is nothing wrong with teachers, but there is something wrong when one authority figure, namely, the teacher, is pitted against another authority figure, namely, the Minister of Education or the Premier (Mr. Filmon). That sends mixed messages to our students.

* (1510)

There is nothing wrong with students either, but I can understand the anger and frustration when they cannot find jobs upon graduation. There is nothing wrong with the students, but there is something wrong with the economic system. Where is there dramatic economic improvement after NAFTA? I do not see it.

There is nothing wrong with parents either. They worry about jobs, mortgages, groceries, paying the bills. They hope that their children will have a bright future, but deep down they often feel it will not happen. They see jobs disappearing, welfare lines increasing, food banks expanding. They know the economy is in a mess and there are sharply differing opinions about how that mess is to be remedied, to be cleaned up.

But tough times or not, the children are our future. Only through them can the dream of a brighter future

ever be realized, so we continue to work, to struggle, sometimes in hope, sometimes in desperation, to create a new world worthy of that boundless optimism, trust and innocence that still shines in the eyes of the young.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As previously agreed this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), Bill 2, (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).

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

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 2, because in many ways it is one of the more interesting debates of this particular session, and I want to begin by saying that I certainly recognize that this matter is not new. The bill that we are dealing with currently was certainly something that was subject to some debate, discussion, prior to the election when the government announced its intention of bringing in this particular legislation. Certainly the government at the time stated its position on the balanced budget legislation, we stated our position and I think really what we are seeing in this debate is really a restatement of many of the positions that were indicated at that time.

I acknowledge as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the government was fairly clear in its intention on this, and while I would certainly in other areas accuse the government, many Manitobans accuse the government, of perhaps having a hidden agenda, they certainly did not when it came to this particular item of legislation.

So I want to preface my comments by saying that I accept that the government campaigned on this particular legislation and is now intent on bringing it in.

That is not to say that I necessarily agree with that position, nor does our party. It is also not to say that there should not be some debate about the particular bill that this government has brought in, in terms of some of the mechanisms that it has built in, but let us put the cards on the table in that sense, the fact is the government did campaign on this particular legislation.

I would also note at the beginning of the debate that this is rather an interesting example, I think, with this government of the way it has chosen to proceed, because there are, I believe, four other jurisdictions in Canada that brought in similar legislation. This is really something that has been brought in from the United States where a number of states have brought in so-called balanced budget legislation, and it is interesting to note there is quite a variance between Manitoba's model and other provinces. There has been some fair discussion as to the kind of model that this government has chosen to proceed with.

I also think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the government would admit that it is part of a larger agenda as well. Certainly, we have had some debate on other aspects of that agenda, and certainly I know the taxpayers' federation, which has been pushing this kind of legislation, has many other aspects of its agenda that it has pushed, rolling back educational expenditures to 1972, privatizing Crown corporations, being some examples of that. I find it interesting to a certain extent.

By the way, those are positions that I do not agree with. I think it would be wrong for us to privatize our Crown corporations, particularly, for example, Manitoba Telephone System. I raised this in committee the other day. Manitoba Hydro, these are Crown assets. They are producing. They are assets for us. They have asset value, and they are producing revenue. I think that is the kind of thing that governments should be involved in. I find it ironic that many of those are brought in by—for example, Manitoba Telephone System was nationalized by a Conservative government at the turn of this century. I

have seen some very interesting changes taking place with this government in terms of its approach to the handling of such issues as Crown corporations or even in terms of budgeting.

In terms of education, I have indicated that I think it is wrong to think that if we rolled back our educational system to 1972—it just happened to be the year I graduated from R.D. Parker Collegiate in Thompson. I can tell you, I did not receive a bad education; I received a pretty good one. My kids right now have much better opportunities and have a much more relevant education than they received in those days, so I think there are some aspects of the agenda that have been put forward that I do take exception to.

I find it interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Conservative government has essentially adopted the taxpayers' federation proposed model almost in its entirety. I do not think there is much difference between what they have been proposing—and this is a group I know that has some interesting background going back to the GST opposition in Alberta. This group has many tie-ins with the party of the members opposite and the Reform Party, but they followed that, whereas other provinces, such as Alberta, having significant components of the current bill before us, have decided not to proceed with that.

I think it is important to put that into perspective, because I think it is important to understand where this bill is coming from and where the government is coming from.

When I say that I accept the results of the election, does it mean that I necessarily support what the government's position is? I do think that the government might want to consider the fact that it is moving fairly dramatically in a number of areas. It has moved far beyond, for example, I mentioned the province of Alberta and other jurisdictions that have this kind of legislation.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as is the case and should be the case with any kind of legislation that is fairly new in that regard, they should be willing to look at the experience that will take place over the next number of years.

I remember when we brought in some pretty innovative labour legislation, final offer selection. The government, which was then in opposition, opposed it. It was put in place under what was called a sunset clause, and eventually it moved to repeal that legislation. I did not agree with the repeal, but at least there was some time period during which we could look whether that legislation worked.

I think, in this particular case, the government should consider that option when it comes to this particular legislation.

Let us deal with the concept of balanced budgets. Let us deal with the concept of the government fiscal policies in this province. Let us deal with the concept of how that relates to us as individuals, because I think one of the first comments I received from many people, those that did raise this issue, and, quite frankly, it was not, by any stretch of the imagination, the biggest election issue in my constituency. I would say maybe less than half a dozen people raised it with me, but I must admit that there were a number of people who were puzzled why the government, after bringing in seven years of consecutive deficits, would all of a sudden become a born-again believer in balancing the budget.

I find this is maybe one of the reasons why it was not as big an issue in the election as many of the other issues that were being raised, largely because I think the people of Manitoba—and this is a comment I would make about, well, probably the parties in this House collectively, MLAs in this House—I think they take what governments say sometimes, particularly when there is some divergence between what they have done in the past, with a slight grain of salt.

I would say, in this case, with the Conservative government, after running seven different budgets, it might be a little bit bigger than a grain of salt. It would probably, I would suggest, be at least a few semiloads of salt that you would have to take because, quite frankly—the interesting thing is, I heard a lot of people, and to put it in the vernacular that—I know all the people I talked to to date, I heard people say, yes, right, you know, the government has brought in this legislation after seven years of deficits.

* (1520)

I mean, let us put it in focus here. The government's credibility is not the greatest on this particular issue. That is not to say that there was not some appeal to this particular bill. The member for Portage (Mr. Pallister), I know, when he was first elected here, brought in a private members' resolution on this type of a subject, and I know it is an area of interest.

I must admit that some of us, at the time, wondered if the member for Portage had perhaps checked, before he ran, the record of the party that he was running for, because, you know, the fact is, it did run up seven deficits in a row. In Public Accounts it has been an interesting last week because we, first of all, had the Public Accounts committee, where we had the opportunity to deal in terms of what the reality was of that year.

We had even the former member for Rossmere here, Mr. Neufeld. Now he, a number of years ago, had said that the '92-93 deficit was in excess of \$800 million. [interjection] Now the member for Portage is talking about fools, I know he is not talking about the former member for Rossmere because he is a very respected individual. Do you know what I find interesting? He is an accountant, and, as an accountant, he said the deficit is in excess of \$800 million. Well, it is interesting. What did the Provincial Auditor say? What has the Provincial Auditor said? The deficit that year was in excess of \$800 million. What did the government say? Approximately \$400 million. What is the divergence? Let us put it this way. I would suggest it is creative accounting, [interjection] I am being generous. I have to be parliamentary. Creative accounting, some might say it is phony accounting. Some might go even further than that, but I have to be careful how far I go. Let us put it this way: that is the context of this.

The government, the born-again believers in the balanced budget, had a year in which their deficit was in excess of \$800 million as was indicated by the Provincial Auditor and their own former member for Rossmere who was, as I said, an accountant and has some experience in these matters. So, as I said, do not take this with just a grain of salt, take it with a few

semiloads of salt: this government now talking about balanced budgets.

Well, let us take another example of how we have to be careful with what this government says and what this government does because, in the 1992-93 budget year, this government raised the equivalent of \$400 per family in taxes. It is interesting, you know, because the script that the government puts out is they have not raised major taxes. What was interesting was, the briefing note at that time pointed out that the equivalent of the increase was at least 5 percent of the provincial tax, the personal tax rates. It will be in the range of a percent on the sales tax. I think that is important because, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not covered in this bill. It is not covered at all. Creative budgeting is not accounted for.

It is interesting that when specific taxes are identified, the taxes identified are a couple of individual tax rates and the payroll tax. Nothing is said about increasing the coverage of the sales tax that took place here. Nothing is said about the creative increase in fees that have taken place, and I want to put this in context, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I think that has to be taken into account.

I think there is also the other side of the ledger, as well, because one of the things that is sort of dealt with by implication with this bill is if in a given year, for example, there is a dramatic drop in revenue, the implications of this bill are that unless it is of the range of about \$250 million the government will have to bring in cuts. It will have to cut program expenditures, et cetera.

You know, once again I think you have to take this with a bit of a grain of salt because we have heard lectures from this government about how tight the government's finances are, but nothing stopped the Premier from signing the loss agreement with the Winnipeg Jets, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which exposed the government, according to the Auditor, in a secret agreement, it exposed the government to approximately \$45 million in losses. I mean, this year alone we have had projections of \$25 million to \$28 million dollars of losses in the Winnipeg Jets. This is the government that is saying there is not funding to cover cancer

patients. There is not funding; they are going to have to cut back for social assistance recipients.

There is money. There is \$25 million to \$28 million, and that is just the low in the estimate to cover the losses of the Winnipeg Jets because of the failure of this government, the agreements it signed, and that does not deal with the losses that have already been incurred. It does not deal with the whole question that arose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of funding that was given under the infrastructure program. The given attendance already at the Winnipeg Jets games, I would suggest to the government, is a low-end estimate. How do you factor that into some of the discussion?

We can talk about other issues. I talked today in committee about the \$118,000 spent by the Lotteries Foundation on two studies that were aimed at deflecting criticism on Lotteries. We can talk about those kinds of expenditures, and I am not going to get into the question of the Beaujolais Restaurant fiasco. I am not going to deal with that. I think that was covered in Question Period yesterday. I think members understand themselves that there is something that does not quite fit when you talk about social allowance cuts and that kind of an expenditure. [interjection]

Well, the minister says there has not been a Lotteries Foundation for three years. He is quite correct. There was a bill that changed that. Of course, there has not been a committee hearing for close to the three years, too. That is one of the reasons I am using the terminology. I guess I am using the terminology from the two reports that we had dealt with this morning which were from prior to that period. The two that were after were under the new name. I appreciate the correction from the minister.

The fact remains that, once again, people have to take with a big grain salt this government's record in terms of spending priorities as well, which, I think, leads us to this particular bill and leads us to that background being then transposed to a government going into an election, looking for something that it could take to the public. This was the particular thing it took.

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

I could point to some of the dramatic changes, certainly, I think, with the tradition of the Conservative Party, also the parliamentary system, because, in many ways, this bill moves dramatically against that. I must admit that it is something that I find rather amusing.

I heard the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) yesterday on a radio broadcast talking about Cicero. I thought it was rather interesting talking about Cicero, because I wondered what Sir John A. Macdonald would say about this particular approach or what John Diefenbaker would have said or even Sterling Lyon.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I was directing my comments through you, and I did not realize they were also at you. But I really believe that. We were close to the 100th birthday—well, it would have been the 100th birthday—of John Diefenbaker. I really believe that there are elements of this bill that go far beyond the parliamentary system for which he fought and committed much of his political life, particularly certain aspects of the bill.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we can go beyond that, because the bottom line with most Manitobans is, when they look at this particular bill, when they look at the situation generally, I would say, most people have a balanced approach toward budgets, whether it is their household budgets or whether it is the Province of Manitoba's budget.

Regardless of what Cicero may have said or may not have said, I look at the average person today, and most people in this House and most people in this province, first of all, most of us do not inherit a lot of money. A lot of us have not inherited money. We do not marry into money. A lot of us work either by employment, or a lot of people own a small business where you basically are on a pretty fine line in terms of what you can start out, how you start it out, what kind of income you earn. I think most people understand that from their daily lives. Most people are not in the situation of having an extensive amount of money they can draw on that comes from outside sources.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): It sounds like this is leading into a silver spoon speech or something.

Mr. Ashton: The silver spoon speech. The Minister of Environment talks about the silver spoon speech. I am not targeting this at those that are perhaps more fortunate, through whatever circumstances, to have inherited money or to marry into money or whatever, win the lottery, you know. Maybe I have Lotteries on the mind today. I am talking about the average person who runs a small business or who runs a household.

* (1530)

Most people, young families starting out, someone in a small business situation, understand better than anyone the role of financing, personal financing and also the role of financing through debt, whether it be for a house or whether it be to operate a small business, because there are very few small businesses in this province that do not have to undertake at least some debt, whether it be an operating line of credit—[interjection] Farmers, as well, yes, have to take out a loan, the average person buying a house.

When I bought my first house in Thompson, I took out a mortgage. When I bought another house recently, I took out a mortgage. What is interesting is—you know, the people that probably understand best are those that deal with finances—it would be bank managers or financial advisers—because the first thing you do when you sit down with the bank manager, whether it is a business or personal.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Asking what kind of credit you have got, and determine what kind of rate you are going to get, what your credit rating is. They try to determine your credit rating, and that is based on knowledge.

Mr. Ashton: I appreciate the comments from the Minister of Education. She has given me her opinions, but we are talking about dealing here with what one's financial situation involves, a business, and you look at it and a number of factors including—

Point of Order

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Acting Speaker, on a point of order, I would just like to remind the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) that if she

has some comments to put on the record she should put them on the record rather than commenting very loudly from her seat.

(Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair)

As she said in Hansard on the record just yesterday, she would much prefer to be in her office doing work that actually was functional than sitting in here listening to drivel. So perhaps the Minister of Education would like to do that very thing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I found interesting is, I have not even gotten to my point yet, and the member for Portage, the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pallister) and the Minister of Education are trying to argue the point that they assume I am going to make that I have not even made yet. So if they will just let me get to my point I think they may find that they may actually even agree with us.

When one looks at a household or a business one has to look at the whole situation in terms of those finances. The first thing a bank manager does when it looks at a business or at an individual is look at the net worth, which looks at a combination of not just liabilities but assets as well. I mean, if you own a house and it is worth \$100,000 and you have a \$60,000 mortgage, the net worth that you have in that house is \$40,000.

It does not matter what the figure is. You sell that house, you obtain a liquid asset in the form of cash, you have \$40,000. But you know, this is something that has to be included when you look at the province's finances.

We own Hydro, we own MTS, we own the Lotteries commission, we own various different things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Debt was incurred to purchase them. There is also an asset value that we have, and I would suggest, in a commercial sense, many of those Crown

corporations have a significant value in terms of good will, which is basically the ability to earn a profit. Anybody who is in small business, and those in this Chamber who come from a small-business background can say from personal experience, I am sure, what that involves as well, because your value of a business is partly your assets, it is partly your ability with those assets to produce an income.

What I am suggesting is that governments are in some ways not a heck of a lot different from personal households and from small businesses. There are a few differences, probably more so at the federal level, but at some point in time there are those fiscal realities and there are assets, there are liabilities, there are certain things you have to be careful of in terms of the degree to which you can take on any debt in terms of your ability to repay those debts, and those are factors that clearly have to be recognized by anyone.

I want to suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the basic concept of this bill in a general principle probably is something that most people would say, yes, you have to have some balance. But what I find interesting though is that the government chose the route of a one-year balance.

It does make one exception, a big exception, in terms of the \$250 million, approximately \$250 million—there is a shortfall in revenues at that period of time—but then basically it says that if there is a dramatic drop in revenues, you have to balance that budget within the year. I find that interesting, because I hate to think of some of the kind of cuts that we could see whether it be in health care where we have already seen enough happen in terms of cuts or education or the rest of it.

But we do have some very clear examples, clear analogies to a family to my mind. If you are laid off from a job—and that is not unusual today—or you get a salary rollback, it is not to be unexpected then in that year you might end up with a much reduced income. You might even end up with no income. Anybody who has been a farmer or a small-business person in this House knows that from personal experience. It is very easy in this province to have no income in a year—zero—because you may have some income, but it is balanced out by losses. It is not an unusual circumstance for

someone in a small business or a farm. But I transpose that to what you do in your household at that particular point in time. Now you undertake various different things. You certainly are very careful in terms of expenditures, but in the short run you may also end up with your debt situation deteriorating somewhat, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is to be expected. A farmer loses money in a year, that alone does not make any income, but loses money.

Where does that money come from? In a lot of cases, there may be a temporary fluctuation in terms of that person's particular situation, but a household or a farm does not send one of the kids out of the house because there is not enough money. You do not do that. You do not sell all your assets in a given year to pay off the shortfall if you know over a longer period of time that you are going to be able to deal with that. You do not sell off the assets of the family. There are limits to what you do. You try to increase your income. You perhaps try and decrease your expenditures somewhat, but you do not go and sell off the heirlooms that your family has had for centuries.

One of the things that this bill allows is for the government to sell off Crown corporations. There is no restriction on that. It allows them to sell them off and then transfer that money to the year in which they are sold or in fact through fanciful accounting—because we have already seen this with McKenzie Seeds—to transfer that over a couple of years. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what they are doing is allowing the government to essentially sell off the assets, the long-term assets that it has not created but has inherited as a government, whereas in a family situation I do not think you would expect that. I do not think you would expect someone to sell off the family heirlooms. That is one very significant weakness of this bill.

The second thing I want to deal with—and I want to use this analogy again of a household or of a farm family that has been in this situation or small-business person. Name me a small business in this province that makes money in its first three, four or five years in operation. There may be a few, but anybody who has been in small business, the first thing they all tell you is that do not expect to make money the first several years. Do not expect to make money for four or five

years and even then you have to be lucky. I am talking in a real sense, taking into account the real cost of assets invested. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know probably better than I do, better than most and better than other people in this House do. But you know there is a very real function of financing in that first period of time. You have got to be careful, you know, the financing, you have got to be careful how much you undertake.

But you know there are a lot of small businesses in this province. Successful small businesses would not have got off the ground at all if it was not for some access to capital through debt financing. One of the biggest complaints of many small business people is the lack of access to that capital. Now that is not to say there should be open access, obviously you have to take into account a lot of factors, but you know small business, new small business in this province, many existing small businesses cannot operate without some access to capital.

I want to throw that out again as another analogy because you know I think what the government is failing to recognize in this particular period of time is that there are times and places in our lives as individuals and in terms of small businesses and farms where debt is a reality. Some cases, as I mentioned, it may be from an event such as a layoff. I know a lot of people who have had tough personal circumstances. To keep their family going they have had to increase their debt load over the short run, and you know there are others who, for investment purposes, have invested in a small business or a farm and that investment is something they have obtained in terms of debt, such as small businesses, big businesses.

* (1540)

Inco in Thompson would not be here today, would not have operated its first mine in the 1950s, would not have constantly upgraded its capital portion of the mine if it had not been for investment and that investment was through financing, debt financing.

Now I am sure if the Minister of Education was to be involved in this debate, she would then say, yes, but the credit rating, yes, but, and you know that is accepted.

Obviously your ability to access that capital is a reflection of your income, also your past ability to deal—maybe through no fault of your own. I know many successful business people who have had a business go bankrupt, who are now very successful. There are many people.

If you look locally, we have a very successful local promoter who is probably one of the most successful business people now, had one business go bankrupt. I was reading, I mean you could take the international examples, The Body Shop, the woman who founded The Body Shop went bankrupt in her first business venture. The interesting thing is she also sought a partner early on in her subsequent Body Shop venture, and it is interesting to note that she also sought an investor to loan her money. That investor received a portion of the business. I believe he loaned about \$10,000. The value of his investment currently today is in the hundreds of millions of dollars. So there is an example of an investment that paid off quite significantly.

You know those are the realities out there. This legislation does not account for this. This legislation is based on a one-year snapshot. It purports to want to establish the balanced budget in each and every year based on its accounting, based on its format and formula. That is, I think, one of the serious questions that have to be asked about this, whether this fits in the reality of what is going on.

I want to deal with that for a second because I talked about families. I have talked about small business. I have talked about farms. Let us talk about governments, and let us deal with the reality of governments.

First of all, provinces do have restrictions in terms of their fiscal situation just like other levels of government but more so than, say, the federal level of government because the federal level of government does have some control over monetary policies within a certain range and certainly has greater ability to control its fiscal policies than do provinces. Provinces get their revenue from taxpayers, and when it comes to financing any debt, that either has to be financed locally or financed through the money markets. So

there are restrictions on what provinces can do. There is a reality. There is a fiscal reality out there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think everybody acknowledges that.

But one of the other realities of governments, and I would encourage members opposite to go through the budgetary information provided by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) every year, is that there is a fairly significant fluctuation, not so much in terms of expenditure but in terms of revenues that governments receive in any given year. I want to give you an example.

In 1988 when the previous NDP government left office at the end of that fiscal year, before any of the transfers, the creative accounting the government brought into office, there would have been a surplus, I believe about \$50-odd million, \$52 million. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the reasons behind that—and I have always been up front about that—is there was a dramatic increase in mining revenue that year, a dramatic increase coming from my own constituency and other northern communities.

Within two, three years because of a drop in the amount of money coming from mining, there was a totally different fiscal position and to a certain extent, 1992-93, the government hit a number of factors. It had its revenues declining in very sensitive areas such as mining. Its revenues were down in terms of other areas such as income tax and sales taxes. It basically hit a wall in that one year whereby it ran this record deficit. But what is interesting is as the economy improved somewhat, there was an improvement on the revenue situation and our fiscal situation today, helped along also by lotteries revenue, is certainly better than it was, say, in 1992-93.

But you compare this 1988-89, 1992-93 and then the current situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What was the key factor throughout those years? It was not a huge fluctuation on the expenditure side. We can argue about the government's policies, that they have cut too much. There might be some people who would argue they have not cut enough. We can deal with those expenditure policies, but you cannot leave out the reality of the revenue side of the equation and that is

that governments are susceptible, very much so, to the economy. That is one area they are susceptible but let us deal with another area where they are susceptible, and the government should know this quite well. It is in terms of transfers from the federal government. One of the significant sources of income is transfers from the federal government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the last number of years that, too, has been subject to a great deal of pressure, and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is here, and the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh) is here, as well. They know that. They have talked about it, somewhat belatedly—I know in the case of the Premier (Mr. Filmon)—but they have talked about the impact that it has had, and is going to have, on the province of Manitoba. So this is another factor that is beyond our control. We can say what we want about the federal government but unless the people of Canada, to a certain extent, wake up to what is happening and make the federal government pay the political price for it, that is going to be the reality of it. They are essentially transferring their own deficit on to the provincial level of government. Of course, the province has transferred part of its deficit onto the local levels of government.

But look, let us deal with that again, another source of revenue that is subject to a great deal of downward pressure. It is somewhat more predictable than our tax revenues, but once again there is a lot of pressure. So I want to submit to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this idea that is inherent throughout this debate, the real problem is somehow expenditure has to be balanced by the fact that expenditure is only part of what governments do. It is also the revenue side.

Now let us deal with that somewhat further because what happens—[interjection] I am advised that is what Terry Duguid says. He also has a sign up about out-of-city people paying their fair share. I know it was not directed to people from Thompson, but I just remind him of how much we send to Winnipeg in terms of mining, VLTs and other things.

I must say, I do take some amusement because, quite frankly, we pay more than our fair share. If Mr. Duguid running for mayor wants to run on that

platform, that is his business, but I think he will get some disagreement from rural and northern members in this House. [interjection] A flawed approach. Exactly. We actually agree on something, as the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) points out.

But I digress because the important thing to look at, when you are looking at the fiscal situation facing the provincial government, is what you do, understanding that inherently there is this susceptibility of revenues to outside forces and particularly the economy.

What does it mean? If you look at what has happened, it means that in a year like 1992-93, in the depths of the recession, what you end up with is a situation where you get a significant drop in revenues. On the expenditure side, you also get a significant increase in expenditure, welfare, social assistance. It is not because of any great generosity of the government at that particular day and time; it is because you have more people unemployed. That, by definition, is what you do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there have been those in the past that argued that what you should do in a depression is you should cut back on government expenditures dramatically, balance the budget. We all talk about the Herbert Hoovers, but we had that here: R.B. Bennett, very much a part of his philosophy in the 1930s here; Mackenzie King.

This is interesting because Liberals do not like to admit to this, but one of the big concerns that Mackenzie King had in the middle of the Depression, one of the criticisms that he had of the Conservative government of the day was, it was spending too much money, and it was running the deficit up. You know these great sort of warm-hearted Liberals who will want to be there when you need help, you know, like in a depression, they wanted to cut government expenditures.

I find it interesting because, to a certain extent, the current Liberal Party is living up to that approach. I mean, they say kind words, and then they bring out the axe. I find it interesting that, when you are looking at these kinds of circumstances, this is the 1930s philosophy of dealing with budgets. If there was one

lesson that was learned in the 1930s, it is that you do not do that.

I will give you another example. This is probably one of the best examples. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in the 1932 presidential election, campaigned against the deficit. He wanted to cut the deficit. He wanted to cut expenditures. Yet what he did, when he came into power and recognized the gravity of the situation, was he brought in the new deal in the United States, which, I think, was a model that I thought, until recently, was accepted by people from the right, the left, the centre.

I mean, it just made sense that when you are in a difficult situation, when your economy is being run down, what you do is you do not cut back even further. What you do is you try and prime the pump a little bit. You help those that need help. You try and get the economy moving.

* (1550)

We could talk about Keynesianism, and I do not want to get into those kinds of debates really, but it was really common sense. Len Evans will talk about Keynes.

I admit, and I think this is a fair comment too, that there has been a sort of a bastardized Keynesianism. It is not unparliamentary. I did not make any reference to any member. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am talking about a particular philosophy. You know, that I refer to as when you do not follow the basic assumption of it, which is that in good times you do run a surplus if necessary, which we did not actually until approximately the mid-'70s, and the tough times, that is, when you are going to get expenditures increased either deliberately or else because that is part of the built-in process that we do—our UIC expenditures go up or our welfare payments go up.

I think that is important because, in the provincial context in Manitoba, I think the government has basically tied itself into the straitjacket of a one-year, balanced-budget bill that does not reflect the reality of the fact that every year is different, that there is an economic cycle—[interjection] No, I talked about a philosophy. I was not making any reference to any

member of the House. I assure the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I was making no reference to him or anybody else.

No, but every year is—well, I have not gotten up and said I am going to withdraw anything I have said to offend anyone, but if the member is happy, if the use of the word "bastardized" Keynesianism has something that he takes offence to, I withdraw that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will say distorted Keynesianism.

Even though it has been somewhat distorted, the fact is, the reality is, not every year is the same. That is why I have some great difficulty with this particular bill. We could deal with the questions of referendum, and I know that Standard and Poor's, for example, has raised some questions about that. There are others who question why certain things have not been included in that. We can also deal with the question of the whole philosophy of the bill, but the reality is, when we are in tough times, we have to maintain expenditures in this province in certain areas, and we have to pay that back in good times. That is something this bill does not do. That is why, despite the fact the government won the election on this bill, I think we warn the government, we do not think it is going to work.

We are going to oppose the bill, and I hope the government will at least agree to review it over the next number of years, because I think they will find as well that this bill will not work. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also am rising this afternoon to put some comment on the record about Bill 2, the balanced budget legislation.

I would like to start by saying that my reading and understanding of what this balanced budget legislation is all about, really the heading "balanced," there is no relationship in any way, shape or form to any kind of legislation or activity on any level in our society, historical or current.

It bears no resemblance to economic theory, whether it is a Milton Friedman supply side economic theory or the Keynesian economic theory or the Adam Smith economic theory. From whatever political perspective

you come, the economic theory that you ascribe to is not reflected in this piece of legislation.

It also does not reflect any economic practice. It does not reflect the actions of past governments in Canada, the United States, anywhere in the developed world or in Manitoba, and it does not reflect the current actions of governments in Canada or this government in Manitoba. It also does not reflect past practice or present practice or theory in the context of business, whether it is small business, medium-sized business or large multinational, transnational corporations. This legislation and its thinking is not reflected in anything business has ever done.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this piece of legislation has no parallel in any legitimate way with what actually happens in the smaller unit that this government wants very much to be the basis of everything, and that is the family. So I find it very interesting that this government has brought in this legislation in the face of overwhelming evidence that this kind of thinking never has worked, it is not going to work now and it most likely in the future will not ever work. Families, businesses and governments throughout recorded history—if I could be that extensive—have never operated under the kind of restrictions and the kind of thinking that is seen in this piece of legislation.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one must ask themselves then, why was this piece of legislation brought in in the first place?

An Honourable Member: Why?

Ms. Barrett: Well, I am going to answer that question, that rhetorical question, and I, of course, am not privy nor was I privy to the discussions and the decision-making processes that were undertaken by the previous government, because this legislation was promised and actually tabled before this last election. I was not privy to those discussions either in the context of cabinet discussions, departmental discussions or caucus discussions.

But looking at it from the outside, knowing what I know about the activities and the thinking of this government, I can come up with a couple of potential

ideas and potential reasons for why this government put this legislation before the Legislature last spring. I think the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) alluded to this kind of thinking in his speech the other day.

A year and a half ago, this government thought perhaps it would not win another term. One never knows what is going to happen in the body politic, and I think we have members in this Legislature today who could well attest to the vagaries of the public will. My sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the government of the day felt that the likelihood of their being re-elected with a majority was less than the likelihood of their either being beaten at the polls or being in a minority government situation.

So to enhance their electoral prospects and thinking that perhaps they would never really actually have to deal with the implications inherent in this piece of legislation, they brought forward in the fullness of time Bill 2, the balanced legislation. My sources tell me that the discussions on the government side said we want to bring forth a piece of legislation that is the toughest in North America. Why did they want to bring forth a piece of legislation that was the toughest in North America? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am convinced that they either did not think through the full implications of what was going to happen to them if they actually had to govern under this piece of legislation, or they did and felt that they were not perhaps going to be the government that would have to implement it.

As I stated earlier, I can only posit these kinds of reasoning, the kind of reasoning that was undertaken by the government. In all honesty, I cannot figure out any other reason why the government would do something like this. They are doing something that no other government in North America has done, whether it is a New Democrat government, a Liberal government, a Conservative government, and Lord knows we have no more Conservative government than the government of Alberta, or any state in the United States of America with the exception of California, anything near as severe as the legislation before us in Bill 2.

With those opening remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like then to go through the various elements of Bill 2 and discuss why I believe this is an unrealistic

piece of legislation this government is going to have an enormously difficult time living with.

I think perhaps that members on the government side are beginning to realize that when you sow the wind, you sometimes are forced to reap the whirlwind. I think the whirlwind that is going to swirl around this government in the next weeks and months and years is going to be devastating, not only for the government, but it is going to be devastating for the people of Manitoba.

And further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to begin my more specific comments by talking about the historical precursors of this piece of legislation.

In the 1930s, both in Canada and the United States, as well as across the entire world, the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. As previously agreed, the hour being 4 p.m., it is now time for private members' hour. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 32 minutes remaining.

* (1600)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 15—Elimination of the \$50 User Fee

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), that

WHEREAS the provincial government unilaterally introduced a \$50 user fee for patients using the provincially funded Northern Patient Transportation Program; and

WHEREAS more than 4,000 northern Manitobans have responded by saying that they object to the imposition of this user fee; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Medical Association has indicated in a letter to the Minister of Health that the

imposition of such a user fee is detrimental to the health care of northerners; and

WHEREAS many families, particularly single-parent families and seniors, find the imposition of the \$50 user fee to be an unacceptable and onerous financial charge against their health care; and

WHEREAS without exception, the 36 public presentations and the 10 written submissions to the Northern Aeromedical Services Task Force supported enhanced northern regional health services and a continuum of northern air transport services, goals which are severely hampered by the imposition of the \$50 user fee.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider immediately suspending the \$50 user fee on access to Manitoba's health care system.

Motion presented.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I humbly apologize to the House. I made an error. The first part of the private members' hour was to deal on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), standing in the name of the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

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

Mr. Jennissen: On behalf of my constituents and on behalf of northerners generally, I am pleased to be given the opportunity to speak in favour of the resolution and against the unjust and unilaterally imposed \$50 user fee for patients using the Northern Patient Transportation Program which is a provincially funded program.

Nothing raises the ire of northerners more—and what my friends jokingly refer to as the republic of northern Manitoba—nothing raises their ire more than this \$50 user fee. Virtually all northerners are united on this issue regardless of ideology or political stripe. Over

4,000 northerners have signed cards and petitions condemning the user fee.

They view this \$50 user fee as a symbol of how the south in general, and this government in particular, tend to ignore the needs of northerners. Northerners view the fee as unjust and onerous and a deliberate attempt to deter them from using health services. It is seen as one more example of a government that is not up front with northerners, a government with a hidden agenda, a government that cannot be trusted, because with one hand it gives and with the other hand it removes.

An Honourable Member: A government that never had a baby.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, the honourable member says the government that never had a baby. Time and time again members from this side of the House, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the former member for Flin Flon, have spoken against the injustice of imposing a \$50 user fee on patients using the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

The government's assumption was and still is, if people in and around Winnipeg can pay for their own transportation to and from the doctor's office, why can northerners not? That type of thinking, that type of elitest, centralist, perimeter-vision thing is exactly what drives—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am having great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Flin Flon with the honourable members from both sides of the House having a debate between themselves. If you want to carry on that conversation, do so in the loge or out in the halls.

The honourable member for Flin Flon to continue, please.

Mr. Jennissen: Going to the doctor in Winnipeg is not identical to going to the doctor into Tadoule Lake or Grandville Lake or Sherridon or Pukatawagan or Brochet or Lac Brochet. First of all, these places do not have doctors. Some of them are lucky to have nursing stations.

Patients from Pukatawagan needing to see a doctor must fly out or take a train. The train runs only two or three times a week. A person from Tadoule Lake wishing to see a doctor or specialist must fly out, catch a scheduled flight out or charter out, and all of this could take or will likely take two or three days. An elderly person from Flin Flon who needs to see a specialist in Winnipeg is facing a 12-hour bus ride one way but also an overnight stay and another 12-hour bus ride back. Now put yourself in the position of that 80-year-old man or woman, bouncing around in a bus for 24 hours in a two- or three-day period, buying meals, finding taxis, finding hotel accommodations and so on.

The simple visit to the doctor is not so simple for the elderly, the sick, the people who do not speak English, the infirm, the young. How often have our northern patients come all the way to Winnipeg only to find the doctor is not in or the appointment was cancelled or to be told come back next week? Yes, we all know that part of the answer is to have specialists and doctors come to the North and to live in the North. Why bring the mountain to Mohammed, bring Mohammed to the mountain. I know, indeed, this is happening to some limited degree.

But the reality is that thousands of Manitobans living in northern and remote communities still need the Northern Patient Transportation Program and that each time they use it they are charged \$50. The member from Thompson (Mr. Ashton) once pointed out—and I found this out from reading Hansard—how one of his constituents used the Northern Patient Transportation Program 11 times in a four-month period. That still translates into an extra cost of \$550 for this person.

I have talked to elderly people in Flin Flon who have used the program monthly, have visited a specialist in Winnipeg every month for a year. That is still 12 times \$50 or \$600, Mr. Deputy Speaker, annually and we are not counting now the meals, the taxis, the accommodations, the phone calls. Seniors are often people on fixed incomes.

It is much the same story for people on UIC, for single-parent families and so on. Northerners cannot afford this \$50 user fee. It is more than a nuisance and a deterrent. It is a cost they can ill afford. They see it

also as a slap in the face. It is adding insult to injury. It is considered to be mean-spirited over there. It is considered unnecessary.

This government should be aware of the extra costs that northerners already face when they use the Northern Patient Transportation Program: lost time, lost wages perhaps, meals, taxis, hotels, telephone calls. Those costs are not covered. As the former member for Flin Flon said when discussing higher mortality rates in the North and the fact that northerners access the medical care system far less than people in Winnipeg do, and I quote: the Northern Patient Transportation Program does not begin, does not even begin to cover the real costs northerners face in getting health care.

Now the government has made much of the fact that in some cases the \$50 user fee is not charged, and that is indeed true. Northerners on emergency medivacs, cancer treatment or dialysis do not pay that \$50, but people on the verge of dialysis still pay it. So do people who are being treated for diabetes or heart disease, post-cancer and so on. A woman facing a difficult pregnancy needing prenatal tests still pays the fee. So does the person who needs a wound suture or the elderly patient who needs a cataract operation. With the new technology, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the CAT scans and the MRIs, the ultrasound and so on, more doctors are sending more patients south for a diagnosis, or at least I think that is the trend because of the new technology.

Now government has argued that the imposition of the \$50 user fee for patients using the Northern Patient Transportation Program in no way contravenes any of the five fundamental principles of the health care system, of medicare, and, strictly speaking, that is perhaps true; that is, we want the system to be publicly administered, comprehensive, universal, portable and accessible. Yet government argues that since transportation is a noninsurable service, the federal government will not retaliate if transportation is subjected to a user fee.

The government compares that to ambulance transportation, but I would argue that the \$50 user fee hampers accessibility. I would argue that a \$50 user fee is a definite deterrent to a northerner trying to

access the health system. Is the system still accessible when a northerner who is on a tight budget decides he or she can postpone that trip to the doctor, to the specialist, because there is a lack of \$50? A northerner might well think twice before going to the doctor simply because of costs, not just the \$50, but all the added extra costs.

* (1610)

In fact, I believe this is borne out by the statistics. In the year prior to the \$50 user fee being imposed on northerners, and I believe that was 1990-1991, there were 12,000 travel warrants issued. In the year the \$50 user fee was imposed, travel warrants dropped to 9,000. That is a 25 percent decrease. Three thousand fewer Manitobans were using travel warrants. Now, how do we account for such a huge reduction in one year?

The government very conveniently assumed that the 3,000 fewer Manitobans using travel warrants between the period July 1991 and July 1992 was entirely due to (a) the influx of more physicians and specialists in northern Manitoba, specifically Thompson, and that is partially correct; and (b) doctors being encouraged to limit and indeed did limit the number of return visits by northern patients.

But there was a third possibility, and it was ignored, namely that many sick Manitobans who should have travelled to see a doctor or specialist simply did not do so because of costs. The \$50 user fee was the key component of that cost.

What are the long-range implications of that, of people no longer accessing the system because of costs? Where does that place preventative medicine, preventative health? All it says to me is that if you leave or ignore a condition that should be treated medically, you are only making it worse for the future. The government might save \$50 on a sick person now because that person will not see the doctor because of the cost involved, but the government is going to lose many, many more dollars later on when that sick person's condition deteriorates to the point of absolutely needing help. We might save a nickel now but we will lose a buck later.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, probably one of the most fascinating aspects—and I just use the word "fascinating," I could have used other words—of the debate raging around the imposition of the \$50 user fee around July 1991 was the manner in which the government avoided using the term "user fee." The government used every phrase under the sun except the phrase "user fee." The joke in northern Manitoba was and still is, when is a user fee not a user fee? When you stick it to someone north of 53.

I understand the reason why, for ideological reasons, the government dared not use the term "user fee," because the Winnipeg Free Press on April 25, 1991, featured the following headlines: Showdown expected at Premier's meeting, Filmon vows to fight user fees. Therefore, the words "user fee" could not be used after that. The Premier was opposed to it.

The fee was implemented nonetheless, but, like Cinderella, it changed, poof, it was not really a user fee. The government minister said it was more—let us list the euphemisms—a contribution or an equity tax or an elective transportation contribution. All of those are euphemisms. The northerners had other names for it but I will not repeat those; I try to keep the language parliamentary.

But let us be clear, the same verbal mechanism, the same euphemism that transforms a garbage collector to a sanitary engineer was used in this instance. Calling a user fee any other name, for example, an equity tax, does not solve the problem. The fee or tax is still there. Calling the user fee a contribution suggests that it is being paid voluntarily as if the sick person had a real choice.

The then-Minister of Health, on June 24, 1991, said, quote: There is no user fee in Northern Patient Transportation Program. That is on the record. Also on the record is the fact that the minister's own briefing book referred to these fees as user fees. In fact, on May 13, 1993, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) pointed out this discrepancy, and the minister responded by saying, well, that was just an old and rejected copy of my briefing book—the before-and-after version of the Cinderella story, from harsh and onerous

and mean-spirited user fee to gentle equity tax, an elective transportation contribution.

However, northerners do not fool easily. We see that election after election. They need and they deserve equal access to medical services, equal to other Manitobans. The \$50 user fee is a deterrent to using those services. Virtually every town and city council in the North has told the government that. The Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities has told the government that. The president of MMA, Dr. Jim Ross, had told the government that.

In the Winnipeg Sun, July 4—and I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a very symbolic date indeed for anyone wishing to Americanize the health system—Dr. Ross said, quote, in the Winnipeg Sun: Plans to deregulate some health care procedures and institute a \$50 transportation user fee for northern residents will cut the poor off from possible life-saving procedures.

Now contrast what Dr. Ross says, cutting the poor off from possibly life-saving procedures with the government's version of the events.

On July 8, 1994, the current Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) wrote to the Thompson Citizen. His letter is headlined as, Northern Patient Transport Program very generous. In the letter, the minister states, quote: For some reason, critics have made this program out to be a special hardship for northern residents and say the Manitoba government is picking on residents of northern Manitoba.

I could not have said it better myself. Now, I know the minister believes the opposite, but the vast majority of northerners do not agree with him, nor are the northerners unaware of the fiscal restraints, the tight budgets that are the order of the day. They are well aware of how the federal government is offloading on the provinces and how this can affect health and educational programs.

But equally true is the fact that northerners know that governments can make choices. They can opt for or against the poor, for or against northerners. They can opt for or against a direction that will lead to a two-tiered system in health and education. There is enough

despair and poverty and illness in northern Manitoba without adding to it by levying user fees against those who can least afford it.

Government has choices, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For example, instead of paying an American consultant, Connie Curran, \$4 million, 80,000 Manitobans could have been exempted from the \$50 user fee. Governments have choices, and I hope that this government will choose freely and honourably to suspend, remove, abolish—I do not care what—the hated \$50 user fee associated with the Northern Patient Transportation Program. Thank you.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon and congratulate the honourable member for Flin Flon on bringing forward for discussion a matter which is of importance to northern Manitobans and should be of importance to all Manitobans, that being transportation for people to and from health services that we provide in our province.

We as Canadians are very, very fortunate people in the sense that, and I say this comparatively, because there are always problems, are there not, but I say we are very fortunate people in our country because the whole culture of our country has proved to be one of caring for the needs of our fellow citizens. I think that culture began many years ago, but I guess I could go back to the early part of this century when the government of Sir Rodmond Roblin began some major reforms and other governments have followed since to improve the lot of Manitobans.

One of the things that came along in the process of the development of our social and our health structure was a transportation program. Now, honourable members will know that when medicare first came to Canada, which has grown to become what we now call our health care system, there were a few ground rules laid down in the Canada Health Act. Those ground rules are the kind of things the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the federal Minister of Health and Welfare like to talk about, the fundamental principles of medicare.

* (1620)

We are talking about a very narrow thing here when we talk about medicare because, wisely I suggest, in our country the medicare program which had government participation has grown to become so much more than that. It is unfortunate today that the federal Minister of Health and Welfare goes after that very narrow area of health care services, which come under the insured services of the medicare system and decides to make a really big issue about that when health care and our health system is so much more than that today than ever was 30 years ago.

I have a theory as to why the federal minister is doing that and that theory has to do with the fact that when you are pulling out hundreds of millions of dollars from provincial health budgets, why not poke a stick in the eye of some Health minister somewhere and start a fight that will divert attention away from what is happening.

I say that to be critical of the approach, not of the bottom line, which I understand, I believe, federal governments have to get their houses in order just like the rest of us do. My comments are not meant to be a total condemnation of the federal government but to say their diversionary tactics are not only not appreciated, but they are not even good for health. However, if it works, I guess, and from a political standpoint, that is what is going to happen.

Back to what I was saying, though, about our health system, transportation to and from medical services or health services is not part of medicare, neither are dental services and a number of other services that are either covered or not covered to varying degrees. There is no law that says in medicare that this is what has to be covered. When it comes to transportation, there are people in this room, in this Chamber, who think that transportation is a right, transportation under the Canada Health Act. It is not. So we approach this issue from that point of view, and we will go from there.

We developed, for Manitobans living north of 53 to the west of Lake Winnipeg, and north of 51 to the east of Lake Winnipeg, a Northern Patient Transportation Program which, for emergent or urgent cases, provides a subsidy which is not available to other Manitobans

but, nonetheless, is available to Manitobans residing north of those two points. So, in 1991, the Province of Manitoba brought in this \$50 transportation charge, user fee, or whatever you want to call it. This is for the elective component of that program.

The honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) talked about euphemisms and how we use other words to describe user fees or whatever these things really are, which reminded me of Eugene Kostyra. I do not know how many honourable members opposite remember Eugene Kostyra. Well, he followed who we used to call Dr. Debt. Dr. Debt was Vic Schroeder—[interjection] No, no. Then along came—[interjection] Who? Eugene?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. If the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wants to get into debate, he can take 15 minutes when the minister is finished his.

The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member for Inkster reminded me of something which, I must confess, for the purposes of the debate this afternoon, had slipped my mind, and I was not going to mention it. He reminds me that the New Democrats are the first people in this province to close down hospital beds, and today we hear—the other day, for example, from the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) raising issues about The Pas Health Complex and forgetting altogether that it is his own colleagues that are the pioneers in hacking and slashing. But, speaking of euphemisms, it was Eugene Kostyra who came out in 1987 with the greatest tax grab in Manitoba history. I remember, I was sitting over there on the other side of the House in—

Point of Order

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are dealing with a very serious issue facing northern Manitobans, and that is the northern patient user fee that has been imposed by this government.

I do not know what relevance whatsoever the minister's reference to past budgets in the 1970s and

political fights that he had in the past has at all with this particular debate. I would just ask you to remind the minister to stay on point so we can have some useful discussion regarding this very important issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member does have a point of order. There is some relevancy required during the debate of resolutions.

The resolution that we are debating is dealing with the \$50 northern user fee.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I accept your ruling, and in using the expression "user fee" as you have in your ruling, you bring me back to the whole business about the euphemisms, which was raised initially by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), which I assume was relevant because he was not called to order.

The euphemism that I was going to recall was the one that described that tax grab, which grabbed taxes in every kind of area you could imagine, and they were referred to not as taxes or the greatest tax grab in Manitoba history, but revenue-raising initiatives. Just for your book of euphemisms, I thought I would raise that for all honourable members.

We have to govern for all Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we as a government feel that some of the things that the member for Flin Flon raises, those things are true. You know, northern Manitoba, every place in northern Manitoba is a long way from the Health Sciences Centre or from the various specialist services that are required by Manitobans. That is why there is a subsidy for northern Manitobans.

I realize the honourable member and his colleagues are really unhappy and there might even be some northern Manitobans who share in that unhappiness about the implementation of a \$50 fee. But when you consider the totality of the subsidy and you consider that people in other places below the latitudes that I referred to have to pay 100 percent, you have to ask yourself, well, there is an issue here of an equitable sort of arrangement for all Manitobans.

For example, what about the citizen of Red Deer Lake, which is to the south of that particular line that was—you know, all lines are sort of artificial, are they not? Well, I say to you that Red Deer Lake is a long way from Winnipeg, and I do not know that they have a cardiac unit at Red Deer Lake. In fact, I do not think they do. So people from there have to come to the city of Winnipeg for emergent and urgent matters. You know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? For those people there is no charge if you happen to live north of 53 and north of 51, but for somebody at Red Deer Lake they have got to pay it all.

This is the inherent part of this argument that the honourable member for Flin Flon and his colleagues, altruistic I know they are about people living in northern Manitoba, and I am too, but they forget to remember to mention that. They forget to mention that somebody in Pierson, Manitoba, for example, down in the southwest corner, has quite a distance to go as well to get to Winnipeg or to Brandon. The point is, if they go to Brandon and they go by ambulance, they pay. It does not matter how far. The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is asking how far.

The reason there is a subsidy is because there is a difference in distance. The honourable member forgets to remember to tell us that this is a subsidy and not a right. It is a subsidy. What we are doing is asking the patient in those cases that are not urgent or emergent to make a \$50 contribution to this cost. Now, everybody else in Manitoba pays it all.

* (1630)

So, difficult as this issue is, I am sure, for the honourable member, and difficult as it is for those of us on this side of the House too because there has been that subsidy, there is an element of equity that has to be discussed as we discuss this issue. I can take honourable members further down the road, and there are still great distances to the city of Winnipeg or to Dauphin or to Brandon or wherever people happen to be referred.

We have people living in the Powell area, the Mafeking area and the Birch River area and the Bowsman and the Swan River area and those places.

I can go on down that particular highway and talk about Minitonas and Pine River and Ethelbert, and then we could turn to the right and go east from there and find people living in Gilbert Plains and Roblin and Grandview and head south on 83 to Russell, St. Lazare, Binscarth. There are a lot of places in this province where people live and all those people pay 100 percent of their cost, or they seek supplementary coverage through other arrangements like Blue Cross or some such thing like that.

I do not pretend to tell northern Manitobans that the imposition of a fee for them is something we like to see, but what the honourable member forgets to remember to tell us is that the largest part of the cost is subsidized by government. It is as if the honourable member would have people believe—I bet you when he goes to Flin Flon he does not tell the people about the people everywhere else in Manitoba who have to pay for it all. That is an important point that the honourable member is forgetting in his resolution.

I would like it if every single aspect of everybody's care was something that could be picked up by the taxpayer, but you know the taxpayer says, do a reasonable job. Do not do any more of the Eugene Kostyra and Victor Schroeder style of government and stick your hands deep down into our pockets and keep pulling money out. I remember Roland Penner did not like that particular analogy when I said, get your hands out of my pockets. He went into a long tirade against me for saying that, bringing in all kinds of Marxist sorts of principles. Maybe they worked in those days for a while, but they do not work in Manitoba or anywhere I know of in Canada.

If you look at electoral results across the country, even Romano's conservatives recognized that you cannot operate that way anymore, and they and the people and the politicians in British Columbia, whatever they are these days, are talking about balanced budgets. Those are the things that people are demanding.

There are a number of other things that I wanted to say—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. McCrae: —but it looks like somebody else is going to have to say them, but thank you very much.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): And indeed I will say them, because I must admit I was wondering whether I was going to debate today, but after hearing the 15-minute tour of the road map of Manitoba here, I am absolutely compelled to speak. I wonder if the minister might want to take that map out again and check and see some of the communities that he, his government, has imposed—not him personally, but the government he was a part of—a \$50 user fee on.

If he would like to check, for example, because I have been accused—I remember the Premier in this House saying, well, the people of Gimli have to pay. Would the minister like to check where Gimli is on the map? How far it is, in terms of the road map, to drive from Gimli to Winnipeg? By the way, I have been in Gimli quite a few times. You have a choice of several highways. Would he like to compare that with Thompson, Manitoba, which is an eight-hour drive, or Flin Flon, Manitoba, which is an eight-and-a-half-hour drive?

I would also like to compare Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake because if he checks, there is a map that lists a road there, but if he talks to his Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay), he may find out just what condition that road is in because that is another three and a half hours. It is a grand total of about 12 hours. If you live in Lynn Lake, you cannot drive into Winnipeg the same day and drive back. That is the reality of life. You have to get on a bus. It takes you 14 hours from Lynn Lake to get in. You have to go over one of the worst roads in Manitoba. The second and third worst roads are also in northern Manitoba, coincidentally, and when you get to Winnipeg—and by the way, what this government does, it hits you for the first \$50. You do not get coverage of the costs you have to be faced with. Now, I will tell you. I can show him constituents of mine who have got on that bus and constituents of the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) have got on that bus, got down to Winnipeg and the appointment is cancelled. And then you go back.

Maybe the minister—and I know the minister is from Brandon which is a grand total of two and a half hours

depending on how fast you drive, I guess, from Winnipeg and has a heck of a lot more resources in its hospitals than we do in Thompson. In fact, the Brandon Hospital is considered an urban hospital and I realize the minister may be trying to restrict those resources, but the bottom line is, get that road map out and check where northern Manitoba is and you will see why we are frustrated by what this government is doing.

Now if the minister will pass that geography test, and I remember when he wrote a letter to the paper, my local paper, saying how lucky we were in northern Manitoba to have the Northern Patient Transportation Program. Well I guess we are lucky, too, when it comes to paying the mining taxes and the income taxes and when the money comes from the hydro in northern Manitoba or the forestry. I guess we are lucky, too, in that.

But let him not say that anybody in northern Manitoba is getting a great benefit from the Northern Patient Transportation Program. The fact is, if you live in Winnipeg it costs you \$1.35 to get on the bus and go see a doctor. If you live in northern Manitoba it costs a heck of a lot more than that. And it is not only the cost of the transportation. It is because you cannot get in and out the same day so you have to be faced with food and you have to be faced with accommodation costs which are not covered.

So I want to deal with that. If the minister wants to wave the road map around, let him look at the reality of the people he has imposed the \$50 fee on and the reality of trying to access medical services which are often not available in northern Manitoba, certainly not available in your home communities. Even in Thompson they are often not available, as well.

That is why this was brought in by the Schreyer government to create equity, real equity, not this kind of reductionist equity the government minister talks about because you know he can quote the communities that are not eligible for this, as well. But the fact is that his government took out the eligibility for full coverage of at least the transportation costs that he has made reference to. Let it also be clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who it applies to, because the government, when it

brought in this particular charge and it is a user fee, let there be no doubt about it, used the same kind of euphemisms, you know. The minister likes this word here.

Well the ultimate euphemism is elective procedures. You know what is elective? I will tell you from personal experience of the people I have represented, that I have raised these concerns with the minister, and I am glad he has the road map out again. Thompson, by the way, is at the top of Highway 6. It is about eight hours from Winnipeg. I know the minister has flown in to our community on a few occasions, but he may not have had the opportunity to drive, and I could take him through some of the other communities that are affected, too, in case he is concerned. The same thing for the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), too. I know he has been in Thompson recently, but if he wants to drive it, it is a little bit more of a lengthy trip.

But anyway, elective surgery, what is elective surgery and who has to pay this \$50 fee? I will give you one example. It is a woman who contacted me, in fact I went and visited her, and you know what? She has a child, there are only 300 kids in the world have this condition. You know what? She was told that, you know, there were other things that frustrated her, the fact that she was told if she lived in Winnipeg they would have child-care services available for her.

She was told she should quit her job in Thompson because that is the only way she could realistically look after her child. But her child had to go to Winnipeg for treatment nine times, and do you know how many times this child, this baby with this rare condition, you know how many times that young family had to pay the \$50 fee? Nine times. Each and every single time. That is elective.

* (1640)

I will tell you about another constituent of mine who had cancer. She has gone for treatment. Now, if you go for treatment you are covered. For five years she has been going for follow-up treatment for cancer. You know what? When you go for follow-up treatment for an appointment, that is not covered. That is elective.

I can run through numerous examples like that. You want me to tell you about how lucky people are of this great benefit? How about the people that, you know, even under the current system are told they have to go by bus. Then they have to pay the first \$50. That means they get a grand benefit of \$70.

I can tell you the person that—one of the most bizarre cases that I have seen—where he had to go by bus. He had to pay the \$50 user fee. The rest was covered by this generous government, this other \$70. This is a person who has had cancer, who has a colostomy bag. I cannot believe that this person had to go to Winnipeg for treatment on the bus.

I can go through numerous other examples of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The person that was borderline dialysis. You know, if he went for dialysis he was covered. I will tell you, this kind of sums it up for me, because I ran into him on the plane one day. He was going down for medical treatment. He said to me, it is frustrating; he said, I am on UIC. I had to give up my job because of my medical situation, and he said, you know, I have got to pay this \$50 fee. He said, in a while it will not bother me because, he said, eventually after my UI runs out I will probably end up on welfare. You know what? When I am on welfare I will not have to worry about it anymore, it will be covered. You know, I raised this in this House. I did not raise it with a name involved, but it was interesting, because a very short period of time after that in that case the exception was made. He did have the fee waived, but that is the reality of it.

I will tell you about some of the other people who are getting hit by this elective coverage. I have known people who live in communities where there is no employment. They hit 65 and they go on a pension. Guess what happens, Mr. Deputy Speaker? You have to pay it. You are not on welfare anymore, you are on a pension. You pay that fee.

So when the minister goes around and waves the map around I would like him to sit down with the people that have expressed their concern to me, the young family that has had to go nine times, the woman that has had to go for cancer follow-up treatment every several months. You want to run through that and

wonder why northerners get frustrated when we are faced with this in particular.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must admit, I could put it in political terms. I mean, I do recall the then-Minister of Northern Affairs, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), talking about us not knowing how to vote right. Quite frankly, I hate to say this, there are a lot of people who wonder that when it came down to this item if that was not a factor as well. You know, regardless of the politics of it, and the minister can trot out his road map, the fact is, there are a lot of northern Manitobans who face far greater difficulty in accessing medical care than anyone else in this province.

Where there are rural Manitobans that are facing similar difficulties, I would suggest in terms of equity what you should do. You should deal with those concerns as well. That is the logical conclusion of the argument put forward by the minister. It is not to make it more difficult for people who have a difficulty to begin with anyway. I mean, what you are doing is, you are imposing this fee on the people—I tell you, there are people in my community who have no road access. They are hit by this fee.

There are people in my communities who are going time and time again. There is no restriction that you pay it once in the year. There is no deductible here. You pay it nine times if you have to go nine times. You pay it 10 times if you have to go 10 times. You know, it is a real hardship on people.

The fact is, to the minister, this great benefit that he talks about only covers certain of the costs that are covered in terms of the additional cost you face. Now, I am not suggesting this minister turn around, this government turn around, and cover all the costs. I understand that. I would suggest they review the program. It was a good program when the Schreyer government brought it in. It is still a good program despite the fact that this government is eroding it, but it could be reviewed because I know of many people that should be covered, just in any sense of fairness, and they are not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the route we should go. That is the spirit, I believe, of this resolution. Let us

review the process, and let us not forget that the reason this was brought in in the first place was straightforward and simple.

We have two realities in terms of health care in this province. The one is, we can talk about the issues, the two-tiered system that we talk about, but I would suggest to you, if you want to see a model of a two-tiered system, you look at what we have to be faced with in many rural and northern communities because, in essence, where do you have a two-tiered system? It is based on geography.

Our hospitals have been hard hit by cuts. We face doctor shortages. We face that whole equation on the one hand, but, when it finally comes down to the analysis where I am sick or someone in my family is or someone else in my community is and they have to access medical care and it is in Winnipeg, I would suggest to you the ultimate insult is to say, oh, well, we do not cover elective processes; we cover emergencies.

You know, elective processes is going for treatment that is not available for a young baby with a special condition. It is going for checkups related to cancer. It is going for checkups related to specialists. That is what is called elective.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us put the road maps and the sort of rather entertaining speech of the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) aside for one moment. Let us put aside everything I have said about the background of this. I ask you one question in terms of fairness. Do you think it is fair? Does anybody in this House think it is fair that those people that I have outlined should be paying this? Should that family have to pay nine times?

An Honourable Member: Choice.

Mr. Ashton: Choice? No one chose to have cancer. No one chose the fact that there are no cancer specialists in our community. No one chose to have a child with a special condition as the member opposite talks about, the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson). I would have thought the member would have had some sympathy. I realize many of his communities are a lot closer to Winnipeg than our

northern communities, but I said rural communities as well because many rural communities face that.

We understand that bottom line, but I ask you, I appeal to members of this House in terms of fairness. Can anyone in this House say that it is fair for those people that I have outlined to be paying the \$50 fee? I think there is only one conclusion, that it is not fair and that this government, regardless of the background of this particular user fee, should go back to the drawing board and make sure that those people who have to go nine times, who have to go for cancer treatment, do not have to pay it.

I ask that as a bare minimum, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is why I say the spirit of this resolution should be supported. That is not only to oppose the \$50 fee, but to review the Northern Patient Transportation Program to make sure that it is fair to everyone in this province, and I have suggested especially rural members across the way.

I do not mean this as a slight against urban members. They know what it is like—not entirely—but they know what it is like. I believe that if they had any real sense of freedom in this Chamber to be able to vote in private members' hour with their conscience, they would vote for it because their communities, maybe not to the same extent, are often there. They know what it is like not to have medical service available in your community. I would suggest even many urban members, too, would have a real sense of that.

That is why I appeal to people to vote on this in private members' hour as private members and fully support this resolution brought on by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen).

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to put a few words on the record with respect to this particular resolution.

I am very sympathetic in terms of what it is the opposition is saying on an issue no doubt they feel very compassionate about. I make reference to the speech that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) had given just recently. That is, that we have Bill 201 inside this Chamber which talks about those five fundamental

principles. We are trying to say here what is a definition, what are the types of health care services that we want to protect with the scarce resources that are out there?

Then I listened to, in particular, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). He posed the question in terms of fairness, and we have to sympathize with individuals who are put into a situation that is somewhat sad, that makes us feel bad. You know, when I think about that, I think would it not be absolutely wonderful and delightful if in fact of having to cut back in some areas, that we were allowed to be able to expand. I think, for example, of the eight-year-old child that maybe has asthma, that has to pay for its inhaler; I think of the nine-year-old child that has to wear glasses but maybe because of the family situation they do not necessarily have the funds to buy the second pair of glasses, or in some cases, the first pair of glasses.

There are virtually endless services that could be provided through medicare. I think we have to acknowledge that. We could make a lot of sad stories, there is absolutely no doubt about that, but I think at the core of any health care policy, once you have an agreement in principle, and we talk about health care and the ambulance services and we all agree that is an important aspect, we also have to ensure that there is a sense of fairness that is out there.

The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) points out—and my purpose is not to defend the Minister of Health. Quite frankly, it would have been nice to have had a discussion so that we would know in terms of what the actual costs are for both urban and rural residents. There are always benefits, many benefits. I would welcome the opportunity at sometime in the future to be able to live in rural Manitoba. There are many benefits of living in rural Manitoba. There are many benefits of living in larger urban centres. It is a question of choice, and there are, unfortunately, some costs that are out there, some negative aspects to it.

When we encounter some of those negative aspects such as, for example, what this resolution deals with, we have to be able to as a governing body collectively determine whether or not this is in fact a fee that is

going to prevent individuals from receiving essential services.

I was pleased when the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) made reference to the one constituent that he met on the aircraft flying back and forth. Through this particular discussion, and the member brought it up inside the Chamber, they were able to get this particular fee waived. I think that is important that that dialogue occurs.

If in fact there is an argument to be made about transportation to medical facilities, that is what we should be talking about and how we can make sure that there is equity across the province, whether you live in the city of Winnipeg in the Tyndall Park area that I represent, Thompson, or if you live out in Morden, there has to be some consistency in policy. There has to be that, first and foremost. We have to take into consideration all circumstances.

* (1650)

I am not going to say that we would oppose this resolution. I am very much though sympathetic to what it is that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) are saying. I think that the issue is much broader than that, and I would have liked to have participated in a debate that deals with ambulance services in general and have a good two-hour discussion or a question-answer dialogue which no doubt we have had in the past in the health care Estimates. There is always going to be a certain element of politics to it.

With those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would obviously not oppose this particular resolution coming to a vote.

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it must have been reasonably nice 20 years ago to have been a government that could have played, I guess, the role if you will, of Santa Claus to borrow money endlessly and be the nice person, where we could fund all of the things that we hear the cries from across the way. We hear these cries all the time. It would be nice to fund everything and be that nice guy and nice person.

I like to be perceived or be known as a person who would never hurt anybody intentionally. I like to be known as a person who goes out of my way to pick up a hitchhiker on the road who looks like they are not the most wealthy people. I like to be known as the kind of person who comes across an accident and seeing smoke starting to come out of a vehicle that is turned upside down, I like to be known as the kind of person—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that we are dealing with the elimination of a \$50 user fee. I am sure the honourable member is about to speak to it, and I am looking forward to it.

Mr. Sveinson: Just talking about this \$50 user fee and the fact that our governments today, the federal government and all the provinces right across Canada, are having to become very efficient or try to make reductions wherever they can without hurting people. I was getting to the point where I like to be known as that kind of a person, too, where in fact I do it with the least possible hurt wherever I can. I also like to be known that I am part of this government that has done just that.

This government has tried to make all programs user friendly and efficient. The demand came from the people of Manitoba, from the people of Canada. They also demanded that a fairness be built into the system. We now come down to the finer point of places—and it has been mentioned earlier, and we can take a number of those, Roblin-Russell, Swan River, Sprague, Waskada, Falcon, I could go on and on and on—the many areas where people have to travel hours, many hours, to get to Winnipeg or get to a facility where they can, in fact, get treatment. They, in fact, have to pay all of the costs of transportation—all of it. They have to pay for lodging and so on while they are in the city or the place where they are receiving that treatment.

Now, that is not to say that we then say that everybody should pay; without a heart, we just say, no, everybody has to pay. We did not do that. In fact, if we look closely, we can say in 1994-95, the Northern Patient Transportation Program provided 100 percent subsidy to 1,530 individuals who were transported for either urgent or emergent medical care—1,530; 6,862

individuals were transported under the elective component of the program. Of these, 2,368 were transported by air. This means that these individuals received—or at least in the majority of cases—return air transportation subsidy at an average cost of approximately \$500 per flight, of which they were only required to pay \$50. I think that we are being fair.

There are cases, too, that have been mentioned earlier that in fact could not pay, and I do know of those cases that did not pay. I have many friends in the North, many friends, and over the past number of years I have visited a number of them and in fact spoken to many who have come out and visited us.

Most of these people, most of them, have never used the Northern Patient Transportation Program—have never used it. Many of them organize a trip out of the North into, be it Winnipeg, some even into the Thompson area, but in to Winnipeg and maybe Brandon, areas like that. They organize where they are going to go and see the doctor, maybe get fitted or checked for new glasses. They might go to a football game or a hockey game. They make, indeed, a trip out of the trip out of the North and never ask for or receive any part of the Northern Transportation Program.

I am not saying that everybody should have to work this way, but I think that what I am saying is that the northerners are trying to be part of that whole plan where in fact we are all doing our part, and if we can afford to do that, we do it. So I commend those northerners very much. I also think that we have to try to continue to be fair, and I say to the people from the northern area, if there are cases, bring them to the minister, talk to the minister. It is not a fast-and-sure thing that the minister is going to say yes to everything, but I am sure that he is willing to sit down and discuss and talk about the situation, and perhaps at that time or down the road there would be possibilities of some change in that program.

* (1700)

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

Madam Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for La Verendrye

(Mr. Sveinson) will have six minutes remaining. The hour being 5 p.m., as previously agreed, we will now move to the second resolution.

**Res. 16—Reduced Speed Limits
in School Zones**

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): I move, seconded by the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), that

WHEREAS on July 29, 1992, City Council adopted Clause 2 of the Report of the Committee on Works and Operations which recommended that the Province of Manitoba, Department of Highways and Transportation, consider an amendment to The Highway Traffic Act to limit speeds to 30 kilometres per hour in the proximity of a school; and

WHEREAS in March 1995 at the annual Manitoba Association of School Trustees convention a resolution was adopted that the Minister of Highways be requested to make amendments to The Highway Traffic Act to establish speed zones in the proximity of schools with a maximum speed of 30 kilometres per hour during school hours; and

WHEREAS to date the matter remains unresolved.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Highways and Transportation to consider an amendment to The Highway Traffic Act to limit speeds to 30 kilometres per hour in school zones.

Motion presented.

Ms. Barrett: It is my pleasure to speak this evening on the resolution before us requesting the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay) to amend The Highway Traffic Act to allow for a 30 kilometre per hour speed zone limit around public schools.

I wish that we did not have to deal with this resolution today. If the government had shown any initiative in this regard, it would have acted on both the request in 1992 from the City of Winnipeg and the resolution in 1995 by the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. I hope that, after the discussion this

evening, the government will reconsider its inaction and move to support this legislation.

The action that the city, or the inaction that the city, has taken to date has been far from responsive and, as a matter of fact, according to us, it has been unacceptable, to say the least. One of the first things that the city has been told by the province is that they should make a representation for a school speed zone of 30 kilometres an hour on a case-by-case basis. Madam Speaker, this would mean that any school would have to go to the province individually on a case-by-case basis to make an application for that school speed zone reduction. Why should the safety of any of our children be more important than that of all of our children? I would like to say that there is a friend of mine in the public gallery, Melissa Bailey, who is eight years old, and has that very question to ask of the government tonight. Why should her safety be any less important than the safety of any other school child in the city of Winnipeg or, for that matter, the province of Manitoba.

If some schools are deemed acceptable to have reduced speed zones, why are not all schools in need of this? We believe that all schools should have these zones instituted, not just some on an ad hoc basis. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the behaviour of this government has been to deal with situations with concerns on an ad hoc basis rather than as a matter of policy. The Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger), the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) all talk in the House in response to questions brought forward by the opposition about situations: Bring them to my attention, and I will deal with it on an individual basis.

Well, that is not good enough for us, and it should not be good enough for the government. In all of these issues, and the issue we are dealing with here today, school speed zone limits, we must deal with this as a policy issue, not on a school-by-school basis. The city traffic engineer has been quoted in the press that, once one area or one school has a school speed zone in place, and I quote him—I am quoting here, Madam Speaker, so I hope I will not be ruled out of order,

quoting: Then all hell breaks loose because everybody wants the same thing. End quote.

Well, Madam Speaker, our response to that is, what is the problem? Everyone should have the same thing. This is a good and sufficient and reasonable request that the City of Winnipeg and the school trustees are bringing before this government. Another comment that has been made by the government is that there would be a significant cost attached to implementing this request. Well, heck, we know how the government feels about putting in place any programs that might have any additional cost to them.

Madam Speaker, we feel, on this side of the House, that perhaps the government, in refusing this very logical request, is putting costs before the safety of the children of the province of Manitoba, and we think that is unconscionable and should not be allowed to take place.

The Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) has also stated that parents, if they are concerned about their children's safety, should drop off and pick up their children from school. Well, Madam Speaker, this just shows once again the complete and utter sense of unreality that pervades the government benches.

The government knows, they have to know, they are dealing with the implications of this every day, that the majority of school children in the city of Winnipeg come from families that either are single-parent families or are families where both parents work or are families where the caregiver is working at odd hours.

There is a minority, and less and less of a minority, of parents of families in the city of Winnipeg today that have what this government still thinks is the norm, and should be the norm, of two parents, one of whom stays at home all day and can drop their child off at 8:30 in the morning and pick their child up at 3:30 in the afternoon or even later, should that child stay after four, one of the increasingly reduced after-hours programs that sometimes happen at school.

Madam Speaker, the Minister of Highways sent a letter on July 31 to the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 which had requested that school speed zones be

allowed to be implemented in all schools in the city. That letter states, and I am quoting here: Reduced speed zones are not necessarily the most effective means of ensuring public safety.

They commented on a study that they referenced to the City of Saskatoon. The traffic engineer for the City of Saskatoon—we did our homework, and the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) obviously had not done his—we contacted the City of Saskatoon and spoke with a staff sergeant who is in charge of this area of traffic safety. He had not only never been contacted by the Minister of Highways, but he had no idea what this study was that was being quoted. He had never heard of the study. So clearly the Minister of Highways does not care about this issue of school safety, because if he had, he would have made sure that the study he quoted was accurate.

And speaking to the issue of safety, when the minister says that they are not necessarily the most effective means of ensuring public safety, well, no one is suggesting that only one form of safety should be in place to ensure that children are safe.

What we are suggesting in this resolution and what the school divisions are requesting and the City of Winnipeg has requested is that this one piece be implemented as a part of an entire program.

I would like to ask how a reduced speed zone could not be at least partially effective in increasing the safety of children? If we carry that thinking to its logical conclusion we would have no speed limits at all. Why are there some roads in the province that have 100 kilometres as a speed limit? Why are there others that have 90? Why is the urban speed limit set at 50? Why are backlane speed limits set at 20 kilometres an hour?

If they cannot ensure the safety of people, then why have them there at all? Well, the reason, as we all know, is that they do act as a partial safety device. It is a recognition that some roads or situations require a lower speed limit to ensure pedestrian driver and passenger safety. That is all we are asking for here is an additional safeguard.

* (1710)

The school division and the City of Winnipeg have not just come cap in hand to the province saying, you do this; we are not going to be responsible. Over the spring and summer of this year representatives from a number of Winnipeg school divisions met to discuss this issue. They sought the advice and input from the Department of Highways and Transportation, the City of Winnipeg Streets and Transportation Department and the City of Winnipeg Police.

At a meeting held just this September 6 this year, Winnipeg School Division No. 1, Assiniboine South School Division, Fort Garry School Division, St. Vital School Division, the Norwood School Division, the Seven Oaks School Division and the Transcona-Springfield School Division, met and unanimously passed the following resolutions dealing with school and students safety issues.

Now I am not going to read them all in their entirety, Madam Speaker, but they deal with an understanding that the city, the province, the school divisions and the police department all have to work together on a number of fronts in order to ensure that children like Melissa Bailey here and the tens of thousands of other children throughout the city and hopefully the province have that extra added safety support that will enable them and their families to feel more comfortable as they go to and come home from school.

The school divisions and the City of Winnipeg are going to work co-operatively to determine criteria to identify intersections where additional safety measures are required. They have asked as well that The Highway Traffic Act be amended to require motorists to obey and observe school patrols and adult crossing guards. This is another request that is not part of the specific private members' resolution, but it is another request of the province, and that the school trustees will work together to co-ordinate a comprehensive traffic safety program with the city, the province and other interested agencies for implementation in the fall of 1996. So, Madam Speaker, the school community is prepared to work on this.

Then they have asked that Section 98(2) of The Highway Traffic Act, which talks about the fact that the traffic board may make orders for fixing maximum

speed limits of less than 50 kilometres an hour, be amended to include school zones. So it is enabling legislation to allow the City of Winnipeg to put in place school zones. Simple, Madam Speaker.

In conclusion, I think that we have shown in this resolution and the school boards and the City of Winnipeg, the Association of School Trustees and the City of Winnipeg itself have all shown that they are prepared to work together co-operatively and to work with the province to ensure the additional safety of school children as they go to and from schools. What we are asking in this resolution, Madam Speaker, is simply a very minor adjustment to The Highway Traffic Act, a very simple amendment which would have two words attached to it. Now is that so difficult?

What we would like to do is to urge all members of the House today to support this resolution, and we would urge the government in its way of supporting this resolution to bring in such an amendment to The Highway Traffic Act. I can guarantee you that should the government do this expeditiously, we would be prepared to pass this amendment virtually immediately. The government has shown that it can bring in legislation very quickly, and we have shown that we are prepared to do our part, so I would ask, I would urge all members of this House to support this resolution and to put into effect the implementation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, I found it is interesting that in the resolution not once does the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) state why this should be happening. All you do is say, well, we should do this because the City Council and some school divisions want it.

There are no statistics. I listened to your talk, and I do not remember hearing any statistics that show that there were 10 children, there were 20 children, there were 50 children that were killed because the speed—

An Honourable Member: So there has to be children killed before you move

Mrs. Render: Well, you did not say they were killed; you did not say that they were injured or in danger. I

did not hear any of that. You know, there is a saying called, "If it's not broken, don't fix it." As I say, I did not hear the member say that there were almost accidents, that there was a child almost injured, a child almost killed.

Now, I can remember I think probably there are a number of us here in the Chamber that can remember when there were speed zones around schools. I can remember seeing those signs posted "Slow down," I think it was to 15 miles an hour. In fact, I think when you took your driver's test, if you happened to go through a school zone without slowing down, I think that was an automatic failure. I am not too sure what year, mid-1970s I understand, this part of The Highway Act was repealed. Obviously, it was repealed for a reason. Again, my understanding is that it was repealed because it was shown that reducing the speed in the school area was not necessarily going to prevent an accident.

At the time of the repeal there was something called the drive imprudent that was put in. This is called, the offence of drive imprudent. This was expanded to include a stipulation that a driver reduce the speed of his vehicle where the presence of a child on or near a highway dictates a slower speed in the interest of safety, whether or not the child was in proximity to the grounds of a school or a playground.

Madam Speaker, when we drive down streets, do we go at 30 miles an hour—or in this day and age I guess it is 50 kilometres an hour—and not bother to slow down? Do we not use our common sense, that if we see children that we reduce our speed? Too often it was found in the past that drivers only reduced their speed around the school and thought, well, okay, I am obeying the law here, but whipped by a playground, whipped up and down very busy residential streets, did not reduce their speed. So common sense to me really is what has to be the bottom line right here.

I also find it very interesting that law enforcement agencies are not supportive of the mandatory reduced speeds, not only because they are difficult to enforce, and that should not necessarily be the reason that they are against it, but because they have felt that having different speed zones, different speeds within a

particular area, is actually more of a problem, is more likely to cause a problem than having one single speed.

I mentioned to the member that I did not hear any statistics from her. I would just like to let her know that the City of Winnipeg Streets and Transportation Department accident statistics do not support the need for reduced speed zones. For a five-year period ending December 1994, for children ages five to 14, there were a total of 548 accidents. There were only four of these accidents that were anywhere near a school area.

There were 319 accidents occurring midblock, and these accidents had nothing to do with speeding. It had more to do with the child jaywalking, not crossing properly in a properly designated area. Maybe what we have to be doing is again alerting our motorists that they keep a watchful eye out and also that the children must be taught that they have to cross at certain designated areas.

I was at a parents meeting at one of my schools a couple of weeks ago, and they were talking about school safety. Not once during that entire discussion did reduced speed enter the conversation. What it was was the fact of the congestion of the cars. With so many parents picking up and dropping off children there were a lot of cars in the area. Kids were darting in and out from the cars. These were cars that were parked, they were not going. Again, I just want to reinforce that it is not necessarily the speed, it is other factors that we must take into consideration. These parents were talking about parent patrols and other kinds of ways to implement safety around the school area.

One other thing, I remember the member saying that she took offence that each school could apply on a case-by-case basis. She took the line of argument, are not all of our children important? Well, of course, all of our children are important, but I think the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) is a very reasonable person, and I think she will also realize that there are some schools in various parts of the province, not just the city, which are on very uncongested areas.

Now should every school have to fall into line with every other school? Do school boards not want to have

the autonomy to make the decision themselves as to what they feel is necessary for their school? I think so, Madam Speaker. So if a school is in a very congested area of the city and if they feel that there is a necessity to have a reduced speed limit, then let that school apply, but why should every single school in the city have to do what every other school is doing if they do not feel it is relevant for their particular school?

* (1720)

Now, having said all of that, I understand that The Highway Traffic Act is undergoing a rewrite, and I understand that the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay) is going to revisit this argument, revisit the proposal, to see whether or not, just to get really up-to-date facts, to see whether or not a reduced speed limit is necessary. So he is not an uncaring person, as the member put on the record. He cares very much, but he wants to make sure that whatever is done is going to be effective, and it may very well be, Madam Speaker, that what has to be done is more patrols on the street. These patrols could be parent patrols on the street.

As I said earlier, I see kids running across the highway. I see kids playing on the street in the residential areas of our city. There is no reduced speed limit there. So are we saying that the child at the playground at the school, that is only where they should be? As I say, Madam Speaker, we as residents, we as drivers have a responsibility, whether it is a child on the street or an adult on the street, to be using our common sense. When we see that there is going to be action, then we should be slowing down. We should not need always to have something posted.

Now, I have in front of me a report that was done in Saskatchewan. It covered a 10-year period, and it was done by the transportation section of the city of Saskatoon. It completed a review of the need to establish reduced speed zones, and their conclusion, Madam Speaker, was that reduced speed zones around school areas was just not the answer. There were better and more effective ways to bring about increased safety for children. So let it not be said that people on this side of the House, the members on this side of the House, are not concerned about the safety of our

children. We are very concerned, and that is why we want to make sure that, whatever we do, it is going to be the most effective kind of measure that we can do.

One of the things that the member mentioned was that, if we do anything, it is going to be a cost factor. Well, regretfully, in this day and age, we do have to think about cost factors, and that is why I say, yes, certainly cost will enter into our decision. That is why we want to make sure that our dollars are spent properly.

The member may have forgotten that if these reduced speed zones, if The Highway Traffic Act is changed and every single school across this whole province, they will all be affected. Case by case might be the way to do it because, if every single school falls in a lump and is treated the same—and I am sure each school board wants to have the autonomy. They do not want to be treated—

An Honourable Member: Everybody on the school board wants this.

Mrs. Render: No, that is not correct. Every school board does not want it. What the member—

An Honourable Member: We are not just talking about Winnipeg; we are talking about Manitoba.

Mrs. Render: We are talking about the whole province. There will be very significant costs associated with the creation of reduced speed zones around all schools, because it means posting the new speed limit signs, alerting motorists to the change in speed as the school zone is entered and what the normal speed is once you leave that particular school zone.

Madam Speaker, I just want to reinforce once more that the city of Winnipeg's traffic accidents statistics simply do not indicate the need for the reinstatement of reduced speed zones, that studies have shown that optimum safety conditions exist when all motorists travel at uniform rates of speed, that danger increases when there are differential speeds. Again, I just want to reiterate that what we have to do when we enter an area where we see there are likely going to be children,

that if we think we should be reducing our speed, then we do so.

My memory fails me. I cannot remember whether those reduced speed zones were also in effect after school hours. I think they were only 15 minutes before school started—[interjection] Yes, and at recess time and for 15 minutes or a half an hour at the end of the school day. I think that is how it worked.

As the former Minister of Highways points out to me, it was very, very difficult to enforce. I just wanted to conclude by saying that we on this side are very concerned with the safety of children. We are concerned with the safety of everyone. So whether it is around schools, whether it is around the park area of the city or just a heavily congested residential area, we must use common sense and safety and slow down, whether or not there is a posted sign saying to slow down. We are concerned with the safety of children. We will be studying this further. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I would like to take this opportunity to put on the record several of my comments and those that came from the school divisions that first brought forward this petition in the last, I would say, two or three years. This is not a new issue. This is two or three times that school divisions have raised the issue to the province and unfortunately have always been turned down.

When the Conservative side of the House talks about speed not being a safety issue, it just actually gets me very angry. Very angry. What we are talking about are children and children that are going to and from school and using schools and school grounds as playgrounds all day long. We are not talking about only at loading time and unloading time.

The fact is that not only is it a Winnipeg issue, not only is it an urban issue, petitions were received from communities all across Manitoba, from Brandon, from Virden, from the Interlake, from the North, all wanting reduced speed zones near schools. Why? Are all those parents wrong? Are those communities wrong? Is this government going to say that, no, it is irrelevant, that speed has nothing to do with safety?

I heard the minister say that. He was quoted as saying, there is no evidence. [interjection] Madam Speaker, let me show. A member on the other side says, there are no statistics. Let me quote from probably the same report, City of Winnipeg, Table K, of the City of Winnipeg Works and Operations Division, Streets and Transportation Department, interoffice memorandum dated May 23, 1995: 87 children had collisions with vehicles—guess who won—near schools, 87 in the vicinity of schools. Is that enough of a reason to slow down? Do cars slow down?

I can assure you, living across the street from an elementary school, that we can clock the speed limits and many people exceed it. It is important to post signage. It is important to provide drivers with a message that, yes, this is an area frequented by children.

In the community that I come from, the amount of green space that we have is very limited, and I invite you to come in to the core of Winnipeg and see that. The school areas, which are very small in relative size to many other school grounds that you may be familiar with, are used as a community resource. That is our park. We are not talking about a limited time from 8:30 to 9:10 or whatever. Those grounds are used from seven o'clock in the morning until late in the evening.

So I would say to this government that if you want statistics we can bring them out. We can talk about what jurisdictions have reduced speed zones. B.C. does. The Northwest Territory does. Alberta does. Saskatchewan does. Yes, even Alberta has school zones. Ontario does. Quebec does.

I am not sure that there is a provincial jurisdiction that does not have school zones besides Manitoba, whose priority is the delivery of rapid transport of goods and vehicles through a road system not slowing down for kids. We have seen that over and over again.

All that the school divisions—and let me quote the recommendation that was endorsed by the following school divisions: Transcona-Springfield, Seven Oaks, Norwood, St. Vital, Fort Garry, Assiniboine South and the Winnipeg School Division unanimously agree and concur with the Manitoba Association of School

Trustees, who have endorsed the proposal two times at their annual conventions.

* (1730)

So I say to the government, there is a small glimmer of hope, as the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render) said that the minister is willing to review this. A small glimmer. Use reason. When thousands of people, parents are saying, slow down the traffic around schools because our children are in danger, there is nothing wrong with that.

This government, who talks about safety, should be responding to community requests. At least provide the provision that the appeal could be made to the Traffic Board. Numerous appeals have been made by school divisions, and this is part of the irony of the minister's comments that individual school boards should go to the Traffic Board. In fact, that is what has happened. What is the result? Cars win, kids lose.

We have never had a ruling which provided slower speed zones in school areas from the Highway Traffic Board since the reduced speed zones were eliminated. Their priority is to move goods and traffic as quickly and efficiently through our system as possible, and that has been made clear year after year after year. You are looking for statistics. Are you looking for deaths? Are you looking for mutilations? This is ridiculous. People are coming to you saying they want slower speed zones around schools.

The brief from the school division which did look at numerous different alternatives also included a review of the proposed volunteer parent program. I happen to have a copy of this program developed in the United States in an area that is clearly a very suburban area, where perhaps there are people at home able to be full-time patrols.

However, in the communities we live in that is not a reality. Many people in the Inkster riding, in my riding are working one job, are working two jobs to make ends meet, to make their mortgage payments, and it is very difficult to ask those same parents to now do what? Come out and be a volunteer to patrol the streets because the Province of Manitoba will not take the

responsibility and do something about the traffic near schools.

What is the point of speed zones at all if it is not a safety issue? Why do we slow down in residential areas? Why is it that on major routes it is 60 kilometres? Why is it on major routes you can go 70 or 80? Why? What is the point of a speed zone? If it has no relevance to safety, eliminate them all. Well, the argument follows, what we are talking about is that speed has a direct influence with safety and the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay) to say that there is no evidence of that just seems to me to be the most impractical, unrealistic response to something which is clearly common sense.

The members opposite are saying that he will review it. Well, I say thank goodness there is a glimmer, very small though, but you are seeing thousands of people who have applied to the government for their appeal. Now you could even go to some jurisdictions, for instance, Saskatchewan, whose legislation allows local municipalities to deal with the issue. What are you doing? You are saying no to everybody.

The present status quo is not sufficient. That is what you are talking about it, that is what you are recommending. What they are saying now is what you should do is locally go to the Highway Traffic Board. Do you think we have not been there? Do you think school divisions have not been there? Parents have not been there? Of course, that is why they are appealing to you as government to use some wisdom in this and pass the amendment to actually reduce speed zones near the vicinity of schools.

Let me point out some further statistics from this report from the city of Winnipeg. I would be glad to share this report with the government, in fact I am shocked, I am shocked that they would make a decision without that type of data. Shocking. Let me point out here we have a table, table E, the city of Winnipeg, collisions involving the five- to 14-year-old age group. That means accidents. That means children were hurt. They make it sound quite clinical, or is it just a statistic? It is a collision. It is like you running into a light standard. These are our children we are talking about.

Let us look at the statistics. When is it that we need—

An Honourable Member: The same children whose future you are mortgaging.

Ms. Mihychuk: The Conservatives, the members across the way, are saying we are going to mortgage our children's future if we put up school zones. Let me suggest that a sign in a school zone is a worthwhile investment, and they are thinking of the dollar. What is it, five bucks for a sign? The least you can do is put up a few signs to save our children.

In addition, getting back to my report, and the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render) wants statistics. Here we go. From seven to eight o'clock in the morning we had 14 collisions; between eight and nine o'clock in the morning, 45 collisions; between nine and 10 in the morning, eight collisions; between 10 and 11, 9 collisions; between 11 and 12, during the day, there were 23 children struck by vehicles; between 12 and one o'clock, 68 collisions; between one and two, 27; between three and four, 50 collisions. Between three and four—

An Honourable Member: Table the report.

Ms. Mihychuk: I will gladly table the report. As I said earlier, I would gladly make it available to the members opposite because to make a reasonable assessment of this you should change your regulation, you should allow for the provision of municipalities at the minimum to do this. That is a very reasonable approach, is it not? The majority of Manitobans think so too, as opposed to this.

Let me continue, we have collision of children all day long and the fact is—[interjection] I am sorry. What we are seeing is children being hurt all day long. What we are talking about is a safety factor that needs to be addressed, not only 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes when the kids are picked up.

We are talking about a provision which allows safety from when the children use the school area, and that is all day, from seven in the morning when parents go to work and drop off their children at many of the before-school programs. Schools are now responding to the

social conditions, which are a reality, and that is the fact that parents are working and the children are at school and they are in the playgrounds and they are getting there. It is important that we look at the provision of these school zones, reduced speeds, from seven in the morning until dark, at least until dark.

I think, clearly, and when I share the information with the government side of the House, and we do have a great deal of it, I am sure that the honourable members on that side will yield to reason and provide what the community wants, reduced speed zones near schools.

* (1740)

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I, too, am pleased to stand before the House and address some of the issues in regards to reduced speed zones surrounding schools.

I would like to point out to the honourable member for St. James, she uses the words "vicinity" and "closeness" and, I am not sure if she is aware, but I was raised in rural Manitoba and I lived five miles from the school and everybody said that was close to the school. I was one of the closest kids to the school, so there is a little bit of concern in my mind as to definition, what "close" is. I take her report as far as the accidents and I take them to be at face value, but I also would like to ask, are these accidents that occur within the school vicinity or to children, period? Is that a block away? A mile away? I am not sure, and the report, if we get a chance to see it, we can certainly make a decision on it.

I would also like to just in speaking suggest that whenever it is convenient for the opposition to quote American statistics they do, but I seem to remember on this side of the House that we are constantly being chastised for using American statistics to serve our purposes, so I would like to point that out to the opposition.

I can remember when my son came home and had been selected to be a member of the school patrol and what it meant to him, and certainly he was thrilled with the idea of being selected. He was part of a group I

think of 14 kids out of about 60, and he thought it was a great idea. He said to me, Dad, we are going to be able to monitor the traffic in the area. He kind of looked upon himself as being a law enforcement officer. When he put his hand out or the sign out and he wore the garb, the bright orange shirts, he controlled the traffic that patrolled back and forth in front of the school.

He certainly did this more out of a feeling of pride and accomplishment and in conversation with some of the local members of the RCM Police, they suggested to me that that was probably the most efficient and most rewarding direction to go in this regard. The children got the gratification of being responsible and being a participant in school safety.

The police in our province do not want to spend every day parked in front of schools trying to monitor traffic, and I think that if you bring this kind of enforcement in, then we are basically asking them to be there on a constant basis to enforce this.

One of the changes that was made in the mid-'70s when they changed the speed from 15 to, I do not even know what it is, they introduced the driving prudent subsection, which to me basically implies that no matter where you are in the community, when you see children, when you see people near accesses or close to accesses to roads, you slow down. To me it is a common-sense approach to driving. I think it applies probably everywhere in the province and probably everywhere in every province. If people are not reasonable, I do not know how we can legislate them to be so. I think it certainly makes it a tough task for government and also for the law enforcement agencies.

I would like to quote the study that my honourable friend to my right suggested. In the study that was conducted by the City of Winnipeg Streets and Transportation Department, 548 total traffic accidents, only four accidents occurred nominally adjacent to a school area. The other ones, 319, occurred mid-block, which suggests, again, out of the school zone. So what I would like to suggest to you is, where do you define school zone? Where do we draw the line? Is it one block? Is it 10 blocks? In my mind, being a prudent driver, whenever I see children, I slow down. That, to

me, seems to be the common-sense approach to it as well as the, I would suggest to the opposition, fiscally responsible.

I think, also, it was brought up—it has been suggested to me that the local municipals have the ability to impose speed restrictions within their own schools and in their own communities. I think going through the process of The Highway Traffic Act probably creates a lot more paperwork, a lot more burden to the people that are trying to impose it. If you have a choice that you can put it into individual ridings, if your decision or your school board decides that is good for you, then I think you should be lobbying your local councillors to have it—and I hate to use the word "imposed" because that is what it seems like we are doing to people.

I think also, as I understand it, the matter is being considered, it is being looked at. I do not think that—the one thing I have learned since I have been elected to government and also to the Legislature is that things do not move as quickly as I would like and, I am sure, as the opposition would like.

I use the example of the two commissions that I sit on. The first one, we spent the first 45 minutes discussing when the next meeting would be, which I do not see as productive government. The second, we spent discussing a motion from a member who was not on the board, and I see that as nonproductive also. I would hope that the opposition would see my position in that sense. If we want to progress and if we want to proceed, we have to discuss it, put it through the proper channels and do it with the same respect that you ask of us.

I also want to talk a little bit about—and again, I guess, being involved with the business world, I always have to look at a cost side of it. I think, if we can do it through parent associations, where they control the traffic—also, I think it is a benefit to the children. They see their parents are involved, not only in their education but in their safety, and I think, as parents, that becomes a responsibility that we must bear.

Once it is legislated, if that is the direction that we do go, it will include all schools in every area of the province. Therefore, I suggest that we make the deals

with the municipalities, with the legions in the communities that feel the need is there. I have lived on a street down from the school, and I know the traffic is heavy. I would not say it is reckless or speeding, but I also know that when my kids leave the house the last thing I say to them is watch out for traffic. But in the same breath, I would suggest that the traffic has to watch out for the children. No matter if you post signs or whatever, people have to be responsible. You cannot legislate responsibility, it seems.

Now, as I say, and I will repeat for the member because I am not sure I had her full attention, of the 548 traffic accidents involving children, only four of the accidents occurred adjacent to school areas. To me that in itself is very self-explanatory, within an area. I also think that the government with the prudent drive is the approach to take.

Point of Order

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, may we have the member's documents tabled? He is quoting from a document, and he is obliged to table it.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable member for St. James does not have a point of order. The member is really not obliged to table anything.

* * *

Mr. Tweed: Madam Speaker, if I were the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I would certainly start to feel a little bit threatened. You have definitely started to pick up on the regulations of the House and I appreciate your attempt. I, too, would like to see the—there it is, the green book.

According to the accident statistics, I do not feel that there is a need for the reinstatement of the reduced speed zones. I do think that there is a need for common sense.

I think there is a need for people to lobby within their own jurisdictions to provide, and what affects the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) may

not be the appropriate answer for people in my riding or people in the Roblin-Russell area or anywhere else in Manitoba.

* (1750)

Thompson may have a different opinion. They may have a different solution to the problem. I have a hard time agreeing with the member that you must legislate it. I think that seems to be the problem that most people are dealing with and it certainly confuses me as to why people sometimes cannot deal with common sense in their own communities and they have to ask the government to do it for them.

I have certainly had several dealings with the government and certainly several disagreements, and I find that one of the first things that crops up is because it is the law and the way the law operates does not apply to everybody in every jurisdiction. Therefore, I think that we should consult, on a very local basis, our school divisions. I will admit to the member opposite, I have had no request from my school division to look at or to reconsider it. It may have come through the MAST organization, but my trustees have not approached me on it. If they do I will certainly suggest to them that if they can bring the results to me that will show that these will reduce the statistics, which to me are minimal, then I probably would take a hard look at it and would work with you as far as looking at some changes. Again, I have a real problem with legislating and putting control.

I think when you put a law like this into place, you are asking the law enforcement people to disregard some of their other duties and some of their other responsibilities to enforce this law. Where, again, I think the board patrols, parent patrols, student patrols on the crosswalks would provide a better way of controlling it, a more efficient way of controlling it and also create some responsibility on the parents and the children and the educators to implement the program.

I do not think that legislation is always the way to go. We do not have to be legislated to know what is right for our children, and if we have to be, then I would suggest to the members opposite and to my colleagues that we are in a very sad situation in today's society

when we have to constantly come up with legislation that provides for safety of our children when the legislation is there. The prudent-drive legislation says whenever a child is near or on a street you must slow down. You can be charged if you do not. Now, to me that results in my mind at this point in time that it is being dealt with and being dealt with in a very positive way.

As I said, if parents are asking for it, I would like to hear from my riding, and when they come forward I would certainly suggest too that when it is reviewed I am sure that The Highway Traffic Act will review the letter and the resolution from MAST. If that is their recommendation, then I am sure you will find that the members on this side will support it.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I have listened with attention to the comments of the member for Turtle Mountain, and I found his conciliatory tone towards this resolution quite refreshing. I do not think it is an issue here that members on this side are not concerned about the safety of children. We are concerned about the safety of children. The question that I have in my mind is what is the most effective way of ensuring the safety of children? What is the mechanism that we use?

One of the concerns I have, speaking from my former profession as a lawyer, is when we get into the area of criminal prosecutions and we set very careful parameters and guidelines and standards, what happens is when the prosecution brings forward that kind of case a defence lawyer will attempt to negotiate his way around those carefully drafted laws.

The more technical we become in our laws, the more difficult it is to try enforce those laws. In fact, in my short career as a prosecutor, I found it was much easier to prosecute an offence under the Criminal Code for some of the most vicious crimes. It was more difficult to prosecute a technical crime under a regulatory statute or a highway traffic statute.

So the approach that the government took in this particular case, I think from an enforcement point of view, is very, very good. Rather than relying on very technical, well-defined types of situations, which only

lead to questions of fact and questions of proof and questions of onus, the government and the Legislature took an approach that was much more flexible, that allowed a peace officer, in looking at a situation, seeing a car come down a road, could say in his opinion, as a professional peace officer, that amounts to imprudent driving.

So this person could give this opinion and obtain a conviction in far more easier circumstances than if he had to try to prove that the person was in fact going over a specific speed limit. So the experience that the peace officer and indeed the citizen who might witness this crime occurring is much easier to prove in a situation where the driving, given all the circumstances, is imprudent.

One of the things is that the driving may well be imprudent even if it is under 15 miles an hour. If there is a child in the middle of the street, crawling across the street, 15 is a little too fast. This law that is in existence now in fact takes into kind that situation, and so the flexibility given by this law protects more children, makes it easier to prove, than the technical kind of bureaucratic approach advocated by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) and the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk).

So I am disappointed. If they would only come to the courts for a short period of time and see how difficult some of these prosecutions are. So let us not burden prosecution with technical elements in statutory offences. Let us give them flexibility so in fact that the purpose and intent of the law is met.

Now, having said that, I have not closed my mind to the resolution. I think that there are very good points raised by both members opposite, the member for Wellington and the member for St. James. There are many studies and I do not pretend to be an expert.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) will have 10 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 28, 1995

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