



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

Monday, October 2, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Federal Immigration Policies

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of T. Danting, C. Danting, Rosita A. Bringas and others requesting the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to request the Government of Canada to cancel fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Eugenia Cabuhat, Narcisa R. Abayon, Nerisa N. Cabuhat and others requesting the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to request the Government of Canada to cancel fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report '93-94 of the Department of Justice; the Annual Report '94-95 of The Public Trustee; the Annual Report '94-95 of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and the report of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner 1993.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Report of The Financial Administration Act Relating to Supplementary Loan and Guarantee Authority of March 31, 1995; the Report of The Loan Act, 1994, Relating to Additional Expenditure Authority for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1995; and the Provincial Auditor's Report 1994-95, Volume 3, Matters of Special Interest and Results of our Audit Work.

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report '94-95 for the Multiculturalism Secretariat and also the Annual Report for the Manitoba Arts Council.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Civil Service Commission 1994-95.

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 twenty-four Grade 5 students from Angus McKay School under the direction of Mr. Greg Holowka. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

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

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Flin Flon General Hospital Budget Reduction

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

Before the election campaign, Madam Speaker, we raised a number of concerns about cuts in northern health care staffing and its impact on patient services. In fact, the day before the election was called, we asked the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) about the specific cuts to the Flin Flon Hospital to which the Minister of Health in a very cavalier and hands-off way said that there are no concerns about these reductions at the Flin Flon facility.

We have since learned, Madam Speaker, that there is \$1.4 million scheduled to be cut from that northern

health care facility. Some 14 percent of the budget will be cut by the government after the election campaign.

I would like to ask the Premier, what is the impact of these cuts on emergency services, on patient care, on the length of the period of time it will be required for operations in that hospital, on pediatric care and other very important vital services for the people and residents of the adjacent and Flin Flon area?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice for the Minister of Health.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: My question again is to the Premier.

Madam Speaker, I will table a memo for the Premier from the Flin Flon Hospital that deals with the 14 percent cut and the \$1.4-million reduction. In that memo, it states—[interjection] It is not very funny to the people of Flin Flon. If the Premier does not care, that is one thing. It is not very funny for those people.

Madam Speaker, in the memo it states that the ultimate decisions on health care impacts will be reviewed at a meeting of October 4 at the Compensation Committee of Cabinet.

Now, we have been concerned for some time now that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is not on top of his portfolio. I would like to ask the Premier, is the system in place that his government has to deal with these cutbacks, are all those decisions being made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the Secretary of Treasury Board, Mr. Jules Benson, the former treasurer of the Conservative Party?

Are all these decisions being made by that committee of government, or are those decisions being made by the Premier, who promised the people of Manitoba that he would be there to take care of their health care after the election campaign, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, without accepting any of the preamble of the Leader of the Opposition as fact, I will take that as notice on behalf of the Minister of Health, as well.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the normal custom is that matters are taken under notice when a minister is not present. I believe the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is here.

Now, if the Premier does not wish to answer the question, he should say so. It does, however, provide great difficulty for those of us in the opposition in Question Period when what the Premier is essentially doing is allowing this matter to come back in an open-ended manner.

If the Minister of Health has information, he should answer that now. If the Minister of Health needs to bring it back, Madam Speaker, he should take it as notice. What we are having from the First Minister I think really does not help our procedures, and I would ask that you advise us on the proper customs in this House and procedures on when matters should be taken under advisement.

Mr. Filmon: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, that is precisely the point. There is a Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) here. The questions have to do with the Minister of Health. Rather than playing games for his own political purposes, the Leader of the Opposition ought to ask the questions of the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the official opposition, on the same point of order?

Mr. Doer: Well, on a new point of order, Madam Speaker, the Premier in his point of order imputed—

Madam Speaker: No. Order, please. I have not dealt with the first point of order, and they must be disposed of individually. I will recognize the Leader of the official opposition on the same point of order.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I asked the Premier (Mr. Filmon) a question dealing with the system in government between the cabinet Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and the cabinet Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) in the Compensation Committee, and for the

Premier to allege that that is not his responsibility gives me a great deal of concern that nobody is in control of health care over on the other side.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the honourable member for Thompson does not have a point of order.

I refer to Beauchesne's 416: "A refusal to answer cannot be raised as a question of privilege, nor is it regular to comment upon such a refusal." I also will recite Beauchesne's 420: "the Chair will allow a question to be put to a certain Minister; but it cannot insist that that Minister rather than another should answer it."

* * *

Mr. Doer: I would like to ask the Premier, who is responsible for making decisions in health care?

Last week, we had a number of questions about vital drugs for children that were being withdrawn from the government until we raised those questions in the House. We have asked questions about LPNs at Seven Oaks Hospital, and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) could not answer those questions.

This memo states that the Compensation Committee of Cabinet will be asked to deal with these matters on October 4, 1995. I would like to ask the Premier, are these decisions being made at cabinet to implement the 14 percent cut? Are they being made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the secretary of the Treasury Board? Are they being made by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae)?

Who in government is making these decisions, given it was the Premier who promised the people of Manitoba that he would make sure that health care services would not be reduced after the election campaign, Madam Speaker?

*(1345)

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, as a former member of the Executive Council of a former government of

Manitoba, the Leader of the Opposition ought to know full well that some decisions by cabinet are deferred to the ministers responsible, that they are within the purview and within the accountability structure, that in the course of approval of budgets, for instance, this Legislature approves Estimates of Expenditure which were approved collectively by this Legislature effective June 30 of this year, and then the budgets are then allocated and distributed by the government, by departments. In some cases, they require Treasury Board approval; in other cases they do not.

One of the issues that he referred to in his preamble, the issue of the removal of coverage for drugs, was made by an independent organization, the Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, as their response to what they considered a budget imperative. The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has addressed that as a result of the Leader of the Opposition raising the issue here, which was not known to him because it was not a matter that had been decided by cabinet or the Health minister.

Madam Speaker, all of these issues have different parameters and different areas of decision making and judgment. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to pursue this, he can ask questions directly of the Minister of Health, or he can engage in discussion on this in other ways, but they are not going to be solved by grandstanding and political gamesmanship here in this Legislature.

Health Care System Emergency Services

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health, although the Premier (Mr. Filmon) could answer because he likes to—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: My question for the Minister of Health is, prior to the election campaign and during the election campaign, the minister categorically stated there would be no closure of emergency rooms in the city of Winnipeg, nor would the hours be reduced.

Can the minister advise this House today, because we have heard that some emergency rooms and hours are going to be closed during the nighttime at the community hospitals, that the announcement will be made this week or it has been decided to be made this week, will the minister categorically confirm that he will not allow that to happen in fulfilment of his election promise both before and during the election that no emergency hours would be reduced or any emergency wards closed?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): The honourable member has a different view of history than I do, obviously, and his Leader, as well, when his Leader suggests that I would ever say that I had no concerns in health. I hope the honourable member can show where I would have made the suggestion that nobody need have any concerns about health in Manitoba or anywhere else in this country. It is one of the chief concerns on a daily basis, Madam Speaker, of this government and any responsible government in this country.

Madam Speaker, as to the present difficulties in emergency rooms in the city of Winnipeg, the honourable member will recall about a year ago, a little more than a year ago, the emergency services task force—we made that report known to the public, and in that report were suggestions of various changes at emergency rooms in this city.

I made the point at that time that I was not prepared at that time to accept some of those recommendations. We certainly have been monitoring very carefully the performance of emergency services in Winnipeg during the last four weeks, during the term of the present disruption, and we have made the point that we are learning from that experience, and discussions are underway, this afternoon as a matter of fact, with the parties in an effort to continue to try to resolve the dispute.

* (1350)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, can the minister, who has raised some very serious concerns in that answer, provide this House with assurances that they are not using this artificial strike situation as a justification for

the government—[interjection] Perhaps if the Premier (Mr. Filmon) wants to answer, he can answer, because he is trying to.

My question: Will the minister confirm that they are not using this artificial strike situation as justification for announcements of the closure of either emergency wards or the reduction of emergency hours, which is contrary to what the minister said on July 14 and during the election?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I would like the honourable member to explain the expression "artificial strike" to me and to all of those people who have been inconvenienced by the fact that 42 emergency physicians and 14 pathologists walked off the job four weeks ago, leaving us to do the best we could with our contingency plan. I would like to know what is artificial about that.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, do I have leave to answer the minister's question?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: No. Order, please. I have recognized the honourable member for Kildonan for a final supplementary question.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the minister confirm further that Dr. Moe Lerner was brought in as a consultant in an untendered contract dated and signed July 5 of this year in the sum of \$52,500 to specifically earmark and work on this entire strike situation, this entire emergency situation, I should say, and was brought in to implement the recommendations to close or downsize emergency rooms? I will table the contract.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the honourable member is or should be aware that Dr. Moe Lerner has been working with our department for some considerable period of time, and the contract that he refers to today is simply an extension of the previous arrangements. The honourable member is totally misleading everybody when he suggests that there was some earmarked strategy to deal with a labour disruption. That would be incorrect.

**Domestic Violence
Rhonda Lavoie Inquiry**

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice.

We all recall when Rhonda Lavoie, a mother of three young children, was murdered by her husband Roy in a garage north of Gimli on January 20, Roy's second attempt. Roy was on bail for the second time, another example of violent men being released time and time again on conditions they have just broken. Roy had been denied treatment, Rhonda denied social assistance, and there are many questions about police procedures. The minister has received many requests for an inquiry, and as early as January 23 the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters wrote to the minister.

My question to the minister is, so the justice system will not continue to fail other women as it failed Rhonda, will the minister now, after sitting on this for over eight months, respond to the ongoing pleas for action, including those from survivors of Rhonda who are here today, and finally appoint an independent inquiry? Time is up, Madam Speaker.

* (1355)

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the member suggests that nothing has been done in this matter. He knows very well that there is a process in place where the Chief Medical Examiner looks at each case.

However, he is also aware that the Chief Medical Examiner, to avoid any difficulty, any questions of conflict, has referred this matter to Ontario.

However, Madam Speaker, let me say that the stand that this government has taken on other issues raised by the member across the way, matters such as bail, this government has taken a position to the federal government to say that in cases of stalking, for a very specific, there should be reverse onus in the matter of bail, that bail should be presumed to be denied in cases where there is a continued threat to the victim. That case has been made strongly by this government. I have not had any support from the other side.

Mr. Mackintosh: That is misleading, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would ask that the honourable member for St. Johns withdraw the word "misleading."

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the word "misleading" is an important part of debate in this bastion of free speech.

The word "misleading," I am sure you will find on checking Beauchesne's, Madam Speaker, was carefully chosen and is parliamentary.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I think, if I might be of assistance, as the member pointed out, "misleading" does appear. In fact, it appears on both lists.

The key element, to my mind, Madam Speaker, has always been the question of whether the member was making the accusation that comments were deliberately misleading. I believe the member, through his explanation, has indicated that the intent of his statement to indicate that the minister was being misleading was within the parliamentary bounds.

I would submit to you that he was not using an unparliamentary term, not only based on that element of Beauchesne's which deals with the word itself but also the fact that we also accept the word of honourable members in this House, and I know the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) would be stating very clearly, with his own knowledge, too, of Beauchesne's, that it was not said in an unparliamentary way. I would submit that we should accept that, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, while the word "misleading" does appear on both lists, I think what was more out of order was the fact that the word "misleading" was used in the preamble to a supplementary question. Preambles, of course, are not required and not deemed so in Beauchesne's with respect to subsequent questions.

Madam Speaker: I thank all honourable members for their advice, and I will take the point of order under advisement.

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, would the Justice minister then confirm to Manitobans that the Chief Coroner of Ontario, in fact, recommended that there be an inquiry, a conclusion the minister should have come to months ago, and would she table in this House the recommendations of the coroner for the people of Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: I have not received any such communication myself. If that communication has been forwarded to the Chief Medical Examiner, it has not yet been forwarded to me.

So I would have to tell the member I do not have knowledge of what the province of Ontario, what the Chief Coroner of Ontario has, in fact, recommended to our Chief Medical Examiner who, I will remind the member, sought advice in this matter to make sure that any decision that was reached was reached in a very fair way.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister explain to Manitobans why she is not on top of this and why she is dragging her feet for over eight months on this inquiry, an inquiry so the government can answer a question for the women of Manitoba: Is there zero tolerance against domestic violence in this province or not?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, the zero tolerance policy which this government brought forward is most firmly in place. If the member has some knowledge of some communication, perhaps he should very specifically say.

But what I would like to tell the House and the people of Manitoba, Madam Speaker, about this most serious case is that there is a process in place. The process was one which was to be reviewed by the Chief Medical Examiner of Manitoba who, in his view, wanted to make sure there was no conflict. Therefore, he referred this to the province of Ontario for its

advice. There is a process in place. Yes, it does take some time.

Now, if the member is suggesting, as he has not once but other times within this House, that the minister should somehow step in over the process and become involved and not respect the process, I think that would certainly be reason for concerns and complaint.

There is a process in place. At this moment, Madam Speaker, we do not have any reason to believe that the process is not working. In fact, I believe it is.

* (1400)

Domestic Violence Review Committee Status Report

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, my questions are also for the Minister of Justice.

I want to return to questions regarding the Domestic Violence Review Committee. I understand that not only have members of this committee not met for two years, but that despite specific requests from the committee, they have never met with this particular minister. Because the committee has neither been formally disbanded nor allowed to fulfill its mission, members feel that the committee has been transformed into a front for government, that the committee exists in phantom form but not in actuality, so gives the appearance but not the reality of consultation.

My question for the minister is this. Does the minister intend to disband this committee as was implied by her Assistant Deputy Minister Theresa Harvey, who was quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press, August 28, as having stated that the committee, quote, had outlived its usefulness?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the committee that the member is speaking about was a committee which was formed to deal with matters of domestic violence, and particularly around the Pedlar report.

There is also another committee which exists. It is the committee of the chief judge, which is dealing very

specifically with recommendations, with the process, with how the courts are dealing with the issues of domestic violence.

The quote that the member brings forward, which to my memory was part of an article by a columnist who seemed to—I found the article extremely difficult to follow and was not sure in what context that question had been asked of the assistant deputy minister, if, in fact, that was a reliable quotation from the assistant deputy minister, if, in fact, it was placed in any context whatsoever. So the member's research is, as usual, done simply through a newspaper article, Madam Speaker, and through a quote that she read, which I am not sure if it was in context at all.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Osborne, with a supplementary question.

Point of Order

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, actually, I rise on a point of order. I feel that the minister's comments on my research methods are personal attacks and have nothing to do with the question.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order, I will take the point under advisement, and, if necessary, report back to the House.

* * *

Ms. McGifford: Back to the Domestic Violence Review Committee, does the minister agree with Ms. Harvey's assessment, or does she intend to convene a meeting of the Domestic Violence Review Committee and finally consult with these people?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, I only raised where the member did her research because that is what she said, so it is simply a reflection on her own preamble to the question.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, you just took the matter under advisement, and the proper time for the

minister to make editorial comments on the point of order was during the point of order, not now when she is supposed to be answering the very serious question put forward by the member for Osborne.

Madam Speaker: Order please. On the honourable member for Thompson's point of order, it is clearly a dispute over the facts. There is no point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, to quickly complete her response.

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, I do have plans to be meeting with that committee. I will have some very specific issues which I would like to address with them.

The broad issue, though, which I am very pleased to indicate to the member is the whole matter of domestic violence and how this government, Madam Speaker, has taken the issue so seriously that we have, in fact, established a Domestic Violence Court, that we have designated Crown attorneys to deal with the matter of domestic violence, that we have training for members across the Department of Justice in the area of domestic violence, and it was this government that brought forward zero tolerance policy.

Pedlar Report Recommendations

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, will the minister table in this House documents detailing which of the Pedlar recommendations have been implemented, along with the schedule for the implementation of the remainder?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I will be providing a report that speaks about the implementation of the recommendations from the Pedlar report which, as the member well knows, I think she should know anyway, Pedlar had said that the recommendations were to be viewed in a holistic way, that they pointed to initiatives which were to be dealt with. In fact, Madam Speaker, this government, I believe, has gone further than the Pedlar report, has taken a very proactive stand in the

whole area of domestic violence, and I look forward to discussing that and making sure the people of Manitoba are well aware of the strides that this government has made in that area.

Health Care System Emergency Services

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

This is, in fact, no artificial strike. It is very real and it is the patient who is losing out. That is why later this week I will be introducing a bill entitled the emergency physicians' labour dispute settlement act, in hopes to get all members supporting it.

Madam Speaker, what else is very real is the fact that health care professionals are concerned that it is this government's intention to reduce emergency service hours by half, from 24 hours seven days a week to 12 hours seven days a week.

This is this government's real intention, so I am asking the Minister of Health if, in fact, this is the case.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I certainly agree with the honourable member that what we have been experiencing is not an artificial strike, and in that context, again, I would like to offer thanks to those people who have extended themselves during the last four weeks, Madam Speaker, to make sure that Winnipeg residents and others who use emergency services are not left in the lurch, as could have happened if no contingency plan had been put into effect.

Again, the honourable member hints at his support for legislation, the legislative option, Madam Speaker, to deal with the present circumstances. I understand the parties are in discussions again today, and it is my hope that those discussions will bear fruit.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Health commit today to ensuring that the five community hospitals in the city of Winnipeg will, in fact, be open seven days a week, 24 hours a day, for emergency services?

Will the Minister of Health give us that commitment today?

Mr. McCrae: I commit, Madam Speaker, to working with the partners in delivery of emergency services to see that we have a co-ordinated, integrated and appropriate use of resources to provide the best quality emergency services possible to Winnipeggers and other Manitobans, and while we are speaking of commitments, I would like very much for the honourable member to make a commitment to the rest of us in this House that he will use his considerable influence with the federal Liberal Party to ensure that actions taken by the federal Liberals in Ottawa do not force us to take actions which are not in the best interests of Manitobans.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, Manitobans have a right to emergency services in our community hospitals in the city of Winnipeg.

My question is for the Premier. Will the Premier, in fact, today make the commitment that community health care hospitals in the city of Winnipeg will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, into the future in the province of Manitoba?

Will the Premier today make that commitment?

* (1410)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, given that the federal government, of which the member for Inkster is a very large supporter and apologist for, is going to be reducing transfers to the Province of Manitoba by \$220 million per year—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, Beauchesne's will, on numerous occasions, point out that a minister should respond to the question that is being asked.

It is not the federal government's responsibility to ensure that emergency room services are remaining open for Winnipeggers. It is this Premier's, it is this

government's, and the question was, will this Premier give confidence in our Winnipeg community hospitals to ensure that they are going to be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister, to complete his response.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, given that the federal Liberal government, of which the member for Inkster is a strong supporter and apologist, is successively reducing its transfers to the Province of Manitoba such that over a three-year period we will be reduced by \$220 million per year for health care in this province, we have an obligation to do all things possible to review and reorganize our health care system to ensure that we can continue to provide the vital services that Manitobans look to this government for.

Madam Speaker, that means that we have an obligation to review the manner in which we do all things because the federal government is imposing such tremendous impacts on us in the way of reductions to our transfers.

The member opposite ought to go to his federal cousins and ensure that we get the money that we require to run the system, instead of coming here and trying to pick holes in what is being done by the provincial government.

Infrastructure Works Agreement Project Selection Criteria

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

The infrastructure program, Madam Speaker, was supposed to be about job creation, and yet we find that many areas of Manitoba, including northern Manitoba and certain rural areas, where unemployment is extremely high and where there is a serious need for

basic water and sewer services, have not received a fair share of infrastructure money.

The government on one hand used \$1.1 million for the planning of facilities for the Winnipeg Jets while denying approval for many worthwhile infrastructure projects throughout Manitoba.

Can the minister explain why the level of unemployment was not the key factor in decision making with this program, instead of this political approach that obviously was used?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I want to remind the member for Brandon East of the approach that has been utilized here in Manitoba, and it is a similar approach that many provinces have now since adopted. We have a total infrastructure program of \$204 million, and we basically divided that into three elements. We allocated \$60 million for the city of Winnipeg, and in that area we have accepted all of the recommendations of the City of Winnipeg Council, the elected body here in Winnipeg.

We allocated \$60 million for outside of Winnipeg. In those instances, Madam Speaker, we have accepted all of the recommendations of representatives from the Union of Manitoba Municipalities and the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities, the elected representatives from across this province of Manitoba who represent municipalities across Manitoba, and we have allocated \$84 million for strategic initiatives that are ultimately decided on by the federal government and by the provincial government and are meant to enhance economic development opportunities right across our province. I believe it is doing that.

So we have struck a process that is all-inclusive. It includes other elected representatives. It is one that is being modelled elsewhere in Canada, and I would suggest that it has served us very well, and it does exactly the opposite of what the member is talking about. It is all-inclusive and it avoids the kind of political interference that he is suggesting is occurring.

It is not occurring. It might have been the way he governed when he was a part of government. It is certainly not a part of how we govern, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance then, was it simply a sheer coincidence that Conservative constituencies received by far the lion's share of infrastructure money, in fact, per capita, 52 percent higher than those in NDP ridings, or is the minister suggesting that Conservative constituencies have more unemployment problems than other constituencies in Manitoba?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I have already outlined in detail for the member the process of including elected representatives from municipal bodies here in Manitoba, obviously the role of the federal government, and I had the opportunity of talking to the same—[interjection] If the analysis that the member is using is the one that was prepared by a reporter that he and I both talked to, I want to point out to him what I think are some flaws in the approach that that reporter used, and I will give you an example.

That reporter took the agricultural building which is a \$6.7-million project, and he allocated it to the constituency of Fort Garry because the University of Manitoba happens to be in the constituency of Fort Garry. I would suggest to everybody that enhancements to the Faculty of Agriculture benefit Manitobans right across our province, so, Madam Speaker, if that is the kind of simplistic analysis that is being relied on for this question, I would suggest that the member go back and do an awful lot more homework.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Will this government, will this minister, come clean and provide an analytical report?—because this Legislature has received no reports to date, no comprehensive analysis.

Will this minister have the guts to provide an analytical report? [interjection] Okay, I will withdraw that statement, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable member.

Mr. Leonard Evans: The minister is a very nice man, and I appreciate that.

Will the minister have the courage to table a report in this Legislature, so that the people of Manitoba can get a comprehensive picture on where these monies were

spent, by riding and by type of facility, the kinds of structure, whether we are spending it on recreational facilities or whether we are spending it on water and sewer facilities, so we have an idea and we can analyze this?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I have never hesitated to provide information on the infrastructure program. In fact, I would suggest that my friend the member for Brandon East talk to his Leader, because just last week his Leader stands up when he is asking questions about the Winnipeg Jets and accuses us of issuing press releases on every single infrastructure project that took place throughout the whole province, so he cannot have it both—[interjection]

Madam Speaker, my point is very simple. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot stand up one day and say there is all kinds of information, all kinds of press releases, and come in here a week later and say, we need more information.

There are all kinds of information on the infrastructure program, and I will gladly provide more information if the member for Brandon East requires such, Madam Speaker.

Infrastructure Works Agreement Rural Gasification

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, over a year ago, the government made announcements that infrastructure money would be going to expand natural gas in rural Manitoba. Unfortunately, over a year has passed, but the promises have not been kept.

Can the minister responsible for the infrastructure program tell this House if money promised to communities such as Swan River and Gladstone and many other communities is still in place, or has that money been taken back?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the rural gasification initiative has come out of the strategic element, the \$84 million I referred to. A certain portion was set aside for rural gasification projects throughout Manitoba. Some of those projects

are taking place right now. As we stand here today, activity is taking place throughout Manitoba, but to date all of the allocation within that pool of money has been allocated to projects.

The specific request about one region, about the Swan River region, at this particular point in time, all of the dollars are allocated, and that application continues to be set aside to be dealt with.

Madam Speaker, I should point out that the infrastructure program is a \$204-million program, and to date we have had in excess of \$900 million of requests for projects here in Manitoba.

Ms. Wowchuk: If I understood the minister right, he said that the money was gone. I want to ask then why his government will not respond to the people of Swan River, the Swan River Town Council, which has phoned many times and has tried to set up meetings to find out if the \$2.4 million is still in place, so that they can proceed with their proposal to expand natural gas since this government's proposal has failed?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I would suggest the rural gasification program has been a very successful program. As I have said, there is activity taking place in parts of Manitoba right now as a result of that program. In fact, it is so successful, there have been more requests for the amount of money allocated than there is money available.

The community has been notified, I understand, from the infrastructure secretariat in terms of that very issue, that at this point in time, there is no money available in—[interjection] Yes, they have been notified, Madam Speaker, to the best of my knowledge, that there is no money available within the allocation for rural gasification in the infrastructure program at this time.

* (1420)

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, since the expansion of rural gasification is important to all economic development right across this province, and there are many people looking at it, will this government give a commitment that they will work with various communities, whether it is co-ops as in Gladstone,

whether it is the community of Swan River that is trying to attract another company or with Centra Gas, but that they will work to see the expansion of natural gas to various communities in rural Manitoba?

Mr. Stefanson: We are doing exactly what the honourable member refers to. In part of Manitoba, there is an initiative in conjunction with Centra Gas. In another part of Manitoba, there is a co-op initiative that I believe is going forward this week to the Public Utilities Board that has support. We have worked with the communities of Swan River and so on, so we are doing exactly what the honourable member is referring to.

There are different approaches to different regions of our province, and we will continue to work with the Swan River region, as we have done in the past. We will continue to do that, and we are having very successful projects proceeding right now in southwestern Manitoba and in the Gladstone region, Madam Speaker.

Fishing Industry Whitefish Quotas

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Natural Resources, and it is on behalf of fishermen who are trying to make a living in the northern region of Lake Winnipeg, who have contacted this minister in regard to opening up whitefish quota within their fishing jurisdiction. These fishermen are concerned with the lack of any long-range strategy regarding fish resources and the negative economic and environmental consequences arising from such an approach.

Given this, will the minister tell this House how his department has responded to the concerns raised by the north shore fishermen of Lake Winnipeg in meetings held over the summer regarding issues such as whitefish quotas, fishing boundaries and the potential for the co-management of the resources found in the lake?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question.

The issues that are facing the commercial fishermen not only on Lake Manitoba or Lake Winnipeg or Lake Winnipegosis are many, but on Lake Winnipeg, specifically, we have had various requests from various groups and organizations in terms of changing boundaries, changing quota systems. In order to deal with this in an impartial and fair basis, we have hired a consultant who will be doing a study and will be able to make recommendations to the government and to myself within the next few months, at which time decisions will be made as to how we deal with them.

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, will the minister assure the House and northern fishermen that he will commission an independent third-party review of Lake Winnipeg, which this will be, which will include examining mesh size, fishing areas, with the ultimate goal of providing fairness for all the fishermen on the lake, and will he commit that this review will contain representation from northern fishermen living in the communities?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Speaker, it would be my hope and desire, and the terms of reference are outlined that way, that it will deal with specifically exactly the things that the member has brought forward. In order to make it fair and impartial, I would certainly hope that all stakeholders are going to have a role to play in terms of having their views known so that a proper decision can be made.

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, will the minister make a commitment in the House to open up the whitefish quota immediately, so as not to repeat the same mistake his department made last year by opening the quota up too late in the season?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Speaker, I think it would be irresponsible to make that kind of a commitment at this point in time when we are trying to decide exactly what would be a fair and equitable way to do it.

Flin Flon General Hospital Budget Reduction

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): My questions are for the Minister of Health.

Although the Premier (Mr. Filmon) may not know exactly what cuts are on the table this week regarding the Flin Flon General Hospital, I think the Minister of Health does know, and certainly the citizens of Flin Flon know, and they are very much concerned about the effect of these cuts.

My question to the minister is, how does the minister think that the proposed budget cuts to the Flin Flon General Hospital of three-quarter million dollars this year and half a million dollars next year will not affect patient care, considering the shortage of medical staff already?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member probably is aware that the process that brings us to the present situation has been a long one. It has been an extremely consultative process, and staff people from hospitals in The Pas, Flin Flon, Thompson and elsewhere have been involved in the review of staffing guidelines that have led to the present situation.

It is not my opinion. It is not the honourable member's opinion. It is the opinion of the caregivers who were involved in recommending the decisions in the first place; organizations like the Manitoba Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, organizations like the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses, staff at the hospitals involved.

So I am not going to replace my judgment for the judgment of the hands-on caregivers who have been involved in the staffing guideline review, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jennissen: How does this minister, considering the severity of the proposed cuts, expect northern hospitals such as the Flin Flon General Hospital to attract and keep doctors, nurses and other professionals?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, this question has been raised a few times and the issue is not new. As the honourable member will recall, it was fully two years ago that I put on hold layoffs and reductions at hospitals that were overstaffed in Manitoba.

After a very thorough review of the guidelines that were leading in that direction, we are now moving forward to implement those staffing guidelines. They are being done, I am assured, by the committee involved with due regard for patient care which, I am sure, the honourable member will agree is what is uppermost in the minds of doctors, uppermost in the minds of all caregivers.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar); St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) for Tuesday, October 3, 1995, for 10 a.m.

Motion agreed to.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Western Canada Entrepreneur of the Year Award

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

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

Mr. Helwer: Madam Speaker, Webster's dictionary defines entrepreneur as one who organizes, manages and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise. However, my personal dictionary simply states that, please see Ken Church.

This morning, Madam Speaker, I, along with the Honourable Jim Downey and also the Honourable Eric Stefanson had the privilege to attend a reception for Mr. Ken Church, who is the president and general manager of Faroex Limited. Mr. Church was recently

honoured at the Western Canada Entrepreneur of the Year Awards, where he received an award in the manufacturing category.

Some 14 years ago, Mr. Church, armed with only an idea and \$5,000 began a plastics manufacturing firm in Gimli. His idea has grown into a company with yearly sales in excess of \$8 million exports to locations around the world and has become the Interlake's largest private-sector employer with over 80 employees. Mr. Church's award is a testament to 14 years of hard work and perseverance. I am especially proud that he chooses Gimli as his place of business and his award is an achievement to both Mr. Church and his workers.

I therefore urge all members to join with me in congratulating Mr. Church on his award and once again illustrating that a good idea coupled with a determined Manitoban is virtually unstoppable. Thank you.

Monument to Monsignor Noel-Joseph Ritchot

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): May I have leave for a nonpolitical statement, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for St. Norbert have leave for a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Laurendeau: Madam Speaker, I rise today in tribute to Monsignor Noel-Joseph Ritchot, a politician priest who played an important role in the founding of our province and to many a father of Confederation. Earlier today, Father Ritchot was recognized as a person of national significance by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in a ceremony held here in the Manitoba Legislature.

Monsignor Ritchot has been described as a person filled with useful and fruitful works. In addition to helping to found the province of Manitoba, Monsignor Ritchot made major contributions to our social, religious and political development of our province.

Monsignor Ritchot was born on Christmas Day 1825 to a farming family at L'Assomption, Lower Canada and was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1855. After serving six years in Lower Canada, he

volunteered as a missionary to the Red River Settlement and was sent by Bishop Taché to serve the community of St. Norbert, a parish Father Ritchot continued to serve for over 40 years.

In 1869, Monsignor Ritchot played a critical role in the Metis growing resistance to the proposed transfer of the Northwest to Canada, recording the Metis deliberations and giving counsel to Louis Riel and other leaders in the movement. During this period Father Ritchot proved himself to be a very able negotiator and, as a delegate negotiating Manitoba's entry into Confederation, helped to secure acceptance of many of the demands of Riel's provisional government in attaining provincial status for the colony and in having 1.4 million acres of land set aside for the Metis as part of this agreement. Father Ritchot continued to work for his community within the province of Manitoba, receiving from the church the title of Monsignor in 1897.

Father Noel-Joseph Ritchot died in St. Norbert on March 16, 1905. Madam Speaker, thank you.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for St. Boniface have leave for a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Merci, Madame la présidente, il me fait plaisir de me joindre au député de Saint-Norbert cet après-midi—[interjection] collègue, oui, c'est ça—afin de reconnaître, de rendre hommage comme on a fait ce matin dans la Législature à la réception. Sans doute, bien des bonnes choses ont été dites ce matin et il était grand temps qu'on le reconnaisse tel qu'il a été reconnu ce matin. Il y avait beaucoup de gens présents pour la réception; il y avait de la famille, le petit-neveu de Monseigneur qui est présent ici cet après-midi, qui a aidé les députés de la Chambre des communes à dévoiler le monument qui sera érigé ici au Palais législatif de la province du Manitoba. Il faut reconnaître ce que Monseigneur Ritchot a fait pour l'entrée de la province du Manitoba dans la Confédération. Ce matin, le Docteur Mailhot, administrateur du Musée de Saint-Boniface, a rendu hommage à Monseigneur Ritchot. Il a fait un très beau discours, et la réception qui a suivi, avec tous les gens qui étaient là, c'est un hommage qu'on ne peut pas

passer aujourd'hui sans reconnaître que le Manitoba a eu des grands hommes dans la personne de Monseigneur Ritchot et de Louis Riel, le fondateur du Manitoba, qui ont travaillé très fort afin de nous faire entrer dans la Confédération du Canada. Merci beaucoup, Madame.

[Translation]

Thank you, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join with the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) this afternoon—[interjection] colleague, yes—to pay homage as was done this morning at the reception in the Legislature. Many good things were undoubtedly said this morning and it was high time that he be recognized as he was this morning.

There were many people present for the reception. There were family members, including Monsignor Ritchot's great-nephew who is present here this afternoon and who assisted the members of the House of Commons in unveiling the monument that will be erected here at the Legislative Building of Manitoba.

We must recognize what Monsignor Ritchot did for the province of Manitoba's entry into Confederation. This morning, Dr. Mailhot, the administrator of the St. Boniface Museum, paid homage to Monsignor Ritchot. He made a very fine speech and the reception following, with all the people who were there, was a very fitting homage to him and to the fact that Manitoba has had very great men in the persons of Monsignor Ritchot and Louis Riel who worked very hard to enable us to join the Canadian Confederation.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I request leave to make a nonpolitical announcement.

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

Ms. McGifford: I, too, was pleased this morning to join in the national recognition of a great Manitoban, Father Noel-Joseph Ritchot, sometimes hailed as an unofficial father of Confederation.

One of the speakers spoke of Father Ritchot's fiery eyes, reminding me of the Renaissance dictum that the eyes are the windows of the soul. In the intensity of his vision, Father Ritchot looked into the future, becoming in his own time a practitioner of liberation theology and a champion of political, social and economic justice.

Manitobans are justly proud of him and pleased that he has been formally honoured. Thank you.

* (1430)

**City of Winnipeg—
1995 Most Beautiful Capital City**

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): May I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

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

Mr. McAlpine: Madam Speaker, on Saturday the city of Winnipeg received a very prestigious award in Ottawa. The city of Winnipeg was chosen the most beautiful capital city in Canada. This announcement was made during the ceremony on Parliament Hill where Winnipeg was announced over other capital cities such as Toronto, Edmonton, Regina, Halifax and St. John's. This award is a credit to the residents of Winnipeg and all those who give their extra time and effort to make our capital city a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Through the presence of the group such as the Take Pride Winnipeg and successful government initiatives like the Winnipeg Development Agreement, we have managed to work in co-operation with the community in building rewarding and successful partnerships. The urban Green Team initiative which employed almost 700 students has resulted in the beautification of our parks, community centres and neighbourhoods.

By providing meaningful employment and experience to our youth, we have managed to make great strides in making Winnipeg Canada's most beautiful city for 1995. Madam Speaker, I think that all men, woman and children in the city of Winnipeg as

residents can take pride in this award and be proud of the city that they live in and in helping to make this the city that it is in the most beautiful country and the most beautiful city in Canada. Thank you.

Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Madam Speaker, do I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

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

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, I rise today to advise the honourable members in this Chamber that I had the distinct honour this weekend to represent the Manitoba government at a luncheon hosted by the Winnipeg Chapter of the Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University.

This luncheon was attended by Doctor Fargahl, Egypt's Ambassador to Canada, Mr. Yerushalmi, Israel's Acting Ambassador to Canada, and Dr. Munem, the official PLO representative to Canada.

This was the first event of its kind in Canada and a premier world event. The symposium and a luncheon was to celebrate the peace initiative on the West Bank of Israel, and the Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University are to be commended for contributing to and celebrating this world peace initiative. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Sports Federation—Used Equipment

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I, too, would like leave for a nonpolitical statement.

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

Ms. Cerilli: Today the Winnipeg Free Press reported that one of the ways we can help kids from low-income families is to assist them with the expenses for equipment and fees so they do not miss out on opportunities that other children have.

One of these opportunities is playing sports, organized sports, and taking up this challenge is the Manitoba Sports Federation to ensure that more kids from low-income families have the chance to participate.

The Manitoba Sports Federation should be commended for working with the City of Winnipeg Police, the Manitoba RCMP, the Brandon Police, the Manitoba Regional Sports Association and even Laidlaw Waste Systems, who are all working together to collect used sports equipment for kids that otherwise would not have access to playing organized sports.

This is a new program. It is only two years old, and the kickoff was this weekend at The Forks. Residents of Manitoba can contribute used sports equipment until the end of October, and I would encourage all members of the House to support this very worthwhile endeavour and support the Manitoba Sports Federation in ensuring that more children in Manitoba can participate and benefit from being part of a team on organized sports.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): On a matter of House business, Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that the 1995 Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, that was tabled in the House on Friday, will be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources for tomorrow morning at ten o'clock for consideration, along with the 1994 report that had previously been referred.

Would you call Bills 2, 4, 5, 12 and then the balance of the bills as listed in the Order Paper?

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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

Madam Speaker: 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), who has 32 minutes remaining.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, to get into the basics of the comments that I would like to put on the record today in regard to the balanced budget legislation, as I stated on Friday, this legislation does not correspond with any economic theory known to personkind, either historical theory or current economic theory.

In the 1930s, when the world went through a major depression, at the beginning of that depression the President of the United States Herbert Hoover followed the same type of thinking that this current government is following in bringing forward Bill 2, this draconian piece of legislation, in not wanting to spend any additional money to get people working, to get the factories working, to get the farmers working, to get the economy going again after it had been devastated by the actions of the stock market and millions of speculators who caused the the crash of the stock market and the attendant devastating depression that followed.

It was only when the new president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was elected in 1932 and came to power in early 1933 that the Depression started to unravel, as it were, that things started to happen. The reason they did, Madam Speaker, is because the new government in the United States followed a different kind of thinking.

The government of Franklin Delano Roosevelt understood that in order for you to have a vibrant economy, in order for you to get out from under a depression, you needed to ensure that people were working, that factories were working, that the farm economy started to make a comeback, that imports and exports started to happen, and you could not do that if there was not money operating in the system and the way to do that was to kick-start the economy.

That is exactly what the president of the United States did very effectively. So that by the end of the 1930s the United States was no longer in a depression. They had made a recovery and things economically were going along well.

So we see one example, Madam Speaker, of where the thinking that this government is undertaking or that underlies Bill 2 did not work in the 30s in the United States and it did not work in the 30s in Canada. The thinking that is behind Bill 2 is outdated and has been proven time and time again to be inaccurate, to be not helpful in trying to keep the engine of the economy and the people of the province on an even keel.

We do have another example of what happens when a government does not give itself the kind of flexibility that it needs to deal with the vagaries of the economy, and that is in the state of California, the infamous Proposition 13. When it was implemented in 1978 or '79 it has had an enormously devastating impact on the state of California, a state that used to be No. 1 in virtually every economic indicator. That was where it was best to be, where things were happening.

Since Proposition 13 has been in place, the state has gone down drastically on a whole number of indices. The state government before Prop. 13 had a \$5-billion surplus. Today it has a multibillion-dollar debt. The state now is resorting to IOUs to pay its own employees. Now that is not the way that even members on the other side would agree you should run a business or a government.

* (1440)

Before 1978, before Prop. 13, California ranked sixth among U.S. states in its per-pupil spending on education. Now, in the last 17 years as a direct effect of Proposition 13, that ranking has dropped to 41st, and this is not because there are fewer needs for spending on education in the state of California. They have some massive educational problems to deal with, and they cannot do it because they cannot afford to put the resources into their school system that are necessary.

However, not everyone in the state of California has been hit negatively by Proposition 13. The Wall Street

Journal called Proposition 13 a business bonanza because it has diverted \$3 billion a year from municipal treasuries to the owners of commercial and industrial properties because of the inability of the municipalities and the state to get tax revenue from those properties.

Madam Speaker, it just does not make any sense from an economic perspective to have a bill like Bill 2 on the books. We know that in an industrial and postindustrial society there is no certainty as far as how the economy is going to go.

We can guarantee that given the fact that we are in an economy that is not only global in scope, but an economy that is driven not by elected governments, as has been the case in the past, not even by national corporations or multinational corporations, but an economy that has is being driven more and more by transnational corporations that have absolutely no loyalty to a state, a political entity, transnational corporations that are bound only by the profit line and care nothing about the impact of their actions on the people in the countries, the provinces and the municipalities that they relate to.

When you have an economy that is becoming more and more globalized and more under the influence of a smaller and smaller number of larger and larger corporations, more and more distanced from the people who pay the taxes that support them, then you need even more an ability by the government to be flexible in their dealings in the economy. Because the government has less impact, it needs to have more flexibility within the scope of influence that it does possess.

Madam Speaker, it is not only we on this side of the House that make that statement about the need to be flexible and the need to have some control over the economy and over the budgeting process. Standard and Poor's, not exactly an organization that we on this side of the House often refer to or many times agree with, has stated that the referendum requirement, particularly of Bill 2, is a concern for them, and I quote: We see the potential to reduce the flexibility the government may have should there be revenue weakness as a result of a recession. The government, because of this feature, may not be able to respond.

Madam Speaker, this is not the left wing speaking here, this is a major voice of the business community, of the corporate sector, Standard and Poor's. They are showing some concern about the inflexibility inherent in the implications of Bill 2.

On the whole issue of a deficit, Standard and Poor's also agrees with us on this side of the House that deficits are not in and of themselves always automatically a bad thing, that there are times for spending and there are times for saving. The reason that they say that this is not necessarily a bad thing is that, and I am quoting again: It is important for a government to retain some ability to do countercyclical budgeting to prevent a recession from ballooning into a depression.

Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House agree completely with Standard and Poor's assessment of the problems inherent in this piece of legislation. We think that it is essential that governments maintain as much flexibility and as much control as they can in these very, very difficult times when the statistics and the indicators are up and down. They cover the map. You do not know whether we are in a minimal recovery or we are starting into another recession. We do not know what is going to happen in the housing market. We do not know what is going to happen in the manufacturing sector. We never know what is going to happen in the resource-based parts of our economy, which are a major part of our economy. Sometimes they are good; sometimes they are bad. Sometimes we have a good crop year, sometimes we have a less good crop year.

It is important for the government to be able to have the flexibility in their planning process to react to these situations that are completely out of our control, and Bill 2 does not allow for that. Bill 2 puts a straitjacket, a fiscal straitjacket, on the government. I think, Madam Speaker, that no responsible government should want to have that kind of straitjacket placed on their ability to do good budgeting. Budgets, as we know, are really no more than a plan. There is very little good planning that can be undertaken under the strictures in place in Bill 2.

What have other governments in the country done about the whole issue of balanced budgets? Well,

some provinces have brought in balanced budget legislation, although, Madam Speaker, I must say that the Province of Newfoundland, which has the best record of all Canadian provinces in fiscal management, has no balanced budget law at all. You do not necessarily have to have a piece of legislation to ensure a balanced budget, but provinces across this country, as well as states in the United States, are looking at and, in some cases, implementing balanced budget legislation.

The Province of Alberta and the Province of Saskatchewan both have balanced budget legislation. Madam Speaker, you cannot find two more diametrically opposed political philosophies in this country than the governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan. One, the Alberta government, is a very right-wing, fiscally conservative government. The other, the government of Saskatchewan, is much more to the left of centre and thinks in terms of the social implications of the budgeting process. They both have balanced budget legislation, but in neither one of those situations do they include all of the elements that are included in Bill 2, which make, when you take it as a whole, Bill 2 such a devastating financial and fiscal instrument.

Bill 2 has all of the elements that, as I said, together cause major problems for us because Bill 2 does not reflect the fact that economies go in cycles, as they have, certainly in the industrial and postindustrial economies, on an average of from four to seven years between a "boom and a bust." Bill 2 does not allow for that. Bill 2 presupposes or will impose a flat line on the economy and the budget of Manitoba.

I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that the end result of this flatlining may very well be to bring the body politic and the body economic into a flat-line situation where there is no more beating heart of the economy, where the hand of Bill 2 is so heavy on the government of Manitoba and then, through the process, on the people and the economy of Manitoba that it will not have the desired impact. It will not mean that the province will be more economically viable. It will have a deadening impact.

* (1450)

So Bill 2 does not allow, as I have said, for the flexibility needed to recognize the boom and bust, the cyclical nature of our economies. All economies go through cycles, but, particularly, in a province like Manitoba, which has such a major reliance on the resource and agricultural sectors, as I stated earlier, you really must have flexibility built in because you do not know what is going to happen.

You cannot control that. We less and less can control any element of our economy, but, most certainly, the resource sector and the agricultural sector are major components that need to have a degree of flexibility in their budgeting and planning process.

Another element of Bill 2, in conjunction with the lack of recognition of the cyclical element of the economy, is that the budget will take into account, will be balanced, on both the operating and the capital side. Now this, to me, is absolutely unheard of, that you can make the assumption that you will pay for all of your capital expenditures as well as your operating expenditures in a balanced manner each and every year. When you put those two elements together, you are just guaranteeing disaster.

What this will mean is that we will not be able to build hospitals. We will not be able to build personal care homes. We will not be able to build schools. We will not be able to build roads. People in northern Manitoba already know that because there has been virtually no road activity in northern Manitoba since this government came to power.

The highway budget, being largely capital, is going to have to go into that year's balanced budget process. I do not understand how the government can think that it can balance both the operating and the capital side together. It makes no sense. It makes no economic sense, it makes no long-term political sense, as I think the government will find out, to its dismay, as the implications of Bill 2 filter through the society. It most certainly does not make any quality-of-life sense.

The capital projects that this province undertakes and has undertaken throughout its history are the kinds of projects that enhance the quality of life for all Manitoba or should enhance the quality of life.

We do not build highways just to give the Highways department something to do. We build highways because it is an effective, efficient means of transporting people and goods from place to place. It connects us, one with the other, one community with another community. It helps to narrow and lessen the isolation that people feel in a province that is as geographically dispersed as this one is.

We do not build schools just so that the construction trades can have a job for a while, although that is a wonderful spin-off. We build schools because that is the place where our children are taught. That is the place where our children do much of their socialization. That is the place where much of what makes us a community takes place. The bricks and mortar are an essential component of that.

The same thing can be said of hospitals, of personal care homes, of electrification, of gasification, of all of the things that we as a province have undertaken, in a capital regard, over the decades to ensure that Manitobans have a high quality of life and that Manitoba is a good place for business to come and operate.

Now, I would like to ask the government how they think that they are going to attract business to this community, to this province if the cannot put in place the capital infrastructure that is needed, and they will not be able to put those things in place because they have to pay for them the day, the year that the shovel goes in the ground. No other government has this kind of capital requirement in its balanced budget legislation.

What have governments—[interjection] A question has been asked by one of my colleagues. I think it is a very good question, and I would like to put it on the record. I am not sure but it seems to me that a major piece of legislation such as Bill 2 should have some government members speaking to it as well, putting on the record their views, putting on the record why this is such a wonderful piece of legislation, and I do not believe anyone has. I would be very interested to know why the people of Arthur-Virden or the people of Rossmere or Riel or St. Vital do not know what their members are thinking about the value in Bill 2. Just an

aside, Madam Speaker, and I would like now to get back to my original comments.

I have spoken about what other provinces in the country have done in regard to balanced budget legislation and how none of the other provinces have put in place anything that is nearly as Draconian as this piece of legislation, and very legitimately so they have not done it.

I would like to put a few words on the record as to comparing the kinds of governments, the ideological differences and the financial differences between Conservative governments and NDP governments both in the Province of Saskatchewan and the Province of Manitoba.

The Province of Saskatchewan has a 50-year history—well, with one unfortunate 10-year hiatus—of good solid financial management by the government of Saskatchewan, and the government of Saskatchewan that first began in 1944 and is currently in place, as well, is the New Democrat government. I think that arguably, and I am not sure of my statistics here, but I would imagine that the government of Saskatchewan throughout the NDP years, throughout the '40s, the '50s, the '60s, the '70s and the '90s, has had a better record of balancing their budget than any other government in the history of Canada.

I take away the decade of the '80s because between 1982 and 1991 the Province of Saskatchewan was governed by a Conservative government. The Province of Saskatchewan, with a slightly smaller economy than the Province of Manitoba, although very similar in its composition, had a surplus when the Devine government came in. When the Devine government went out nine years later, the Roy Romanow NDP government came into power with a \$1-billion deficit—

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker, is this relevant to the bill we have before us?

Ms. Barrett: Madam Speaker, the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), who is not prepared to put his words on the record of the reasons for his support for Bill 2, asks for relevancy. I am suggesting that it is incredibly relevant because the Province of

Saskatchewan now has balanced budget legislation which does not require a balancing of the budget every year, which does not require capital and operating to be in the same process. In the four years since the NDP government was re-elected in the Province of Saskatchewan, they have taken a \$1-billion deficit rung up by those fiscally prudent managers, the Tories, a \$1-billion deficit over those nine years, and they have turned it into a surplus in four budgets.

Madam Speaker, I would suggest to you that this is an indication, as was stated by Standard and Poor's, that you do not necessarily need balanced budget legislation to balance your budgets, and you certainly do not need the kind of draconian legislation that is before us today to do that.

Madam Speaker, I think that we needed—and I would like to talk as well about the elements of balancing budgets and budgeting as undertaken in businesses and families. The government has talked often about how businesses could not operate like NDP governments do. They have talked about the need to be more businesslike in their approach to budgeting and finances, and they have also spoken about how families do not budget inappropriately and do not budget for debt and this kind of thing. I would like to suggest that the government is completely wrong in its analysis of both the business budgeting and household budgeting. They are completely wrong when they are trying to put business budgeting and family budgeting in the context of Bill 2. Historically and currently that is shown to be the case.

* (1500)

Madam Speaker, families, yes, every family wants to be able to budget for no deficit, for no debt. We all agree with that. Most families try and do that, but I would suggest to you, and here we get into the difference between capital and operating, that there is virtually no family in the province of Manitoba that at one point or another was not forced to take out a loan, was not forced to go into debt.

Madam Speaker, these are families who are not irresponsible budgeters, who are not irresponsible in their looking at the needs of their family both short

term and long term. Where would our provincial economy be today if we could not, on a personal level, on a family level, go into debt to buy a house? If there were no such thing as mortgages, what would happen to our already moribund housing market? People would never be able to buy houses.

I would like to ask—it is a rhetorical question—the members opposite, how many of them were able to buy a home without a mortgage, their first home without a mortgage? Very few. [interjection] Very frugal, yes, but every single one of you with the one exception so far did take out a loan, a mortgage to buy their home. This is a legitimate expense.

I would like to ask a question, how many members opposite, or how many people in the province, are able to buy a car without a loan, certainly the first car without a loan? Some people can buy a car without a loan. Most people cannot buy a car without a loan, especially if you are going to buy a new car. They pay it back.

Do you know what, Madam Speaker? We are, as a province, paying back our long-term debt. We also have, because we have allowed ourselves to take out loans to implement capital projects, we have things like hospitals, personal care homes, highways. We would not have those things if we were not allowed to—if we had to respond to Bill 2. Bill 2 will not allow the government to make any capital decisions that will impact positively on the people of Manitoba. I do not understand how they can say that it is going to be a help. I am sorry, but we have to assume that they do not know because they are not choosing to speak on this piece of legislation.

Madam Speaker, in the whole issue of small business too, which is the cornerstone and the backbone of the province's nonfarm economy and becoming more and more the backbone of the farm economy or a necessary adjunct to the farm economy because the small family farmers are going under as the agribusiness takes over and the multinational corporations come into the province of Manitoba, there are very few family farmers who can afford to be farmers completely. They have to have a second income of sorts. [interjection] Farmers. Now, I will ask—

Point of Order

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member really knows what she is saying. She should really check as to what she said about the small family farms in this province going under and not being important to the Province of Manitoba. I wonder if she would withdraw her comments.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Yes, I would ask that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism listen a little closer. My colleague indicated that many family farmers were in trouble and going under. She did not say that they were not important to the economy of this province. Many—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order, there is no point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Ms. Barrett: Madam Speaker, I would like to make it crystal clear to the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), in case it was not crystal clear before, that I started my remarks about the family farm by saying that the agricultural sector was an enormously important part of the economy of the province of Manitoba. The backbone of the province of Manitoba's economy, both urban, rural and farm, is the small-business person, whether that is a business person in an auto parts business or a small retailer or a small family farmer. They are all vital to the backbone of this economy.

I am suggesting that the Bill 2 that is being brought forward by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) is not going to help any one of those major segments of the economy of the province of Manitoba. If the minister has some concerns about my position and the position of my colleagues, perhaps he would like to put his notes on the record.

Madam Speaker, the government of Manitoba instituted a task force on capital markets which said, and I quote: the majority of small businesses usually require some debt financing. The report goes on to

note that small business uses debt financing to purchase capital assets such as buildings and equipment and for current assets and ongoing operating costs. Financing of operating costs is usually by way of loans, mortgages or leases backed by the required level of collateral security.

The government says that Bill 2 will not devastate the small-business community, will not devastate the retail sector, will not devastate the farming community.

I am closing my remarks by saying that this government has put forward Bill 2; it has chosen not to speak one word on the record about this bill. I would suggest to you that when we get to public hearings that the people of Manitoba will speak loud and clear about the devastating impacts of this ill-thought-out and ill-conceived piece of legislation, and I would urge the government to take Bill 2 back and come back with a logical, legitimate form of balanced budget legislation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I am pleased to rise to put a few comments on record on Bill 2, which is the balanced budget legislation, but before I do, I would just like to quote a saying that a very well-respected ex-Premier of Manitoba stated. He said, who can say what the monetary costs are of not building a road, a school, or a hospital? I think that explains the whole effect of Bill 2. That Premier was no other than the well-respected Duff Roblin.

If you look at his comments and if you look at the implications of Bill 2, I do not think Mr. Roblin would have had the opportunity to build the now famous Duff's Ditch. We all know that the floodway has saved many, many residents and homeowners from getting flooded year in and year out. So how can you say on one hand that balanced budget legislation is so great and, yet, on the other hand—one of the most respected Premiers of Manitoba from the Conservatives—it just contradicts exactly what that Premier was able to accomplish.

I am not surprised that we are not seeing too many of the members standing up and speaking on this balanced budget legislation, because they would have to speak out against and contradict Premier Roblin, who was

very wise in building that floodway. If you look at the impacts that it would have had had that floodway not been built, the same families, year in and year out, would have been getting flooded, would have had enormous costs because of the flooding.

If they kept taking out insurance policies to reclaim the losses that they would generate from the floods, they either would have been cut off from insurance by now or their insurance premiums would be so high that they would not be able to afford them. I think everyone in this House recognizes the tremendous impact that floodway has on residents who would have been affected by that flood.

* (1510)

If you just go on to see what Premier Roblin was saying, you know, about building roads and schools and hospitals, when I was sitting in this House the other day when my Leader was speaking, he said the former Finance minister and he were in a conversation and the former Finance minister had stated, well, what about our debt?

My Leader reacted at that time, no one really likes debt; but he said, I am so proud when my children are born in their hospital. He said, when my daughter goes to school, she is going to school in her own school. When she goes out to play in the playground that is owned by the people of Manitoba, he said, that is a tremendous amount of pride.

For a while I did a lot of thinking about that, and he is absolutely right. We have a lot to be thankful for, and we have a lot to be thankful for the visions of past leaders and past premiers. I only have to look at the constituency of Point Douglas, and I am reminded of the vision of Ed Schreyer when I visit the seniors homes in Point Douglas.

When I go door to door, a lot of seniors say to me, yes, we remember Ed Schreyer. He built my home where I am living today. There is no way that our hospitals, our roads, our seniors homes would have been able to be built under this Bill 2. There is no way because you would have to save up the money first and then build it.

So, if you look at some of the ways governments have spent money—[interjection] The member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) just stated, well, what about Saudi Arabia? That is true. It was money well not spent. But I just have to remind him that just in the last year I do not know how many millions of dollars we are going to be spending on the Jets who are not even going to be here. Who is spending those dollars? It is not the NDP. It is not the Liberal Party. We are not in government. It is the taxpayers of Manitoba who are going to be having to pay those high costs of financing a personal business person that had a hockey team.

But, if you look at the irony of it all, this government, sure they say that it is great to build an arena. A lot of people will use it. I would like to recommend to the government that, if they are really looking at building an arena, in Point Douglas there is a community in there called Lord Roberts tenants association that is living in a Lord Roberts housing development there.

They have a community hall and a beautiful recreation building called Turtle Island. Right in behind there is a massive amount of land. Could you imagine if the government in their wisdom and their efforts to wanting to build a beautiful indoor arena built it there? That would benefit the whole community. You would see crime go down, and you would see kids happily going to physical activities.

If you people want to build an arena, I would recommend they look at that site because that would benefit children.

So, when you look at this legislation, we only have to look no further than comparing it to our own family finances. When I say that, I do not know too many people, those I know anyway who are my friends and associates, that could lay down \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 cash to buy a house. There are not too many families I know that could lay down \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 for a car. So if the government ran the government and looked at their own finances, I do not know how people would ever, ever have homes. I do not know how many people in this Chamber—I saw one hand go up when my colleague from Wellington (Ms.

Barrett) asked how many people were able to purchase their home without a mortgage. I saw one hand go up.

Some people are fortunate enough through wise investments, or a lot of people, if you look at how they got their start was through inheritances from their families. Some of them were fortunate enough to get the capital that they were able to invest from families, but there are a lot of people in Manitoba that do not have the opportunity to inherit a huge inheritance.

Some people say, well, it is their responsibility. I think a person that is working a steady job year in year out, that is looking at assets for their family, that looks at their budget and takes out a mortgage to buy their home to make sure their family has a decent affordable shelter, I do not see anything wrong with it. When your kids start getting a little older and you have to start driving your children to hockey games or baseball games or Boy Scouts or Girl Guides, you need the means of transportation. I do not see anything wrong with taking out a loan to purchase a car, but you have to balance it in your overall budget.

Under this legislation, if you compared it to family financing, then what would happen is when you have an income and all of a sudden something happens that you have to spend extra dollars that you really did not budget for, something unforeseen, and then all of a sudden you are faced with an Autopac bill, under this legislation you could not even go and borrow the funds to pay your Autopac. What you would have to do is you would have to immediately cut back on family income. When you are a family where you have your fixed costs, mortgage, loans and your heat, lights, well, you know, we know how much they cost every month, if you do not have that flexibility, if you are faced with a loss that you had not really budgeted for, and you need to expend, there is only one way to cut back and that is in food.

So under this legislation, then, what this government is saying is no matter what, take food away from your children in order to come in with a balanced budget. [interjection] Well, that is exactly what is going to happen. Well, we are paying—when we bring money in, we should be paying back.

This government says we have such a huge debt to pay back. I think our ratio on our debt is somewhere from 10 cents to 12 cents on a dollar. I wish I could get that kind of a rate at my bank for my car or loan or whatever. [interjection] Well, that is 10 cents on the dollar.

An Honourable Member: No, that is the amount of our debt, it is not a rate.

Mr. Hickes: Well, if you compare it to our debt ratio, percentage of dollars that goes to pay down our debt is \$10 on \$1. If you looked at comparing deficits—now how come all of a sudden the government in their wisdom came out with Bill 2 and says it is such a great idea to come in with balanced budget legislation? Well, my colleague said earlier that Newfoundland has the best finances in Canada. They do not have this legislation.

An Honourable Member: Newfoundland?

Mr. Hickes: Newfoundland. It states right here: Newfoundland has the best record of all Canadian provinces in fiscal management and has no law at all.

An Honourable Member: Who said that?

Mr. Hickes: Well, it is right in the editorial of the Free Press.

So, if you looked at that, if you compared it to this government's newfound vision or wisdom, I just wonder what happened in the last seven years. If the government was serious and intent on balancing the budget, there was no reason, there was nothing in the way of stopping you from coming in with a balanced budget legislation. I would just like to ask, when you talk about figures, what happened in 1989-90? Was the budget balanced? This is the responsible fiscal managers of Manitoba. When they were elected, was the budget balanced? No, it was not. How about in 1990-91, was the budget balanced? No, it was not. In 1991-92 was the budget balanced? No, it was not balanced. How about in 1992-93, was the budget balanced? No, it was not. How about in 1993-94, was the budget balanced, Madam Speaker? No, it was not. How about in 1994-95, was the budget balanced? No,

it was not. How about in 1995-96? Do you think it will be balanced? Well, that is to be seen.

* (1520)

Well, what happened in 1988-89? Was the budget balanced? There was a surplus of \$55 million in 1988-89. Who was the government at that time? So, when you look at tax and spend, who has been taxing and spending since 1989 to now? Is it the NDP? I do not think the NDP has been power since 1988-89 when we had a surplus budget of \$55 million—\$55 million surplus.

An Honourable Member: It is a figment of your imagination.

Mr. Hickes: Well, the Minister for Highways (Mr. Findlay) says, it is my imagination. Well, I would just like to ask and read something that has been—this is from the Provincial Auditor. I wish the Minister of Highways would write a letter to the Provincial Auditor and state what he is stating in this House that what she has stated is not true, because it says right here: responding to questions from NDP industry critic, Tim Sale, Ms. Bellringer said the '92-93 deficit was not \$330.5 million, nor was it \$566 million. It was \$819 million, and it states right in here that it was the highest, highest deficit that was ever recorded in the history of Manitoba, the highest, and this is from the fiscal managers that we have today.

They are talking about tax and spend, so just go back and just check from 1989 to now, who the government has been that has been practising the tax and spend. It is nice when you can be part of a party that in 1988 had a surplus, a surplus budget that was even confirmed by the Provincial Auditor. So I could not see how anyone in this House could stand up and argue with the Provincial Auditor and say the Provincial Auditor is wrong.

It says right here, it says—this is taken from CBC 24 Hours, a transcript from CBC 24 Hours News, and it says Diana Swain, this is what she is saying. She is asking a question: How do you budget your cheque book? Well, the Provincial Auditor does not like the way the provincial government keeps its books. She

says in 1992-93 the province reported a deficit of \$470 million, but Carol Bellringer says properly accounted for the number was over \$800 million. Even one of their own colleagues, the former member for Rossmere, stated right in this House that the deficit was much, much higher than what the government was stating, even made it in one of his speeches. And it goes on to say, the highest deficit ever rung up by a Manitoba government, the highest deficit ever.

So that is very, very scary stuff, as some member just mentioned, because if that continues on, what are we going to leave to our children? And this government keeps saying we have been responsible and we have not raised taxes, but you know, Madam Speaker, a couple of years ago my son, who was 13 at that time, was told by this province to pay taxes. Thirteen years old. Six-year-old children, some five-year-old children, even some babies were now forced to pay taxes which they had never paid before. That is true, because when my son and his friends and the children used to go to McDonald's and buy their hamburger, they never used to have to pay tax on that, but now, when they walk in those doors, buy a hamburger, every child in Manitoba has been taxed by this government. Because meals under \$6 were not taxed, but now every one of those burgers are taxed. Well, taking from the mouths of children, it is okay to take money from the mouths of children.

Yet we look at big corporations that are—oh, it is fine, they do not need to pay taxes. Also when you look at taxes, like under the new tax system, I think it was the first time baby bottles and baby supplies were ever taxed. Newborn babies, diapers, their bottles, taxed, and this government says they do not tax, but they go through another way. So when you look at other avenues that people are scared of, I will read a little bit from this article. It says: Manitoba has already had one experience with how the Tories finesse around the eight-year tax freeze.

It occurred in the 1993-94 budget which slashes the property tax credit from \$350 to \$250, and extends the sales tax to cover newspapers, snacks, meals under \$6, personal hygiene products, school supplies. Well, who uses school supplies? It is children. You are taxing children and baby expenses, that is newborn babies.

Now, to generate revenues to balance the budget, I am sure that we will hear from this government. This government will say, hey, look, we do not want to really tax babies, we do not want to tax children, but darn it, this balanced budget legislation forces us into doing that. We do not want to do it, because we are nice people, but we are forced into it by Bill 2.

Madam Speaker, that is what we will hear next year, the year after, when a government is trying balance the budget, or what you will see if the economy does not pick up or if we have no further revenues coming into the province, that could be because of transfer payments by the federal government. There is no way that you will not be able to balance that budget without cutting services to people. You will see the impact that seniors will feel, our children will feel and citizens of Manitoba, when you start cutting our health care programs, our education opportunities for children and when you start cutting further our social programs that are there for an emergency whenever people need them.

I know a lot of people that are on social assistance, and it is not their will to be on there and to stay on there. They would like an opportunity to get into training programs and get into meaningful careers. But if you look at, a lot of the single parents that I have spoken to, and they say, if I go into education opportunity, I will need money for babysitters and daycare, because there are not enough public daycare spaces available. Also what happens is I need transportation costs. That goes up.

We have to make sure that all those barriers that are placed for individuals that wish and want to and hope, I know, dearly some day to get off social assistance, that we have the means in place. If you look at what Premier Roblin was stating in his comments, when he made his statement, that I am sure that has had a lot of impact on Manitobans throughout the years if you really, really think about it.

When he stated, like who could say what the monetary costs are of not building a road, a school or a hospital. All we have to do is just—let us just go through a little exercise, where I know the government would be so happy. I am sure the government would

be so happy if there was a new mine found in any community in Manitoba, any community, a new mine.

* (1530)

Say they discovered a gold mine, it does not matter where, like wherever it is, and it created enormous opportunities for people. You had a population explosion where thousands and thousands of people moved in. They had jobs, they had the opportunity, and now you have thousands of people in a community without a hospital, without adequate roads, without schools. What would the government do? Would they ignore those?

If you know anything about the mining industry, it is one of the most hazardous occupations that is out there. There are many opportunities for accidents to occur in the mining area. So what you would need immediately, you would need a hospital. How would you build a hospital in that community now that you have thousands of people and children there? How could you build the roads? How could you build the hospitals? How could you build the schools under this legislation? You could not. How could you? How could you without breaking—

An Honourable Member: Yes, you can. We will.

Mr. Hickes: The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) says yes, we will, we will build them. That is why you have to be very, very careful when you bring in legislation that handcuffs you so tightly that you do not leave room for expansions of communities if you do have the good fortune to get a major industry going in some small community where you will need—that is exactly what Duff Roblin was talking about. To me, that is exactly what he was saying. He was saying that. Do not sacrifice roads. Do not sacrifice schools. In other words, do not sacrifice the care of people that you have been elected to be responsible for.

Madam Speaker, when you look at those kinds of observations that I have seen, and if you look at what this government is doing, then—so what happens? Since 1989 to now we have not had a balanced budget. Now for the government to balance this budget under this legislation they are free to sell Crown corporations

to balance their budget. We all know those Crown corporations are in place to keep the rates low for all citizens of Manitoba. If you privatize them I would say there is a 99.99 percent chance that the rates will go up because—[interjection] Well, the member says the Public Utilities Board will take care of that.

If they are private, who is to say that they will be kept reasonable? No one can guarantee that. So if you look at our Manitoba Hydro, we have one of the best rates in all of Canada, if not the best. So we have to make sure we protect the citizens of Manitoba from high costs. MTS—look at what is happening to MTS—slowly being chipped away, chipped away. What is going to happen under this—[interjection] It is also you need services for the people. [interjection] That is incredible. So, from what I am hearing, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hickes: —from that side is what I was afraid of. In order to balance the budget under this legislation, probably one of the first public utilities to go would be Manitoba Telephone System. That is what I was afraid of, and I think it was made pretty clear to me, because when I hear people talking about selling off corporations to balance the budget—but, you know Madam Speaker, it is like people that need money tomorrow or need money next month. Where do you go? You go to wherever you can get the most dollars in the shortest period of time.

So you will see the selling off of Crown corporations for half their value, probably a quarter of their value. So just to come in with the so-called balanced budget which I feel was an election gimmick. It worked, it worked. It was an election gimmick. It was a gimmick because it is not going to work unless you are willing to hurt the citizens of Manitoba, and you will be forced to cut more and more and more. Well, a lot of people do not understand this balanced budget legislation. I have spoken to many people, and I have explained what can happen under this legislation. They said, well, I did not know that. I did not realize that.

I said, to balance a budget, you have to sell Crown corporations or you have to cut services, and the

services that governments look at and which I am afraid of—which terrifies me because it has done this in the past and without much caring. I hope that the member or the Minister for Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik) will speak after I do to make some comments on what I am going to say because I am terribly afraid that the hardest hit, the hardest hit individuals in the province of Manitoba, in order to balance the budget, are going to be the aboriginal community.

When I say that, Madam Speaker, I just have to look at the past experience that the aboriginal community has experienced under this government. You look at 100 percent funding cut of the friendship centres, 100 percent. So, to balance the budget, do you think aboriginal people will not be hit? I am afraid they will be hit the hardest.

If you look at the friendship centres—I asked a question in the House. My colleagues asked other questions in the House. I heard the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of Manitoba stand up and say, well, they are only an advocacy group. I heard the Premier say that with my own ears.

Madam Speaker, if you look at the kinds of services that friendship centres offer to the aboriginal community across Manitoba, you only have to look at assistance to the elderly, assistance to the homeless, youth programming, socially disadvantaged, families in crisis, education, recreation and cultural programming, housing relocation, fine options, counselling, court assistance, Cree languages, day activities, wilderness camps for the aboriginal children, a children's Christmas party, training workshops, education workshops, an elders' supper. Is that so terrible? Is that so bad? Elders' supper, elders' afternoon program, they have had to cut back a lot of these programs, a tremendous amount of these, elders' other contacts, fine options, gym nights for the children, hospital visits to our elders, interpreters and escorts for individuals who do not speak English, interpretation. Who do you think requires an interpreter the most? It is our respected elders in our northern communities.

To give a little exposure to the aboriginal culture, they hold jigging, square-dancing, and also they

provided a lot of literacy programs, native awareness to the schools, so the other students who are not aboriginal could get a better understanding about the aboriginal people and the aboriginal community so people have an understanding why it is different when you are an aboriginal versus a nonaboriginal. That I am sure has eliminated a lot of stereotype mentality that people had in their heads, native awareness through powwows and various different activities.

The friendship centre participated in Nickel Days activities in Thompson, so the community could have a better understanding of what the friendship centre had to offer: programs, event inquiries, a resource library pertaining to the history of the aboriginal people and assistance to social agency administration, youth group activities and even the registration and intake of the hostel centre in Thompson and various other communities.

(Mr. David Newman, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

There is no one in this Chamber that could convince me and I am sure convince my colleagues that the friendship centres were not delivering excellent programs that benefited the aboriginal community, but because some people thought they were an advocacy group they lost 100 percent of their funding.

* (1540)

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, who provide a tremendous amount of advice and leadership to the First Nations community, was cut 100 percent. Cultural operation grants to Native Communications, now what is so wrong with providing communications in peoples' own languages, because in most of those communities the language, whether Ojibway or Cree or Saulteaux, that is the first language of the people, so what is wrong with providing communications in those languages? That was cut. First Nations Confederacy, MKO, who provides a tremendous amount of service in the North, very, very well respected, all these organizations, but, no, they were cut.

We hear day in and day out about crime and, I guess, children, you know, like being mischievous, you know, breaking windows or being a little destructive.

If you look in those northern communities, a lot of it is because the youth in those communities do not have an opportunity to get involved and wear off their energies through adequate recreation programs and activities.

One of the most successful programs was the Northern Fly-In Sports Camps, which was started in 1986. It used to go right into the communities, offer recreation programs, hire local people to assist them, and children learned swimming and a bunch of different activities, a very successful program. The funding was cut to a certain extent in 1994, and on and on and on.

That is what I am afraid of under this balanced budget legislation. The first people that will be hit will be the aboriginal community. It will be hit the hardest because of the examples that I have given you.

I have to continue on, because we have to reflect on the past experience of this government when it pertains to aboriginal—and I would like to state again that I hope the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik) will speak after me, because I would like to listen to see what he has to say about these cutbacks and if he will guarantee the aboriginal communities and aboriginal people that under this new balanced budget legislation that there will be no further cuts to aboriginal communities and aboriginal people, if he can stand up and guarantee that.

Also cut was the northern freight fish subsidy program. That was a program that benefited northern fishing, and most of the northern people who were fishing that had the negative impact were the aboriginal people. That was cut, the northern freight fish subsidy. You try to analyze it and you try to understand it in your mind, and it is so hard because, you know, if you take the people who are fishing in Gimli or Riverton or one of the other communities, when they take their fish and bring it to market, they can just throw it in boxes, throw it onto a truck and they drive it in. But these communities, their cost for freighting their goods out is so much, much higher. So what do you do with five or six times more? Does that make any sense? It does not make any sense at all.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Northern Economic Development Agreement between the federal and the province expired in 1989. Where is it? Has it been renewed? I do not know why not. You know, that used to benefit so many people in the North. Look at our Access program. Our Access program has been cut. One year it was 11 percent. Another year it was cut \$2 million, 20 percent, and the enrollment for Access in the past went down from 928 to 714.

The Access program—I would like to tell you a little story about the Access program, because the Access program has benefited and educated so many aboriginal people in northern Manitoba. We always talk about role models for communities. I have talked to a lot of people who said, you know, what we need to do is we need to get more role models into the communities so that the children in the communities can see hope and say, well, if so-and-so did this, so-and-so did that, then the opportunity for me is to work hard at my education and get my education and go through the Access program, get a degree and serve.

I was in Shamattawa and, you know, everybody knows the horror stories that come out of Shamattawa; it is no secret. There are horror stories that come out of there, but we have to be willing to work with the people to overcome and to correct some of those behaviours there. I was in there to visit some friends, and I was just waiting for a plane to come out, and this guy steps off the plane and I had not seen him in I bet you 15, 20 years. George, he said, how are you doing? I said good. He said, what are you doing here? Oh, I said, I just came to visit George Redhead, I said, my friend and his family. I said, we are just spending the weekend and, you know, having a little bit of fun visiting old friends. I said, what are you doing here? I said, you were living in Winnipeg last time I saw you. That was 15, 20 years ago. No, he said, I have come, I am going to do some work for my people. I said, what are you doing? He said, I am a dentist. It is Dr. Henry Redhead, trained through the Access program, from Shamattawa, going back into Shamattawa. He was employed by Northern Medical Services going into all the communities to do their dentistry work.

It is an excellent story, and it is an example of why Access is so important. It is an example. So that is

why when you look at cutting, do not cut programs that are so essential to helping communities and people like the Access program. There are so many success stories to the Access program. I do not understand why you would cut a program that provides so much—[interjection] Well, yes, but they have to see some kind of fairness somewhere. Like my colleagues keep saying, standing up in the House saying there has to be fairness in the North. Well, what happened to the Northern Affairs budget? Twenty percent. What is spent in northern Manitoba? Under 6 percent of the budget is spent in northern Manitoba? Under 6 percent?

An Honourable Member: It is more than that.

Mr. Hickes: Well, ask the Minister. The Minister is next to you. Ask the Minister if that is correct or not because that is what my colleagues keep saying. Highways budget, I mentioned.

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

An Honourable Member: Oh, Highways.

Mr. Hickes: I mentioned the Highways budget. Under 6 percent of the total budget is spent in northern Manitoba. Have you ever—

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

Mr. Hickes: Maybe they will give me leave to finish my comments on northern roads.

Ms. Wowchuk: I move, seconded by the member for the Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 4—The Real Property Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ernst), Bill 4, The Real Property Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens

réels), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to be able to debate Bill 4, The Real Property Amendment Act. This is a bill that I have given quite a bit of attention over the last couple of years. We are pleased to see that the bill has again come before the House and I want to indicate right off the hop that we support the legislation. Indeed, we have been after this government to bring in a bill such as this for a couple of years now, and that is one of the concerns that I have is that the government has taken quite some time to bring in this bill, and in the meantime there could have been many more people who are going to fall prey to the loophole that exists in real property law because of inadequacies of current legislation in dealing with the realities facing lending institutions and homeowners dealing with assumed mortgages.

This bill does deal with assumed mortgages and it tries to deal with the problem that there have been cases where a homeowner who sells their home under an assumed mortgage is given a big surprise down the road when the bank comes calling for payment because the purchaser of the home has defaulted. This occurred in 1993 with a resident in Radisson being pursued by Royal Trust for over \$23,000 in mortgage arrears when the owners of the home that bought their home defaulted on their mortgage. So this bill is intending to deal with that. It is intending to deal with the fact that a mortgage has two parts, and that even though the land transfer and the home transfers to a different owner, the bank still had the legal option because of the personal covenant section of the mortgage to pursue or go after or call claim for payment on the mortgage from the original owner.

* (1550)

I think any one of us can imagine that this will cause a lot of problems for individual homeowners as it has for a few residents in the province and individuals who have come to my attention. So, I want to say too that it is quite satisfying that this government has come forward, they have taken seriously the call for attention

to this case. It is satisfying to know that we can affect some change in legislation even from the opposition side, that we can raise issues based on constituency work, based on inequities that are occurring in our province or problems with laws that come to our attention and that in fact if we persevere we can see some legal changes and some more justice in the laws that are there for the province of Manitoba.

But as I said earlier, there are some concerns with the delays that this government has taken. They have had a number of opportunities to deal with this situation. It first came to the attention of the House—and maybe this is not the case, maybe even this government knew about this problem prior to that, but it was in early 1993. Initially, we began writing letters to the government and it has taken a couple of years. It has taken over two years for them to come forward with this legislation.

It is interesting when we look at the way that it has been covered in the paper. Reading some of the headlines, it tells the story of the situation, given the problems with The Real Property Act, headlines such as, house returns to haunt seller, from January '93. Assume the worst in mortgage switch, was another one from January '93. Then we had an opportunity for the government to give it serious attention when the NDP proposed a private member's bill, and the headline was, NDP bill would protect after mortgage transfer.

The government though has chosen to look at more details, and I would give the government the consideration that this bill they are introducing is more detailed and specific than the one that was put forward from this side of the House. This is a very technical matter, and the bill that the government has brought forward deals with more of the technicalities than the private member's bill that I had introduced.

But further to that, some of the other headlines that speak to this issue where the minister—one of the headlines says, the minister to review mortgage liability. That was then in May 1993 so some time is passing.

Then we had another headline that was also in May, Ernst to take a hard look at perils of assumed

mortgages. This is after they had the private member's bill introduced. Then we had a court case where, the judge upholds the mortgage injustice. So there is an acknowledgement that this is an injustice but that there is legal protection and then, I think, the headline that probably bothered the Tories the most, Tories dither on mortgage injustice.

So we have I think a good record of the process and the many attempts that have gone forward to get this government to move on this issue. There was even an instance where one of the Premier's own constituents had a similar problem where they were being called on by the bank for claims to pay the mortgage on a home that they had sold and no longer lived in. The minister and Premier had promised action at that time, but there was none. They then referred the matter to the Securities Commission and received a report on September 1, 1994, outlining how this issue has been dealt with in other parts of the country, and it has taken them a full year to come forward with legislation. It is interesting that the government tried to deal with this before the election, and they brought forward a Bill 2, but when I was looking at Bill 2 as compared to the current Bill 4, there are some changes. So we can see that the government had to go back to the drawing board once again and they have made changes which I will get into in more detail later on.

I asked questions in the House on June 30 with regard to how this government is going to deal with the issue and now here we are October 1995 and we are debating the legislation. I do not know how many other people have had to deal with lending institutions in the meantime around assumed mortgages, but I know from dealing with the people who I have talked to that even though some people may say this is not a problem that affects a lot of Manitobans, it is not a big problem, I would say that even if there is one person who is unjustly affected by poor laws in this province that we have a responsibility to deal with those problems and ensure that legislation is going to be fair and balanced.

So even though there are some banks that have had their own policy not to make claims on an assumed mortgage after it is one year, that there are some banks that have not operated by this type of policy, that they

have used the letter of the law to their advantage and to the financial ruin or to just add great stress and problems for individuals in the province. So it may not be a big issue in the broad scheme of things in terms of the very large number of houses that are bought and sold in the province but, for those individuals who are affected, I can assure you, it is a big issue. I am pleased to see that the loopholes and problems with the law are going to be addressed.

Further to that, I think the big question is the issue of balance. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ernst), when dealing with this issue, has often talked about the need that we have to have a balanced approach, that we have to take into consideration the interests of the banks, of the lending institutions, as well as the interests of homeowners. This only applies to residential mortgages.

I ask the government to consider how you balance the interest and the ability, for example, of individuals to hire lawyers as opposed to the ability of a bank to hire lawyers and go to court and deal with these matters. I want to impress upon the government that their attempts to achieve balance may not actually take into consideration that the banks have a tremendous amount more power and influence and ability to deal with these matters than individual citizens and homeowners.

So I think that although we support the bill, I think that there is still some room to make it more balanced and will look at that in more detail. You can just look at one of the options in the legislation: to allow the banks now to charge fees when they are trying to deal with approving an assumed mortgage. Because the bill is allowing for banks to charge fees, I guess that has been one of the ways they have attempted to balance the interest of the banks, but we can all, I think, agree that banks are doing pretty good in this day and age, that the banks are making hundreds of millions of dollars of profit. I think that any provision that allow banks to charge additional fees—

* (1600)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 4 p.m., as previously agreed, it is time for private

members' hour. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 28 minutes remaining. As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Proposed Resolutions

Res. 17—Social Assistance and Job Creation

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that

WHEREAS there is an unacceptable number of employable social assistance recipients across the province of Manitoba, with over 15,000 in the city of Winnipeg alone; and

WHEREAS there are over 26,000 social assistance recipients on provincial social assistance, some of whom are employable; and

WHEREAS the cost to individuals in lost earnings, loss of dignity and pride, and the cost to society in the loss of productivity and tax revenue is incalculable; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has closed Human Resource Opportunity Centres and has reduced funding for training programs such as New Careers and Access programs; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has given grants to businesses under the Workforce 2000 program totalling \$30 million with little accountability and no job creation component.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recommend that the provincial government give consideration to creating work for welfare recipients in areas such as environmental cleanup, retrofitting of houses for energy conservation, infill and rehabilitation housing programs, and infrastructure renewal, particularly streets, back lanes and sewer renewal and construction in the city of Winnipeg.

Motion presented.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this resolution is just as timely today as it was when I submitted it for the resolutions' draw at the beginning of this session in May. In fact, my numbers of the number of people who are unemployed were on the low side, deliberately, so I would not be caught out with my facts wrong.

Just to give an update, in the first WHEREAS I said there were 15,000 people on social assistance in the city of Winnipeg. In fact, there are over 16,000 on the city system. That is not persons; it is cases. So there are many more persons who are on the city rolls.

It is important to make a distinction here between those who are employable and unemployable. The City of Winnipeg is responsible in its jurisdiction for employable social assistance recipients. The province is responsible for those who are unemployable and single parents. So in the provincial system it would be true to say that some are employable and some are not.

I have the most recent numbers for those who are on the provincial system. I would like to thank the director of Income Security and the assistant deputy minister for Income Security who on a monthly basis send me statistics. Just today I received the figures for the benefit month of August, I believe. There are 26,249 cases. In fact that means thousands more individuals.

So we know that the problem of unemployment is an extremely serious problem in Winnipeg and Manitoba, although it is much more serious in Winnipeg than in Manitoba because 89 percent of employable social assistance recipients live in the city of Winnipeg. Part of this is due to the pressure that rural municipalities and small towns put on their clients, in many cases forcing them to move to the city of Winnipeg, or even assisting them to move to the city of Winnipeg.

When people on rural municipality assistance request moving costs to move to the city of Winnipeg, R.M. councillors are only too happy to give them their moving costs to move to the city of Winnipeg so that they are not on their local rolls.

As I point out in my resolution, the cost to individuals in lost earnings, the loss of dignity and pride and the cost to society in terms of the loss of productivity and tax revenue, is incalculable. These are very important aspects. All of them. We know that the vast majority of people do not want to be on social assistance. The vast majority of people want to be in the paid workforce. In fact, a minority of people on social assistance in Manitoba are employable because there are such a large number of people who are disabled and unable to work or whose circumstances may prevent them from working.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very interesting to look at the statistics of who those people are who are unemployed and what their personal circumstances are. For example, we have repeatedly talked about single parents. I know that the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) also likes to talk about single parents.

If you look at their rates of unemployment and how many of them are on social assistance and particularly how many live below the poverty line—I remember in recent memory it was about 56 percent of single parents were below the poverty line. Now it is well over 70 percent, but it really depends on the age of their children.

For example, the number who are below the poverty line and are on social assistance with children below the age of six is much much higher than the rate for single parents who have children over the age of six. The crucial difference, of course, is that when the children are over the age of six the children are in school. As a result it is much easier for that parent to get into the paid workforce.

Of course, the other thing that makes it much easier for these individuals to get into the paid workforce is if they have subsidized child care. So I think that, if you were to compare single parents with subsidized child care and parents who do not, you would probably find that a higher percentage of those with subsidized child care are in the paid workforce than those who are not.

I have also pointed out that the cost is incalculable of the loss of dignity and pride. I have many of these

individuals in my constituency; I talk to them on a regular basis, and I know that people do not want to be on social assistance and that it is demeaning for many of them to be on assistance.

Just today I was talking to the parent of an individual who has MS and is living at home and I presume receiving a partial subsidy. This individual volunteers for a number of organizations, including a school division, and was volunteering in the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and spending a regular part of the week volunteering in this department folding letters and stuffing envelopes. It was good for this individual, just as it is good collectively for people on social assistance to volunteer, whether it is for government or nonprofit organizations or churches to be doing this. But when she asked if she could get bus fare, she was told no. I think that is a shame. I think giving bus fare to people who volunteer in government would be a very minor expense but very important to people's self-worth, dignity and even ability to continue volunteering.

In the next WHEREAS, I pointed out that the current provincial government has closed Human Resources Opportunity Centres, including one in Dauphin and one in Selkirk. They have reduced funding for training programs such as New Careers and Access programs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very interesting to be here over the cycle of a government. In the case of the current government in the Thirty-fifth Session, we are here for six sessions. At the beginning we heard a lot of criticism from the government about job training programs and job creation under the Howard Pawley NDP government. It was in most of their Throne Speech Debate and their Budget Debate. This government was extremely critical of government attempts at job creation and their line was that government job creation does not work, that the private sector is the engine of growth, and they had all these shibboleths and expressions by way of criticism of the NDP record.

We listened to that for at least four and a half years. Then all of a sudden we were in a pre-election year and we know, of course, that the government was doing a lot of polling. And what did their polling tell them?

Their polling told them that unemployment was a No. 1 issue and people wanted government-sponsored job-training programs. So for the year leading up to the election we heard more and more about what the Conservative government was allegedly doing in terms of job creation and job training, such as handing out \$30 million to private companies for employee training, money which went to car dealerships and golf courses and many questionable sources with no measurable outcomes whatsoever.

* (1610)

Of course, when the election rolled around it was in their campaign literature that they believed in job training and they were doing a great job in job training and creating employment because they knew that they had to talk about that to get elected. Most of the people on the other side here are laissez faire Conservatives, they really do not believe in that sort of option unless they absolutely have to because the polls are telling them that it is important to do so. In fact, they discontinued a number of programs that trained people for jobs during the four and a half years of the Thirty-fifth Legislature.

I have given just two examples. Meanwhile, at the same time, of course they had the Tory version of job creation which was Workforce 2000 and training people who already had jobs but in the private sector, many of them companies and individuals who had donated money to the Conservative Party of Manitoba.

So in my THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED I have recommended that the provincial government give consideration to creating work for welfare recipients and I have given a number of examples. In the area of environmental cleanup, we know that there are many things that could be done by way of environmental cleanup. Speaking of the environment, there are already excellent programs, particularly at the level of the City of Winnipeg. I have their report here. In fact, one of my constituents is in this report. I plan to get him a copy and send it to him because there are pictures here of people who have been part of the City of Winnipeg employment programs.

An Honourable Member: You should table that.

Mr. Martindale: Well, if I had an extra copy I would table it. It is called Working. It was written by the city's Social—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Just for a point of clarification for the honourable member—I have stopped your time, your time is still going to carry on—when you had read the resolution into the record, I might have misunderstood you, but the number that is on the resolution is 26,000. I notice there was a penned in number on your resolution of 26,949. I think I understood you to say 26,949. If the member was attempting to amend his resolution, he has to amend it at a previous time. He cannot just hand it in with that figure on it. So the 26,000 is the figure that will stand on this resolution.

The honourable member for Burrows to continue, and I apologize for that.

Point of Order

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I could make this a point of order, I did not intend and will not be amending the resolution. I was going to use that as speaking notes. I forgot that I had to hand it in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank the honourable member for that.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was quoting from correspondence from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Family Services and the actual figure is 26,269 cases of people on provincial social assistance. I am using not my numbers but the government's numbers here, an astonishing number of people on provincial social assistance.

Continuing with my description of this city's Social Services' document called Working, they describe many of their programs. One of the reasons why we have concerns about the provincial government taking over the city's Social Services is that I think they probably have more job creation and training programs than the province does. If I am wrong, I stand corrected. They have many excellent programs, and

one of them is the Dutch Elm Disease Control Program—and the provincial government made a grant towards that—whereby people on social assistance have been hired in this excellent program. At the end of the program many of them got jobs with the City of Winnipeg and with private companies, for example, nurseries and tree pruning companies. I remember one year they hired heads of households of large families, families with many children, and the cost of subsidizing this was actually cheaper than the cost of social assistance for those families.

That was only one example. Of course, there is the Winnipeg infrastructure. There is the demonstration employment project. There is community home services, many excellent programs that the city's Social Services runs that this minister is familiar with. We think there are many things that people on social services who are employable could be doing. Other examples are retrofitting of houses for energy conservation. The carpenters union of Manitoba has submitted proposals whereby people could be doing this. As we know, many energy conservation programs are very cost effective because they pay back the cost of the program in terms of savings very quickly and infrastructure renewal, we think that there are many more things that can be done under infrastructure renewal.

We think that the kind of money that would have been committed or that was committed by this government to a questionable project like the arena could be redirected towards sewers and streets and sidewalks, that that would have been much more beneficial to the citizens of Winnipeg and the individuals who are employed than putting \$37 million or \$60 million of provincial money towards a questionable project like the arena.

So I encourage this government to take seriously this resolution and to come forward with many more job creation programs than they are doing now. Thank you.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to, at the outset, thank my honourable friend for bringing this resolution to the floor of the Legislature for some

debate. I think when we look at the intent and the first three WHEREASes of this resolution, I heartily agree and I will just repeat and put into the record the substance of the first WHEREAS, where it says, there are an unacceptable number of employable social assistance recipients across the province of Manitoba, with over 15,000 in the city of Winnipeg alone. I do not disagree with that comment or that WHEREAS, the intent of it.

We believe on this side of the House, in government, that indeed we have to do something to address the inordinately high number of unemployable social assistance recipients across the province of Manitoba and indeed in the city of Winnipeg. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is exactly what we have been trying to do and will continue to do. I would think that my honourable friend might be very pleasantly surprised with some of the new initiatives and some of the new thrusts that our government will be taking and has indeed undertaken over the last period of time to try to ensure that those who have the ability to work do indeed have the opportunity to seek employment through some of the very positive initiatives that have been undertaken.

I noticed in my honourable friend's comments around some of the city programs or initiatives that have been undertaken that indeed there are some very good programs in place that do provide the opportunity for some work experience for those who are on our social assistance rolls, one of them of course being the Dutch elm disease program that we heartily supported and endorsed and in fact cost-share with the City of Winnipeg because we believe that is a good program. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have no intention of cancelling that kind of program.

I think it is important that we do not reinvent the wheel. If, in fact, there is something that is working, benefiting the community and also providing the work opportunity for those who need that experience, we want to ensure that those kinds of things, those kinds of projects are continued.

One of the other programs that we support and endorse wholeheartedly is the Community Home Service project that is run by the City of Winnipeg.

Indeed, they thought it was such a valuable program that they implemented or instituted it on their own and came to us, as a province, and showed us that there were many positive outcomes as a result of that program, so two years ago, through the budget process, we enhanced and doubled that program and put provincial resources into it.

Because it had a proven track record, we asked the federal government to come on board and possibly provide some additional support. They refused to get involved in the project, but we, on our own as a province, doubled the size of the program that the City of Winnipeg was running.

* (1620)

We believe that it is an excellent program, that it has indeed created an opportunity for those that are living in their own homes and need support; namely, many seniors in our community have had the benefit of work done around their homes to help them to stay in their homes and contribute to their community, so we believe there has been a win-win on both sides. It is a program that we wholeheartedly support, and we would want to see some form of program like that continue into the future.

When we look at bringing the welfare program together under the provincial government, this is not an exercise in trying to create more hassle and more problems, more aggravation for those that are on social allowances, but it is indeed a desire on our behalf to streamline and reduce the overlap and duplication that does exist between the two levels of government delivering the same sort of program, and indeed ensure that the dollars that are needed for those that are most in need in our community go to those people directly in the form of the ability to create a work experience or an opportunity.

What we do not want to do is continue to have two bureaucracies, two sets of offices, two different computer systems that are dealing with social allowance recipients. We think this is an excellent way to test a new way of delivering service so that the overlap and the duplication that presently exists is set aside and that our priority goes to trying to ensure that

those who need our assistance and want to enter the workforce and be productive members of society do have that opportunity.

Another program that we participated in was the last infrastructure program for street renewal in the city of Winnipeg. It was a three-level-of-government initiative: federal, provincial and city. One of the criteria that we wanted inserted in that infrastructure program was the opportunity to hire social allowance recipients to do some of the work that was required, and we were very successful. I think the report that did come out from the City of Winnipeg did indicate that indeed there were those that were on social allowance that had families that were the benefactors, indeed, of jobs through the infrastructure program.

Some of the other initiatives that we have undertaken as a government are very positive in respect to trying to find the opportunity for those that have been on social allowance for a period of time, provide that opportunity for them to gain some work experience.

The Rural Jobs Project, for instance, where we, again, it is a partnership between the municipalities and towns, cities in rural Manitoba and the provincial government, I have to say with some disappointment: the first year we announced the program, which was in the last budget year, we did have participation from the federal government in the program; this past year they have withdrawn their support and their funding for the Rural Jobs Project.

We felt that it was important enough for us to continue funding the Rural Jobs Project. It has moved a little more slowly than we would have liked or anticipated, but in fact the municipalities and we are co-operating. In rural Manitoba, a lot of the municipalities, the City of Brandon, the City of Thompson have indeed hired social allowance recipients to do work in their municipalities. We have contributed half of the salary cost to those jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also participated in opportunities with the private sector in rural Manitoba where we have provided a wage subsidy of \$2 an hour for anyone in the private sector that hired a social allowance recipient to do work. We are prepared and

committed to continue that kind of a process because we believe that there are many out there, given the opportunity, who want to participate in a meaningful way to their community and to our society.

(Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Acting Speaker, Taking Charge! is another initiative that we have undertaken. I would like to spend a few moments just bringing members of the Legislature up to speed on what has taken place. There was an announcement made last September, and we are now a year away from that announcement and there has been a lot that has happened.

What we put in place was a community board that looked at finding community solutions and working in partnership with government to ensure that single parents whom we have labelled as unemployable in the past—[interjection] Well, I hear some chirping from the other side of the House.

What I do want to say very clearly is that we as a government believe that single parents are as employable as any other member of our society and that many of them do want the opportunity to work and the opportunity to contribute in a very positive manner to the quality of life of themselves, their families and their children.

We want to be a part of finding some of the solutions in a way to help single parents out of poverty and into successful jobs and opportunities for the future, and that is exactly what Taking Charge! is all about. We have now a community board of nine people in place that has hired an executive director and is in the process of initiating opportunities and needs assessment for single parents in the city of Winnipeg.

They are in the process now of negotiating their lease, and their office will be opened up very shortly. A lot of groundwork, a lot of legwork has been done in trying to bring together—

Point of Order

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): On a point of order, I am just wondering if, either now or at the

conclusion of the minister's remarks, she would entertain a question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dyck): On the point of order, it is up to the minister who is speaking in order to entertain that question. It is her prerogative to do that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Absolutely, I would be prepared to entertain a question because I would want all members of the Legislature to have all of the information available to them around—I would presume it is around the Taking Charge! initiative, and, if it is not, I am prepared to answer any question that my honourable friend might want to raise and try to give her full and factual information.

* * *

Mrs. Mitchelson: Anyway, thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker. As I was saying, the Taking Charge! initiative is alive and well. We do have much of the community—and, as I am out speaking to members of the community, whether they be volunteer organizations, service clubs, churches, the business community, everyone is keen and excited to become involved and to help support, in whatever possible, those that need individual support and mentorship through the process, so I am quite excited that we are going to see major positive results in the very near future.

I see that my light is flashing, and I would like to, before I get to the end of my time, make an amendment to the resolution and then entertain, by leave, I guess, if it is going to take more than my allocated time—have some time after my 15 minutes to answer the question.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

* (1630)

I would like to move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe),

THAT the resolution be amended by deleting all the words after the third WHEREAS and replacing them with the following:

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba is concerned about the growing number of welfare recipients and in the costs both to individuals of lost earnings, dignity and pride and the cost to society of untapped potential in participating in the economic and social life of our province; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba has taken steps through initiatives within Making Welfare Work to help provide work and work experience to employable welfare recipients; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba is committed to continuing its proactive approach to Making Welfare Work.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the ongoing work of the provincial government in helping welfare recipients back to work.

Madam Speaker: I will take the amendment under advisement.

Ms. Cerilli: I have a question for the minister. I wonder if she can explain and clarify if there was indeed about \$30 million that went to the Workforce 2000 program from the Student Social Allowances Program and the Access program and how this transfer of money of \$30 million from those programs to the workforce program which went to industry actually is helping people on social allowance get training and find jobs.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired. Is there leave to permit the Minister of Family Services to respond to the question? [agreed]

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, as the program Workforce 2000 falls under the Ministry of Education, and I know that there were many hours of debate and discussion around the Estimates of the Department of Education just in the spring, I would hope that my honourable friend had had the opportunity to pose those questions to the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) and get full and factual responses back from her. If she did not avail herself of that opportunity, it was a missed opportunity in fact to find out what is

happening in the Department of Education and in Workforce 2000.

I do not have the detailed information as the Minister of Family Services around Workforce 2000 to answer the specifics of her question, and I would encourage her very strongly to raise those questions if she did not take the opportunity through the Estimates process to do that with the Minister of Education. I would encourage her to sit down with her or ask those questions of her very quickly to try to get the answers.

Ms. Cerilli: A point of clarification. Realizing that the Workforce 2000 program is in the Department of Education—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Radisson, this is not a time for questions. This is debate time. Our rules are very explicit, that the member can speak only once to the debate items, and by doing this, you are promoting debate between two members and it contravenes the rules of the House. The minister indicated she would be prepared to reply to a question. Leave was granted for that explicit purpose.

Now, I will recognize the honourable member for Radisson if she wishes to speak to the resolution. No.

The honourable member for Swan River.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Radisson had some very good questions, and I had hoped that we would have the ability to get answers to those questions as the minister had agreed to answer questions. Since they have not, I would like to commend my colleague from Burrows for putting this resolution forward because it does raise a very important issue, that being the high number of people who are unemployed in this province, people who would very much like to go to work but, because there is no opportunity for them to work, end up being on social assistance.

My colleague refers to the number in the city of Winnipeg, but there are many of these people in rural Manitoba too who have become trapped in a system and certainly are not happy with what has happened to

them. They certainly take no pride in having to resort to going onto social assistance, but, as I say, they have become trapped.

For these people to get off the system, we have to be able to provide them with the opportunity to get some additional training or provide them with opportunities for work. My colleague has listed in this resolution many opportunities, but we see that under this government those opportunities for retraining have been taken away from the people. I look, in particular, at programs such as New Careers and Access.

As I relate those to my own constituency, I know many people who were previously on social assistance, many single mothers who had not had the ability to complete their education, but who through Access have been able to upgrade themselves. In the Duck Mountain, Frontier School Division in my area, there are many teachers in the area who are setting an excellent role model for the other people in the community who got their training through Access and other such programs. It is unfortunate that these programs have been reduced to the point where there is very little opportunity for people to get training and for people to get their pride instilled back in them and for people to play a contributing role in society.

I regret very much that those training opportunities have been taken away from the people of all of Manitoba, but we talk about other programs that could be—there are many places that the government could invest in and improve the quality of life of people by creating work for welfare recipients. Certainly, in the area of environmental cleanup, there is much that can be done, but I look at some programs that could apply to rural Manitoba and programs that were in place under the previous government.

There was a program that allowed for river cleanup, and, Madam Speaker, for anybody that is familiar with rural Manitoba, you know that we have a very serious problem with debris in rivers. This would be a project that would not require very much training because, as I look at the people in my constituency, many of them have skills that they have learned in working in the bush. They would be very capable of doing the work of cleaning up these rivers, and it would be a great

benefit to the community. It would also be a job creation for the people, and it would be a benefit. We would be getting a service provided, and people would be feeling very good about themselves.

I look at another area that causes an awful lot of problems in rural Manitoba, and that is the whole issue of beaver control. There was an opportunity for this government to address that problem. They did put some money in place for the program, but it is my understanding that either they have pulled back the funds on that program or the funds have been spent.

Certainly there were people who could have been hired to address this very, very serious problem, and it would be a benefit to the people of the area, particularly the farming community. Municipal councils are having to pick up costs, and there is a lot of environmental damage because these issues are not being addressed.

This government appears more interested in turning money over to large corporations and companies under Workforce 2000, where you see that a total of \$30 million having been spent—was turned over to corporations. But, certainly, I do not see any benefit of those programs, particularly to the people of rural Manitoba, absolutely no benefit at all.

* (1640)

Madam Speaker, we certainly would like to see this government take more action and look at some of the suggestions that have been put forward in this resolution to allow for more job creation. We would like to see this government reconsider some of the decisions they have made, particularly with cutbacks to programs such as the New Careers and Access.

I want to say that the closure of the Human Resource Opportunity Centres created a serious impact in rural Manitoba, because these were resource centres that helped people who through no fault of their own end up in a situation where they end up on social assistance and want to be working but they cannot. So I would hope that the government would reconsider and reinstate some of the programs that they had, in particular programs for single mothers and supports

that would allow them to have the resources to continue their education and play a role in society and certainly help them to regain their dignity.

I know the government has put forward one project in rural Manitoba, the Rural Jobs Project, which helps pick up some of the costs of salaries for municipalities, but I think that the government should really revisit that program. When you look at the numbers in 1994-95, only 24 welfare recipients got employment under this program. There appear to be problems with the program that certainly should be addressed.

I would very much like to see the government look at job creation in rural Manitoba. Those people who are unemployed in rural Manitoba in most cases want to stay there, but getting social assistance from rural municipalities is sometimes very difficult and people are very much encouraged to leave the area and move to Winnipeg or other larger centres. This does not address the problem. In fact, Madam Speaker, when people who are from rural Manitoba end up being in Winnipeg, they are not used to the city way of life and it ends up that their problems are compounded.

So I think that we have to look at ways of getting people off social assistance, both in the city of Winnipeg and other communities and also in rural Manitoba. We have to look at job creation. We have to be willing to invest in the people who live throughout the province and in northern Manitoba as well where we have some of the highest unemployment rates. This government should be looking at giving the people the opportunity to get the training that they need, giving them the opportunity to work and contribute and play a meaningful role in our society.

As has been outlined in this resolution, there is a lot of work that can be done. There are many communities in northern Manitoba, in rural Manitoba who do not, for example, have sewer and water services. It is a known fact that these are areas whereby starting up a sewer and water project you could have a lot of construction jobs that would help people and it would certainly improve the quality of life. That is something else that we should be very concerned about as we are looking at job creation and ways of getting people back to work.

Certainly we have to start working to protect and enhance our environment, and there are many opportunities as well that the government could be investing in and encouraging people and providing them with the training that they need. It is a disgrace to have such high numbers in a province such as Manitoba, to have this many people who are employable on social assistance. It does not set a good example and it does not lead to a good quality of life, particularly when you look at the amount of money that these people have to live on. They would much rather be working. The government has to look at putting in place the resources to encourage these people back to work, giving them the opportunity, doing job creation, meaningful job creation, Madam Speaker, that will enhance the quality of life in the community. Those are the things we have to work for.

I want to again emphasize that many of the people I know that are on social assistance, and there are many people in my constituency who are on social assistance, the majority of these people who are able do want to work. They do not enjoy being where they are. They do not enjoy having to wait for the end of the month to come for them to get a cheque. They want to be contributing to society. They want to have the opportunity to enhance their quality of life. Many of them have been caught in a system where they drop out of school at an early age. They do not have the skills that they need. If we believe in our society, we will give these people the opportunity to get the skills that they need and allow them to be contributors to society.

I support this resolution, and I hope that the members across the way will recognize its merit and also support it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Martindale: My point of order is that private members' hour is intended for private members to speak, and my understanding of private members is that it is all of us who are not members of Executive Council, so I find it unusual that a cabinet minister would speak in private members' hour.

I am wondering if you could either advise me of the rules or your understanding of private members' hour

or take it under advisement and get back to the House at a future time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order, the honourable member for Burrows does not have a point of order.

I have been informed the Manitoba tradition is that private members' hour is indeed for all members of the Assembly, and it is matters that are related to Private Members' Business.

* * *

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon in support of the amendment of the honourable minister on this case, and I think it is important to point out at this juncture—

Madam Speaker: I would remind the honourable member for River Heights that he should not be speaking to the amendment—the amendment was taken under advisement and has not been dealt with—but should be speaking to the main motion.

Mr. Radcliffe: I was just making reference to that, Madam Speaker, but, in fact, I would like to point out to the Assembly this afternoon that the government of Manitoba makes common cause with Her Majesty's honourable opposition in some of the preamble today. We, too, find it unacceptable that anybody should be unemployed.

I want to make that point succinct and very clear that one of the major goals of this government is to make sure that an environment is provided in this province whereby everyone who is so inclined can seek employment and can find employment. We, too, are very aware of the importance of the dignity of work. We join cause with our honourable friends across the floor in the concept that everybody should have a job and where we differ of course is in the means of providing this opportunity.

Madam Speaker, the government of Manitoba has a proven track record right now as to what we have done in providing jobs for the people of Manitoba. We have one of the lowest unemployment levels in this country

of Canada and the reason for that is that we have provided an opportunity, we have provided an environment where the people who best know how to create jobs have come to Manitoba. Therein is the essential point where we disagree with the honourable members across the floor.

The honourable members across the floor persist in taking social policies which create dependency upon the vulnerable members of our society. The government of Manitoba takes the perspective and this party takes the perspective that we will create the environment for people to find employment. We will draw people to Manitoba who can create employment. We will assist business to create jobs. Government in itself does not make work.

* (1650)

All these programs that the honourable members from the opposition were making reference to earlier have the net effect and one net underriding effect is creating dependency, building a bigger bureaucracy, whereas, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to advise this House and the honourable members this afternoon that Workforce 2000, which is giving assistance or giving stimulation to people in business to employ more members out of the workforce, has for the period ending July 31, 1995, a total increase of 1,189 employees trained or committed to train between the month of July 31 and the month of August 31.

That is remarkable that the public money of this province is becoming that effective. This is not now just a feckless handout to people who consume but rather this is creating an initiative so that these people can become productive members. This is again an example how this government is listening truly to the needs of the people of Manitoba. We are responding with needs-driven policy for our people in Manitoba.

The honourable minister was reviewing a number of other initiatives that this government has started and is co-operating with other levels of government, but the fundamental, underlying, philosophical policy which cannot be underestimated must be that government does not create work. We will make an environment where business people will come to Manitoba. It will

be an environment where people will want to live here, where people will want to raise their families, where people will want to do business.

We have seen in the last two weeks where there was a new initiative, a new corporation, opening business in Portage la Prairie. This is going to be taking people off the streets of Manitoba; this is going to be taking people and putting them to useful employment.

We saw last weekend where there was another announcement in the newspaper where there is a prospect in the Department of Agriculture where there will be a greater hog-processing facility in Manitoba. Madam Speaker, this is what will make Manitoba grow.

An Honourable Member: Hogs and potatoes.

Mr. Radcliffe: Hogs and potatoes. These are the fundamentals of our province. [interjection] I hear some verbiage kind of floating, wafting, across the House, but I can assure this Chamber that these sort of concepts are the future for our province.

The whole concept of making Manitoba a hub for transportation and distribution of goods has endless possibilities. I can assure Madam Speaker and the honourable members of the opposition today that our industry, trade and commerce is working hard to ensure that this is not just a dream but is being put into actuality.

There is an old adage, Madam Speaker, and I would repeat it today, that if you give a person a fish you feed them for a day. You teach that person to fish, you have fed them for their lifetime. That has to be one of the fundamentals of our initiative.

Now I would like to draw a little attention to the aspersions that have been levelled against this government in the preambles presented by our honourable friends. I would suggest that in fact the records should be straightened out.

One preamble says, whereas the provincial government has closed Human Resources Opportunity Centres and has reduced funding for training programs

such as New Careers and Access. I would point out to this House and to the honourable members here that there was over \$20 million put into New Careers in Manitoba since 1988, and what have we to show for it?

Whereas, Madam Speaker, if we have people coming to Manitoba to do business, we want to say emphatically in this Chamber, on the streets of our cities and in the byways and highways of our province, that Manitoba is open for business. We want Manitoba to be a hub of this continent. We are geographically located in an ideal situation. We want to attract people to be here. We have a skilled workforce. We do not deny for a moment, as do some of the members of the honourable opposition, that some of the people who are on relief, many of the people who are on relief, are desperately looking for work. Instead of perpetuating that situation of dependency, this government and this minister and our government are taking active steps to change that reality.

An Honourable Member: More fishermen.

Mr. Radcliffe: More fishermen, absolutely.

An Honourable Member: More potato growers.

Mr. Radcliffe: More potato growers.

We are getting actual results, Madam Speaker, and the people of Manitoba will have recognized this situation and have exercised their choice because they know that their future lies with this government. This government is putting Manitoba to work. Our statistics of employment indicate this reality.

One point that this motion of my learned friend or of my honourable friend has indicated—

An Honourable Member: Not learned.

Mr. Radcliffe: Not learned. Well, I do not know how learned he is but—sorry, that was the last forum in which I had the opportunity to speak, Madam Speaker. The honourable member—[interjection] That is right—has said that we have reduced the funding and we have closed the New Careers and Access programs whereas I would point out to this House that in fact the Access

program is still functioning. It is on a limited basis, and it is functioning in northern Manitoba. I am pleased to advise this Chamber today that graduates projected to graduate and complete the programs for the Access program in 1995-96 will be 160 graduates.

I would confirm that these graduates—now an interesting point and then I shall retire with the confirmation and the sure assurance that this motion will be interpreted with the slant that the Madam Minister has presented. Again, we do not want to be creating jobs making square pegs for round holes. That is the last thing in the world that we should be doing.

The only way that we can be assured that the people that we are training and the people that we are supporting in this province are going to be employed is if we have it needs driven through the people who best know what jobs are required. Those people are the businessmen and the businesswomen of Manitoba. Those are the people who will be creating jobs and future employment.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to address these few humble words to this topic, which I think is very essential to our future. If this concept is not fulfilled, then the future of Manitoba will be very dire. We will then become a province and a population where jobs will decrease, where everybody will be resorting to the attitude of, well, we have to look to government to cure all the problems. Government cannot be considered as the panacea, as the cure-all. In fact—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for River Heights will have two minutes remaining.

* (1700)

The hour being 5 p.m., as previously agreed, we will now proceed to consider Resolution 18, Student Loan. Resolution 19.

In accordance with Rule 22.(4), Where the resolution of a member, other than a resolution for an Order for Return or an Address for Papers, is reached for the first time on the Order Paper during private members' hour,

if the member is not present, or does not proceed with the resolution at that time, the resolution shall be placed on the Order Paper at the bottom of the list of resolutions of that type.

**Res. 19—Professional and Technical
Accreditation**

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I move this Resolution 19, seconded by the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale),

WHEREAS human beings, considered as any country's most important resource, are not merely a material factor of production but are instrumental to achieving nontangible values of fairness, freedom and individual self-actualization; and

WHEREAS recent immigrants to Canada and to Manitoba tend to possess higher than average levels of education and skills that contribute to the enrichment of the Canadian diversity essential to securing a position of competitiveness in a global economy; and

WHEREAS there are some new Canadians who settled in Manitoba and elsewhere in Canada who brought with them professional and technical education, skills and training which they are unable to use in Manitoba or elsewhere in Canada; and

WHEREAS there are institutionalized social structures in Manitoba and in Canada of vested self-interested and self-governing groups of professional and technical persons who collectively are exercising almost absolute autonomy to the extent that the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government have practically abdicated the inherent public regulatory power of the Crown over the education, training, internship, admission, disciplining and other related processes connected with the creation, empowerment and operations of professional and technical associations, societies and organizations; and

WHEREAS the utilization of the professional and technical education, skills and training of new Canadians would, without many social costs, be immediately beneficial to Canada in general and to the province of Manitoba in particular.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider implementing an enlightened policy of formal recognition and accreditation in meritorious cases of the professional and technical education, skills and training brought into Canada by new Canadians; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly ask the provincial government to consider holding public hearings to elicit the opinions and views of Manitobans, including new Canadians, on the desirability of forming formal governmental accreditation and licensing boards for each of the new self-governing professional and technical associations, societies and organizations, the boards of which should have membership drawn from the respective and related professional and technical groupings, the provincial government, and lay members of the general public to ensure that members of such boards will be trustees of the general public interest of all, instead of being privileged guardians of vested, self-governing groups.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Broadway, seconded by the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), Resolution 19.

WHEREAS human beings, considered as any country's most important resource, are not merely a material—

An Honourable Member: Where is the member for Burrows?

An Honourable Member: I will be the seconder.

Mr. Santos: The seconder will now be the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Broadway, seconded by the honourable member for Elmwood, resolution, WHEREAS human beings, considered as any country's—Dispense.

An Honourable Member: Read it again, please.

Mr. Santos: WHEREAS human beings, considered as any country's most important resource, are not merely a material factor of production, but are instrumental to achieving nontangible values of fairness, freedom and individual self-actualization; and

If I may go on to the THEREFORE, Madam Speaker?

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider implementing an enlightened policy of formal recognition and accreditation in meritorious cases of the professional and technical education, skills and training brought into Canada by new Canadians—

An Honourable Member: You do not have to reread it. Go to your speech.

Mr. Santos: Okay, I was advised to go right into the heart of the matter.

The present system is a system of self-governing groups. They determine and they have a say in the recruitment in the education, in the admission, in the monitoring of their activities by themselves because the government had abdicated the power to regulate these professional groups by granting them a self-governing system.

What happens, Madam Speaker, when the system is by a self-governing group with their own special interest to protect? It is, first of all, productive of criminal, illegal, illegal, immoral behaviour. [interjection] True.

This is a case of a member of the medical association. I would not name him for purposes of courtesy, but there is a plastic surgeon acquitted of sexually assaulting a patient while under anesthesia, but then because he was acquitted, there is a universal justice, as you know.

He is now paralyzed in hospital after falling off the roof of his mother's house while doing repair. He was cleared by the professional group, but then there is the

natural universal justice that had to intervene, and he has suffered his due penalty.

That is case No. 1. That is the medical people, the most powerful group in Canada as far as I can see. They were the ones instrumental in preventing measures that will regulate the practice of medicine which is important to the health and well-being of Canadian people.

The second most important group are those who interpret the law: the lawyers. This is the Winnipeg Free Press of September 16, 1995: Brandon lawyer pleads guilty to stealing \$25,000 from clients. Whatever happened, he took from his client. He is a trustee who violated his trust.

But that is nothing compared to another member of that profession. There was, for example, this \$630,000 fraud by a lawyer/broker who worked in one local law firm in 1988, when a clerical error was made listing 10-million-yen bonds as if they were \$10 million. With inflated bonds, a collateral, he obtained \$2.2-million line of credit to slay the stock market.

* (1710)

These are illegal, immoral and criminal behaviours because they regulate themselves. There is no one looking over their shoulder, they decide who is guilty, who is not, but because of fraternity and common value, they protect one another.

So what happens? We have our own Law Reform Commission, and they made a report on regulating the professions and the occupations. It is—where credit is due, I give the credit. The then Minister of Justice, the Honourable Jim McCrae, initiated this. So what are the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission? Let me summarize, and then I will make comments as I go along.

They recommended that at least one-third of the governing council of the self-governing body should be composed of members of the public who are nonpractitioners; in other words, who are not within the camaraderie of self-interested people.

As well, at least one-third of the members of all the committee should be made up of members of the public. I think that is a good recommendation. But what was the reaction of those people who are affected? Let us hear them. What did the medical people say? [interjection] Oh, they did not say anything here, but it is the medical people. They say, doctors, this has already been implemented. They already include at least one public representative in their committee. That is nominal representation. It means nothing—insignificant.

The Certified General Accountants Association of Manitoba say they already have lay people on their boards and then they made a comment, to make one-third of the board made up of lay people is too much, so they also want a nominal representation of the board, somebody whom they can always overrule, overturn and ignore. That is no good at all.

The second recommendation is that the meeting should be open to the public and the public should have access to the minutes of meetings. This recommendation is also good because the public can attend the meetings, the general meeting of any organized group, of any professional group. In fact, not only the professional associations are doing this, right now, I think it was last Thursday the board of governors of the University of Manitoba for the first time in history held an open meeting and accepted members of the public in their meeting.

The third, the certification and licensing should be considered for use in situations where harm results from incompetence or unethical behaviour on the part of the practitioner. You see, you wait until harm results until you do something about it—no good. It is like refusing to put a traffic light at an intersection which is so busy such that they will wait until somebody dies before they put the light on. That is not good at all. That is bad. The idea is to prevent the undoing, to prevent the damage, to prevent the unethical behaviour, not to wait until harm is done to any member of the public.

Neither certification nor licensing should be implemented unless their benefits exceed their costs. Now this is the bottom line again. They always look at

the resources of the group, whether they can have the resources that will be needed in order to govern themselves. If they do not have the resources to govern themselves, they will not be allowed self-governance—unfair, because only the rich groups, the powerful groups, the economically privileged groups are the ones able to qualify.

The power to administer a licensing or certification regime should be delegated to a practitioner only when it is in the public interest and not merely because the practitioner desired this power. Who determined who or what is in the public interest? They will determine it themselves. How can that be? So it is not a good recommendation when the nature of the public interest, whether it is in the special interest or in the public interest, is a basic issue that will be decided by the group themselves.

Next, the qualities needed to sustain self-regulation in the public interests are adequate human and financial resources, a democratic structure, a genuine and demonstrated willingness to act in the public interest. So the required three things are financial adequacy, democratic structure, and willingness to act in the public interest.

The first is again discriminatory because it only works in favour of the well-vested, rich, powerful group. The second requirement is democratic structure. That is good because then it applies the nature of democratic process, the rule of majority and other rules of majority and democratic system of government; namely, the rule of the majority and that the minority should submit to the decision of the majority.

But the last one, willingness to act in the public interest, they will always say, we are willing, of course. That is not a good test. It is subjective. It is self-interest determined, and willingness is not enough. I would say it should be proven capacity to behave according to public interest.

Next, each self-governing group should develop preventive measures that attempt to ensure the practitioner remain competent and ethical. How can that be unless you have a continuing training program, continuing upgrading, and that it is a requirement that

those who are already in the old line of training in the profession should be allowed and should be required to take upgrading courses?

They should be subjected, like drivers, to constant, periodic review of their capacity to drive; otherwise, they will still be governed by the old rules of the old boys network, and they determine who enters into the profession.

It is a well-known fact in life that access to this ruling elite is determined by the very members themselves who preserve their own monopoly of the profession and exclude all the rest in society that are not to their best interests.

So I would like to say that the resolution is very modest in what it is asking. The resolution is simply asking for a public hearing so that the views of the public can be aired, so that the public will be aware of all these machinations and favouritisms and discriminations and exclusions that are taking place behind the aura of committees and committee hearings that are not always publicized.

Therefore, it will be to the best interest of the people in general, particularly those people who are excluded from exercising their skills and their training and their profession as citizens of this country, regardless of whether they are natural born or not.

This system, the present system is, as I have said, productive of illegal, immoral and criminal behaviour. That has been proven again, again and again. That cannot be prevented. By human nature we are all selfish. People are selfish by human nature, especially if they are governed by material considerations in life like their means of livelihood, their economic and social opportunities.

They would like to exclude anybody who shall compete on equal terms. They can do this institutionally by passing laws and legislation like self-regulating acts. A foundation to establish this group as an institutional group, that can be done, and it has been done. As you know, when there is a conflict between private special particularistic interest in the broad general public interest, we always know, almost

always, the special vested private interests will win over the general public interests.

I know of no case where the general public interests win because the majority are not aware of what is going on. They have no information, and they do not know, but the special public, especially if they are working toward the economic monopoly of a profession, they will be very vibrant and very vigilant in protecting the interests of the group to the extent that they will even, I would say, cover up some of the things that should be made public.

* (1720)

Another general observation that we can say is that no person or group who is enjoying privileges and are able to exclude members of the public to participate in the special privileges that they enjoy, no one, no group will willingly reform themselves so that they will be fair to the rest of the general public in the same way that no one will willingly give up the benefits that they already enjoy. They will not do so unless there is pressure, and the only pressure that can come is from the pressure of public opinion. But the public opinion pressure can only come about if there is extensive hearing as to what is going on, if there is a public airing of all these things that are done in secrecy behind disciplinary committees of various groups and the public airing is nothing but a democratic way of reforming our social system.

Moreover, if they determine who violates and who does not violate their own rules and they themselves make these rules and they themselves interpret these rules and they themselves enforce these rules—

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

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy it when the member who just spoke speaks, because he has a very colourful way of using words and some very entertaining and rather dramatic ideas that do cause the listener to sit spellbound on the edge of his or her chair, sometimes wondering what is being said but, oftentimes, admiring the language with which it is said.

I am rather interested in listening to the remarks of the mover of the motion, at the paranoia he seems to feel over the existence of disciplinary bodies and self-governing groups such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Association of Professional Engineers and all of the other professional associations and self-governing bodies.

I do not know if he is a part of one himself or if he is a part of one if he feels that he is subject to the same dramatic self-interest or if he would like to see the public take a hearing on whether or not his own particular profession should be treated the way in which he feels other professions should be treated aside from his own, but I would be interested in hearing his view on that.

Madam Speaker, I have a feeling, judging from comments he has made in the past, that he feels his own profession would indeed be perhaps the one exception to the rule he feels exists in being able to be above the immoral, illegal, corrupt and criminal behaviour that exists in all of the self-governing bodies that are in place in Manitoba.

I submit, Madam Speaker, that contrary to the member's implied and expressed opinions, that the term "self-governing" is not a synonym for the term "self-interest." They are not the same term.

I wonder as well if the member is aware in his plea for public participation that the College of Physicians and Surgeons, for example, has laypeople on it. The Association of Professional Engineers has laypeople on it. The wide variety of these particular disciplinary self-governing groups have lay representatives on their boards to bring in an outside objective opinion.

It is against the self-interest of those groups to allow members with lesser standards to continue functioning. I would warrant that for every statistic he can bring forward about immoral, corrupt, illegal, criminal behaviour existing in self-governing bodies that one could also point to the same kind of immoral, illegal, corrupt and criminal behaviour existing in professions which are not self-regulated, and that for every example of corruption, an equal if not bigger number of high standards could also be displayed.

When the member indicates that a physician, for example, has broken his trust and been disciplined, the point that comes through is that the member has been disciplined. Where a member has been found innocent, I think one draws a rather long bow if after a person has been acquitted, we then publicly attribute subsequent physical accidents to God's punishment for the crime of which earthly men have acquitted the individual.

The statement made by the member says very clearly that the governing body or the disciplinary committee found the individual innocent, but that God and Conrad Santos, God and the member for Broadway, know he was really guilty. I think that is probably not a very wise thing to put on the record.

I also think that maybe we could extend the thinking, and the member would probably agree with me on this, into this own House and have a self-governing disciplinary committee for the way in which we politicians conduct ourselves in here because we are not always evidencing the loftiest standards of conduct and making the best use of our time.

I have said before, I think sometimes we are in this Chamber absolutely wasting the taxpayers' money. We spend, I think it is, \$10,000 a day every day we sit in this Chamber, and for many people out in public, they consider this a chamber of horrors because of the waste of public money that they see, and many have submitted, and I have been one, on occasion, who submitted that this particular exercise makes much noise, signifies nothing and costs the taxpayers \$10,000 a day.

I often wonder why they do not rise up in protest that we here in Manitoba drag this process out to an unseemly long time, way longer than other provinces, that we cannot get our legitimate business done in a decent amount of time because we are too busy in this place pontificating and throwing insults back and forth because it is traditional.

I maintain we could do with a self-governing body, and the only ones who can fix us up would be us, because the public is letting us get away with it, year after year, session after session after session.

But to speak directly to the motion's points, I understand what the member is trying to say, and there is some merit in some of the points that have been made. I think they are overstated, and I think the generalizations are too general, but there are points that he has made that are valid, but I submit, Madam Speaker, that those points are being addressed with the current system.

* (1730)

Notwithstanding the validity of the points he mentions in terms of the ability to subject something to abuse, anything can be subject to abuse, and this, no different than any other, can be subject to abuse, but I do point out that the government's role in this is not to step in and play a more direct role in certification and licensing of professions and trades. We do not have the expertise, for example, in medicine to know if particular actions by a physician are of the standards deemed to be necessary. Those who work in that field do. The expertise and knowledge lie with the professions and trades.

Our role as government is to assure a fair process, and I think this is where the member's concern comes in, a fair process that will reflect the public's interest, and I think this is accomplished by government working in partnership with professional associations and regulating bodies, as is currently the case.

The government, as well, supports the effective and efficient recognition of credentials held by new immigrants. That is why, in response to the member's one concern, this government has commissioned a major study of how recognition of immigrant credentials could be improved.

As a result of this study, Madam Speaker, the Immigrant Credentials and Labour Market Branch was established within the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship to facilitate immigrant credential processes.

My own department, the Manitoba Education and Training department, works closely with the Immigrant Credentials Branch to improve the immigrant credential recognition process with respect to apprenticeship,

college programs and the professions. That Immigrant Credentials and Labour Market Branch assists immigrants in having their educational and professional credentials recognized in Manitoba. The branch works directly with individuals facilitating the accreditation process with the professional associations and with the relevant regulating bodies.

The branch is well versed in the accreditation processes of various associations and has very good working relationships with them. The good working relationship hinges on the confidence of professional associations, on the confidence that those associations have in dealing with only one branch of government. Through the credentials recognition program, the branch provides wage assistance to Manitoba businesses which create full-time employment opportunities for eligible immigrants. These employment opportunities enable clients to obtain Canadian work experience necessary for professional certification.

This program is known to employers who frequently inquire as to whether or not we have clients with specific training and specific education to meet their labour market needs. So we are not ignoring the needs and desires and expressed wishes of newcomers to our land whose training may have taken place under slightly different circumstances but whose credentials may well fit with the ones that we have here.

We have, for use abroad, information sheets which outline the credential processes for about 31 professional associations. Those are being developed here in Manitoba to be available for those coming into the country with specific skills desirous of being certified for work purposes here in this province. That initiative is being expanded upon in the upcoming year, and it will include similar information sheets on the trades in Manitoba. That is a joint initiative being undertaken by the branch and by Apprenticeship and Training.

Government is also working and has been working with the University of Manitoba and Red River Community College to develop a computer model to provide information on accreditation in Manitoba. The credentials assessment assistant will provide

individuals with detailed information on the accreditation process for various professions including pathways, time frames and associated costs.

As part of its ongoing work, Madam Speaker, the Immigration Credentials Branch is researching international education systems and gathering information on course outlines from international institutions. That information and that research is shared with professional associations and regulating bodies. In addition to facilitating the credentials process, the branch links immigrants to available training and upgrading programs which will facilitate their entrance into the labour market. Where necessary, the branch works to link persons requiring English second language to appropriate programs. The branch is also co-ordinating an interprovincial conference on credentials. Participants will include provincial government counterparts.

The conference will provide an opportunity to learn what other provinces are doing in this area to determine opportunities for interprovincial initiatives and to facilitate the recognition of international credentials.

It is important to note that Pathways, which is an interactive computer data base outlining the specific steps that individuals with international credentials are required to follow in order to acquire professional certification, was piloted at a meeting of the deputy ministers of Immigration at the Canada High Commission in London, England. The executive directors of The Certified General Accountants Association of Manitoba, Association of Professional Engineers of the Province of Manitoba, Association of Occupational Therapists of Manitoba, the Manitoba Society of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists, Inc, federal staff from Human Resources Development Canada have reviewed this model and are interested in developing their career-related information in a similar format.

It is also important to note that this government is focusing on immigrant credentials from a national perspective. For instance, the director of Immigrant Credentials Branch has been appointed to co-chair the federal-provincial access to professions and trades working group established by the deputy ministers of

Immigration. The working group is investigating the feasibility of establishing an interprovincial network to facilitate the assessment of international credentials. So I submit, Madam Speaker, that many of the initiatives indicated by the member in his resolution are already being addressed in one way or another.

Is my time up, Madam Speaker? You are indicating it is nearly up. Ten seconds. Thank you very much for the opportunity to put these comments on the record.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to say a few words on this particular resolution. I can somewhat sympathize with the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) in particular with respect to this particular issue because both he and I, no doubt, have had numerous occasions where we have been able to sit down with the people that we are probably most familiar with and when we go to many different events—that is, individuals who are experiencing what the member for Broadway talks about first-hand. So we get to experience a lot of that frustration that many people that come to Canada experience.

I guess, I know in the past, I too have introduced a resolution into this Chamber trying to address this particular issue. I recall—because I am going by memory—my resolution talked about the need to establish some sort of a data bank that would see information from around the world, if you like, in terms of being stored so that it would help facilitate accreditation of immigrants that come to Canada. What quite often will happen is an immigrant that comes to Canada will have the expertise or have the skills or the university background that says, hey, look, this person has the training to be a qualified nurse, if you like, or an architect, engineer, whatever it might be, yet for some reason that individual is not necessarily allowed to be put on that equal playing field, to be able to enter that job market.

In many areas, no doubt, it is justified. In other areas, one in many I should say, question in terms of whether or not it is in fact justified. The most common example that is brought to my attention is, of course, the nurse. We get nurses from foreign lands that come to the province and they say, you know, why is it that

I am not allowed to practise what I learned from my homeland, yet I can go to many American states, and I would be able to continue on in terms of what I was trained to do?

* (1740)

I guess if we try to put ourselves in the situation, in that very same situation, if we were practising law or an engineer here in Canada, and we went to another land and which we adopted as our homeland, and we were told, well, we are not prepared to recognize the skills or the profession that you were in, in your homeland, you, too, no doubt, would feel awfully frustrated if what you are doing is washing dishes when you were previously taking care of patients in a hospital in some other land.

There is to a certain degree some conflict, as the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) has pointed out, through different organizations. Government would be classified as one of those organizations that does put up some stumbling blocks. It is important that as legislators we try to see past those. For example, a classical argument for anything dealing with health care is for someone to say, well, we are concerned about the quality of health care and for that reason you have to meet these particular standards.

Madam Speaker, no one is as concerned, or I like to believe anyway that I am second to no one in terms of wanting to ensure that we have quality health care delivery people at our front lines. I am equally prepared to say that individuals that come from faraway lands should be given the opportunity to be able to compete for those jobs, because in many areas, and we can take a look in medicine, that of the physician, where in rural Manitoba, in some areas, we are borderline crisis, whereas if we take a look at our immigrant population they might be able to meet a certain need.

I am glad to see that the College of Physicians and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has in fact recognized that and is attempting to try to recognize some of those credentials. I ultimately believe that you could go down a number of different professions and skilled levels of employment, and I have made

reference to a few of them. I will reiterate again that, of course, in medicine, being of our nurses, of doctors, in terms of outside of medicine, you can talk about everything from agricultural jobs to architectural jobs, engineering jobs. I look around, and in particular the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) and the minister who went to many different events with me, or not necessarily accompanying me, but we attended the same event. What would happen is no doubt he would enter into the same sorts of discussions and dialogue that I and the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) enter in quite often.

So what this resolution is suggesting is that we provide that opportunity in a very public way in the sense of having some sort of a public discussion forum, if you like, that would see individuals expressing their frustration. I think there is a lot of merit to that, Madam Speaker. In fact, I look at what the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) talked about at the beginning of her remarks. She talked about the costs of running this particular Chamber of \$10,000 a day and, yes, there is no doubt, if I could have my way, there are many things that we could actually change that would make it that much more productive in terms of the time that we are putting in and in fact the tax dollars.

One of those ways might be to have one of our Standing Committees dealing with issues which members of this Legislature want to draw public attention to. I think this is an excellent issue. If in fact, Madam Speaker, if we had a Standing Committee that was prepared to do something of this nature, this is the type of issue in which I believe Manitobans—because you do not have to be an immigrant to be sympathetic to this. Anyone with a vision for the province of Manitoba could see the net benefits of acknowledging the skills, the many skills and expertise that many people bring to the province of Manitoba. Those individuals, also it would acknowledge the need to address this problem.

The member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) talked at length in terms of some of the barriers that are put up front. The Minister of Education talks about some of the frustration that she has and many of us share in terms of the worthwhileness of us sitting inside the Chamber, and ultimately I think that both the Minister

of Education and the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and all of us would benefit tremendously if in fact there were changes that allowed for what the member for Broadway is trying to say, and that is allow the people that are experiencing the frustration first hand to come before a legislative group or legislative body.

It is one thing to meet with caucus representatives or individual MLAs as an interest group if you like; it is another thing to formalize that process in terms of as a Legislature.

I believe, Madam Speaker, and that is why I do not have too much of a problem with the resolution, and would have in fact liked to have provided a forum to allow these individuals and others to be able to express their thoughts, their feelings and most importantly their ideas on how we can resolve this. I would welcome the opportunity, for example, the Manitoba nurses' association and government bodies or management bodies that are out there that many believe put up some of those barriers, whether it is intentional or nonintentional, whether it is in the form of job protection or genuine concerns about health care delivery or architectural standards or law standards or whatever it might be.

With those few words, I did want to, as I said, indicate that the concept of the member for Broadway is something which we support. I applaud him personally for bringing forward this resolution. I encourage very strongly to the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) that it would be nice to see us deal with issues of this nature, as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) himself has experienced on several occasions in a more independent way or private members' way.

A standing committee of such might facilitate this sort of a thing. We can all still be very political, obviously, on all the different issues, including this one, but at least to have some process that will allow individuals the ability to express their frustrations that they have been experiencing for many, many years, Madam Speaker. This is not a new issue. This goes back to immigration ways right from virtually the turn of the century.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, I do count it a privilege to be able to speak on this resolution.

I would just like to make some comments as to the comments that were made by the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) regarding getting public opinion and in fact talking to our constituents, the members out there, as to their feelings regarding the whole area of accreditation.

I started off with my mother who in fact took her Normal School training, which is what it was called at that time, in the 1930s, and it was a real highlight for her when she completed her training to have that credential which gave her the opportunity and the ability to teach. When that was handed to her, it was something that she treasured. I believe that there was a point in time when standards were set, when accreditation was given to individuals upon completion of assignments that we do not want to ignore. I think that ongoing we have been demonstrating the ability to do exactly that.

* (1750)

Madam Speaker, the Manitoba government has made a great deal of progress on this issue in terms of facilitating the effective recognition of immigrant credentials. Manitoba Education and Training works closely with the Immigrant Credentials Branch to improve the immigrant credentials recognition process with respect to apprenticeship, college programs and the professions. Our government places a high priority on developing a clear, meaningful and accessible education and training system in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, having that system in place will allow us to deliver a more efficient and effective assessment of credentials from other countries because those equivalencies will be much clearer. It will also make it easier for all Manitobans, including immigrants, to build upon their previous learning experiences without repeating course work. This also means working closely with professional organizations

and others to ensure that legitimate credentials and education from other countries gets the recognition it is due here in Manitoba.

However, this is not just a matter that Manitoba can easily resolve on its own. We have also recognized the need to work with our counterparts in the other provinces and in the territories. Madam Speaker, this way we can work together to ensure that we remain consistent with a trend toward making credentials portable for all occupational groups.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to say that steps towards these goals are occurring in different areas of the education system. Our province is collaborating with the other western provinces and territories in the development of common outcomes in core curricula. That co-operation extends to many levels and will have many benefits. One of the issues that is being dealt with is the issue of certification. Manitoba is what is called a lead party in the areas of teacher preparation and certification, aboriginal education and aboriginal teacher education and also in the area of French languages.

Madam Speaker, certainly we must have standards and similarities from the ground up when it comes to professional and technical accreditation. That is one reason why we are looking at all areas of this issue from grade school education to universities and beyond to professional associations.

Another important element of this plan is the initiation of a senior year's apprenticeship option on a pilot basis for 1995-96. This involves the Apprenticeship Branch and the school system from Kindergarten to Senior 4 levels. Another key component of this government's actions is the work that is ongoing between the colleges and the Colleges Secretariat to work among themselves and with the province on a protocol for transferring college credits. The college credit transfer guide is one of the components of the plan. There is also ongoing discussion and work to improve communication and co-operation between some colleges and high schools.

Madam Speaker, this is also a goal for the entire country. I know that the Council of Ministers of

Education from across Canada have put forward an initiative that first- and second-year university courses be recognized across Canada. By next year the plan is to make the undergraduate credits completely transferable, and that would be followed by a similar transfer credit among the colleges, then between colleges and universities.

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

This is an initiative that has involved Manitoba's universities. This is still in its early stages, but there is clearly a great deal of potential for improving communications and methods both provincially and nationally.

Our government is also working on the area of immigration to ensure that skills and credentials are recognized. We have worked in the health care field to ensure that foreign doctors are able to work here in Manitoba. Like all physicians, they must meet the high standards of our health care professionals.

I would like to outline some of the things we are doing in Manitoba to ensure that credentials are recognized for those who wish to practise medicine in our province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, our government established a conditional registration process as of July 31 this year to help foreign doctors practise in Manitoba. This conditional register provides rural and northern communities with a greater opportunity to attract both Canadian and foreign medical graduates who do not yet meet all the licensing requirements but are deemed adequately competent by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba.

This is welcome news to those of us in rural Manitoba, and it is great news for the medical profession in our province. I would just like to elaborate on that. In our own area we have a number of doctors who have over the years done an excellent job in looking after their practice who are from out of country. They have gone through the process of getting themselves registered and are certainly a great contribution to the community and are very, very much appreciated.

We also have in place a process to allow graduates from Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland to qualify for the conditional registration without taking immediate equivalency examinations. They get up to two years to take the Medical Council qualifying exam.

By putting forward this conditional registry, we are doing exactly what should be done, ensuring standards are met while at the same time making it easier for doctors from other jurisdictions to practise in Manitoba.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

My colleague the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer) has also worked on the area of immigration to ensure that our common goals are being met. That dialogue included a meeting last week in Ottawa with the federal Minister of Immigration. In Manitoba we are also working to remove the red tape and other impediments to businesses. All of these things have a common thread, and we are working to make it easier for Manitobans to do business and to work in their field of choice and expertise.

Through the Credentials Recognition Program, the branch provides wage assistance to Manitoba businesses which create full-time employment opportunities for eligible immigrants. These employment opportunities enable clients to obtain Canadian work experience necessary for professional certification. This program is known to employers who frequently inquire whether we have clients with specific training and education to meet their labour market needs.

I would just like to elaborate a little further on a personal point of my own. I have two brothers who in

fact took their education, and they got their doctorates in Oxford. In order for them to be able to complete the requirements that they had, they also had to go through a very specific accreditation program in order to obtain their Ph.Ds.

There are other countries that are doing the same. I believe that is important for us that we continue to take care and take note of the credits that we give out in our province and that we critically analyze them.

On the other hand, though, I believe that we should also allow for and give the best opportunity for those who are coming into this country to allow them to become involved and work in our communities. They are a great asset to our communities, and we do appreciate them.

One other comment I would just like to make is regarding the whole area of the information and for-use-abroad information sheets which outline the credentials processed for 31 professional associations in Manitoba being developed. This initiative is being expanded upon in the upcoming year to include similar information sheets on the trades in Manitoba. This is a joint initiative being undertaken by the branch and Apprenticeship and Training.

The government is also working with the University of Manitoba and the Red River Community College to develop a computer model to provide—

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

The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that this House will reconvene at 8 p.m. this evening.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 2, 1995

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