



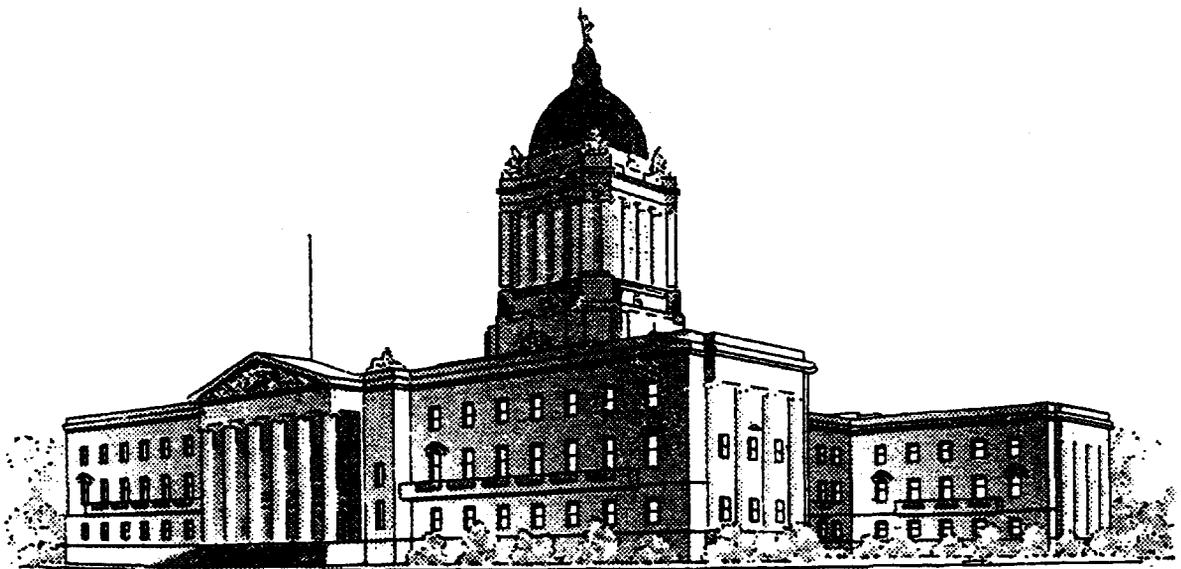
First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 19, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****PRESENTING PETITIONS****Emergency Health Care Services—
Community Hospitals**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Claire Bowering, Manuel Garcia, Kim Gawryluk and others requesting the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister responsible for Health (Mr. McCrae) consider making a commitment to the people of Manitoba that emergency health care services in Winnipeg's five community hospitals will remain open seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS**Emergency Health Care Services—
Community Hospitals**

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

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

THAT emergency health care services are the core of Manitoba's health care system;

THAT Manitobans deserve the greatest possible access to this care;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister responsible for

Health consider making a commitment to the people of Manitoba that emergency health care services in Winnipeg's five community hospitals will remain open seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all members to the public gallery, where we have this afternoon thirty Grade 5 students from F.W. Gilbert School under the direction of Mrs. Meryl Stepaniuk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Praznik).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**Health Care System
Emergency Services**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon). The government has received a letter from the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses documenting chaos with the decision of the Premier to close emergency wards in community hospitals, talking about one door being open in one hospital, one door being closed in another, nurses having to leave medical sections to deal with cases in the emergency ward at midnight. The nurses go on to say that in their opinion the decision of the government to close the emergency wards in our community hospitals at midnight has compromised the patient care in those health care facilities.

I would like to ask the Premier, has he taken into account the people on the front lines of these decisions, and will he now reverse the decision of his government and keep open the emergency wards in our community hospitals?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, as I reported yesterday to honourable

members, the task force committee overseeing the development of an integrated emergency services system for the city of Winnipeg and monitoring the present system, as well, had another meeting on the 17th. That was Tuesday. At that time, all facilities confirmed that since the previous meeting the situation seemed satisfactory. Each facility stated that the weekend was manageable and that staff were pleased with the changes that had been agreed to at the last meeting.

The facilities also agreed to work co-operatively to ensure that patients have timely access to beds. This is done to ensure that the tertiary centres do not get backlogged with patients, particularly during the weekends.

I received the letter to which the Leader of the Opposition has referred. My office has been in contact with the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses today. We have been in touch and are in touch to ask them to provide some input to the emergency services working group.

* (1335)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, these people are on the front lines of the chaos created by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in his decision, his hasty decision, to close the emergency wards and study the effect of it after.

Madam Speaker, my question to the First Minister is, in light of the fact that the people on the front lines, the nurses on the front lines dealing with patients—and we have already tabled the guidelines from the College of Physicians and Surgeons—have stated that, in their opinion, in the evening people tend to come to emergency departments with real emergency complaints and real emergency concerns, I would like to ask the Premier to reverse the decision of the Minister of Health, to start listening to the people on the front lines and start working on behalf of patients and their life and limb situations here in the province of Manitoba by reversing his government's decision on emergency wards.

Mr. McCrae: When the honourable Leader of the Opposition makes a reference, Madam Speaker, to

things like chaos and that kind of language, he obviously did not listen to my previous answer or the one given yesterday, which was a report of the emergency services working group.

The honourable member may also recently have read about a hospital in Montreal where 18 percent of the cases presenting at a particular emergency facility there are nonemergent. We have a 50 percent nonemergent situation here. [interjection] In the neighbourhood of 50 percent, Madam Speaker. On average, 4 percent of the cases presenting at our emergency rooms are classified as emergency, 43 percent are classified as urgent and the remainder are either scheduled admissions or they are nonemergent. That is the point that I am getting at.

The honourable member referred to these so-called real emergencies and that is exactly what the plan that the emergency services working group is placing as the No. 1 priority group of people to be served at all hours of the day.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, if the minister feels that one door being locked and one door being open and nurses having to be moved from one place to another and people not knowing in our communities is not chaos, he is really getting out of touch with what is going on with the patients here in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the front-line nurses go on to say that this provincial government has committed itself to the World Health Organization in terms of health strategy. They go on to say that this government is in violation of that strategy because that calls clearly for a commitment of government to make decisions in consultation with the people directly affected in their own communities.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) again to overrule his Minister of Health and involve people in the communities that are affected by the closure of these hospitals. We do not want government committees making these decisions. We want the people who are directly affected, Madam Speaker, as the government is committed. Will the Premier now reverse the decision and involve the public directly affected in these decisions?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I would not want the honourable member to be under any illusion or be misled into thinking that health care professionals are not very much part of any consultation process in which we engage in the province. I do not think any minister in any NDP administration has visited and listened to as many nurses as I have in the past couple of years in every corner of this province, including the city of Winnipeg.

The other day I met with nurses from the Grace Hospital; yesterday morning I met with nurses from the Health Sciences Centre, and my door will remain open for meetings with health professionals who want to make their concerns known directly to me.

* (1340)

Health Care System Emergency Services

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, when will the Premier finally realize this was a wrong decision? It is not advocated by anyone in the health care field. The nurses today say it is a difficult situation, it is compromising patient care.

My question to the Minister of Health: The Minister of Health has stated that he is going to consult after the wards are closed. Will the minister advise this House how it is that we are now going to have confidence in his consultation when, on page 23 of their own health care reform act three years ago, they said they would have these services in place prior to the closing?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Again the honourable member was not listening to anything that was said earlier, Madam Speaker.

The consultations in regard to emergency services and all kinds of services have been the cornerstone of what has been going on in Manitoba, unlike what you see in other provinces where they have had to take very, very significant measures in lopping off whole limbs of their health care system, including 10,000 hospital beds in the province of Ontario, including a tertiary centre in the province of British Columbia and on and on across the country.

The honourable member is critical on the one hand when we do consult, as many of his questions have indicated, with his criticism of the fact that we have committees composed of health care professionals and consumers who give us advice, and he says all you do is consult one day, and then another day he comes along and says you do not consult.

Well, Madam Speaker, there has to be some kind of consistency and I am glad the consistency is on this side of the House.

Mr. Chomiak: My supplementary to the minister, Madam Speaker: Can the minister, who finally is beginning to understand the statistics, explain to this House why they have closed the emergency rooms at night when his own statistics say that over 50 percent of visits to emergency rooms are at night, and, when his own statistics say that 15 percent of those people who go to emergency rooms are admitted to hospital, why he chose that particular time to close those emergency rooms?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member might consult some of the people whom we asked prior to the doctors' strike—please, put off any idea about strike action until we can work together and build that integrated strategy together.

But we were not given that luxury, Madam Speaker. Forty-two doctors and 14 pathologists walked off the job on Labour Day, leaving us to put together a contingency plan to deal with emergencies during that strike, and we found during the course of that time, without the help of those doctors, that we could manage, and we did manage.

The doctors are back to work, and we are now engaged in an orderly reopening of emergency services—I stress the word "orderly"—so that we can meet the demand that exists in our city and in our province.

Mr. Chomiak: My final supplementary is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

Will the Premier finally do the right thing, admit the mistake, reverse the decision, open the operating

rooms, Madam Speaker, reverse the decision of the Minister of Health?

I will provide page 23 from his own health care reform—I will table that for the minister to read, which shows they promised they would put in place this program prior to closings.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House are not engaged in theatre. We are engaged in the provision of quality health services for Manitobans.

* (1345)

Grace General Hospital Emergency Services

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): My questions are to the Minister of Health. Only two years ago this government in their planning decided to upgrade the Grace emergency room by investing over \$43 million into those facilities. Why does this government insist on locking those very doors to these emergency facilities at night and keeping away those emergency doctors whom Manitobans wish to use?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member is falling into a dangerous trap, and that trap is to equate buildings and bricks and mortar with quality health care.

Madam Speaker, the good people at Grace Hospital provide excellent service to the community and to the province for 14 hours of the day, and they need facilities there like they are needed everywhere else to provide those services.

So the honourable member raises that, and she did that previously in another question another day on the same topic. Madam Speaker, the bottom line remains the provision of quality emergency services is what is needed. The honourable member also said for people who want them. We have to remember that people need emergency services.

For that 4 percent of people who need emergency services and that 43 percent who need urgent care, day

or night, we have to have an integrated city-wide emergency system to provide for those needs.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Health: How can this minister justify to Manitobans the closing of the Grace emergency rooms at night when ambulances are now required to travel as far as Portage la Prairie to receive these services?

Mr. McCrae: In the city of Winnipeg, there are seven acute care centres, five community hospitals and two tertiary care centres. We have been told for years—the honourable member would criticize us if we did nothing about that—but we have been told for years that we need to better structure our emergency services system in the city of Winnipeg to make appropriate use of the capacity that exists. That is exactly what is happening.

The honourable member did not raise these questions when the doctors walked off the job on Labour Day, but she raises them today, and that in itself is interesting, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Mihychuk: My final question to the Minister of Health: Can the minister explain to us why, since senior members of the same cabinet that he works with pushed the Charleswood Bridge through by arguing that the residents of Charleswood and Tuxedo needed the Grace Hospital emergency rooms, why, when that was part of the reason for the Charleswood Bridge, have they now decided to close those facilities?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, streets and roads and bridges are things that you need in an urban environment to allow people to access all kinds of services, including health services, including the opportunity to get to a hospital during whatever hours of the day, whichever hospital happens to be on the other side of the bridge.

* (1350)

University of Manitoba Labour Dispute

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I am addressing my questions to the Minister of Labour

since the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has abandoned any impartiality in the U of M dispute by clearly taking sides with his politically appointed board of governors.

The Department of Labour provides many useful support services to assist negotiating parties resolve issues in dispute. Since conciliation, mediation and arbitration form a legitimate part of the free collective bargaining process to assist negotiating parties in a resolution of matters in dispute, and since conciliation has not worked in the U of M dispute, will the Minister of Labour now appoint either a mediator or an arbitrator in the U of M dispute?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, the member opposite realizes that if both parties wish binding arbitration, they are entitled to have it. The Minister of Labour has no authority to impose binding arbitration upon these parties, even if, in fact, it was appropriate to do so.

To this end, I have advised the University of Manitoba Faculty Association by letter, which I would like to table, that I, in fact, have no basis in legislation to impose that kind of binding arbitration, and I do also express my disappointment that the University of Manitoba Faculty Association has chosen to withdraw their services to the students of the university.

I think it is clear that the members have the option of bringing this strike to a close, either if they choose to go through binding arbitration or if, in fact, the Faculty Association members return to work and provide their services and continue to discuss this matter with the university. I think that is the reasonable way to approach in this case.

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, since it now appears that the Minister of Labour is taking sides in this dispute, will the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), since the students of the University of Manitoba—

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the member for Transcona clearly imputed a motive to the Minister of Labour, indicating

that he was taking sides in the dispute, which he is not. Ask him to withdraw.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, I would suggest, Madam Speaker, not only did the minister not have a point of order, I think he should recognize that all the member did was state a very obvious fact, that the government is taking a position in this dispute in favour of the Tory-appointed board, and I would suggest that the government House leader ask his minister to deal with the question raised, and that is, what is this government going to do to resolve the strike on behalf of the students of this province who are the ones suffering right now?

Madam Speaker: I thank both honourable members for their advice, and I will peruse Hansard. I will take this under advisement.

* * *

Mr. Reid: My question is for the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh).

Will the Minister of Education, since the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) refuses to deal with this matter and since the students at the University of Manitoba have said that binding arbitration is an option, that the Faculty Association has said that binding arbitration is an option, voluntary on both parties, will the Minister of Education press her Premier (Mr. Filmon) and her Minister of Labour to take the steps necessary to have binding arbitration take place and have the parties go back to the negotiating table, so that the students can return to the classroom?

Mr. Toews: The primary concern of the government in this situation is that the students receive their education. My department and I are prepared to meet with both parties at any time, whether they require a mediator or a conciliator, and if both parties choose to have binding arbitration, that is their right to have binding arbitration, but I will not impose myself upon these negotiations at this time.

* (1355)

Mr. Reid: My question is for the Minister of Education.

Since the Minister of Education has a role to play in this process and since the government appoints 12 out of the 23 board of governors to the University of Manitoba, will the Minister of Education ask the negotiators on the part of the University of Manitoba to return to the negotiating table, Madam Speaker, perhaps with the services of an arbitrator, such as one Pat Ferg, a retired justice from the province of Manitoba acting as an arbitrator in these matters?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I am pleased to hear the member finally indicate that the government only appoints half the board of governors—[interjection] By one, which is the chair, and he knows that includes the chair. He also knows that we do not tell the board of governors what to do. He wants us to tell the board of governors what to do. We do not tell the board of governors what to do.

I will indicate to the member that I have met with the students at the university. I am working with the students of the university. I will listen to the students of the university, listen to what they have to say before I will take the member's word for what he says the students want. Our first concern in this is the students' well-being. As Minister of Education, I will continue to meet with the students on a regular basis.

I have written to the UMFA group reminding them of their firm commitment to me in July that students were their first priority and would take precedence over all of the concerns. I have reminded them of that commitment to me and asked to make that assurance credible by servicing the students.

I have also, Madam Speaker, contacted this morning the administration of the university and have been assured that they are doing all they can to alleviate the impacts of the professors' actions upon the students. I will answer more in the next question since you have indicated my time is up here.

Health Care System Emergency Services

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and it is regarding emergency services.

There has been, since the emergency services have closed down, a considerable amount of concern expressed from all aspects, both in politics, from the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), for example, from both sides of this Chamber. We have had nurses, in particular the nurses from today—a substantial piece of information being provided to the minister. We have had doctors. We have had, most importantly, patients, through petitions, who have indicated their concern about what the government has done with emergency services.

My question to the Minister of Health today is, is the Minister of Health prepared to acknowledge the possibility of establishing a special task force committee made up of representatives from all three political parties that would be able to come up with alternatives or suggestions in terms of how we can deal with this particular issue in a nonpolitical way?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, if that were possible, I would do it.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask then that the Minister of Health approach both opposition parties. I can assure him that the support would be there from our political party to ensure that the best thing is done for the patients—and I would trust that the New Democrats would do likewise—and would like to see this group of individuals meet in a very short period of time.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I said if it were possible, I would do it. Knowing that it is not possible, I cannot agree. I am sorry about that. We just do not have in this Chamber the good faith amongst the parties to work together without politics on a quality emergency services plan for the city of Winnipeg or for any part of Manitoba.

Now, I am not blaming the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) when I say that.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, then I would ask the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to acknowledge that there is more than just the emergency needs of the 4 percent that the minister quite often refers to, there is more than a need for that for a community-based emergency service, and will he not consider reopening it based on the other 96 percent which are legitimate concerns that are coming from the different communities?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, of course the honourable member is right. There is much more than the 4 percent that are classified as emergency cases.

As I have pointed out many times for the honourable member and others, according to the recommendation by mediator Jack Chapman and by agreement with the Manitoba Medical Association and ourselves, we have to have an integrated emergency services system by the end of the year. That is the process that we are in right now with our emergency services working group. We are building towards that conclusion.

Madam Speaker, in the meantime we are providing quality and safe emergency services in the city of Winnipeg because of the contingency plan that we have in place and because of the good work of all of the people on the working group and the good work of the people in the emergency rooms in Winnipeg.

Misericordia General Hospital Emergency Services

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae).

In the last term of office this government tried to close the emergency ward at the Misericordia. The community fought back and the government eventually agreed that that emergency room would remain open.

I want to let the Minister of Health know today that the community's needs have not changed. Today at 2:30 the nurses, the patients' families and the community will be meeting to express again their

serious concern about the loss of those emergency services.

I want to ask the Minister of Health to come to that meeting with me and to listen to those citizens.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, for the information of the honourable member, there are few hospitals in Manitoba that I have visited more often than Misericordia Hospital in the past two years as Minister of Health for this province.

My door remains open. I met with nurses from two of the hospitals already and will continue to meet with nurses. As long as I am in this job, it is appropriate and necessary to do that and I will continue to do so.

Bed Closures

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Could the minister tell us whether he plans to close more beds at the Misericordia than the 54 he has already announced for this year? Will he tell us what his plans are for that community hospital?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member might contact the board or administration at Misericordia Hospital to ascertain from them what plans they might be looking at. Any plans that come forward, however, by way of a proposal, are looked at by Manitoba Health.

Sometimes the plans put forward by hospitals to Manitoba Health are accepted, sometimes they are rejected, sometimes they get changed, and the reason those last two things happen is because patient care is the No. 1 priority.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister explain how he as minister has ordered the emergency rooms to be closed and then simply disclaims any responsibility for the cutting of beds in hospitals?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I would have preferred that this matter happen in a different way in the sense that we pleaded with the doctors, the 42 of them, emergency doctors, and 14 pathologists not to leave their patients without any plan, without anything.

We had a plan, Madam Speaker. We put one together and that plan worked. We will continue with that plan and it will be flexible, as we are in an interim period between now and the end of the year.

The honourable member's question is identical to many others, and I think my answer is probably quite identical, as well.

Linnet Graphics Contract Cancellation Request

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Over the past three years, this side of the House has asked many questions concerning the monopoly held by Linnet Graphics for GIS mapping development in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

The company's promises remind us of the government's broken promises on many issues—600 jobs promised, 45 or 50 delivered; a vibrant industry promised, a few mom and pop shops and some bankruptcies; strong-arm tactics to force cities to use the services of Linnet Graphics.

In the light of their failure to achieve even close to the target set by Linnet, will the government now end the monopoly with its company and its cronies and let the industry begin to develop in a normal and rational way with the market?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): The responsibility for Linnet falls under my jurisdiction. I have had the privilege of being responsible for that area in the last year and a half approximately, and I want to tell you it has been a very challenging area.

Madam Speaker, the evolution of this whole Linnet area and the geographic information service has been, I think, slow starting, but there is a lot of potential in it.

It is not that easy to address and give proper information here in this House during Question Period. But because I feel so confident that we are on the right track with it, I am prepared to offer to all members of the House here, if they want we will set up a briefing information meeting where they can talk and find out

the full implications of it. I am that confident that we are on the right track with what we are doing.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for his answer, Madam Speaker.

Contract Tabling Request

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Will the government table a complete list of all government contracts and grants to Linnet Graphics over the last three years from departments, special operating agencies, Crowns and other government entities before this House, so that we may then judge what has been given and what has been achieved, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I think it would be counterproductive to do this piecemeal. Again, I offer to the members of the House that at their—I will talk with their caucus chairpersons somewhere along the line or whomever wants to take responsibility. We will set up a briefing meeting, because it is much more complex than we can just respond to at the time allowed in Question Period.

I am prepared to table any information that is required. However, I would suggest that the meeting be held first where there can be an exchange, where questions can be asked of the impact, the evolution, of Linnet Graphics, and where it is at right now can be done.

So I again offer that to the members opposite and even members on our side of the House who would want to partake of that. We are prepared to set up that meeting.

* (1410)

Vulnerable Persons Commissioner Competition

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, The Vulnerable Persons Act was passed in this House on July 27, 1993. Since then, we have been waiting for the minister to put together an educational package for the public and people affected by this legislation. We

have been waiting for a Vulnerable Persons Commissioner to be hired.

I have correspondence from the minister dated April 6, 1994, saying that she was hopeful the recruitment process would begin early in the fiscal year of 1994-95.

Since that was over a year ago, I would like to ask the minister, what has been the delay? Why have they not hired a Vulnerable Persons Commissioner to date?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I thank my honourable friend for that question. Indeed, the competitive process is underway. We are down to the final selection, and that decision should be made shortly.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services why this competition was held and people were interviewed and then the competition was cancelled, and the process started all over again, particularly in view of the fact that the minister said, in Estimates on June 15 of this year, that a Vulnerable Persons Commissioner would be hired very soon. What is the delay? When can we expect an announcement and the proclamation of the act?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, indeed the competition was cancelled, and we did go to another competitive process with a slightly different bulletin. As we have been progressing through doing the work that needs to be done in order to proclaim the legislation, there were some changes in requirements for the job and so we cancelled the competition.

There is another one underway, and we are down to the last short list of interviews to take place. I know that in the very near future a Vulnerable Persons Commissioner will be hired.

Salaries/Wages Provincial Comparisons

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance likes to boast in this House about some of his economic statistics, but on close examination we see that real wages in Manitoba have declined substantially since 1990 when this

government achieved a majority status. After taking inflation into account, average industrial wages in Manitoba have declined by over 4 percent since 1990.

Will the minister acknowledge that real incomes of workers in Manitoba are lower today than 1990, causing a decline in their standard of living?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): No, Madam Speaker, I will not acknowledge that.

As I pointed out to the member for Brandon East, if you look at some of the other statistics like the amount of money being left in the pockets of Manitobans at the end of each year and comparing that across Canada for 1994, we had the second-best performance in all of Canada. I believe for 1995 and '96, we are expected to have the best performance in Canada, leaving more dollars in the pockets of Manitobans because of the policies of this government, because of not increasing any major taxes, not increasing personal income taxes, sales tax and so on.

If you look at that statistic, you will see that Manitobans are being left with more money in their pockets as a result of the policies of this government.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, getting back to real wages which is what the question is about, can the minister explain why since 1990, Canadian real average industrial wages have actually increased, modestly, but they have actually increased, whereas real wages in Manitoba have declined by 4 percent? Why have we done so poorly? Please answer the question.

Mr. Stefanson: I think, Madam Speaker, I give more credit to Manitobans, and what they are concerned with is what is left in their pockets at the end of the day, what money do they have to meet their requirements.

When you compare what is happening in Manitoba in terms of after-tax disposable income, as I said, in 1994 we had the second-best performance in all of Canada. In 1995 we have the best performance in all of Canada in terms of increases and after-tax disposable income available to Manitobans to meet all of their personal needs, to invest and to do all of the things individuals require. They are the kinds of policies that

this government has in place, and I believe those are the kinds of policies that Manitobans support.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Prairie Preserve

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

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, at 12:30 today I was pleased to attend the grand opening of the Prairie Preserve in Transcona. I want to congratulate the number of partners that were involved in ensuring that this important habitat is protected for the city of Winnipeg.

The City of Winnipeg has agreed unanimously now to protect the site from development in its entirety in perpetuity. They have worked closely with a number of partners in the community, including the Transcona Rotary Club, the Transcona Horticultural Society, Manitoba Hydro, the national conservation group, Environment Innovations Fund, the Sustainable Development Fund, Canada Trust, and Action 21. All of these groups are I think showing foresight that Winnipeg will now have a piece of 20 acres of pristine tall grass prairie for the future citizens of Winnipeg to enjoy. It will add to our natural and cultural heritage.

I want to take the opportunity to encourage all members of the House to take the trip out to Transcona and enjoy this natural site. Thank you very much.

World Dairy Exposition

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I wonder if honourable colleagues would allow me to make a nonpolitical statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Agriculture have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Enns: Madam Speaker, recently, Manitoba Agriculture along with the Manitoba Forage Council and the Manitoba holstein association and its affiliated regional clubs completed a very successful trade mission at the World Dairy Exposition at Madison, Wisconsin.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, this is not a small-time affair. It is a big event attended by over 70,000 people from over 70 countries. The noteworthy news, among the other accomplishments of the forage clubs and so further, was that an 11-year-old cow owned by Ray Brown of Vista, Manitoba, in the constituency of my friend and colleague the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), named Rainy Ridge Tony Beauty EX2E captured the grand champion holstein award and went on to be the supreme grand champion of the 1995 World Dairy Exposition by placing over all other six breed winners.

Madam Speaker, the fact that an aged cow can win over the very best from across the U.S. and Canada is a superlative achievement and will surely assist Manitoba breeders in selling dairy stock throughout the world.

* (1420)

Committee Change

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) for the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): After the dissertation by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), I would like to move—[interjection] Would you call please, Madam Speaker, Bill 22, Bill 5, Bill 20, Bill 15, Bill 23 and then the balance of the bills as listed on the Order Paper.

Committee Change

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: Wellington (Ms. Barrett) for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) for October 19, '95, for 7 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 22—The Municipal Amendment and Brandon Charter Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), Bill 22, The Municipal Amendment and Brandon Charter Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités et la Charte de Brandon), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I just have a few brief comments to make on Bill 22 before I give the opportunity to my colleague the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans).

This bill, The Municipal Amendment and Brandon Charter Amendment Act, I believe is an important piece of legislation for the community of Brandon. There are some changes that this legislation is going to bring into being respecting the ability of the Brandon community, through its council, the opportunity to make changes to the public transit fares that they charge for public transit within the community.

I believe that under the current situation there is a requirement that the Public Utilities Board review any changes that are involved in these matters. While that, as I believe, has been a practice for some time now, there will be some changes as a result of this legislation wherein the community of Brandon will no longer have to go to the Public Utilities Board for any changes dealing with changes or anticipated changes in transit fares for their public transit system.

Since this is an issue for the community, we do not find any problem with this taking place and allowing the community of Brandon to decide for themselves that these fare changes take place. We think that the changes in the legislation are reasonable. While there may be individuals coming from the community of Brandon to comment on the legislation itself, and I am not sure if any are registered at this point in time to speak, when the legislation goes through to committee, we think that this is a reasonable request and that this legislation should be passed to allow for the community itself to make a determination on what are fair and reasonable fares for the public transit system.

With those few words, I will give my colleague the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) the opportunity to add his comments on Bill 22 as it more directly applies to his critic's responsibilities. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Prior to my colleague for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), I would just like to add a couple of words to the debate.

I want to advise members of the Assembly that I have spoken to members of the Brandon City Council, who have no difficulty with this piece of legislation. They look upon it as putting Brandon on the same footing as the city of Winnipeg. As I understand it, the city of Winnipeg transit system does not have to go before the Public Utilities Board for transit fare changes, increases or decreases. It is felt that the city of Brandon should be put in the same category. So it is a matter of being made equitable, bringing about an equitable situation in the province.

Brandon has an excellent transit system. It has difficulties in paying its way, as many transit systems do. I might add that I was very proud to be part of the government that substantially increased the grants to not only the Brandon transit system, but also the city of Winnipeg transit system and indeed other transit systems in northern Manitoba. We not only assisted those systems by way of grants for purchases of new buses, but we increased the subsidy very substantially.

I recall, when I was first a member of the Legislature, I believe, at that time, the previous government, in the

1960s, had offered a subsidy to the tune of 5 percent of the revenue of the Brandon transit system. After a couple of years of the Schreyer administration, we decided that we should be more generous to help the City of Brandon in terms of keeping the fares down. Over a period of two or three years, we actually increased the subsidy 50 percent of the operating loss. That was a substantial improvement, and, as a result, the transit system did improve in the city of Brandon.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, this government has seen fit to cut back in the last few years on the level of grants to the Brandon transit system and has made it much more difficult for that city to try to maintain good reliable service at low or reasonable rates. I am afraid that if the government continues to offload, in effect, by reducing transit grants to the City of Brandon, you may find that the rates are going to have to increase more substantially than they would otherwise. People may become very upset with the city over this and may complain that, well, you should go to the Public Utilities Board.

My position has always been that if it is a publicly owned facility, that publicly owned facility surely is acting on behalf of the public in the public interest, unlike a private monopoly which indeed should be required to go before a board to justify any rate increases, such as Centra Gas, to use a local example, but, in terms of publicly owned enterprises, those publicly owned enterprises are responsible to the people anyway.

That is why I often wonder why even Manitoba Hydro, for instance, or the Telephone System should have to go before the Public Utilities Board because the point is, neither Manitoba Hydro, let us say, or the Telephone System are in the business of trying to rip off the consumers. They are not in the business of making excess profits; they are in the business of providing service to Manitobans.

Similarly, with the transit systems, they are in the business of providing a service to the citizens of their particular jurisdictions. I know the people in the Brandon transit system, and I know many of the councillors, have done their very best to offer the finest

transit system possible, given the financial constraints to the people of Brandon.

As I say, I do worry, however, that there may be further cuts, especially with Bill 2 now, when Bill 2 becomes law, because the government is not likely to raise income taxes or sales taxes, and, if conditions warrant to require more revenue or to require more ability to avoid a deficit, I can see further offloading onto the municipalities as one of the consequences. I hope I am not right, but I am prepared to predict that there will be further cuts to the Brandon transit system, not to mention the Winnipeg transit system or indeed other municipal services.

By passing this legislation, we are certainly going along with the feeling of the City Council in Brandon and, hopefully, as I said, in the years ahead the city will be able to continue to manage a good quality service for the citizens of Brandon.

* (1430)

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): I just want to make a few closing comments on Bill 22, The Municipal Amendment and Brandon Charter Amendment Act, so that we can go on to committee with it. I know, in consultation with my colleague from Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), when the bill was presented, I had made certain inquiries with the community of Brandon and council through the member for Brandon East. As the member for Brandon East has indicated, there were no problems with this bill, and in discussions with different people from the community, they seemed to feel that it is the right way to go.

Hopefully, to echo the words of my colleague for Brandon East, this will turn into a fair and equitable position, putting the community and the council of Brandon into being able to adjust their own fares accordingly. Hopefully, it will not have to be dealt a blow later down the line with these further cuts, if there should be further cuts, to have to increase public fares, transit fares. That would be unreasonable for the citizens of Brandon.

Having just spent a few days at conferences in Brandon this last weekend, I want to compliment my

colleague for Brandon East, seeing all the buses running around Brandon full. Hopefully, the transit system in Brandon will continue to operate to the best efficiency and to provide the best service that it can to the people of Brandon. So, Madam Speaker, in closing, I would like to see this bill go on to committee and to third reading.

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): I would like to put a few comments to Bill 22, The Municipal Amendment and Brandon Charter Amendment Act, so that it can proceed to committee.

This is mainly a housekeeping amendment to bring The Brandon Charter Act in line with The Municipal Act. The Municipal Act was amended in 1993 to remove the requirement that public transit fares be approved by the Public Utilities Board. A similar provision remains in The Brandon Charter Act. That provision is removed in this amendment, making the two acts compatible. Therefore, with these comments, we would like to see it go to committee, and we will be supporting the bill. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 22, The Municipal Amendment and Brandon Charter Amendment Act. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 5—The Education Administration Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading, Bill 5, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire), on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), standing in the name of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, I want to begin my comments by saying that I will be the last speaker from this side of the House on this piece of

legislation as we will be moving this piece, with the conclusion of my comments, into the committee stage and into third reading.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words on this bill, Bill 5, The Education Administration Amendment Act. It has been noted and stated by several of my colleagues, it is a very small bill. It is a very slight bill. It looks relatively innocuous. It is, however, a bill that deals with the issue of education, and we all know that education is an issue that concerns all of Manitobans.

We have just noted today that the government opposite is unprepared to deal with a very important part of the education system; that, of course, is the labour dispute at the University of Manitoba. We on this side of the House have asked the government to take a more proactive role in resolving that dispute instead of sitting back and clearly just taking one position and not looking at the issue from both sides.

As I stated, this is a small bill. It was a bill that was brought in last session. It is a bill that we on this side of the House have seen before. I believe it was called Bill 3. It was brought in by the former Minister of Education, Mr. Manness, just prior to the election. They were going to, at that time, campaign on this bill, and they did campaign on this bill during the election.

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

It has three proposals. First, it allows the minister to make regulations concerning the establishment of a school advisory council; second, it allows the minister to make regulations concerning the duties of principals; and, thirdly, it authorizes the suspension of students from school by superintendents and principals, something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is already in practice in most of Manitoba schools.

I recall quite clearly the session prior to the election when the former member for Rossmere, Mr. Schellenberg, raised this question. He questioned the provision of that particular bill which enabled individual teachers to suspend students. He questioned that, and the government at the time, the Minister of

Education and the First Minister, stood up, and they attacked him very viciously in this Chamber for his position. Well, now we are finding that the member was right all along and the government, in fact, withdrew that provision from that particular piece of legislation.

It was clear to us at the time and it is still clear today, but it was clear then that the former Minister of Education did not understand the pressures that are placed on both teachers and principals in our school system. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it goes without saying that we all want here in this province safe classrooms. We all expect to send our children and we all expect our children to learn in an environment that is safe, and the government, according to Mr. Manness, believed that allowing teachers the right to suspend or expel students not only from the school and from the classroom would achieve those goals. That is all he suggests that would be required to provide a safe environment for our students and our children to learn in, simply to give the teacher that right. We, at that time, and the former member for Rossmere questioned that here in the Chamber. As it turns out, as we have stated, he was correct.

The former minister believed that everything could be solved by allowing teachers to suspend students from school. It is interesting now and we find it very interesting that this government has now withdrawn that particular section from this Bill 5. Bill 5 is unlike Bill 3. That particular proposal has been withdrawn and we feel that it is right. The former member for Rossmere was correct when he said that should not be included in this legislation.

We pointed out to the government at that time that to give individual teachers that responsibility would create a situation where there would be inconsistencies in terms of discipline not only across this province but also within individual schools. It was an issue that was raised by this side of the House. At that time, the minister was uninterested in our proposals. They campaigned on provisions that were in Bill 3 in the past election. Once the election was over they realized the error of their ways and they withdrew that particular section of that bill, and we do support the government for withdrawing that.

The bill before us allows a teacher to suspend a pupil from a classroom and not the school. In most jurisdictions this is already the case in principle and in practice. Bill 5 also authorizes the principal and the superintendent to suspend students from school. Again, this is no different from practices already well established and well provided for in our school system.

This particular piece of legislation removes from school boards one of the areas for which they are responsible to the local citizens, and we questioned the minister on a number of these issues. Does this minister intend to bring in rules that are substantially different from those already in place?

We have read the minister's speech, and we are still unclear what her intentions are. We feel that Bill 5 could create conditions for divided authority and weaker accountability. In matters of suspension, it is the minister who sets the rules, and it is the minister who will set the duties of a principal, and we have seen over the course of this government many different ministers.

* (1440)

It is the revolving door when it comes to education in this province. One minister will be appointed and take the education system in a certain direction, and then, sure enough, as we pointed out on this side that the minister was wholly inaccurate or inadequate in his or her role, then a new one is appointed and takes the education system in a completely different direction.

So now we have a minister who is taking it once again in a third direction or fourth direction actually, because it has been four ministers now since this government has been appointed.

We believe on this side of the House that this bill is a desire of this government to exert more control over individual schools and individual principals. It is brought forward to by-pass school divisions, school boards, and we see this elsewhere in the Conservative agenda.

The central authority through the creation of governing councils, through the allocation of financial

responsibilities, it is a first step, we feel, and it is a step in the wrong direction, of placing vouchers or another element of direct competition between individual schools. We feel that is not part of the Manitoba tradition. Right now we are in the middle of school board elections, and we know that Manitobans have a very strong attachment to the school board system and not give the minister the power that this particular piece of legislation would give her.

We claim, and I think it is rightly so, that we can claim victory on the government withdrawal of the section allowing teachers to suspend. It was our member on this side of the House who raised that issue in Question Period. The government attacked it at the time. The government attacked that member at that time. Really, they made a serious error in doing so because the member has been proven and his position at that time has proven to be correct.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do claim certain victories on this legislation, as I have stated earlier on in my comments. We do have some deep concerns regarding this government's power grab in terms of the education system. We know that the suspension has some serious problems, especially when discipline can be applied inconsistently throughout the province, not only throughout the province, but we also find within individual schools as well.

We see that the government opposite, over the seven or eight years of its mandate, has had no consistent pattern when it comes to the administration of education in this province. One minister will take it one way, another will take it another. We see again today that the minister or the government is unprepared to act to deal with some very serious issues related to our education system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we, of course, are very interested in hearing what the public will have to say about this particular piece of legislation. That is why we are prepared to move it through into committee stage, and we are prepared to listen to the public when it reaches that stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is second reading, Bill 5, The Education Administration Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi l'administration scolaire. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) for Thursday, October 19, 1995, for 7 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 20—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), Bill 20, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). Is there leave that this matter remain standing?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, leave has been denied.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this amendment to The Child and Family Services Act. Although the minister may describe it as a minor amendment, I personally think it is a very interesting amendment because it touches on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It touches on the power of government and the power that governments have over individuals. I think it could be argued that it touches on the right to life, and it also touches on religious freedom and freedom of conscience. For those reasons, I find this to be a very interesting bill.

I will be the first and only speaker on this bill for our caucus, and then we are going to pass it to committee

Also at the beginning, I would like to thank the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), who arranged a briefing by several of her staff for me, and I appreciate that. I also want to thank her and her staff for giving me some background information, in effect, a briefing note about this bill. I found that to be very helpful in understanding this bill and in being prepared to speak on it today.

At the present time, The Child and Family Services Act allows for emergency medical treatment of children by way of an agency having the authority to authorize that, but this is being changed so that in future there must be a court order. In the past, the Child and Family Services Agency gave consent to usually emergency medical treatment of a child who had been apprehended without the necessity of a court order. In fact an agency in the past was given authority to consent to medical treatment on a child without a court order approving the treatment and without a court order having considered or approved an agency's guardianship of a child.

There are two situations where an agency may want to rely on Section 25. The first is where a child has been apprehended because the parents have refused necessary medical treatment. The cases where this arises or may arise usually refer to people who do not want the medical treatment by virtue of their religious convictions. In particular, that is true of Jehovah Witnesses, so we have quite a different view from that of the government and society as a whole with individuals and their religious views. I think I will touch on that later in my speech.

The second situation where an agency may want to rely on Section 25 is where a child has been apprehended for a reason other than parental refusal and where a situation arises prior to an order of guardianship being granted. In this situation, the parents may not be available to consent to treatment so, to paraphrase that, it would apply to children who are in limbo, I guess we would say, between other than being apprehended, but not having legal guardianship over children.

* (1450)

As we know, whether or not children have legal guardians raises many questions for parents. For example, I recently had a case drawn to my attention where grandparents became the legal guardians of three children and then found it very difficult to pay all their bills and feed and cloth these children, but because they were legal guardians, they did not have the same access to resources that other people might have. I know of children, because of the situation in almost identical circumstance where the children are not legal guardians, they are foster children, as a result the income for that family is much, much higher. They are being paid foster children rates, whereas in the situation where the parents—in this case grandparents—are legal guardians, they were given the room and board allowance under The Social Allowances Act. So it really does make a difference in terms of income whether people are legal guardians or whether they are foster parents.

The reason for this change is a Supreme Court of Canada decision in January of this year. It was an Ontario case, but it affects other provinces including Manitoba. In fact, I was told in the briefing that we did not have to act immediately, but of course there are advantages to acting immediately. One is that court cases are pending in Manitoba, and the province, of course, did not want these cases to go to court because they would have almost certainly lost because of the Supreme Court decision. So this minister, to her credit, is acting in a proactive way in bringing in this amendment during this session so that those cases will not proceed to court, and the staff acknowledged that Manitoba probably would have lost those cases in any case. So Manitoba is amending Section 25 of The Child and Family Services Act in order to comply with this court case which was based on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The major change in this amendment is that, where parents of a child refuse to consent to necessary medical treatment, an agency must proceed to court to obtain an order authorizing such treatment. I think this is a good change, a logical change, a justifiable, a reasonable change, because I think what it does is it allows the lawyers for the agency and the lawyers for

the individual to appear before a judge and the judge makes what we hope is an impartial decision, whereas in the past the agency had all the power. I think there is a good balance as a result of the amendment where the decision is made by a judge rather than an agency.

Agencies will not be required to obtain orders where a child has been apprehended for reasons other than parental refusal to consent to medical treatment. In such cases, parents will be contacted and involved in the decision to treat, or where parents cannot be located, agencies will have the authority to consent to treatment where it is recommended by a medical practitioner.

Now as I have mentioned, I have used the example of urgent medical treatment. The background paper talks about necessary medical treatment. So there are cases where, because of the urgency, there may not be a hearing in court, so what this amendment allows for is for teleconferencing so that the lawyers and the agency can talk to the judge by phone and can obtain the necessary permission. It also allows for the documentation to follow. I suppose this is a rather unusual exception because I am sure that in most cases the judges would want to see the documentation in front of them, but in this case they do not have to. They can make the decision by phone, and the necessary documentation can follow afterwards.

Bill 20 also includes recognition of the rights of mature minors. At common law, a child has the capacity to consent to or refuse medical treatment once he or she is mature enough to understand the nature and consequences of treatment. Generally, this age is well below 18 years of age.

Existing provisions in The Child and Family Services Act do not recognize the rights of a child in this respect. I suspect that we are going to have a change in Manitoba. The Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) has indicated to me, as a result of questions in Estimates, that she is going to revise or, perhaps, rewrite The Child and Family Services Act of Manitoba. In fact, the minister promised public hearings. Just yesterday, I was talking to the president of LINKS, an organization that the minister will be familiar with, and they are looking forward to

amendments to adoption legislation in Manitoba, which is part of The Child and Family Services Act.

Mr. Kading was pleased to hear that the minister promised public hearings because they want to have some input into changes in adoption legislation. In fact, Mr. Kading suggested the process that was used in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia, I am not sure which, where they actually had a task force or some sort of public body that heard submissions and then submitted a report to the minister. That is an option that this minister could consider in Manitoba.

But the reason I mentioned the act being revised or a new act being written is that I suspect in the new act that the minister may want to lower the age of children from 18 to 16, which actually would be in keeping with some other provinces in Canada, although I would question the minister's motives for this. I know that Manitoba, I believe, has the largest number of children in care of any province in Canada on a per capita basis. If the minister lowered the age from 18 to 16, that would improve the statistics and make this minister and this government look better. So the minister may have reasons for wanting to change the act in that regard.

In any case, revising The Child and Family Services Act is a major undertaking. It is a very significant piece of legislation. I think the minister indicated that it would be a process of approximately two years. We look forward to taking part in that. We look forward to the public consultation that the minister has promised. I think probably the adoption changes may well be the most significant changes of a new Child and Family Services Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members wanting to carry on a conversation across the way to do so in the loge so that I could hear the honourable member for Burrows.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that intervention, very timely on your part.

As I was saying, existing provisions in The Child and Family Services Act do not recognize the rights of a child and, more importantly, the act conflicts with the provisions of The Health Care Directives Act. I think

members will remember us debating The Health Care Directives Act, which was a very interesting piece of legislation. The briefing note which the minister's staff kindly provided to me points out that this act presumes that a child 16 years or older has the capacity to make health care decisions. The proposed amendments will prevent an agency from overriding the wishes of a 16-year-old without a court order. This situation would generally arise where a doctor is not prepared to proceed without parental consent.

As far as I can see, there are no needs for improvements or changes or amendments to this bill, but one minor technical amendment was suggested to me and that is that the minister may want to make an amendment, perhaps at committee stage, in Section 25(3)(1) and change the word "the" to "a." I would say that is probably a very technical amendment. It is not something that I would have found in reading this bill, but we will see if the minister—I am sure that if Legislative Counsel thinks it is important the minister will proceed with that very minor technical change. I would even second it for the honourable minister.

We may have presentations at committee stage on this bill. I was advised that probably the lawyer for the Jehovah's Witnesses will appear at committee. I think that presentation will be very interesting because, as I said at the beginning of this debate, it is possible to frame this debate in terms of the rights of individuals and the rights of society or the rights of government and the extent to which government has power over the rights of individuals.

* (1500)

We quite often hear from this Conservative government that government should be downsized, that government has too much power, get governments off the backs of people and off the backs of individuals, but in this particular case the minister is passing an amendment—perhaps she does not have any choice because of the Supreme Court decision—where in fact the government does have the power over individuals.

I expect that when we hear the lawyer's presentation he will probably be arguing about things like individual rights and individual freedom, perhaps freedom of

conscience, freedom of religion. I look forward to that presentation because, you know, sometimes we hear arguments from people in our society that we may not agree with or we may think that the arguments are kind of far-fetched and that society indeed does have the right to overrule these arguments about individual liberty, individual freedom or religious freedom or even religious beliefs

But, if you look at the particular examples where Jehovah Witnesses have said they do not believe in and do not want blood transfusions, that religious view may actually have saved people's lives in the early 1980s in Canada. Because of blood transfusions being tainted by the AIDS virus and because of their practice of not wanting adults or children to have blood transfusions, that may have saved lives and may have been a very wise decision on their part.

I think that medical science has learned from that, has learned ways of performing surgery without blood transfusion, and there may have been improvements and changes which have resulted as the result of the knowledge acquired by doctors who were trying to adhere to people's religious beliefs.

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this amendment is really in keeping with the thrust of The Child and Family Services Act, whereby everything is done and decisions are made in the best interests of the child. That is an expression that you will find, I think, in more than one place in The Child and Family Services Act.

Just yesterday on the news we saw the director of Winnipeg Child and Family Services, Mr. Keith Cooper, responding to a question that I raised in the Legislature a couple of weeks ago, on behalf of a couple of parents, and asked the minister to investigate. She asked Mr. Cooper to investigate and report back to her, and I was very pleased to see a public response to that. The decision that was made was made in the best interest of the child, and I do not think we can argue against that.

That is a principle that is in the legislation. I believe it is an underlying principle that is adhered to in this amendment because the whole reason for giving the courts the authority to make decisions in medical

emergencies is to save lives, in this case, to save the lives of children.

I certainly expect, and I hope, that when the minister brings in a new act, and I look forward to debating that and to being consulted on it and to taking part or observing public meetings that the minister calls, I certainly hope that the best interest of the child will be a principle of any new Child and Family Services Act that this minister brings in.

With those few remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I conclude, and we are going to pass this to committee. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, regarding Bill 20, we understand that this amendment changes The Child and Family Services Act to provide a medical treatment of a child against the wishes of a parent must be justified before a judge in accordance with the recent ruling from the Supreme Court of Canada, and having said that, we, in principle, support the bill and would like to see it go through.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is second reading, Bill 20, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 15—The Agricultural Producers' Organization Funding Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On second reading of Bill 15, the motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), The Agricultural Producers' Organization Funding Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement d'organismes de producteurs agricoles, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): As a member of a riding that is situated in rural Manitoba, I am pleased to be able to stand and talk about something as important to my constituents as agriculture. After all, the Dauphin area is predominantly an agricultural area. I think most honourable members are aware of that. Our history is absolutely intermingled with the ups and downs and the cyclical nature of agriculture, no different than most other communities our size throughout western Canada, including other constituencies and other towns within our province.

I want to also indicate that farmers and people involved in agriculture in the Dauphin area realize that being the base of the economy in our area, that a whole lot of other jobs, other activities, other ventures in our area, are based in agriculture. So as agriculture goes, so does the rest of the economy in the Dauphin area.

We notice that when agriculture suffers, when prices fall, when poor decisions are made by governments at whatever level, including federal and provincial and municipal, that the effects of those decisions and those circumstances ripple right through the whole economy in our area, and we notice the differences from the business community to schools to our hospitals, all throughout the whole economy of Dauphin and the surrounding area.

Of course, I rise knowing as well that I speak on behalf of a somewhat greater area in terms of the Parkland, which includes more areas, more constituencies, than just mine in underlining the importance of agriculture to our whole Parkland region.

So it is something that we need to consider very carefully. It is something that we need to keep in our minds as we put together legislation designed, I would hope, to help farmers.

That is where this Agricultural Producers' Organization Funding Amendment Act comes into play. That is the accepted name. That is the official

name of Bill 15. I prefer to call it a negative check-off legislation with heavy emphasis on the term "negative." I do not like the approach that the government is taking through Bill 15. I do not think it is going to help the farmers in the Dauphin area or the Parkland area or, indeed, throughout the province of Manitoba who will eventually see the results of this sort of legislation when they deliver their grain later on this year or whatever part of the year they finally get their crops off to market.

I think what we are going to see happen in Dauphin and the Parkland and across the province are farmers coming to the elevators finding out that this government has imposed yet another tax on their ability to put together a decent living in rural Manitoba. I do not believe that this bill is good for rural Manitoba, and I do not believe it is good for farmers and other folks involved in the agricultural production in this province.

Let us consider a little bit the reasons why this bill is before us today. I think it has a lot to do with the situation that the farm community finds itself in across our province. First of all, in rural Manitoba there is a great degree of uncertainty right now. There is a great degree of trepidation amongst farmers as to their future in making a living off the land. There is a great deal of worry that they are going to be put into a position where they cannot pass on their farms to the next generation. There is a great deal of worry that, if we continue to go the way we are, they will not be able to make a living doing what they are doing, and they will not be able to live in their final years on the planet in comfort because of the poor outlook in regard to agriculture.

Now, that is not to suggest that everything is absolutely gloomy out there in agriculture. I think that there are some very positive things happening in agriculture, and I think that farmers from one end of this province to the other should be congratulated for adapting to some of the changes that have been foisted upon them.

* (1510)

It has been my experience as a person living practically all my life in rural Manitoba that farmers are

some of the most adaptable, flexible people in our province. Certainly, that is because so much of what they do is out of their hands, government policies that the farm community has no control over and all too often too little input into and, of course, they have to rely on Mother Nature a lot. Time after time, we have seen examples in western Canada and particularly in Manitoba where Mother Nature has not really been all that friendly to farmers. So it is easy to understand how farmers can develop themselves into very flexible, progressive, hardworking people, and it is my hope that we take that into consideration whenever we put together legislation that will have an effect on the lives of farmers. My worry about Bill 15 is that that is simply not the case.

My first worry about Bill 15 is the lack of input into the bill from real, live, actual farmers who have some hands-on experience in the area of agricultural production. Let us consider why the farmers need protection, because I think they do. Certainly, one of the reasons that I am here representing a rural area is that I think that there is a need to protect those people in society who provide food for the rest of us to eat. I think that is something that is important. The amount of change that has taken place in the field of agriculture most recently indicates to me that there is a role for government to play in protecting the livelihood of our farm communities.

We have seen a massive amount of rural depopulation over the last couple of decades. We have seen many towns that were once vibrant and active turned into ghost communities. We have seen towns like Dauphin in which the population decreases and also the average age of people in the community rises because people have retired from the farms and are now living within larger centres. Now that may be fine for the Dauphins and the Selkirks and the Brandons of the world, but it is not okay for the Rorketons and the Gilbert Plains and some of the other smaller communities, who, at one time, were very active and very vibrant and have suffered, at least in part, because of the actions of one government or another.

One of the major changes that has occurred in the area of agriculture is with the Western Grain Transportation Act, an act that was originally put in

place for the benefit of all farmers, an act that did help farmers. The Crow benefit now, though, has been something that has been taken away from farmers, and I think we need to give farmers some sort of assurance that this House is going to do what it can to stand up for the farmers and to stand up for their best interests.

Now I think the provincial Legislature is one avenue we can do that, but certainly they can do it through farm commodity groups. I think there is good reason for farmers to get together and organize. If I were a full-time farmer, I would be looking to become part of a group as well. I would feel that I would need the protection against the Liberal government, who is responsible for ripping this Crow benefit away from farm communities, and I would also suggest that if I was a farmer I would be awfully angry and I would be forming an organization to tell the provincial Agriculture minister that he did not lobby hard enough against those meanspirited Grits to stop what I think was a very backward action.

Here is another example, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I was a farmer I would want to be part of an organization that would stand up clearly and say that the Canadian Wheat Board is worth protecting. I would want my organization and I would want my provincial government to stand up and say, remember what it was like before we had the Wheat Board and you guys tried to sell your grain. You were at the absolute whim of multinational corporations and you will be again if we lose the Wheat Board. I would want to organize my organization, my farm organization to say that clearly to not only the federal Minister of Agriculture but this Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and all of the rural MLAs who have farmers scratching out a living in their areas.

Another example, something that has been going on for a long period of time, year after year, one Tory and one Liberal government in Ottawa after another, is rail line abandonment.

I spoke earlier about the small towns like Rorketon and Gilbert Plains that are becoming less and less a factor in rural Manitoba because of rural depopulation. One of the main reasons for that is that we have been cutting rail lines that service those communities and

service farmers in those areas and the business people and all the rest.

I would want my farm organization, whichever farm organization that may be, to approach the federal Minister of Agriculture and the provincial Minister of Agriculture and, if I lived in any of the rural ridings, I would be approaching my MLA, along with whatever farm organization I wanted to, to tell them that enough is enough when it comes to rail line abandonment.

I would want my farm organization to tell the minister that that is a backward step, that we are moving the clock back. I would want my MLA, if I was a farmer and a member of a farm organization, to be looking at other options. I would want him to be looking at models that work. I would want him to look into Scandinavia, where they do have some good examples of change in the area of rail lines. I would want them to look in other parts of Europe and anywhere they can to get good ideas.

What we see in Bill 15, however, is a bill that is saying, there is only one group that you can be a member of. There is only one group that is going to speak on behalf of farmers, and that is just not good enough for farmers, and I do not think that this government should be foisting that onto the backs of farmers.

Certainly, since the changes to the WGTA and the Crow benefit, the Port of Churchill has become much, much more of a topical issue. The importance of the Port of Churchill is absolutely paramount now since the Crow rate has been taken away from farmers.

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

Now, I think that people should be taking the alternative of the Port of Churchill a lot more seriously. If I was a farmer, especially a farmer in Dauphin, since Dauphin is going to be quite likely hit the hardest when it comes to freight rates over the next few years, and the whole western part of Manitoba and the eastern part of Saskatchewan could gain absolutely phenomenally when it comes to the Port of Churchill—it is no secret. It is not disputed. It is not political ideology. It has nothing to do with that. It is a fact. Dauphin,

Kamsack, Yorkton, Roblin, Russell, those parts of the country are, factually speaking, the furthest from the market. They were the ones which gained the most out of the Crow benefit. They are the ones which are now going to suffer the most since the Crow rate was taken away.

Now, what has this provincial government done about the Port of Churchill? What has the federal government done? I would suggest that the federal and provincial governments, be they Tory or Liberal, have done about the same in terms of the Port of Churchill, and that is not very much. I would want to belong, as a farmer, to a farm organization that would take this government right now and hold its feet to the fire and say, you said you were going to show some support to the Port of Churchill, and I would want my farm organization to do that. I would want my farm organization to do that in Winnipeg and in Ottawa, because I think we are missing out on an opportunity with the Port of Churchill, and we are missing out on an opportunity to provide some kind of a fighting chance for many farmers in western Manitoba that many of us in this House are here to represent. It is a good idea. It is something we should be looking at, and I would want my farm organization to do that on my behalf.

One of the buzz terms these days in agriculture, one of the latest, is something called "vertical integration." Now, vertical integration throws up a whole bunch of new possibilities, new risks, to farmers. There may be some opportunities there for farmers to expand. There may be some opportunities for farmers to grow, but there could be risks involved as well. We may find out that we only enhanced the problem of rural depopulation through vertical integration. We may find out that smaller communities and smaller farmers have no room within the concept of vertical integration.

* (1520)

These are things we do not quite know yet, in Canada at least. If I was a farmer right now, I would want to belong to an organization, an organization that will take an objective evaluation of what has happened in vertical integration for this short period of time that it has been around here in Canada, and I would also want

my farm organization to take a good, unbiased look at what vertical integration has meant in other jurisdictions, like the United States.

What has it meant in the European economic community? Bill 15 says that as a farmer, I can get my money checked off and put into one organization who may or may not do that. I would want whatever farm organization that I would be involved in to take a good serious look at vertical integration, and that is not included in this legislation right here.

Farmers throughout Canada and throughout the history of our country have offered up food to the other folks of the country very cheaply. We have had—and I am sure that members opposite would agree with me—a very cheap food policy in this country. Farmers have done their part to help make society better.

What are we doing in return? Well, we are telling them that when they haul their grain off to market, they are going to be checked off a sum of money to belong to a certain farm organization. Is that any way of treating the people who have provided this country over 128 years with the cheap food, cheap, safe, secure food, something as important as the bread and the meat on our tables? Is that any way to treat the farmers in rural Manitoba? It may be that the party opposite, the party in government right now, will treat the farmers in that manner, but it is not the way I would treat farmers, and it is not the way that New Democrats would approach the situation.

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

One of the biggest factors in the farm community these days and over the last number of years is the impact of trade agreements that have been made by the federal government—Tory and Liberal—and supported wholeheartedly by this provincial government. The Conservatives in Winnipeg have been backing up the Liberals and the Tories when it comes to these free trade agreements. I do not think they have spent enough time, I do not think they have spent enough energy, and I do not think they have done enough research as to the impact that this would have on the farm community.

If I was a farmer, I would want my organization to do some sort of research into the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement on my farm operation and I would want my farm organization to do an unbiased, objective evaluation of how the effects have been over the last five or six years. I would also expect that my organization would pressure provincial governments into providing some sort of analysis of the future. What will be the future effects of NAFTA on my farm operation? The way this legislation is set out right now is, that sort of analysis, that sort of unbiased evaluation, just is not provided.

I have another concern with what is contained within Bill 15. It is my belief, it is one of my principles, that farmers should be able to have a strong voice, that farmers should be able to get together and express their opinions and put some sort of pressure on the people in government who make decisions. It is my belief that farmers should be able to organize themselves in such a way that they can express their opinions and they can put some kind of pressure on this government or the government in Ottawa or whoever else is involved in drawing up legislation that affects farm operations across this province. There is no doubt about that.

You know, I think the farmers need the protection of an organization from the very people across the way who are putting together this bill in the first place. My worry, though, is that, with the number of farm organizations that we have out there, too many farm operations and farm groups are becoming splintered. I would prefer if they talked with one voice so that the government maybe then would listen, as the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) is right now.

The problem with this legislation, though, is that they take Bill 15 and this government takes one group and puts them into a distinct advantaged position over the other groups, saying that now when you show up to take your wheat to market, you are being forced—no choice involved here—to join this certain group, with their certain attitudes, with their certain history, with their certain connections to the Conservative Party of Manitoba, as the member for Emerson would back me up on, and you are telling me, who, as a farmer, may not agree with what is going on in KAP—heaven forbid, I may not even agree with what the Conservative

government is coming up with. Lord knows, I might even disagree with what the current Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) says about education, but still I have no choice. If I farm, this government wants me to belong to a certain group. End of story.

That is heavy-handed. That is undemocratic. That is not what built the rural communities. That is not what built the communities in which I live. That is not the kind of approach to agriculture that built us into the breadbasket of the world in the first place. The farm community, at least the farm community that I have been a member of, has not been built on undemocratic principles, the likes of which are contained within this Bill 15 legislation.

To be specific to Dauphin, again, I want to remind members across that there was an election back in April.

An Honourable Member: How did it turn out?

Mr. Struthers: Very well. The member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) asks how it turned out, and I think in Dauphin it turned out extremely well. The farmers of the Dauphin area voted in favour of the New Democratic Party, a party that put its platform forward on agriculture, and it was accepted by the people in the Dauphin area.

On the other hand, the people of Dauphin did not fall for the promise that was announced in the town of Dauphin having to do with agriculture in which \$10 million was promised by this Premier (Mr. Filmon) to diversify farmers into other areas. It is one thing to talk during election and come up with money, just pick money out of the air and throw to farmers at election time, but let us consider two things.

First of all, how far did this government really think \$10 million was going to go to diversify the economy of Dauphin? The second thing I want people across the way to consider is should it be any surprise right now to see the price of cattle and the price of beef falling at the same time as we are getting more farmers to diversify into beef? The Conservatives talk a lot about supply and demand and Adam Smith and all these free-market principles, then why do you not practise what

you preach and admit that what you are proposing in agriculture makes a mockery of supply and demand and you are trying to ignore the very principles, the very economic principles that you run on, that you are suppose to believe in?

* (1530)

If this was the case and if I was a farmer in Dauphin, I would expect my farm organization, which I would be a member of, I would want my farm organization to speak out and point out to the Conservative government of Manitoba that their ideas in terms of election campaigning, election promises, election rhetoric, just do not make sense and just do not serve the interests of farmers.

Now the other part of this is that one of the areas that maybe concerns me most in this whole area is the amount of cutting that has gone on in terms of research and development. Now this is something that I realize the members across the way might start yelling about, is the federal government involved and they are partly right. I would want my farm organization to tell the federal Minister Ralph Goodale that he is being backwards when he cuts back on the amount of research dollars going into agriculture.

We know, I think everybody that has any connections at all with rural Manitoba—and, heck, you do not even have to have connections with rural Manitoba—to understand that research into agricultural products and their uses and ways to limit the input cost to farmers is a good thing for everybody. It does not take too much of a genius to figure out that if you cut the funding to research, if you cut the ability of different groups to research agricultural products, then that is not a good step for Manitobans. I would want my farm organization that I choose to be a member of to tell Ralph Goodale that, but let us not just write this off as a federal problem either.

The provincial government has a responsibility in the field of agriculture to provide money for research and development as well. What has been happening in the province of Manitoba? They have been cutting too. So it is not good enough for the other side of the House to simply, every time we raise a question about federal

responsibility for the other side of the House, just to pass the buck on to Ralph Goodale or whoever else they want to in the federal scene. This government has to walk up to the plate and hit the ball too. This government has a role to play in research and development. This government has been cutting, and I would expect my farm organization to tell this government that research and development is important and to tell this government that they should not be cutting the money going towards research and development that helps farmers maintain a livelihood in rural Manitoba.

My basic premise and my basic objective here is to make sure that people understand that I think farmers can decide. I have the full confidence that farmers can decide, No. 1. whether they want to belong to a group or not; and No. 2. what group they do want to belong to. I think farmers agree with this, that it is important to organize, it is important to get together and speak with one voice. I do not think there is going to be a lot of argument from anybody in this House on that one. Their lot in life, their ability to live successfully in rural Manitoba would be enhanced by that, but if you think that forcing farmers into going for one particular group over another is a positive thing, then I think you are missing the boat. [interjection]

An Honourable Member: Well, you missed the train.

Mr. Struthers: Well, the member for Turtle River says that I have missed the train, but when—

An Honourable Member: Turtle Mountain.

Mr. Struthers: Oh, sorry. When the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) was waiting for the train he realized too late that he was at an airport and that is why he missed the train.

I want to get back to the undemocratic strain that runs throughout Bill 15. It is my assertion, and I believe I am correct in making this assertion, that this is an undemocratic, heavy-handed approach to organizing farmers in rural Manitoba. I am glad that the Conservative Party is getting clear on the advantages of organization and having people uniting together to work for a common cause, to work together

to improve the betterment of all, but I do not like the way they are streaming farmers into one particular group or another at the expense of other groups.

Now, one of the problems with this is that up until now farmers can choose whether they want to be members of one group or another. They can choose to be not part of any group if they want, but right now farmers have the ability today to choose to become part of a whole variety of different groups, different organizations, different associations, but what are they doing? Are they running out like crazy to get in on these groups? Are they beating down the doors of the canola growers or are they beating down the doors of KAP or the National Farmers Union or any of these groups? I do not think that is true.

As a matter of fact, it is my understanding—we will just take right now the canola growers—from the literature that I have received from the canola growers, is that in Manitoba there are 12,000 canola growers. How many of those canola growers are signed up with their association? How many would it be—300, 400, 500, somewhere in there? It is a very small number, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I would suggest that it is not just the canola growers that are going through that kind of a stage in their history. I would suggest that if anybody cared to look into this further I would suggest that all the groups are going through that kind of a history right now.

Membership through choice is down. My assertion will be that this government is simply trying to pick and choose which groups it wants to funnel farmers into. It is deciding which groups most accurately reflect its own agricultural policies and is then saying to farmers, these are the groups that you must belong to. I do not think that is right. I do not think that is fair. I do not think it is democratic. It is something that I have become used to hearing from the other side of the House, though.

An Honourable Member: We are hearing you, Stan.

Mr. Struthers: Right on. As I said before, I have full confidence in the people that I represent in Dauphin, specifically the farmers, to come out and choose for themselves what group they belong to. In that vein, I

would challenge the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and some of the other members across the way to come out to rural Manitoba. I will host you in Dauphin for public hearings. You can go to Dauphin and you can go to Swan River and you can go to Gimli and you can go to Brandon and you can go to Deloraine. You can go all over the province.

I want you to go out to rural Manitoba. I want you to face the farmers in your areas. I want you to tell them they have to belong to one group or the next. What do you think the farmers would tell you? The farmers will tell you that they can make up their own minds for themselves, thank you very much, and they do not need this government to be funnelling them into any group. It does not matter what group it is. [interjection]

What I am explaining here, for the information of the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), would be very much acceptable within the whole history of the trade union movement in this country, because they are allowed to vote. In this instance, in this legislation, that is not available to farmers, so the argument of unions versus farmers is just a nonstarter.

* (1540)

What I want to continue on, though, is pursuing the possibilities of public hearings in rural Manitoba. I want the minister, and I want rural MLAs from the government side, to go out and talk to farmers about what they think should be contained in this Bill 15. I want them to tell farmers that they have to belong to a certain group or another, and see what the reaction is.

My suspicion—and I will probably never be proven right or wrong on this, because I do not think this government has the will to go out into rural Manitoba and ask farmers what they really think, but I would just like the government to head out into rural Manitoba, come up to Dauphin—I will host you there—talk to the people in my area, see what they have to tell you.

They are going to tell you they can make up their own minds. I would challenge the government to hold a vote. I would love for them to hold a vote with farmers.

An Honourable Member: They will not do it, Stan.

Mr. Struthers: Any group. I want the farmers to be able to vote on whether they should belong to a group or not.

An Honourable Member: Democratic decision making.

Mr. Struthers: It is very democratic. Is this government not prepared to do the democratic right thing and come out to rural Manitoba, meet with farmers in public hearings, and then allow farmers to actually vote on something? I do not think this government has the political will to do it. I do not think they have the courage to do that.

An Honourable Member: I challenge that.

Mr. Struthers: It is a challenge, and I do not think you are going to live up to it. I think I am going to be right on this, but I will wait. I will sit back patiently, and I will wait to see if this government will indeed do the democratic right thing and come out to rural Manitoba and talk about this legislation.

What it comes down to, what this legislation really boils down to is just another Tory tax, no different than taking the property tax credit away, no different than broadening the provincial sales tax as you have done in your budgets of 1993. This is just another way to tax farmers. This is another form of Tory taxation. I think it is heavy-handed, I think it is undemocratic, and I think you should have told farmers this back in the election instead of waiting until the election was over and now coming to the House with this kind of legislation. I think that you deceived farmers, I think you continue to deceive farmers. I again challenge you to come out to rural Manitoba with the legislation and talk to farmers about it instead of being secretive.

The last point that I want to make is that I am worried about where this legislation may go next, and I am being signalled that my time is up, so I will save what I have to say for the next earliest opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Bill 23—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), Bill 23, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill deals with a few amendments to health care services insurance, and I want to say that there are many major challenges facing us in the health care field. We are facing a deterioration in our health care system and there are many issues that should be addressed by this government, issues such as the closure of emergency wards, issues of cutbacks of beds in rural Manitoba and various cutbacks that we are seeing by this heartless government when it comes to dealing with the health of people.

In addition to that, a lack of recognition on the part of this government that there is a need for health care services throughout rural Manitoba and that we have many areas where people do not have adequate care, and in fact have not been addressed by this government.

I think about some of the communities that I represent where we have called on this government to address things such as nursing stations, but I realize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these issues are not addressed in this bill.

This bill contains three amendments which actually are minor amendments in comparison to the major issues that our health-care system is facing. These amendments deal with the health services insurance, and the first amendment gives more power to the inquiry committee established to investigate practices of physicians not falling in line with what is deemed to be average or norm.

The second provides broader liability protection for individuals and committees involved in investigating doctors. It is greater protection than the previous legislation provides.

If an investigating agency looking into a doctor makes a mistake on their investigation, then the agency is protected from lawsuit, and we have no problem with those parts of the legislation. Clearly, there should be protection for the committee that is doing inquiries or investigation on behalf of the people in Manitoba when it comes to the practices of doctors.

I know that although this gives protection to people who are doing investigating, there are also people who serve on hospital boards, representatives from municipalities who are often concerned about how they would be protected if they took certain actions. Although this protection does not extend to them, it does protect those people who are doing the investigation of various doctors if there should be a lawsuit involved.

Finally, the act allows the government by Order-in-Council to allow nursing homes to deal with funds kept in interest-bearing accounts for patients in those nursing homes, giving them the authority to use the interest for the benefit of the residents.

This area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a bit controversial. We are curious as to why the government would feel that they would have to pass this kind of legislation when the present act allows personal care homes to actually hold funds in trust for residents and allows government to make regulations on how that trust money should be dealt with.

So there are the regulations now, and it seems strange that the government should want to make these changes right now. We are waiting for information from the government as to what the regulations would be and what the impact of these changes will be. Certainly, as it is right now, when there is money held in trust, the personal care home has the ability to hold that money and use it for the betterment of the residents of the personal care home. That is legitimate, but when we see the expansion of this regulation, we wonder what

the government means when they are bringing in comments such as "generally."

It could mean anything from the interest of the account being used to improve the facility of the residents. It could be used for recreational activities that would benefit the residents, and certainly that would be good, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but is it possible that this could also mean that the money could also be used, in the case of a private nursing home, to pay salaries? It could be used to pay the expenses of the running of the home, and that takes away the real intent of what the trust was set up for.

* (1550)

So there is some concern as to why this legislation is being brought in and why it has been decided that these changes should be dealt with under regulation. We feel that there should be more specifics brought forward so that we can have a debate on the real intent of this legislation, and there should be an open discussion on what the government is actually proposing to be doing.

Certainly, we recognize that there are many of these trust accounts. These trust accounts do, in many cases, bring in a lot of revenue, but the trust accounts are set up for a particular purpose. We must ensure that they are being dealt with properly and that it is not an attempt by this government to bring in something that will end up being used in private nursing homes and other nursing homes that will not be in the best interest of the people. So we would hope that there will be hearings and we will have the opportunity to hear from people who have concerns, and hear the views of the people who are affected by this legislation and, from that, take the necessary recommendations from people who will be at the hearings and from the general public.

But certainly the government, as I say, should be spelling out more clearly what the intention is of this legislation. We look forward to hearing from them. But, as I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at a time when we are facing many, many challenges in the health care system, it is unfortunate that the most important issue that we can see coming from this government is ways to deal with trust accounts. Certainly we agree with the section on giving some protection to people who are

doing investigating of medical practitioners who may have fallen outside the guidelines of how they should have been practising, but, as I say, there are many other serious challenges facing us in this health care system.

People in my constituency are certainly affected by changes that have been brought about by this government, particularly with the cutbacks and lack of introduction of new services.

I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that people in my constituency are quite disappointed with the change to the regional health districts, that the government did not recognize that in the area of Swan River as a regional health district when they were able to make the necessary adjustment to boundaries to create another health care district in southern Manitoba but not recognize the natural geographic boundaries of the Swan River area. That is a concern.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

I am sure that this is going to lead to problems when the government realizes that just drawing boundaries without considering the natural geographic boundaries of the area—they will recognize in a few years that this is not a good decision that they made.

With those few comments, Madam Speaker, I will adjourn my debate and look forward to hearing what people have to say of this at the committees.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, it is actually with pleasure that I am provided the opportunity to speak on this particular bill, Bill 23, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act.

In fact, I have a bill entitled the same, but of course a bit different of a number. It is Bill 201. They are, in essence, the two extremes. The one that we are dealing with today does make reference to some changes that will have an impact no doubt to Bill 201, where you would see that there is going to be a very significant change. I feel that it is important to be able to express my thoughts, the party's position on this bill. Equally do I feel it is important, in particular for the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), to be able to speak to Bill 201.

I trust, Madam Speaker, having realized that there are very few days left to go, that the member for Sturgeon Creek will in fact comment on Bill 201.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, this bill does provide for protection from liability for the members of different boards who conduct themselves, in essence, in good faith. The three boards or committees, if you like, are the Medical Review Committee, the Manitoba Health Board and the Formal Inquiry Committee.

The legislation is also there to assist the investigating of irregular billing practices. Both of these amendments, I believe, are positive and a move in the right direction. The whole question of health care reform is something in which there has been a significant amount of debate in the Chamber over the last little while, and in particular we have seen, with the emergency services and bed closures that it is once again becoming the issue to be debated inside this Chamber in this relatively short session.

One of the aspects of this bill is to look at the whole way in which billing practices are in fact conducted. It would be nice, and I have made the suggestion in the past, that we have to look even broader than that, that there are other ways in which we can be paying health care workers, in particular our doctors and more importantly through the expansion of a nurse practitioner to the extent of actually having a certifying body.

There is the whole concept of salaried positions, both for doctors and this new classification of a nurse practitioner, that I believe would go a long way in dealing with what is being hoped to be achieved in this particular bill, and that is trying to insist on more accountability of those scarce public dollars that are going towards health care.

To that end, Madam Speaker, I would hope and trust that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has taken questions in particular that we in the Liberal Party have put forward to the government regarding the expansion or certification, if you like, of the nurse practitioner, because ultimately we believe that that initiative in itself will do a lot more than this particular piece of legislation.

We owe it in terms of investigating irregular billing practices, but it is important to note where there might be reasons to believe that something has gone wrong with the way in which a particular clinic or a doctor might be, in some cases, and we are looking more at the exception obviously than anything else, or there is a mistake that is made in good faith or by accident, I should say, not in good faith. So the principle of this particular bill is something which we support and we do want to be able to see go to committee.

When we talk about freeing up, in particular the boards and the committees that the government is proposing to do in terms of liability, again, we have to rely very heavily on these boards and committees in performing. The best way we can ensure that they are performing to their best is to give them the assurances that the legislation is there to protect their best interests on the condition, of course, that they are conducting themselves in a way that is responsible and in good faith.

There are numerous committees that are out there. In fact, we just had a committee that was fairly recently announced in terms of its activities.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will have 34 minutes remaining.

* (1600)

The hour being 4 p.m., as previously agreed, time for private members' hour.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 201—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), Bill 201, (The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie), standing

in the name of the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 204—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (2)

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), (Bill 204, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Second Readings, Public Bills. Bill 205, The Health Care Records Act. Bill 208, The Elections Amendment Act.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 31—Highways in Northern Manitoba

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), the following resolution.

WHEREAS under previous NDP governments the percentage of highway funds spent in northern Manitoba ranged on average from 15 percent to 20 percent of the budget; and

WHEREAS under the current provincial government the percentage was dropped immediately to 11 percent, and has now been cut further to less than 6 percent in 1995; and

WHEREAS in 1993, the RCMP issued a press release warning drivers that the condition of Provincial

Highway 384 had caused one accident and was not safe; and

WHEREAS a Department of Highways official said the road needed major work but that there was no money in the budget for essential clay capping, a problem that is common for roads in northern Manitoba; and

WHEREAS in 1994 the Highways budget for the North was cut to less than \$5 million but the total budget was increased to \$109 million; and

WHEREAS highways in northern Manitoba have deteriorated greatly due to the cuts of the last six years, and petitions from residents and the NDP over the cuts to northern Manitoba roads such as PH 384, PH 391 and the Cross Lake and Norway House roads have been consistently ignored by the provincial government; and

WHEREAS the poor condition of PH 391 is so serious that the RCMP frequently has to escort the Leaf Rapids Hospital ambulance when it travels on PH 391; and

WHEREAS the cuts to the North have hurt tourism, are driving up costs of goods in the North, and are causing many accidents.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) to consider increasing the percentage of highway spending in northern Manitoba to 25 percent for the year 1995 and to restore northern roads as an urgent priority.

Motion presented.

Mr. Jennissen: Madam Speaker, I am glad to rise to speak to this resolution today, but I do so also with a certain sense of impatience and urgency. This sense of impatience and urgency is a reflection of what virtually all northerners feel. Virtually all northerners are unhappy with the conditions of many northern roads, especially gravel roads in the springtime. We are not talking about washboard, minor ruts, dust, flying stones and other inconveniences. We are talking about road

conditions that threaten life and limb. We are talking about road conditions that at times are so hazardous that accidents are unavoidable, and apart from the high cost for repairing damaged vehicles, there is a much higher cost for lost lives or damaged lives. Cars and trucks can be replaced, but human lives cannot.

There are already enough costs attached to living in the north, an area we as northerners love passionately, without having to pay extra penalties. We are already paying more for food, gasoline and hydro than southern Manitobans pay and substandard roads further force northerners to pay fortunes each year for tires, mufflers and windshields. Sometimes, usually in the spring, some of these roads such as Provincial Road 391 to Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake and Provincial Road 373 to Norway House and Cross Lake are impassable. Trucks break axles, cars have to be towed through boggy sections. Police cars have to escort ambulances, and there have been accidents, broken bones, injured spines and lost lives. Almost every northerner knows someone who has been hurt or killed on PR391 or public road 373 or public road 384 to Moose Lake or on the narrow twisting road to Sherridon and Cold Lake.

Take for example the Sherridon Cold Lake road. It is in a stretch of 80 kilometres that there are over 200 sharp turns. The road is narrow and frequently used by pulp trucks, that is, trucks hauling huge loads of logs. In many places there are no ditches, just sheer rock sides or steep drops. Also there are long stretches where the sides of the roads have not had the brush removed, and it is very easy to collide with a moose because drivers cannot see an animal until it steps right onto the road.

In the last few years there have been major accidents on this stretch of road. The mayor of Sherridon Cold Lake was badly injured on this road. The Metis leader Edward Head and members of his family were badly hurt on this road as well. There was one fatality, and the same sad statistics hold true for other northern roads. Northerners have complained about their roads but the complaints have largely fallen on deaf ears.

Northern MLAs constantly raise the issue of substandard poorly funded roads in northern Manitoba.

The chambers of commerce in most northern towns and cities have written letters to the minister voicing concerns. Certainly the chambers of commerce in Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake have done so. Many northern residents have written letters to the minister protesting the condition of the roads. Residents from South Indian Lake, Norway House, Moose Lake, Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake, and so on.

Northern newspapers consistently write editorials about the government's lack of sensitivity to the roads issue. There have been protests, there have been pickets set up.

Let us make no bones about it, transportation is key to our survival in northern Manitoba. Residents from South Indian Lake, from Moose Lake, from Sherridon, must drive a long way over bad roads in order to see a doctor, have their eyes checked, or pick up a prescription. It is not just a matter of driving across town or driving a few kilometres on good roads.

A person from Lynn Lake who needs to see a specialist in Thompson, if one is even available, has to drive at least three hours one way if the road is passable, much longer if the road is almost impassable. If the same person needed to keep a doctor's appointment in Winnipeg, well, the distance between Winnipeg and Lynn Lake is over 1,000 kilometres.

Now, all of us have heard the economic argument: there is only so much money available. It is not that we are unsympathetic to that argument, but I would like to point out what I consider to be weaknesses or flaws in the argument that is based solely on a Winnipeg and southern Manitoba view of economics because that view is very simplistic. It goes something like this: There are limited funds, we find out which roads are travelled most, which are in the worst shape, we prioritize, we fix. That may be impeccable logic in Winnipeg, but it does not fit the northern reality.

Here are the three weaknesses of that argument. First of all, if you use population, if you use a number of people travelling a road as a basis for judging which road gets repaired and which road does not, you are discriminating against a region. Obviously, 6 percent of the population cannot compete with 94 percent of

the population. Very often the reason we are not travelling on those roads and cannot be counted is because the roads are not capable of being travelled on.

There are not as many of us on northern roads, but those roads are much more important to us. Those roads, those highways, are often our lifelines, whether it means seeing a doctor or fleeing from a forest fire. We would like to see criteria built on need, northern criteria, and the same holds true for funding northern schools and hospitals.

Secondly, there seems to be an unstated assumption in Winnipeg, the place that we up north call Perimeterville, that the northern area, and often rural areas as well, that these areas are asking for special favours, that we are looking for handouts.

The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) stated this position clearly when he wrote to the Thompson Citizen in July of 1994—and I am paraphrasing—he said that northern residents believe that the Manitoba government is picking on them. That is what the minister said. Now the minister was referring to health care, but the same thing applies to highway construction and maintenance in northern Manitoba.

It is not that we are whining or petulantly repeating that the government is picking on us, we actually believe it is picking on us. It is picking on us. We are not asking special favours, we are asking the government generally and the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay) specifically to set aside the biased notion that 6 percent, or perhaps today it is 5 percent of the population deserves only 6 percent or 5 percent or less of the Highways budget.

* (1610)

Despite the huge stretches of roads, despite the sparse population, the North supplies enormous wealth to the south, and that is a fact that is conveniently overlooked quite often. Hundreds of millions of dollars worth of hydro power flows south every year. Tens of millions of dollars flow south in the form of mineral wealth, gold, copper, zinc; tens of millions of dollars flow south in the form of lumber, pulp, fish, fur. Northerners pay taxes, high taxes. The northern tourist

potential, hardly even tapped, which is partially due to bad roads, provides not only jobs, but generates millions of dollars of revenue for this government.

Northerners are only asking for a fair share, a fair return for the immense wealth that the North provides for this province, the wealth that the south pulls to itself. We do not want handouts, we just want a fair share.

The third argument, or the third fallacy: One of the great fallacies under which this government labours is the belief that a road is a road, that all roads are more or less equal, that a bad stretch of southern road is roughly the same as a bad stretch of northern road. I do not buy that and northerners do not.

Allow me to clarify this. In many northern communities, there is either no road or one road. In many southern communities, there are several roads; you have a choice. You can always detour. You can use a different road if you need to. In northern Manitoba, that is not the case. There are only two ways you can get out of Flin Flon and go north or south. There are at least eight roads out of Brandon. There are at least a dozen roads out of Winnipeg, and, in fact, if you take the map of Manitoba and randomly look at the south, you will find some places such as Elm Creek, four ways out of town, Winkler, four roads leading out of town, but there is only one way out of town for such communities as Lynn Lake, South Indian Lake, Norway House, Cross Lake, Snow Lake, Sherridon, Cold Lake, Nelson House and Moose Lake. There are no choices for those communities regarding roads.

That is why it is vital to keep that one lifeline open, to keep it in good shape. It is simply not acceptable to equate southern roads with northern roads. If you do that, you are comparing apples and oranges. So I reject the arguments that are based purely on population or on the fact that we are getting special treatment, because I do not believe we are, or the mistaken belief over there that all roads are equal. I reject those three assumptions or fallacies.

Now the minister himself admits that northern roads are in bad shape. In fact, in one of his letters dated

June 14, 1995, he refers to PR391 in the following terms: unreliable road conditions and actual road closures, and he is right. I would argue then that the minister has a responsibility to make those road conditions reliable to prevent road closures.

Indeed, some repairs, some fixing is taking place, and for that all northerners are thankful and I do thank the minister, but it is too little coming too late.

The minister often points out that northern roads, particularly PR391, were built to rough pioneering standards; they were built in a hurry. There is some truth to that, but that does not mean that we should sit idly by and only do the minimum.

That begs the question, what happened the last seven years? In the last seven years, this government could have been much more aggressive in improving northern highways, and when this government finally does do a little paving in the North, it always seems to result in a minor catastrophe. Well, at least it did this summer in Wabowden, and perhaps it is unfair to point out that one example, but our cynics, our critics up North say that the Filmon government is so unused to paving roads in northern Manitoba that the one time they do it they screw up, because they have not had any practice. It is hard to believe—[interjection] It is hard to believe there is not—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Jennissen: It is hard to believe there is not some ideological basis—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Jennissen: I will try that for the fourth time, Madam Speaker, thank you. Practice makes perfect.

It is hard to believe there is not some ideological basis for not wanting to improve northern roads. As my esteemed colleague from The Pas has pointed out on numerous occasions, this government will build roads, pave roads for ducks in the south but not for humans in the North. Certainly the statistics are disturbing to us northerners. The allocation appears very one-sided.

Let us compare two years a decade apart. In the years 1981-82, under the NDP, the northern Manitoba capital projects road budget was \$21,464,090.06, roughly \$21.5 million. The provincial total was \$97,950,255.67. Madam Speaker, the highway construction expenditure for northern Manitoba that year was 21.9 percent of the provincial total, roughly 22 percent. Now, look exactly a decade later, 10 years later, in 1991-92 under the Tories. The percentage allocation was 5.7 percent, according to my figures, and why should anyone question my figures?

An Honourable Member: Did you say '82-83?

Mr. Jennissen: I said 1981-82 and '91-92.

That low allocation has been more or less maintained since 1991-92. How do northerners react to this? They think it is unfair. They are fully aware that funding for a northern highways project is only one-quarter of the historical norm. They feel that blatant favouritism is being shown, that southern Tory constituencies are much more likely to have highways built and repaired than northern NDP constituencies, and they sometimes feel that is done as retribution for voting the right way, from my point of view, and the wrong way from the members opposite.

What irks northerners most is that some of the southern highways are being twinned or paved or upgraded when there was no obvious serious need to do so at the present time, whereas the area of greatest need was being more or less ignored in northern Manitoba. Southern inconveniences are being addressed while northern emergencies are being virtually ignored. That is why the residents of Nelson House protested last summer. To the government's credit, a portion of PR391 has been resurfaced, and I thank the minister for that. It is not enough. We are tired of protesting, of writing letters, of pleading with the minister and his government.

We ask the minister to escalate highway construction in northern Manitoba, and we specifically point out highways and roads that are in most urgent need of upgrading, PR391 from Thompson to Lynn Lake and the South Bay road to South Indian Lake, PR373 to Norway House, PR374 to Cross Lake, PR384 to Moose

Lake, and the Cold Lake-Sherridon Road. We realize that this will require a much larger allocation than what is presently budgeted for. To make up for the lost years, years of neglect, this resolution urges the Minister of Highways and Transportation to consider increasing the percentage of Highways spending in northern Manitoba to 25 percent of the budget.

Let me finish by saying every year this province benefits from our hydro power. Northern hydro power generates hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for this province every year, each year. Is it too much to ask that the North, whose hydro power makes your electronic highway possible, should ask this government, this minister to give the North a few decent, well-maintained, ordinary gravel highways? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for an opportunity to comment. I respect that the member, in all honesty, comes here because he genuinely believes the mission that he is on, that he wants more money spent in the North. He did not identify any particular roads or any particular areas that there is very urgent, urgent need.

An Honourable Member: We just want our fair share. That is all.

Mr. Findlay: Okay, fair share, but I also want the truth on the record now, for the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin).

The member talks about, and I go back to his resolution that the NDP government spent 15 to 20 percent of the budget. Well, let me give the member the actual figures that were spent, the real numbers. In the six years from '82-83, which was the first year the NDP was in government where they had a Highways budget, to 1987-88, and these are the numbers that the department brings forward because they are the truth. They vary from 15.2, 12.5, 13.9, and, yes, they got all the way up to 18.2—they actually got into that range once—11.7, and 10.5. Now I say six years, if you add that up and you divide it by six, pretty simple arithmetic, it is 13.6.

* (1620)

I asked the member when he was giving the information, he said 22 percent, 21.5 million, 97.5 in total budget. I asked him what year; he said '81-82. Guess who was in government in '81-82? The Tories were in government in '81-82 because the highway construction is done in the summer and the election was November 1981. So guess who was in government? Guess who was in government? The Tories. The member should stick to the truth.

I can listen to any legitimate argument that is based on need and fairness, but, for gosh sakes, let us talk the truth, the facts, and do your homework to be sure you know what you are talking about.

In this past year, we spent considerably more because of road conditions based on weather. Yes, there were problems. There have been problems all over the province. When I hear the words, I want my fair share, I need more, I hear that from 205 municipalities throughout this province—R.M.s, LGDs, north and south. North and south.

I would ask the member for The Pas to go out and drive on some of the PR roads—

An Honourable Member: I have.

Mr. Findlay: Where have you been?

An Honourable Member: All the roads are in southern Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate between two members. This is the time for individual private members to have the right to put their comments on the record when they are recognized in appropriate speaking order.

Mr. Findlay: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In '95-96, we spent 7.5 percent of the capital budget up there. In the spring program, 14 percent was dedicated to the North. Madam Speaker, 5.2 percent of the actual miles travelled in this province are travelled

in that region, and we spend 17.4 percent of the maintenance budget.

Now, if I told those numbers to the number of R.M.s I will meet next month in Brandon at the annual UMM, they would be upset, saying that is unfair, special treatment for the North.

An Honourable Member: When did you pave the . . . to the highway?

Mr. Findlay: We have representation—

Point of Order

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member for The Pas makes accusations from his seat. Let him put that false information on the record, because his accusations are untrue.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order, I did not hear the comments from the honourable member for The Pas and I can only rule on what is on the record.

I would also like to remind the honourable minister to pick and choose his words carefully. "False" is a word that many people have been cautioned about the usage of.

* * *

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, the reality of the economic—[interjection] The member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) can speak after I am done; I should be done about 4:30.

Madam Speaker, the reality of the economic circumstances—we are talking about a bill to strike home right here. This is where the rubber hits the road. The NDP government in six years ran up a deficit of \$3 billion. That is a bill they left unpaid. Every year the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has to spend \$300-million interest on NDP debt that was not paid.

Madam Speaker, as members speak from their seats, that could mean \$100 million for education, which they are constantly yelling for; it could mean \$100 million

for health, which they are calling for; it could mean \$100 million for highways that the North wants spent. But they spent the money in the past, ignored the fact they did not have the revenue. You cannot run your household like that. You cannot run the government like that. That is where the rubber hits the road of the failed social policies—[interjection]

The member does not want to accept the reality that exists. If she wants to go back through the budgets of the NDP years and total up the income, total up the expenditure—[interjection] Madam Speaker, she can speak at a quarter to five if she would like.

Total up the incomes, total up the expenditures, you will find a gap of \$3 billion. That, at 10 percent interest, which is about the going rate, comes up to \$300 million a year. Would we not all like to have that to look after today's needs? I do not think there is any untruth in that at all. I need it for highways for all of Manitoba desperately. [interjection]

See, Madam Speaker, the members bring a serious resolution here, but they think it is a fun thing. [interjection] You are laughing at every moment.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I was not laughing at the issue; I was laughing at the incompetence of this Minister of Highways.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson does not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Now, I recognize this is a very important issue, and most members will have an opportunity to speak to it if all members cooperate and allow the member that has the floor to finish his remarks.

Mr. Findlay: Now ladies and gentlemen, we all understand that there is need, there is need everywhere,

there is need in the North. I know there is one road in and one road out of the communities. The department, through maintenance and capital construction, is working hard, has worked hard, to be sure to meet the needs of the North. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) did recognize some projects were done, but he failed to recognize the number of projects.

I would just like to tell him the projects that were done in '95-96: Highway 6, a complete grade widening of 24.8 kilometres; Highway 380, spot grade and drainage improvements, completed; on PR 280-290, grade improvements and pavement, completed; PR 373, grading and granular base, it is complete. There are several projects on 391, base and AST, gravel, grade improvements. On it goes to the tune of \$7.2 million and three seal coating projects. It is major money spent. I think that the people who drive on those roads, on these projects, realize the improvement. More projects are scheduled in the program for next year and the year after.

Madam Speaker, I want the member to know that this government serves all of Manitoba. I have discussions with a lot of different levels of government, with PRs, towns, villages, R.M.s, and they all want more, but they realize that we must live within our means. There is no other way; we cannot spend money that we do not have today as was done during the NDP years. That kind of philosophy of governing is over.

Madam Speaker, we spent in the vicinity of \$100 million to \$110 million in our years in government. The NDP in their years of government were lucky to spend \$85 million a year on highways. So who has put the greatest effort in in terms of highways for Manitoba? I think this government has done an exceedingly good effort.

He also fails to recognize Hydro put a lot of money into northern roads in the mid-'80 years. They are not able to do it now.

Another issue that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) would be, I think, intelligent to bring to the House, and that is that the federal government, which collects all kinds of tax revenue out a highway system, puts nothing back and nobody says anything about it.

We try. The minister previous, from 1988, developed the national highway program. This was the lead province. All provinces were in tune; everything was ready to go, and the federal government kept saying maybe, no, not yet, we are not ready. Last year, about this time, we got the federal minister at least to commit that he would make a yes or a no by December 15.

I committed that I would get all the provinces' money commitments on the table. We got \$2.7 billion of commitment over the next five years from nine out of the 10 provinces, only Quebec was not ready to say anything yet for obvious reasons. The federal government said, we did not have our commitments up front. We all had it on letter, five-year projections of what we would spend, all we asked them to do was match it in any fashion.

The federal government collects out of our national highway system between \$4 and \$5 billion a year in excise tax. In Manitoba, our users of the highways—

An Honourable Member: Billion, right?

Mr. Findlay: Billion, yes, \$2.5 billion. The taxpayers in Manitoba contribute to the federal treasury about \$180 million a year in taxes, and they do not send any money back after the SHIP is over this year, will not be sending any money back to the road network of Manitoba.

* (1630)

The provincial government—[interjection] Now, that is a third, a third, a third. I would love them to do that with the provincial roads. We put \$100 million in and the federal government puts zero. I would like a third, a third, a third with them. The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) might take that message back. It is time to come to the table and be equal in our expenditures. [interjection] Infrastructure was sewer, roads, municipal projects. [interjection] In the infrastructure program, a third, a third, a third.

I like that principle and we have advocated to the federal government infrastructure 2. We are prepared to go 50-50 because we cannot ask the municipalities

to contribute to our provincial roads. They can go 50-50 any day. Our 50 cents is there; our \$50 million is there; our hundred million is there. Just come and match it. We are ready. They collect out of this system more in taxes than we do.

Madam Speaker, I recognize, as I have already said, what the member is saying, and we try to meet the needs as best we can. We are trying to meet them in terms of having jobs in the province and convenient travel, safe travel, but we always must talk about the truth, what in reality is going on out there. We must not stretch it to try to make political points because nobody gains.

If we are going to go after political points, let us go after the federal government. Why does the member not bring forth a resolution that says, we should ask the federal government to pay a "fair share," which are the words I heard often today, towards the highway network of this country.

The Premiers have been on this agenda, Ministers of Highways have been on this agenda since 1988. The federal government, because nobody really gets together and says we must work solidly, they get away with saying no.

But the member for Inkster, yes, infrastructure 2. Highways across this country would be a tremendous investment because the federal government, in terms of taxes paid at any job, gets \$2 to a province's \$1. They always get their money back—always.

But, Madam Speaker, so far they have not done it, and for the members from the North, they may say, well, the National Highways Program is only Highways 1, 16, 75 and the Perimeter. Well, if we as a province have to spend less money on those roads, we have more available for the North—that is absolutely what would happen—and more available for all the secondary road networks of this province wherever.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I also thank the member for bringing it to the House because it gives us a chance to talk about the reality of what is going on and maybe the initiatives we should be on.

Committee Change

Madam Speaker: Order, please. May I quickly recognize the honourable member for Gimli with committee changes.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) for the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, two things I want to say right off the start, and that is when I get up to raise issues, issues that were brought to me by the people that I represent in the communities of Cross Lake, Norway House, Moose Lake, Easterville, Grand Rapids, when I get up to raise those issues I am not here to grandstand. I am not here to score political points. I am merely trying to do my job, just as I am sure the minister tries to do his job whenever he comes into this Chamber and throughout the week that he does his work as Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Secondly, I want to invite the Minister of Highways and Transportation—because he seems to have a different understanding of what fairness is all about. He seems to have a different understanding of what the reality is in terms of the way that resources are allocated in this province by this government.

So, therefore, if he lacks that understanding, I will invite him to travel with me from Ponton to Cross Lake and Norway House, especially right now. The former Minister of Highways, some year and a half ago, drove from Ponton to Cross Lake, and I was told by the members of Cross Lake First Nation that when he arrived in Cross Lake, his car was just covered with mud; you could not recognize what kind of a vehicle he was driving. Apparently, when he got out from his car finally, after he recovered somewhat, made an announcement to people like Ernest Monias: I am ashamed; I am ashamed of that road.

An Honourable Member: I do not know whether I said it that way.

Mr. Lathlin: That is what the people from Cross Lake told me, and I believe them.

Now, there are two things. I am not here to score political points; I am here to represent those people who elected me into this office, but I also invite the Minister of Highways and Transportation to put his money where his mouth is. Come with me, travel from Ponton to Cross Lake and see for himself what conditions those roads are in. We are not exaggerating; we are not making light of the situation. We are very serious. It is a serious situation. The minister knows full well that in some cases it is a life and death situation. The RCMP, from time to time, advise people not to travel the roads because of the fact they present too much danger, that their lives will be in danger if they were to travel.

The minister knows, too, that in some cases RCMP have had to escort ambulances coming from Nelson House to Thompson. So it is not a joke; it is not a light matter. We are serious.

Madam Speaker, it is a well-known fact that this Filmon government has abandoned, in our minds, northern Manitoba's highways. Some may wonder why. Others simply accept it as an attitudinal thing on the part of ministers who come mainly from the south of Manitoba. Northerners do not understand how this government can justify a reduction of Highways expenditures in the North, and it is a reduction, no matter how the minister puts his numbers across. Northerners know that the North is receiving little or no support as far as the Department of Highways is concerned. They are also aware how much more money used to be spent in the North, contrary to what the Minister of Highways is trying to portray.

The previous government, in seven years—how much has this government spent on highways and transportation in the North? How much money have you spent in the North during your term, during the term that your government has been in office, how much? Okay? Then compare. For example, northerners recognize that the 15-year period that the

minister talks about, they recognize that money was spent. There was enough money spent, \$13 million, \$14 million, almost triple the amount this government has spent during the last three years in northern Manitoba. Northerners know that. Northerners know and recognize that their roads at one time were in better condition than they are now. They know that. They also know that the province's overall Highways budget at the time was averaging out at \$92 million.

* (1640)

However, looking at the last five years, northerners have also seen the Filmon government increase the overall budget to average about \$104 million, while at the same time reducing the North's portion to an average of \$6 million. The Minister of Highways and Transportation says the North is receiving a proportionate amount of the Highways budget based on a population count.

Madam Speaker, that is absolute nonsense, and the minister knows that. Frankly, the minister's answer does not wash with anyone living in the North. It does not. The fact is that the North has traditionally received much more money from the province. Northerners know that they used to get their fair share of the Highways budget and as a result of their getting their fair share of the Highways budget, were able to enjoy better road conditions. Since then, however, the roads have deteriorated to the point where they have become health and safety hazards. It is not safe to travel on them. So how can the minister say that he is treating the North fairly? How many roads can the minister identify in southern Manitoba that are like the one that goes from Ponton to Cross Lake to Norway House?

I challenge him to show me a road in southern Manitoba, because I do a bit of travelling down south when I am down here, to go to different meetings and stuff like that. Every time I go somewhere I have yet to run across a road that is similar in condition to the one that I travel on every time I go to Cross Lake from Ponton.

Madam Speaker, the minister also knows that from time to time constituents sign petitions, they write

letters, they write letters to the editor, they write letters to this government. Delegations come in from time to time. The minister is also aware that in one case a constituent of mine went so far as to blame this government for the loss of life of an Anglican priest serving in the community of Cross Lake, and the minister can sit there and laugh and ridicule and say we are trying to score political points.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I have sat here for 10 minutes listening intently to that member and then he says "the minister can sit there and laugh and ridicule." I have sat here consistently for 10 minutes to listen to him make legitimate points. I would ask him to withdraw that comment.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order, I did not hear the comments made by the honourable member for The Pas. I will take it under advisement. I will review Hansard and, if necessary, report back to the House.

* * *

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, the roads in the North are continuing to receive the same level of attention or, should I say, lack of attention, because this government is choosing to ignore the welfare of the North.

Another example of this could be the government's negotiations with Norwin. We are told that Norwin will have to accept a cut in funds available to them. We are told that, if they do not accept this budget shrinkage that the government is giving them, the project will be tendered out. We saw what last year's government action did in respect to Norwin being forced to take less. The winter roads in some dozen remote communities were not open for as long as they were in past years.

Northerners are telling me that this government does not care what happens to the North, and that makes perfectly good sense to me, because I remember right after I was elected for the first time, I sat here and I listened to the then-Minister of Northern Affairs saying

to the Chamber, it is too bad that the North did not know how to vote. Do you know what, Madam Speaker? Because I knew the minister before, it saddened me to hear the minister utter those words then. It made me sad because I thought I knew the minister better. Then I started to realize that that attitude, those words were clearly reflective of this government's attitude as far as the North is concerned. Since then, I have been able to reconcile those statements made by the minister and the attitude that this government displays whenever they are dealing with northern issues.

Madam Speaker, of course, the then-Minister of Northern Affairs would have said those things because he meant them. It was not a joke.

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

The other thing that I wanted to mention before I sit down is this government is fully aware that it is much more expensive to live in the North. Food, services, gas, et cetera, are all more costly. The Minister of Highways's own admission of equality for the North does not take into account those increased costs which all northerners have to experience. He is therefore openly admitting that he is being unfair to the North as far as the Highways budget is concerned.

Northerners know that. I know that. They live with this knowledge every day. We live with that every day. Their cars break down. You know, the minister travels the paved highways in the south, purchases a vehicle, probably has it for 10, 15 years, because that is how long it lasts because the roads are good. If he were to live in Cross Lake, that same car would not last two years because of the conditions that you would have to travel if you were coming from Cross Lake to Winnipeg. It is expensive.

As I said earlier, the RCMP have, from time to time, closed roads because of the safety and health hazards that they present, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am going to stop there for now, but I do want to say that northerners, many tourists, my colleagues and I all know that there are some very, very serious problems

in the way that the highways budget is being administered by this government.

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) in his private member's resolution is seeking to address this problem. The resolution seeks to bring true equality to the North. I urge all members of this House to take seriously and not make light of the poor conditions of northern roads, with a view to ensuring that the North for once is treated with equality.

As I have previously stated in this House, the North only wants what is fair and just, nothing more, nothing less. We just want what is fair. Northerners just want those things that you people in the south here take for granted every day. Northerners do not want to be alienated anymore and shut out from the family, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Northerners want to feel that they are a part of Manitoba. Northerners want to feel that they are citizens of Manitoba whether they live in Cross Lake, Nelson House or in Winnipeg, and they want to be treated as such by this government. Thank you.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I like these kinds of resolutions. I think it is good that we have a chance to sort of express some views on issues that are very important. I certainly do not criticize the members opposite for bringing forward and lobbying on behalf of their constituencies out there. This is a very common thing in the Department of Highways. I, having been the Minister of Highways and Transportation for five and a half years, feel that criticism is directed more at me possibly than even the present Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay).

* (1650)

But I would like to take and use this opportunity to caution some of the new members who come in here from time to time, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) who I have respect for, as I do for most members in the House, but would caution them not to get too carried away with some of the statistics that he perceives that he has, because everybody can play with figures the way they want to. I do not want to spend

too much time going into the figures end of it, but I just want to give him an illustration.

In 1982-83, which was basically at the time when the Sterling Lyon administration had been defeated by the Pawley government—but what happens usually when you have a change of government, the budgets that have been prepared previously sort of carry through because the process is there. So that 1982-83 budget which basically was just shy, just a smidgen shy of \$100 million, that was basically the Conservative budget that was brought forward at that time, and the high figure—if we take the last 13 budgets—the highest figure spent in the North was done under a Conservative budget. [interjection] Yes, it was. In '82-83 it was our budget and it was 15.2 percent.

But then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what happened under the Pawley administration, each year they cut the highway program more and more. Revenues kept going up. They prioritized differently. It was in 1986-87 when we hit the all-time low of \$84 million being spent on highway construction. That was under the NDP administration, and 11.7 percent was spent up North.

During my administration in 1988, when I took over, we spent higher percentages than that in the North every year—

An Honourable Member: What about '81, '82, '83, '84, '85?

Mr. Driedger: No, no, I am taking from what I have here. Yes, for the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I just clarified. I say that only it really does not matter that much; it does not really matter that much. I am just cautioning the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), do not get too carried away with figures because they come around and everybody plays with them whichever way they want.

But I have to tell you that since 1988, at the time when our government took over again, we have fought up from a budget of \$87 million. We got it up to \$92 million, and then out of the next six budgets there was only one year where it was under \$100 million.

I argued all the time, desperately, as my colleague has as well, that roads are the economic lifeline in the province. We need to have good transportation. We have fought hard with the federal government, appealing: Stay out of putting gas taxes on; let the provinces do that so that we could generate revenues for the roads. It never worked; it never worked. But, by comparison with other provinces, we have kept our budget up there. Saskatchewan cut the living dickens out of their budget. They were down to a capital program of around \$60-some-odd million at one time. Unbelievable, and they had a higher capital at one time than we did. So it was a matter of how governments prioritized.

I always felt we should have put more priority on highway construction than we did, but the government of the day at that time and to this day always felt Health, Education, Family Services, the social programs, by and large, the ones that affect everybody, should have higher priority and money was channelled there. We managed to maintain that level, but I will tell you something, it was very difficult.

For members to criticize the government—I do not think it is wrong to lobby, but be careful when you criticize and say that these things have not been taken care of. I took the liberty—when I was the Minister of Highways and Transportation, I was lobbied and challenged as the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) challenged the present minister: Come and have a look. In August 1993, I took the challenge. I did even before that. I travelled with some people from Lynn Lake all the way to Thompson. The fellow that was driving me was driving a big Chrysler—[interjection] No, we were on a tour at that time, and he insisted on hitting every pothole. After miles of this, I said, you know what, Bill, you do not have to hit every pothole. I can see where there are holes. You do not have to ruin your car. We sort of got there to Thompson ultimately safely, too.

Then, in 1993, I took the liberty and did a tour up North. Again, people challenged me: Come and see how bad the roads are. I had the privilege of travelling most of the roads. I did that time. We travelled up to Ponton and from Ponton down to Norway House and the Cross Lake road. It happened to be a rainy day. I

did not choose very wisely. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they make fun of the trip I had up there. It was wild because the first stretch of road was very slick. It was not that the road was soft; it was just grease. It was raining, and I had a blue car. That is right, you could not tell the colour really by the time I got down to Cross Lake. Everybody had some fun with that.

But I have to also say that from the junction of Norway House and Cross Lake, that stretch going to Norway House was relatively a good road. For a gravel road, it was a good quality road. From that corner going into Cross Lake, there were stretches that were bad. They needed gravel, they needed work. I do not deny that.

Then from there we travelled all the way across to The Pas and then we drove into Moose Lake because the chief and the mayor of the community had called and said, you know, you cannot travel on this road.

I and my assistant travelled down there, and that is why I want to caution a little bit when people say, come and travel the roads. We did, and that road was actually, at that time, in better shape than many of the roads in the south. They were, yes.

An Honourable Member: Not the Cross Lake road.

Mr. Driedger: I did not say Cross Lake, I said the road to Moose Lake. For members, just to put it in the right perspective, they say, you know, do not make fun, it is dangerous. I want to tell you what dangerous is. You try driving Highway 59 from Ile des Chenes to Winnipeg in the morning during rush hour, or in the evening, because nobody even stops when they come off the side roads because you cannot get into the traffic. They peel onto the shoulder and start squirting gravel until they finally find an opening to get in.

Do not talk to me about danger because there is danger on all kinds of roads. You know we all have compassion, and it always hurt me when anybody got killed on highways because some people invariably always say it is the government's fault, it is the Department of Highways' fault, we should sue them. This is not an unusual thing.

If you want to talk about roads and compare roads, and you want to talk about cost spent on roads, let us compare because I have been there and I will tell you something. You have preferences, everybody has preferences, and decisions are not made on political decisions necessarily. We have a system in place in the department. [interjection] Just a minute. There is a system in place. Every highway is graded, and if you want to go on Highway 52 in my constituency, it has the poorest grading of a PTH in the province—am I right?—so do not talk to me about these kind of things. You stand here and you criticize and you say, oh, it is picking on the North. Bull, bull, it is not. That is not right at all.

I just happen to travel, every summer I travel north. I love the North. I love to travel in the North, and I can tell you your parks in the North are better than ours in the south, and your roads are not that much worse than most of the roads in the south. I will tell you something, based on traffic on these roads—[interjection] Well, this is the truth and if you do not like it, find out for yourself. I did. Do not challenge me about travelling. I have done it, and I do it every year up north. I am a hunter and a fisherman, and I love to travel out there. I will tell you something, drive these roads. I will take you out to the roads in the south portion of the province.

There is nothing wrong with lobbying. There are over 200 municipalities and LGDs that lobby for roads. Every town lobbies for their roads in town to be done. The City of Winnipeg lobbies the Minister of Highways for cost-sharing. We have done that as well.

The City of Brandon, the City of Portage, the by-passes, everybody lobbies the Minister of Highways and Transportation. It is very difficult to take and prioritize things, and if you think the decisions are all made on a political basis, it does not work that way. You think they are made that way; they are not. I will tell you something, and I will compare—

An Honourable Member: Look at the facts, Albert.

Mr. Driedger: Well, look at the facts. I will tell you—some of facts were put on the table.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am really having difficulty hearing the honourable minister's presentation. I would really appreciate it if he would be given the opportunity to continue.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am trying to speak loudly on this so you can hear me because it is important. But I would suggest that instead of being as critical as they are of the province here that they should take and combine with us to put pressure on the federal government who have a moral obligation to take and participate financially in these things.

I shamed the federal government when Jake Epp was my MP, shamed them into a SHIP agreement, Strategic Highway Improvement, and the only reason they participated with Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was because they had given the East money. They had not given us money and we got money. So we should work jointly with the federal government. We should take and push them together in terms of supporting that.

* (1700)

Lobby for your individual roads if you want, that is fine, but I think as far as the province's responsibility is concerned, that we should all work together to try and make the federal government accept the responsibility for a national highway program, which has always been my pet project and has been this government's pet project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., the first private members' hour is now complete. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have four minutes remaining.

The proposed resolution of the honourable member for Kildonan, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

Res. 32—Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale),

WHEREAS Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (also known as Chronic Fatigue and

Immune Dysfunction Syndrome, Fibromyalgia Syndrome) is a devastating illness for which there is no known cure or effective treatment, and for which the method of transmission of the disease is unknown; and

WHEREAS Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome strikes people of all age groups, including a growing number of children, but women between the ages of 25 and 40 are most at risk; and

WHEREAS recent biomedical research has identified Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome as a serious illness which affects a number of systems in the human body, including the immune system; and

WHEREAS the syndrome is characterized primarily by chronic debilitating pain, incapacitating fatigue and many influenza-like symptoms, and is often accompanied by a variety of cognitive dysfunctions; and

WHEREAS more serious and longer-lasting neurological impairments, including seizures, psychosis and dementia, have also been observed in some patients; and

WHEREAS the disease can produce extreme debilitation and prevent sufferers from working and other normal daily activities, leading to a severe decline in their quality of life; and

WHEREAS because so little is known about the disease, people with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome are often misdiagnosed and receive inadequate medical treatment; and

WHEREAS there is a need for education and training of health professionals regarding Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and increased public awareness of the disease; and

WHEREAS estimates indicate that approximately 5,000 to 7,000 may be infected; and

WHEREAS a number of groups and organizations and individuals, including the ME Support Network, and the Nightingale Research Foundation are asking for

treatment and education programs to combat this debilitating disease.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider developing education and treatment programs for the general public and health care professionals to deal with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: I welcome the opportunity of having a chance to debate in this Legislature a very significant health issue, health preventative issue, women's issue, children's issue and an issue that affects many, many Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for those members who may not be familiar with the disease, I just want to point out some of the aspects of this disease. This severe disease is characterized by muscle failure with marked fatigue, pain or exhaustion in the exercised muscle, inability to return to the normal state of mental and physical activity, marked variability and fluctuation of symptoms, major sleep disturbances, problems of dyslexia, memory loss, aphasia and severe malaise.

ME is a non-HIV acquired immune deficiency syndrome. It injures both the immune system and the central nervous system. This double injury allows the chronic viral infection and illnesses to take hold. Although some people recover, most individuals remain chronically ill or weakened. Others follow and relapsing occurs. Despite the fact that many ME patients may appear normal, their muscles and memory fail. Many are left in chronic pain. They have difficulty standing, reading and walking. They frequently lose or have to lose their occupation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to try to assist members of this Chamber in understanding this disease and this problem, I would like to read to you an abridged letter that I received a while ago from someone who is a sufferer, and I will just quote from this letter: Like many people with ME, I am relatively young, 32 and well educated. Before I became ill in 1987, I was the marketing director for a company, one of Canada's

leading presses, and I had a bright future ahead of me, but, for the last several years, I have lived on a combination of social assistance and CPP. I desperately want my old life and my old health back. I was lucky to find a knowledgeable physician quickly that many of the estimated 5,000 to 10,000 ME sufferers in Manitoba have spent years before finding a physician competent to diagnose their condition, and a lack of physicians who are trained to identify or understand this condition means that many others are still on their own, wondering why their lives are being taken from them.

Leaving aside the personal cost, the drain on the health care budget from the many physicians and specialists typically seen before the diagnosis is substantial, and because the length of time before diagnosis is a major risk for the condition becoming permanent, lack of knowledgeable treatment increases the cost to society of having so many who could be the most productive members of society permanently disabled. This is brought to my attention by an individual named Duncan Thornton.

We have spoken to many people about this disease, and one of the problems with it is that we encounter scepticism by friends, family and health care professionals. So little is known about the disease that people are often misdiagnosed and receive inadequate medical treatment. As I indicated earlier, it is estimated that 5,000 to 7,000 Manitobans with this disease are receiving care, and how many are not receiving care or are being misdiagnosed? This goes to the heart of this resolution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many support groups and individuals involved in support groups who have been lobbying for some time to have some form of formal recognition for this disease, and we in this legislative Chamber have a very unique opportunity during the course of this debate and this resolution to pass a resolution saying we recognize that this exists. There is no doubt that it does, and we recognize that a role must be played by the Department of Health in educating professionals and others and providing support and research to try to deal with this debilitating disease.

We have many resolutions of a great deal of importance that appear before us on a regular basis in private members' hour. Sometimes it is symbolic what we say and what we do, and sometimes it is quite significant. I believe that by members of this Chamber unanimously passing this resolution, we could go a long way towards helping those who suffer from the disease and helping those in the health care professions to better understand and to better deal with this debilitating disease.

This is not the first time we have brought this resolution forward. This is not the first time we have raised the issue in the Chamber. We have raised it during Question Period, and I dealt with this issue with the present Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) during the course of Estimates quite extensively. We had discussions about it in our attempts to try to enlighten and inform the Department of Health and others that something should and ought to be done about this disease, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, this disease has probably been with us for some time. It has only been recently that we have probably been able to isolate it and to try to deal with it, and therein lies one of the major problems. I wonder, as we advance in technology and as we advance in society and in science, if there is going to be a variety of ailments and diseases that have to be recognized and have to be dealt with, and there are many that come up regularly in Question Period in this Chamber.

We have to be able to adapt our health care system to recognize the reality of new diagnoses, new illnesses, new treatments and new forms of education, and this is one of those examples where we cannot be inflexible, we cannot sit back and say, no, this does not exist, we cannot sit back and say, no, we are not going to do anything because maybe two provinces out of the 10 are not doing anything about it. This is an opportunity, a unique opportunity, presented to us in Manitoba to do something positive and something concrete to assist those sufferers and all those potential sufferers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and help them with their disease.

We are not asking for millions and millions of dollars in research money to be put forward by the province.

We are not asking for hospital beds to be opened up to study. Our goals are not to spend substantial amounts of money. Our goals are quite modest but very significant. Our goals are to have the Chamber recognize the significance of this disease and to, within and throughout the Department of Health and through the Department of Health with health care professionals, have them come together to educate them better, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as to this type of disease. In fact, we will probably, by virtue of doing this, save money in the health care system, save costs, and of course more importantly and above all, save pain and needless suffering by many, many of our fellow Manitobans.

* (1710)

So this is not a political issue by any stretch of the imagination. It is not even controversial. It is well recognized and well documented, and there are many Manitobans who suffer from this illness today. All we are asking is for recognition and acknowledgement and support, and that is not, I do not think, too much to ask of the Department of Health and of the province in order to help, at minimum, the 5,000 to 7,000 chronic sufferers in the province of Manitoba.

Several months ago, I was door knocking in my constituency, and I returned to a house that I had been at previously. I met a woman who had been vibrant and dynamic and actively employed, and she was no longer vibrant, active or employed. I asked her what the problem was. She was suffering from this illness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it was a stark contrast from the woman whom I had remembered meeting approximately a year or a year and a half earlier in previous door knocking.

It very much brought home to me the significance of this illness by this encounter with this woman. I was shocked to see her condition, and when I discussed it with her, in some ways she was fortunate because she was in a situation where her health insurance plan was such that it recognized it and was paying for her long-term disability which she was under because of the disease. But there are many, many Manitobans, some of whom I have talked to, who are not so fortunate to have either health care plans that recognize it or to have

health care plans at all, insurance plans that is, that provide for disability and therefore they are caught.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the thrust of this particular resolution is to educate. It is to educate professionals and to educate those in the health care field to recognize and to be on guard and to diagnose as early as possible, in the early stages, these illnesses to prevent both deterioration of the individual and of their system as it relates to this disease, but also to lessen the impact on the health care system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have many opportunities to deal in this Chamber with a variety of issues. We have just come through a controversial Question Period where we have disagreed about a number of actions of the Department of Health. It is legitimate on all sides of this Chamber to have legitimate viewpoints on particular issues and to argue them. I do not think in this case we are in a situation where we can argue about the disease itself, the significance of the disease itself and the problems encountered by sufferers and those in the health care field in diagnosing and treating this illness.

We have an opportunity in this Chamber to move forward and to do something very positive in the health care field, to actually proceed from this resolution which will alert professionals, which will alert the health care department, which will assist those who are sufferers and members of support groups and say, yes, we recognize. We will lend you our support, what support we can lend you. We will try to do our part to improve your quality of life and to deal with this illness so that we can do as legislators our part, which is what we are elected to do, to try to improve the life and the quality of life for not only those suffering from the illnesses but their friends and families who must watch their loved ones deteriorate as the disease progresses, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, I have brought forward many resolutions, and I have been fortunate to have a number of them passed in this Chamber, some of them unanimously, and I thank all of my colleagues in the Legislature when they have done that and they have recognized the significance. I am asking all members of this Chamber, imploring all members in this Chamber, to take this

next step to recognize this illness, to do our part—it is modest, but it is significant—to educate and to try to provide some support to those in Manitoba who are suffering from this debilitating disease, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There is no ownership. There is no politics in this. It is a straight health issue; in fact, it is more than that. It is a human issue. It is something that we are elected in this Chamber to do, to try to better the lives of our fellow Manitobans. It is an opportunity for members of this Chamber to do something positive to assist our fellow Manitobans who are suffering from this, and I urge all members of this Chamber to look very carefully at this resolution, to recognize the significance it has on Manitobans, to look at what we are asking for. It is simply a recognition, an acknowledgment and an education component that will, in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, go a long way towards helping those Manitobans who are suffering from this disease and those potentially who will suffer from this disease in the future.

I urge all members of this Chamber to seriously consider this issue and to assist all the sufferers and to pass this resolution today, to pass it unanimously and to send a positive message to those 5,000 to 7,000 Manitobans and their families who are suffering from this.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this private members' hour to say thank you to the honourable member for Kildonan for raising the issue of chronic fatigue syndrome in our Legislature today. I do not think that issues like this get discussed as often as so many other issues of the day, as they sometimes tend to come and go; but, with respect to this particular matter, I think that a discussion like this today and any other consciousness-raising exercises with which we can become engaged help all of us and help the general public, too, because a debate in the Legislature of a province can have the effect of tending toward a greater level of public awareness about a matter like chronic fatigue syndrome.

So I say to the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) that he does a service when he raises an

issue like this. I am sure anyone who suffers from this syndrome would be able to speak more eloquently than I or even the honourable member for Kildonan to help create and promote an understanding of the kind of life people suffering from this syndrome have to live. So, on behalf of those people especially, I think that we should be pleased that this private members' hour part of our procedures offers us an opportunity to discuss this particular problem which can be so devastating for people who suffer from it.

As the honourable member's resolution points out, the syndrome is devastating, and the fact that there is no known cure or even effective treatment makes the sense of desperation more acute, because, imagine if you can, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what it must be like to have to live with the symptoms that people with chronic fatigue syndrome have and live with the knowledge that not enough is known about it for there to be an effective treatment or cure, let alone any knowledge about the method of transmission of the syndrome.

It causes some concern too to know, as the honourable member's resolution says, that the syndrome is affecting a growing number of children; women as well between the ages 25 and 40 being at risk causes me and everybody concern. You know, a lot of people think that between the ages of 25 and 40, maybe I hope a little older since I am a little older, that one is at—[interjection] I am 47.

But at that kind of an age there is a recognition that in the average, healthy person that those are the productive years of a person's life when they make their greatest contribution to their family or to their society or to their community or to their fellow citizens.

* (1720)

So it is a very serious prospect to have to be thinking that especially among women in that age group they are going to be facing that risk and potentially depriving themselves of the satisfaction of making the kind of contribution that they might be able to make but depriving society as well of the benefit of those contributions. Now, I do not claim to have any more expertise than the honourable member or indeed all of

the professionals who have yet to complete research on areas related to cause and effect and treatment and cure, so that is what makes this discussion so difficult.

But I think if the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and myself and others who take part in this discussion today, if we raise a little bit more awareness about the whole matter then we will be more likely to be engaged in further discussions in the future, which is the right thing to do.

This and other conditions for which little is known or not enough is known are in the same sort of position as other syndromes and diseases of the past for which research has been done and much has been learned and people have been able to benefit. So there is reason to be hopeful even if it does not seem to loom very large today; there is reason to be hopeful because of the wonders of technology and research and the results those efforts have brought to us in the history of mankind and certainly in the modern history as it relates to medical research.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba has been forwarded the revised case definitions of the chronic fatigue syndrome so that the medical profession can be better informed about the subject, and I think that is one of the things the honourable member wants to achieve by bringing this resolution to us today.

I realize that if you are a medical practitioner and you get into the practice of your profession you deal with the things you know about for the most part and research is left to researchers and others, but it is important that any new developments that might come to light with respect to chronic fatigue syndrome be shared with the profession and that they make whatever use they can of that information in order to alleviate the concerns, the problems, the symptoms, the effects that their patients have, because certainly in my travels throughout this province and in all my discussions with professionals of all kinds, but certainly physicians, they too have as their central desire that of the alleviation of suffering amongst their fellow citizens.

So I think that in the crush of the everyday life of the average physician, busy keeping their appointments

and looking after their patients, there is not enough information around about this problem, and so they are not able to be as helpful as they would like to be. It is my hope that a recently revised working definition of the syndrome will lead to increased research so that treatment and prevention technologies can be advanced.

Chronic fatigue syndrome is a clinically defined condition, characterized, as the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has set out, by severe disabling fatigue and a combination of symptoms that prominently feature impairments in concentration and short-term memory, sleep disturbances and musculoskeletal pain. Diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome can be made only after alternative medical and psychiatric causes of chronic fatiguing illness have been excluded.

When you are dealing with a process of elimination, when you cannot, I guess, figure out whatever else it is might not be wrong with a person, that is how you come out with that sort of a diagnosis. I guess if I were a practitioner, I would find that really not a very satisfactory sort of way to arrive at any kind of definitive diagnosis of my patient's condition.

So, therefore, because of all of that, no definitive treatments exist. I am told that some people affected by the syndrome, some people's symptoms improve some with time, but I am told also that with most they remain functionally impaired for years. That must be an extremely terrifying prospect to go on day after day, month after month, year after year, not knowing what the problem is, not being able to get help from the family doctor or anybody else and wondering if it will ever go away. I cannot imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, anything more frightening than that.

There are some issues with respect to chronic fatigue syndrome research, and the central issue in this research is whether the chronic fatigue syndrome or any subset is a discrete entity. This issue depends on whether clinical, epidemiologic and pathophysiologic features convincingly distinguish the chronic fatigue syndrome from other illnesses. Anxiety disorders, major depression and other symptomatically defined syndromes can manifest severe fatigue as well. Several

psychological symptoms are diagnosed more frequently in populations affected by chronic fatigue syndrome.

With respect to clinical evaluation of cases, that includes history, physical examination and mental status examination, tests that strongly suggest an exclusionary condition must be resolved, and there, again, the frustration. There are some conditions that explain chronic fatigue; those are the ones.

The following ones exclude a patient from the diagnosis of unexplained chronic fatigue. I put some of this information on the record simply in an effort to assist in bringing the matter forward in the sense that there is a real—if you happen to be a person or a family member or associated with a person with chronic fatigue syndrome, these matters are extremely important, even though not enough is yet known about the condition.

There are some things that exclude a person, so that if you happen to think that you have symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome and some of the following situations reflect your life, you may be able to, in consultation with your physician, exclude the diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome, which may create another problem for you, but at least you can set that one aside if you have these conditions. Any active medical condition that might explain the presence of chronic fatigue is, of course, what we are going to be told is what explains your fatigue, so some other medical condition will do that—any previously diagnosed medical condition whose resolution has not been documented beyond reasonable clinical doubt, any past or current diagnosis of a major depressive disorder, alcohol or other substance abuse within two years before the onset of the chronic fatigue and, lastly, severe obesity.

The honourable member certainly, as I repeat, does us all a service. Every time he—and he brings up a lot of things in this House. There is no question about that. We do not always appreciate his efforts, but on this one I think we can probably find agreement that we do indeed appreciate the fact that the honourable member has cared enough to bring forward this matter to ask that we consider developing education and treatment programs for the general public and health

care professionals to deal with chronic fatigue syndrome.

* (1730)

That is something that I will certainly bring to the attention of our epidemiological people within the department just to ensure that our department is, as busy as we are and as many things as we have to do, this is certainly an area of significant concern for people in our province, our fellow citizens. So we will take the concerns raised throughout this resolution by the honourable member, take them seriously and discuss them further within the Department of Health.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I, too, rise and am pleased to put a few words on the record with regard to this chronic disease, as it is so called, whether it is chronic fatigue syndrome or chronic mononucleosis or chronic Epstein-Barr or whatever other name that you want to give.

I think what I would like to do, and I do not know whether I am going to be able to have all the time to be able to put all the remarks that I wish to put on the record, but I will go to the point that you ask and give me the full time that I am allotted. I want to express some understanding of the history of this.

You know, I had some difficulty with what the honourable member, even in his compassion, because I share his compassion, but I have some difficulty with what he is proposing. Maybe once we hear what we have in terms of what I am offering, and I do not profess to be an expert on this aspect of chronic fatigue syndrome, but chronic fatigue syndrome goes back 125 years. It was first diagnosed or referenced by a psychiatrist, a Dr. George Beard, in 1869. He called it at that time, and I cannot even say it, neurasthenia, which is an exhaustion of the nervous system.

Then sometime after that, a neurologist, Dr. Silas Mitchell, diagnosed the similar symptoms and recommended rest care as a prescribed form of treatment. In that he suggested that the treatment deal not only with rest, but with proper health in terms of proper diet, rest and to remove the patient from the

environment in which they were being affected that would cause them to have this condition.

It is interesting that, during the epidemics that there have been over the 125, 130 years the history of this diagnosis, and even in the epidemics in the USA and in Europe, this practice of removing the patients from their environment was carried out for many years to follow. This was practised even before medicine became a science, and it was a treatment of contextual healing. If we examine contextual healing, what we are doing is that we are looking at the context of the people who are affected by these symptoms that are described with this so-called illness.

Fifty years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was medical research that begged to believe and suggested that chronic fatigue syndrome was a brucellosis bacteria. The people who have spent years on the farm around animals, because that is a bacteria of animals, and people who have spent time around animals know how it affects animals in terms of their ability to provide milk for their young.

So there have been many diagnoses over the 125 years. Studies in the 1950s and 1960s demonstrated that victims of postinfectious fatigue to be inherent and what they would do is the psychoneurotic suggesting meant that the people who had this were mentally disturbed.

Then in 1955 there happened to be an outbreak of chronic fatigue syndrome in the Royal Free Hospital in London and the neighbourhoods around that hospital where a medical student and subsequently a doctor and then a nurse and subsequent to that followed by 300 staff were affected by this. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the epidemic outbreak, most recently, was in 1985 in Lake Tahoe and the medical authorities again studied it and they came up with nothing—some over a hundred years later after studying this. The profile reflects that CF is a nervous disorder related to stress but no evidence exists to support that.

One of the things that I think is really important here and I think that a doctor going back to 1765, a Dr. Robert Whyatt, wrote that physicians of the day—and this is when we are talking about trying to determine

what the causes of diseases are—tend to diagnose as hypochondriacs or hysteric all cases whose nature and causes they were ignorant of.

Maybe that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, exists today. You know, I have on my wall in my home this wall plaque, and I think that really what it does it describes in terms of where I am coming from and I think that the way society has to go in dealing with health care or any diseases that we are dealing with. I would like to say that for the record. I would ask that if there is anybody who—and this is a quote that goes back a number of years just to give you an illustration and I share this with you. I quote: The doctor of the future will use no medicine but will care for his patients in the use of diet and the cause and prevention of disease.

Now I wonder how many people in this Chamber are aware of who made that quote. I will tell you, it was Thomas Edison. Thomas Edison made that quote. But where have we gone in society today?

Diseases to qualify, in terms of our medical, as thing-like entities in terms of what we are talking about. And I respect what the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is saying because people are devastated because they are looking, they are seeking for help, and the only place that they can reach out for help on this is through the medical profession. They are the so-called experts, but there have been some failings over 125 years, and the reason being that the diseases to qualify as thing-like entities must have specific characteristics. They must have a check list in order to determine and to be able to diagnose and then to treat. If they cannot diagnose, they cannot treat it, which is a problem with chronic fatigue syndrome, because we heard the honourable minister list all the symptoms with chronic fatigue syndrome. Now, what symptom do they treat?

It is quite obvious that chronic fatigue syndrome cannot follow that checklist like blood pressure or cholesterol, and it gets confusing for many because of the many other conditions. It gets confused with such symptoms as malignancies and auto-immune deficiencies or diseases, chronic and subacute bacterial conditions, fungal and parasitic chronic inflammatory conditions.

* (1740)

In search of a cause for chronic fatigue syndrome, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why do we not look at the contextual conditions, contextual healing. As I said at the outset of my remarks, I do not profess to have a great deal of knowledge, but I have done a great deal of studying, and the research that has been done and whose direction I follow is from a Dr. Dean Black. Many of you have heard in this Chamber—I have spoken of Dr. Dean Black who has done an insurmountable amount of research and study on all aspects of health, and a lot of what I am sharing here with this Chamber today is what he offers in terms of dealing with contextual healing.

Chronic fatigue syndrome, as both the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and the honourable minister have indicated, affects young, middle-aged people who are active in their professions and have achieved a level of professionalism. Those are the people who are affected by this, and it is sad to see the debilitating conditions that some of these people are in. But I do not share the same feeling that the member for Kildonan shares in saying that we should throw more money into this, because if we examine that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who are we going to give the money to? Who is going to do this? Is it the medical doctors? Is it the drug companies?

The honourable members across the way, they talk about drug companies as the big problem to society in terms of our health care, the people who are making the money. I do not disagree with that, but I think if we examine what this resolution is going to suggest, I do not feel that that is going to be the answer. I mean, people have been trying to deal with this in a positive way and in a compassionate way for 125 years.

The condition we now call CF or chronic fatigue syndrome as I mentioned was first described in 1869, and since then we have had recurring epidemics to the point it has grown to be the seventh most common medical complaint, yet the medical profession, by their own admission, cannot explain it.

In 1985, there were the two separate research reports that CF was caused by a virus. The offending virus is

the one called Epstein-Barr. The medical profession at that time felt that they had hit on something, but there is no conclusive evidence to support that as well, and the virus is associated with the infection, mononucleosis. The authors were careful to say that this theory was only a possibility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that we certainly do have some difficult decisions to make on all the things that we are going to do in terms of dealing with health care in the province of Manitoba. I do not think anyone here denies that, but I do not think that the answer is to put more money into it. [interjection]

The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) says that is not what he is saying, but what do you do? Who do you involve? Well, I distinctly heard the member for Kildonan suggest that he did not say that, but if you read the resolution that he brings before this House, that is—

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

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to put on the record that myself and my two colleagues, Liberal MLA members in this Legislature, support this resolution, and we would like to see it come to a vote.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had the misfortune to have two young friends, both very active people at the peak of their learning careers and in the beginning years of their jobs, neither of them in any sense people with any history or any indication of any kind of mental illness or any sense people who were not highly energized and highly active, who have had this syndrome.

I think it is most important that we pass this very nonpartisan resolution so that people who are suffering from this very debilitating condition can have a sense that the members of this Legislature understand the need for further research, as the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) has pointed out and as the honourable Health minister (Mr. McCrae) and the mover of this motion. I think all of us have had calls from people with chronic fatigue syndrome. Probably

many of us have either friends or, even closer, perhaps family members who have suffered from this debilitating disease. So I urge all members to support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may call for the question.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I too am pleased to speak to the House today on this resolution. I think all members in the House and the people of Manitoba share with everyone the common thought that health and fitness, health issues, are certainly in the hearts and on the minds of the people of the province of Manitoba, as being identified in this House every day as I sit and listen to the members opposite and members from this side of the House speak about health care and health issues. I think that it is very important that we have new ideas like this brought to the floor.

It is certainly new to me as far as I have heard of the illness, but, personally, I do not know of anyone who has it. I certainly, from listening to the other members speak on it, know that they have a personal interest in it. Thinking of people's health and the care of the people, particularly with an illness such as this, and reading through the resolution, and it is stating that there is no known cure. I am sure, for anybody who becomes diagnosed with this syndrome, I guess that to be told or to understand that they really do not have a cure at this point in time for the illness must be very devastating—not only a cure, but there is no treatment for it.

Again, it seems like it is so vague in the sciences. There is certainly a lot more room for study and a lot more room to make people understand the illness. I also note in the resolution that the member discussed that the method of transmission is completely unknown also. I cannot relate it to anything that I have ever done in my life, except I do know, myself, personally, when there is something wrong that I cannot fix, and I cannot understand why it is not working properly and I do not know what caused the breakdown of it, it certainly frustrates me. I am sure that, when it deals with people's health and the health issues, it certainly has to be catastrophic to the person.

* (1750)

It is a term "chronic fatigue syndrome" that is used to describe a very large group of symptoms. A lot of these symptoms can be persistent, or you can go into a relapsing fatigue which is lasting six or more consecutive months. I just cannot imagine experiencing something like this myself for that long a period of time. To suffer with this syndrome, and, again, not know how I got it, not know if there is a cure for it, knowing there is no cure for it or even effective treatment, it would certainly be very disheartening.

I understand, too, that the illness may also include short-term memory defects, difficulty concentrating, unrefreshing sleep—and I think everybody in this House can identify with that as far as one of the symptoms. After spending long hours here some days, no matter though your eyes are closed, whether you are resting or whether you are getting any sleep or not is certainly up for the question. A sore throat is also one of the symptoms, tender lymph nodes, muscle pain. Again, I think something that we can probably relate to, to a degree, but maybe not understand again why it happened to us, what caused us to get this.

Whenever I suffer from muscle pain and joint ache, I usually know why I have it. It is from exertion or overexertion, and I know that in a couple of days it will go away. Unfortunately, the people that suffer from this particular syndrome do not know that. They have really no understanding of when it will end, and, if it does end, why it ended.

Headaches and sickness follow exertion, and again, in this case, I am led to understand that exertion is basically just any kind of movement that we consider to be normal. In this case, with people that are suffering from the syndrome, they become sick and ill after those kinds of exertion.

The definition, chronic fatigue syndrome, has been revised over the years and has recently been revised and will likely continue as we do get to know more about this illness and understand it, understand how we get it, how it is transmitted, and hopefully the cure will follow. It is something we have seen throughout history, so it is not a new illness. It has just recently been systematically separated out so that we can identify it and understand it and study it.

The illness appears to be associated with abnormalities of the immune system, which I think even I can understand that. If your system is abnormal, is the word, I would say, weak or suffering some sort of a defect, it certainly would suggest that it can enter your system. Certain hormones, as well as depression, frequently, but not always, follow the infection. Again, I think that the depression part of it, you definitely are going to feel that way after enduring some of the symptoms that I have described earlier. It would certainly be an easy thing to fall into as far as you are tired, you are worn down and you are susceptible.

The diagnosis of the syndrome can be made only after alternative medical and psychiatric causes of chronic fatigue illness have been excluded. So, before they can actually tell you that you are suffering from the fatigue syndrome, they must separate through a series of testings and alternative medical causes to eliminate the idea of a chronic fatiguing illness. The presence of prolonged or chronic fatigue requires clinical evaluation, so therefore there is a lot of time spent studying the patient, and the clinical evaluation is used to identify underlying or contributing conditions that require treatment.

There are many conditions which exclude a patient from the diagnosis of unexplained chronic fatigue. They are any medical condition that may explain the presence of chronic fatigue, i.e., if you exhibit some of the suggestions I presented to you earlier, that would be one of the first steps. Any previously diagnosed medical condition whose resolution has not been documented beyond reasonable clinical doubt—I would think from this statement that would mean that the process is a very long and drawn-out affair, and a lot of clinical diagnosis has to take place. Any past or current diagnosis of a major depressive disorder—and I would certainly suggest again we have endured some of that type of medical history in our own families or people that we know, and I am sure it is certainly one of the causes.

Something else that I found to be quite interesting was the fact that alcohol or any other substance abuse within two years before the onset of chronic fatigue and severe obesity may also be contributing factors to the disease. Although the illness may be prolonged, many

patients do gradually improve and eventually recover. I am certainly pleased to hear that. I think if you can take on this syndrome, not know how you got it, not know how to treat it and to know that basically there is no cure for it, it has to be a very frustrating time in one's life.

I guess if there is a bright side to it, it is the hope that many patients do gradually improve and eventually recover. In that instance, I can cite an example where I have a person that I know that has suffered from a disease that basically they said in time, hopefully, it would leave him. The chances were good and I certainly know that that encouraged everyone within our family and his family to look forward to that day.

Something that struck me about the syndrome, and it quite actually astonished me or astounded me was the fact that it includes a growing number of children, but

particularly women between the ages of 25 and 40 are most at risk.

I would suggest, not being clinically wise or a doctor of any profession, that these are as I like to look at myself and the minister has suggested earlier, those are we hope to be our most productive times of our lives. When you think of people that age, usually with children, with families, careers, there are so many things that are happening to them—[interjection] Yes, athletics also. It must be a devastating blow to these people to come into contact with this kind of an illness.

Mr. Deputy 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., this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 19, 1995

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