



Fifth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Law Amendments

*Chairperson
Mrs. Myrna Driedger
Constituency of Charleswood*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AMENDMENTS

Thursday, July 8, 1999

TIME – 10 a.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

**CHAIRPERSON – Mrs. Myrna Driedger
 (Charleswood)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. David
 Faurschou (Portage la Prairie)**

ATTENDANCE – 11 – QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mr. Cummings, Hon. Mrs. Mitchelson

Ms. Cerilli, Mr. Downey, Mrs. Driedger,
 Messrs. Faurschou, Helwer, Martindale,
 McAlpine, Ms. McGifford, Mr. Sale

WITNESSES:

Ms. Shauna MacKinnon, Choices: A
 Coalition for Social Justice; and Private
 Citizen

Mr. Randy Kotyk, People Empowering
 Themselves Against the System

Mr. Sid Frankel, Social Planning Council of
 Winnipeg

Mr. David Martin, Manitoba League of
 Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Graham Starmer, Manitoba Chamber of
 Commerce

Ms. Pauline Riley, Manitoba Action
 Committee on the Status of Women

Mr. Blair Hamilton, Canadian Union of
 Public Employees–Manitoba

Ms. Rhonda McCorriston, Private Citizen

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Ms. Bev LeBlanc, Private Citizen

MATTERS UNDER DISCUSSION:

Bill 40–The Employment and Income
 Assistance Amendment Act

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. Will the committee please come to order. Good morning, everybody, the Standing Committee on Law Amendments has come to order. This morning we will be continuing with public presentations on Bill 40, The Employment and Income Assistant Amendment Act.

We do have a number of presenters who are registered to speak to this bill this morning. I will then read the names of the persons who are registered to make presentations this morning. Randy Kotyk, People Empowering Themselves Against the System; Sid Frankel, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg; Allen Bleich, Canadian Union of Public Employees–Manitoba; Patrick Martin, member of Parliament; Neil Cohen, Community Unemployed Help Centre; David Martin, Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities; Pauline Riley, Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women; Sylvia Farley or John Doyle from the Manitoba Federation of Labour; Rabbi Levenson, Temple Shalom; David Herry, private citizen; Peter Kaufmann, private citizen; Valerie Price, Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties; Thomas Novak, OBLATE Justice and Peace Committee; Rhonda McCorriston, private citizen; Graham Starmer, Manitoba Chamber of Commerce. There is no speaker identified, but there is a group wishing to speak for the Workers Organizing Resource Centre. Shauna MacKinnon, private citizen; Darrall Rankin, Communist Party of Manitoba; Bev LeBlanc, private citizen and Alan Maki, private citizen.

Those are the persons and organizations that have registered so far. If there is anybody else in the audience that would like to register or who has not yet registered and would like to make a presentation, would you please register at the back of the room. Just a reminder that 20 copies of your presentation are required. If you require assistance with photocopying, please see the Clerk of the committee.

Before we proceed, I would like to advise that at last night's evening meeting, there were no time limits established for public presentations. As was agreed last evening, the names of the presenters who are absent will be dropped to the bottom of the list. What is the will of the committee for those names that have been called twice? Shall they be dropped from the list after being called twice? [agreed]

As a courtesy to persons waiting to give a presentation, did the committee wish to indicate what time it wishes to rise this morning?

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Chairperson, I would like to suggest that the committee consider rising at 12 noon.

Mr. James Downey (Arthur-Virden): Madam Chair, I agree that we would rise at twelve o'clock.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I wonder if it would make sense if at that point there were one or two presenters left, that we might consider that question at twelve o'clock. We might still choose to adjourn and hold hearings next week sometime, but if there are simply one or two left, then we might reasonably agree to accommodate them rather than asking them to come back.

Madam Chairperson: We will then at twelve o'clock revisit the clock with the intent that, if possible, we will try to rise at 12, but we will revisit at noon.

We have had a request from presenter No. 17, Shauna MacKinnon, to be able to be moved to the top of the list and speak first due to work commitments. Is there agreement from the committee? [agreed]

Bev LeBlanc, No. 19 on the list, is unable to attend but would like her presentation accepted as a written submission. [agreed]

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Chairperson, I had the opportunity to talk to one of the presenters, David Martin, who I believe is No. 6 on the list. I know that he would like to be heard and finished before 11:30 because he has another commitment. Would it be the will of the committee to ensure that he is heard sometime shortly after 11? [agreed]

Madam Chairperson: We call on our first presenter now, Shauna MacKinnon. Good morning, Ms. MacKinnon. Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Shauna MacKinnon (Choices: A Coalition for Social Justice; and Private Citizen): Just for the record, I am here on behalf of myself but also on behalf of Choices.

The recent announcement by the government of Manitoba to implement policies which will expand on the punitive policy measures implemented through Bill 36 come as no surprise given the popularity of similar programs elsewhere. The popularity of such draconian programs is most worrisome and often rooted in a lack of the knowledge of the issues and implications of welfare-to-work policies.

Research in the area of welfare without exception has demonstrated that welfare programs do not work. Further, they do more harm than good as they increase the stigma already attached to welfare recipients. Welfare programs are meanspirited and punitive. They are based on unfounded assumptions that people are poor because they are lazy and/or because they are substance abusers. The policy direction that this government has chosen to move in shows absolutely no creativity and innovation. It is quite simply following the lead of many other jurisdictions and blames the unemployed rather than unemployment for welfare dependency. What is most disturbing is the irresponsibility of moving in such a direction without having researched the effectiveness of similar programs worldwide. Many jurisdictions have failed in any substantive and unbiased way

to evaluate their programs. Those that have had independent evaluations have found no significant increase in long-term employment for welfare recipients through workfare policies.

Workfare programs are extremely expensive. Employment creation is limited to positions for those hired to manage the lives of the poor. Employment for welfare recipients is most often short term with poor pay. Research indicates that a high percentage of recipients in such programs return to welfare after having a brief role as cheap labour in the marketplace. Many of the jobs are subsidized by government, and employers have no obligation to keep people employed beyond the subsidized period.

This government boasts of the drop in the welfare rolls since the implementation of welfare reform; however, there is no evaluation to suggest welfare reform is successfully keeping people employed. Research in other jurisdictions would suggest otherwise. Workfare creates a revolving door through the system. More often than not, employment is short term and/or hours are insufficient. Individuals often end up on unemployment insurance and back on welfare.

* (1010)

As I stand here, I realize that my concerns with welfare policy direction in this province are not going to be heard, but, nonetheless, I feel a moral obligation to express my concern with this government's continued attack on the poor, the marginalized, those with the least energy to fight back.

This decision has clearly been made for political purposes at the expense of the poor. The process has been a long one. This government has strategically used welfare recipients as a scapegoat for all that ails us, beginning with massive cuts throughout the '90s, allegations of rampant fraud and the establishment of the welfare fraud line. We do not hear too much about the welfare fraud line, so I really question how much fraud there really is out there, and, then, of course, the clawback of the National Child Benefit supplement which would have been extremely helpful for those

surviving on the mere pittance that welfare provides.

Programs which provided welfare recipients opportunities for education have been slashed to the bare bones only to be replaced by a coercive program offering short-term training which results in either no employment or low-wage employment. God forbid, we do not want these people to become too educated nor should they have too many choices. We need them as cheap labour, and cheap labour we have as we provide subsidies to encourage the private sector to hire people for a short period of time. Community organizations have also been forced to participate in the punitive world of workfare. Government cuts through the '90s have resulted in a struggle to survive for many organizations. Participation in workfare has often allowed many to continue to do good work with the help of subsidized employees or those putting in their hours of free community service.

Volunteerism is a good thing. Community participation in exchange for welfare benefits is not. It can create some ethical dilemmas. It often puts those who have previously acted on behalf of the poor in a position where they are now participating in the management and control of the poor. Forcing people to be involved in their communities is difficult for everyone. People should be participating in their communities out of choice rather than force.

Now we want to force people to go to school. We want to force people to get addictions counselling. How do we implement this? How do we enforce it? How do we decide who requires it? Do we create a telephone line for this, too? What happens to the children? What are the implications for the very stressed child welfare system, and what will be the long-term effects on these children who are placed in care because their parents are put into addictions counselling? The implications are mind-boggling.

Even if we put aside these important questions, more practical issues arise. As these ethical dilemmas do not appear to be in the mindset of this government, perhaps economic ones will. The bottom line is this Archie Bunker approach to social assistance does not work.

Study after study demonstrates this. Canadian governments have copied workfare models in the U.S. As American programs have been in place since the late '80s, we can look to their experiences to determine the effectiveness of welfare reform.

An earlier evaluation of a similar learnfare program in Wisconsin found no increase in attendance during the learnfare experiment in any of the six school districts studied. In Milwaukee, AFDC teens showed a statistically significant increase in absences under the learnfare policy. The Wisconsin study also found, surprise, surprise, that the availability of jobs appeared to be the single most important factor in determining the number of families on welfare. Welfare employment programs showed no measurable impact on caseloads. The relationship between unemployment rates and caseloads was found to be direct and consistent over time. Evaluation analysis of costs and savings showed substantial cost increases rather than savings.

In Canada similar findings are emerging. The much-hailed NB Works is an extremely expensive program. The cost per person if participants complete the program is estimated at \$59,000. There is, however, over a 60 percent dropout rate. Not one job has been created through NB Works except for those, again, hired to deliver, manage, and evaluate the program. There has been no reduction in the poverty rates or unemployment levels. Participants are ending up back on assistance.

Similar results have been found in Quebec. In Ontario, qualitative research found that welfare recipients who found permanent work said that they did so on their own. They did not attribute Ontario Works for assisting them in getting off welfare.

Once again I emphasize, the research is clear. It is the existence of jobs that gets people off welfare, not coercive, punitive programming.

My question for this government is what is the real motive for these programs? Do we really want to help people make better lives for themselves? Are we concerned at all with the important roles single parents have in the lives

of their children and the contribution they are already making to society? Is this really about addressing the welfare problem, or is it about creating a cheap pool of labour?

If this government is serious about reducing the welfare rolls they need to educate themselves and take a perspective that respects the dilemmas and barriers those on welfare face. People on welfare are no different than you or I. They want similar things. They want to work and provide for their families as best they can.

This government needs to move beyond this archaic notion that we can force people into work, school, counselling. This government needs to focus the attention on creating good jobs, improving the financial support for individuals in poverty so that life is not centred on survival. Government needs to encourage, not coerce welfare recipients to explore their options. They need to support individuals in their chosen fields of study, not limit them to short-term, dead-end training. This is what will move people beyond welfare. More important, this is what will move people out of poverty.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. MacKinnon. Any questions for Ms. MacKinnon?

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I would like to ask Ms. MacKinnon if workfare does not work, as your brief says, why do you think the government is bringing in Bill 40 at this time?

Ms. MacKinnon: As I said, I strongly believe that there has been sort of an environment created where this government has made people on welfare out to be these terrible people who are contributing to all that ails us. So pointing the focus towards that, now implementing this has become politically popular. People believe that people on welfare are really lazy and they are contributing to our huge deficits. I think that having gotten the public on side with that line of thinking, now, with an upcoming election, they are talking about implementing these policies knowing that now people will support such policies. I mean, that is my feeling on that.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Thank you for your presentation. I

do not think anyone quarrels with your comments that there are a wide variety of needs that people have when they come into support programs, but would you agree that there should be, or is there any question in your mind whether or not there should be some responsibility on the part of the person seeking assistance?

Ms. MacKinnon: Responsibility in what, looking for work, getting a job? Is that what you are asking? Of course, but I think that people do that. People are looking for work. They cannot find work that will pay them sufficiently to look after their families. I mean, the percentage of people who do not is so small, and I do not know that you can—there are people in all levels of income that will take advantage of systems. There is no more or no less from people on welfare. So I do not think they have to be forced to do that. They are already doing that.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I am interested in pursing this issue of the cost of the New Brunswick Works program. I am wondering if you have any more detail, if you know any more about what contributed to this \$59,000 cost per participant.

Ms. MacKinnon: They put them through the program, the short-term training and, you know, the same things that we are doing here. So there are costs involved with hiring people to do all these things, to train them. Then what is happening though is they are either dropping out or they are getting through the system, getting short-term employment and then ending up back on the system. So there are no long-term savings. There is no increase in employment.

Ms. Cerilli: The other thing you talked about is the kind of programs that are necessary, the kind of programs that would support people. I am wondering if you could describe a little bit more the kind of programs you think would assist people in getting the education they need. I mean, I deal with constituents who have a Grade 3 reading level, and they are expected to go out and work. They have a few kids and they are continually going between the workforce and social allowance. So the kind of programs that would help people like that to successfully make that transition on a more permanent basis.

Ms. MacKinnon: Well, I think there are some good programs out there. We have had some good programs in terms of the Access programs, but they have been gutted so much. There are so few people that now qualify for them who are able to financially sustain themselves through it. They are not getting financially supported. So there are good programs out there, but the government needs to support those programs better there and look at maybe some other innovative ones rather than sticking people in these training programs that more often than not go nowhere.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. MacKinnon.

Ms. MacKinnon: Thank you.

* (1020)

Madam Chairperson: Our next presenter is Randy Kotyk from the organization People Empowering Themselves Against the System. Good morning, Mr. Kotyk. Welcome. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Randy Kotyk (People Empowering Themselves Against the System): First of all, I would like to introduce myself.

My name is Randy Kotyk. I would like to thank you for allowing a nobody such as myself to make a presentation on the evils of Bill 40. I would also like to say that I represent a lot of organizations. They are: PETAS, People Empowering Themselves Against the System; I am secretary to the west end chapter of CFCA, which is Citizens for Crime Awareness; board member to Spence Neighbourhood Council; board member to the West Broadway Community Centre; captain of my block of the adopt-a-block program; co-captain of Neighbourhood Watch for my area. I am also president of the Canadian chapter of WAPD, which is the World Association of Persons with Disabilities. I must also state that none of these positions are paying jobs. I also delivered groceries for free food for disabled and senior shut-ins around the city of Winnipeg. I got a lot of publicity from that, but no job. I continually volunteer for several services and still no job.

Now, then, my speech. UN condemns government for growing differences between rich and poor. A report of the United States confirms that social critics in Canada have been saying that Canada's budget deficit has been eliminated at the expense of the country's poor people. Canada has topped the United Nations list of the best countries to live for the past five years, but a new report condemns federal and provincial governments for exacerbating poverty and homelessness. During a time of strong economic growth and increased affluence, the UN report comes just as the big Canadian banks are releasing their annual record-breaking profits, led by the Royal Bank of Canada, with an all-time Canadian record after-tax profit of \$1.8 billion.

The UN says that while Canada has topped its human development index, demonstrating that there is great wealth and potential for shared well-being, Canada has placed 10th in the UN's human poverty index. This demonstrates the wealth is not being shared. The UN report comes just as Finance Minister Paul Martin is accepting accolades from the business community for eliminating an annual deficit which reached over \$40 billion, most of which went for interest rate payments on the accumulated debt, a debt which itself mostly resulted from tax breaks for corporations and the rich.

The UN committee examining economic and social rights issued a scathing attack on Canada's treatment of its women, poor and aborigines. The committee expressed concern about the high disparity in standards of living between aboriginal Canadians and other Canadians. It mentioned inadequate housing, high unemployment and high suicide rate, lack of safe drinking water and dispossession of aboriginal lands. There were also harsh words for the Canadian delegation that appeared before you and committee last week saying—pardon me, I omitted that from yours, sorry—the kind of information that we really wanted was not forthcoming, said Virginia Denton [phonetic], chairwoman of the committee. Some members of the UN committee voiced frustration at not getting useful answers from the Canadians for homelessness, inadequate supplies of subsidized

housing and poverty among single Canadian women.

The UN on economic, social and cultural rights issued a blistering attack on Canada's record for over the last five years saying the country has not ensured Canadians enjoy economic and social rights guaranteed by UN covenant, to which Ottawa is a signatory. The committee's report painted a picture of a country that is not taking care of citizens living at the low end of the economic spectrum, highlighting crises, levels of homelessness, skyrocketing usages of food banks, deep cuts to welfare rates and inadequate funding for battered women's shelters. It placed particular emphasis on living conditions of many First Nations communities. To me, this gives a black eye to Canada from a respected United Nations body.

Bill Namagoose, executive director of the Grand Council of the Crees who made a presentation to the committee, told the Canadian Press, Canada goes around the world saying that it is a champion of human rights. I think Prime Minister Chretien has to begin to address the situation in his own backyard, also. The committee was highly critical of the federal government for effectively shelving the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. We are concerned about the high disparity between aboriginal people and the majority of Canadians in terms of inadequate housing, high unemployment rates, high rate of suicide and the lack of safe and adequate drinking water and the dispossession of their lands, committee chair Virginia Denton [phonetic] told the Canadian Press at the news conference, December 4.

The committee made 21 recommendations, calling the need for low-income housing to be treated as a national emergency. In a report that emphasized 26 areas of principal concern, it called for national standards on welfare reform of the Unemployment Insurance Program, so more workers are covered and more money from all levels of government to combat women's poverty and poverty among children. It is obviously one of the most scathing criticisms of an affluent country that was ever released by the UN human rights body, a spokesman of the chartered committee on poverty issues, one of

several social advocacy groups which made presentations to UN committee told CP.

The report said poor Canadians, especially women and children, are being denied their basic human right to food, clothing and shelter. It said their gross disparity in the living standards of the aboriginal Canadians versus others. It condemned the cuts to unemployment insurance and social assistance. It criticized the federal government's repeal of its Canada Assistance Program which ensured national standards for education, health and social assistance.

The committee said that the National Child Benefit program is inadequate, and pointed out that homelessness has been declared a national disaster in Canada's 10 largest cities. Meanwhile, government policies are creating obstacles for women trying to escape domestic violence. The committee condemned workfare programs instituted by the provinces which required to work for welfare benefits. The report says food banks have doubled in the country, that the minimum wage is inadequate and that over 90 percent of single mothers under the age of 25 are in poverty.

* (1030)

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy was cautious about responding. He says he had not read the report, but he told CP some of the figures the committee relied on were from 1995, so they do not take into account many of the initiatives that have been taken by this government. But nongovernmental organizations and Ontario's low income families together briefed the committee extensively on the current situation in Canada so it was aware of new initiatives such as the National Child Benefit. It just was not impressed that while Ottawa was instituting a program to help children in poor families, all but two provincial governments claw back the benefits.

As one of 137 signatures to the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Canada must report to the committee every five years on progress it is making ensuring it lives up to the commitment in the document. The covenant states: citizens have the right to work and form labour unions, the

right to adequate living conditions, the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health. Concerned those promises are not being met, the committee asked Canada for answers to 81 additional questions. A Canadian delegation spent two days before the committee to address those concerns, but the officials offered vague generalities while the committee sought specifics on questions like why the poverty rate among single mothers has risen during the last five years, a time of economic growth and why such a wealthy country has so many homeless people.

The repeated use of such strong language as gravely, deeply and great concern and perturbed in the UN report on Canada will not please the federal government, which regularly boasts Canada has topped the UN's list of the best countries to live in for the last five years. But it was music to organizations that have been trying to challenge the government's social policy record.

I am pleased to see that they essentially hauled our government on the carpet, said Josephine Gray [phonetic] of Low Income Families Together, but what really matters is what happens now, what comes of it. The committee noted that for the last five years, Canada had been ranked at the top of the United Nations development programs, human development index. The HDI indicates that, on average, Canadians enjoy a singularly high standard of living and that Canada has the capacity to achieve a high level of respect for all covenant rights. That this has not yet been achieved is reflected in the fact that human poverty index ranks Canada 10th on the list of industrial countries.

Here is a summary of the UN concerns: people living in poverty, usually women with children, identified government policies which denied the claimants and their children adequate food, clothing and housing; provincial courts in Canada have routinely opted for an interpretation which excludes protection of the right to an adequate standard of living and other covenant rights; inadequate Canadian legal protection of women's rights such as pay equity, restricted access to civil and legal aid, inadequate protection from gender discrimination.

The committee is greatly concerned at the gross disparity between aboriginal people and the majority of Canadians. There has been little or no progress in the alleviation of social and economic deprivation among aboriginal people regarding the shortage of adequate housing, the endemic mass unemployment and the high rate of suicide, the failure to provide safe and adequate drinking water to aboriginal communities on reserves.

The delegation of the state party conceded that almost a quarter of aboriginal household dwellings require major repairs for the lack of basic amenities. The committee views with concern the direct connection between aboriginal economic marginalization and the ongoing dispossession of aboriginal people and their lands. The replacement of the Canada Assistance Plan by the Canada Health and Social Transfer entails a range of adverse consequences for enjoyment of the covenant rights by disadvantaged groups in Canada.

Unemployment insurance cuts have resulted in a dramatic drop in proportion of unemployed workers receiving benefits to approximately half of the previous coverage, in the lowering of benefit rates, in reduction of the length of time for which benefits are paid, and in the increasingly restricted access to benefit part-time workers. Cuts of about 10 percent to social assistance rates for single people were introduced in Manitoba, 35 percent for single people in Nova Scotia, 21.6 percent to both families and single people in Ontario. These cuts appear to have had a significantly adverse impact on vulnerable groups causing increases in already high levels of homelessness and hunger. In all but two provinces, New Brunswick and Newfoundland, the National Child Benefit introduced by the federal government, which is meant to be given to all children of low-income families, is, in fact, only given to children of working poor parents, since the provinces are allowed by the federal government to deduct the full amount of this NCB from the amount of social assistance received by parents on welfare.

The repeal of CAP and cuts to social assistance rates, social services and programs have had a particularly harsh impact on women,

in particular single women who are a majority of the poor.

The committee is gravely concerned that such a wealthy country as Canada has allowed the problem of homelessness and inadequate housing to grow to such proportions that the mayors of Canada's 10 largest cities have now declared homelessness a national disaster. Provincial social assistance rates and other income assistance measures have not clearly been adequate to cover rental costs of the poor. In the last five years, the number of tenants paying more than 50 percent of their income toward rent has increased by 43 percent.

In both Ontario and Quebec, governments have adopted legislation to redirect social assistance payments directly to the landlord without consent of the recipients. The government of Ontario proceeded with its announcement or announced 21.6 percent cuts to social assistance in spite of claims that it would force large numbers of people from their homes. The significant reduction to provincial social assistance programs and the unavailability of affordable, appropriate housing and widespread discrimination with respect to housing create obstacles to women escaping domestic violence. Aboriginal women living on reserves do not enjoy the same rights as women living off the reserves. At least six provinces in Canada, including Quebec and Ontario, have adopted workfare programs that either submit the right to social assistance to compulsory employment schemes or reduce the benefit of social assistance for recipients.

The minimum wage is not sufficient for a worker to have an adequate standard of living. The number of food banks has almost doubled between 1989 and 1997 in Canada and are able to meet only a fraction of the increased needs of the poor.

There is the plight of thousands of convention refugees in Canada who cannot be given permanent resident status for a number of reasons, including the lack of identity documents, and who cannot be reunited with their families before the period of five years.

The committee views with concern that 20 percent of the adult population in Canada is functionally illiterate. Loan programs for university education are only available to Canadian citizens. Tuition fees for university education in Canada have dramatically increased in the past years, making it very difficult for those in need to attend university in the absence of a loan or a grant. Thank you.

* (1040)

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Kotyk.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, I would just like to thank Mr. Kotyk for taking time to present a brief to the committee today.

Mr. Kotyk: Thank you.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Kotyk, I want to thank you for the presentation that you made, and thank you for your volunteer commitment to our community, because I have seen very positive things about the contributions that you have made to others in need in our community. So I want to say thank you very much, and I do want to commit to you that we will ensure that you are part of the consultation process when we look at the programs and the needs of the disabled community through the public consultations that will be held later on this year.

Mr. Kotyk: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would certainly like some of your ideas and suggestions on how we might make that program most appropriate for those that need our support.

Mr. Kotyk: I have one request, if you do not mind. I just recently heard that there is a course at the University of Manitoba on disability studies. Is there any way that you can tell me more information on this and how I would go about getting on to this?

Mr. Downey: Yes, I could, and I think you are referring probably to the International Centre on Training for people working with people with disabilities. To give you some further information, Dr. Henry Enns is heading up that organization, and we can make sure that you get

the people to contact to get more information on that.

Mr. Kotyk: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Kotyk. Because we do have a very lengthy list of presenters, I would ask that all presenters keep their comments relevant to the bill under discussion, if we please could.

The next speaker is Sid Frankel from the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. Good morning, Mr. Frankel. Welcome. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Sid Frankel (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg): Thank you, good morning.

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg is pleased to present its point of view of Bill 40, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act. In general, we are concerned that this legislation is ill conceived in that it does not deal with the main ingredients required to enhance work by welfare recipients. It also contains redundant, unnecessary and some harmful measures.

Let us begin by sharing our understanding that there is virtually no opposition from any source that we know about to the idea that welfare recipients should work. The idea is supported by the social policy community. It is supported, as far as we know, by all political parties, by all groups we know about in society and by recipients themselves. We assume it is supported by the business community. Those who set themselves up as defenders of this idea against supposedly hostile poverty advocates and lazy welfare recipients are simply setting up a straw dog which does not really exist, and in the bargain, they are reinforcing harmful stereotypes about the poor.

Now, what are the ingredients necessary to support work by welfare recipients? Three kinds of conditions are necessary. First, there must be sufficient long-term jobs available, and these jobs must pay enough to move the families of workers out of poverty. We were very surprised to see in Bill 40 that moving families out of

poverty is indeed not one of the stated goals of the income assistance program. We would have thought that this would have been a central goal of the program.

Second, recipients must be appropriately educated in skills that will allow them to acquire jobs. Third, supports must be provided for the transition from welfare to work. These supports should include accessible high-quality child care, subsidization for transportation, counselling and social support, among others.

The act under study, and indeed the act which it amends, deals with none of these ingredients. In fact, the preamble to Bill 40 does not even acknowledge providing these elements as one of the goals of the income assistance program. Therefore, we would suggest the following additions to the preamble in addition to the purposes already stated: Whereas a goal of Manitoba's income assistance program is to lower the rate of poverty among Manitobans; and whereas a related goal of the program is to ensure that adequate long-term employment is available for recipients at levels of remuneration adequate to move them out of poverty; and whereas a related goal of the program is to ensure that income assistance recipients receive adequate education relevant to labour market demand to obtain and maintain long-term employment; and, finally, whereas a related goal of the program is to provide accessible supports to facilitate the transition to long-term work.

In addition, work by welfare recipients is discouraged by high tax back rates on earned income, much higher rates than those paid by upper-income Canadians. These should be immediately lowered.

Throughout history, various government and political parties have attempted to use controversy about welfare recipients in electoral politics. This goes back in recent memory certainly to the Reagan government in the U.S. and to the government in the province next door to us, Ontario. The timing of this bill and the associated political advertising indicates to us that this may be happening here. The Social Planning Council finds this to be divisive, harmful to recipients by reinforcing stereotypes, and harmful to society indeed by lowering

acceptance of welfare recipients by employers and others. It goes without saying, it is simply a bad way to make social policy.

Now, Bill 40 provides virtually no detail about the intended measures. Unlike the Ontario government, which tabled detailed regulations at the time that they detailed their Ontario Works bill, this government has not done that. This makes it impossible for the Legislature or the public to debate the public policy issues. Therefore we urge the government to table detailed regulations so that Manitobans and legislators can understand the government's intentions.

Now, what are the unnecessary elements of Bill 40? Research has demonstrated that punitively enforced community service activity for recipients is unnecessary, as are other work-for-welfare provisions. This is because on average welfare recipients already work whenever they are able. Punitively enforced obligations for training and education are similarly unnecessary. The problem is not that recipients will not enrol in existing programs but rather that the government has not made university and college education sufficiently accessible. It has concentrated upon short-term training, which will not lead to long-term labour market attachment. Even this short-term training is in short supply.

Existing provisions of The Child And Family Services Act which apply to all Manitobans who are parents are adequate to protect the children of welfare recipients. So the parenting support requirements in Bill 40 are unnecessary. Why should welfare recipients be held to a higher standard than the rest of us? The problem is not that substance abuse services are underutilized but that there are long waiting lists because government has not provided adequate funding for services.

What are the harmful effects of Bill 40? Bill 40 contains three kinds of harmful effects which should be removed. First, punitive measures to enforce work-related activities, training, and treatment paints welfare recipients as lazy and drunkards or drug abusers. This makes it more difficult for recipients to maintain community connections and to attain employment.

Ironically, these very connections and this very employment are stated as the main intent of the bill. I should have said paradoxically rather than ironically.

Second, because of the broad discretion given to welfare officials by Bill 40, recipients can never be exactly clear as to what they must do and to what they are entitled. This makes it impossible for them to undertake responsible financial planning or to have the psychological capacity necessary to improve their employment potential and situation. Beyond this, current appeal provisions do not adequately protect recipients from unjustified action on the part of officials where this occurs.

Therefore we recommend that, first of all, benefits not be eliminated or decreased until the administrator's decision is automatically reviewed by the appeal board so that the administrator's use of discretion can be assessed before recipients are harmed and, second, that no-cost legal assistance for those appealing decisions be guaranteed in the legislation. We recommend the establishment of a fully accessible welfare duty counsel through the legal aid system to provide advice to recipients about their rights. The current appeal system is certainly not a level playing field.

We recommend that Bill 40 should contain provisions that establish further appeals to the courts on matters of fact. We think there will be many disputed matters of fact about the appropriateness of work requirements as well as on matters of law, jurisdiction, and public importance. We urge that the welfare appeals board be appointed by a committee of the Legislature so that we are sure that we will have a truly independent board not appointed by the government and the minister administering the program.

The third harmful effect, a great deal of research has demonstrated that work-for-welfare provisions are simply ineffective. They do not increase or extend long-term labour market attachment. Therefore, they are an excellent example of waste in the public sector and their enforcement robs resources from the measures I have just described which would be effective. Thank you.

* (1050)

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Frankel.

Mr. Sale: One of the things, Madam Chairperson, that has been very frustrating for many of the people that my partner works with at St. Matthews Maryland Christian centre is that the effective tax-back rate, I think I am right in saying that above \$90-a-month income is deducted on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Is that your understanding still?

Mr. Frankel: I do not think that is quite correct. The rules are actually quite complex. When you combine the tax-back rate on earned income and the income tax rate, I think it is safe to say that we are well over 70 percent.

Mr. Sale: Do you know of any other Canadians in any tax bracket who pay a 70 percent tax rate?

Mr. Frankel: I certainly do not.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Mr. Frankel, for your presentation. I notice in the introduction that you indicate that you certainly do not oppose the idea that welfare recipients should work.

Mr. Frankel: Madam Minister, we think everyone in society has the obligation to work.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can I interpret that then, Mr. Frankel, to mean that welfare recipients should be required to work or train?

Mr. Frankel: Well, as the minister knows well, that is already a requirement in The Employment and Income Assistance Act. It is an unnecessary requirement because welfare recipients, like other citizens, will work because they think it is the right thing to do. But this bill certainly is not necessary to name a requirement to work. This has been in social assistance legislation in Canada since at least the '30s.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So you would then agree, Mr. Frankel, that the provisions that are in the social allowances act that require people to work or train in order to receive assistance should

continue to be part of the legislation, or would you recommend that that be taken out?

Mr. Frankel: Madam Minister, as you know, there are many provisions in the act. The provisions that require work of welfare recipients have always been there and are fine. The extra punitive provisions that this government put in are not fine and have caused harm, as we have said. But the issue is not the requirement of welfare recipients to work. That is a social obligation of all of us, of ministers of the Crown and others.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Mr. Frankel, because I am sure you are aware that the New Democratic Party is opposed to the requirement that people should work or train in order to receive social assistance because they have—[interjection]

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Frankel, could you just repeat your comments.

Mr. Frankel: I would like to say to the minister, first of all, I am not aware of that. I would be interested in the members of that party making their statement after the public presentation. I would also like to say that this is an example of the divisiveness and the harm that this minister and this government are doing, trying to divide Manitobans between the good and the bad, trying to get people to say we are off here supporting those bad, lazy welfare recipients and allowing herself to say we are the ones holding them responsible. Well, that kind of divisiveness makes it very difficult for any moral person to respond to that question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank Mr. Frankel for those comments. I just wanted him to be aware that the New Democratic Party, in 1997, did put forward a resolution that said that people had the right not to work or do training in order to receive assistance. So I was just asking whether he was aware of that, and I thank him for his clarification.

Mr. Frankel: Madam Minister, I would be interested in seeing the exact wording of that resolution.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, I will get that and provide it to you.

Mr. Frankel: I would be pleased to come back to the committee with an analysis of that provision. I would be very glad to be called to do that or to explain it to the minister.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Frankel.

Is there leave of the committee for me to now call David Martin to make his presentation? [agreed] David Martin, please. Good morning, Mr. Martin, and welcome. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. David Martin (Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities): Thank you very much.

The Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities, for those of you who are not aware, is an organization of individuals with all types of disabilities which represents its members' views on important social policy issues in Manitoba. The MLPD was formed in 1974 and has grown to represent hundreds of Manitobans with disabilities from across the province. The MLPD has branches in Brandon, Souris, Steinbach, The Pas and Thompson, and the MLPD's head office is located in Winnipeg.

Since its formation, income issues concerning people with disabilities have been a priority concern of our members. Over the years, the MLPD has been actively involved in raising issues of direct relevance to Manitoba's income support programs for people with disabilities. Many of our submissions to the provincial government have resulted in policy and administrative changes to improve the way income support programs are delivered to people with disabilities. The MLPD's income security committee met a few days ago and discussed the recent announcements from the Department of Family Services concerning changes to the Employment and Income Assistance Program, Bill 40.

It would be fair to say that the announced changes stimulated much discussion at our committee meeting. In the end, I was asked by the committee to attend this hearing today to present some of our thoughts with respect to the proposed changes. First, we must admit that we

were a little confused when we heard about these recent announcements because we thought most of these ideas had been debated in 1996 when The Employment and Income Assistance Act was passed. Back then, the MLPD expressed concern about the act, and it would be fair to say that our concerns remain. Specifically, our members continue to wonder how we, as a society, can threaten to make anyone live without some guarantee they will have access to a minimal income to provide themselves with food and shelter if they have no other source of income. Threatening people with life on the street or starvation seems untenable in a society like Canada.

Since the government has decided to move in this direction, however, our members have questions about the implementation as it affects people with disabilities. We fear that some people with disabilities may be affected by the measures forcing people to work, to attend addiction programs, or to participate in educational classes, because there is no clear definition of disability. The government has continually said that people with disabilities will not be affected by these changes, but the MLPD is worried that some people may indeed be harmed.

* (1100)

In particular, we worry about people with hidden disabilities or disabilities which are hard to diagnose. We fear that some people in these categories may be faced with punitive measures by the Employment and Income Assistance Program.

It is likely that the definition of disability will be addressed during the review of Income Assistance for people with disabilities which was recently announced by the Minister of Family Services. The MLPD members are looking forward to this review, and we will be recommending that the definition of disability be flexible and must take into account the needs of all people who identify themselves as having a disability. MLPD members have always favoured the concept of self-identification of disability as the policy for accessing services to meet our needs. We suggest that the Department

of Family Services use this approach when deciding who is disabled and who is not.

In closing, the MLPD Income Security Committee strongly supports all provincial government measures to help promote employment, and we hope that people with disabilities will be able to also receive supports to move off Income Assistance into employment if they are able. Many people with disabilities on Income Assistance would rather be in paid employment. However, they have received little assistance to achieve this goal. The MLPD is currently undertaking a major consultation project funded by the Department of Family Services to identify ways the Income Assistance Program might support people with disabilities to be employed. We will be submitting our recommendations to the minister in the fall.

At this point, we are pleased to provide you with a copy of the discussion paper which we are using during this consultation process. It identifies eight key issues which might need to be changed to help people with disabilities on Income Assistance to be employed. These issues and others, discovered during the consultation process, will likely form the basis of our final recommendations. Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks, Mr. Martin, for your presentation. I want to thank you for a very balanced approach, raising issues and concerns, as well as indicating your desire to be involved in the consultation process that will be upcoming. I know that you are never hesitant to put forward your points of view on the issues that affect those with disabilities.

So I commend you for that, and I look forward, too, to the discussions and dialogue. I know certainly you and your organization will be involved as we work through how the consultation process will take place, trying to ensure that we cover all of the issues and deal with all of those that need to be consulted with around services and supports through employment and income assistance for the

disabled. So thank you for your presentation and look forward to continuing to work with you.

Mr. Martin: Thank you.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Martin, for your presentation on behalf of the Manitoba League and especially for the Employment Solutions pamphlet. It looks very interesting.

I am wondering if you are concerned that this minister and this Conservative government, by telling the public that persons with disabilities are exempt from this legislation and by increasing the disability benefit from \$70 a month to \$80 a month, are trying to widen the distinction between the deserving poor, many of whom are disabled, and the undeserving poor, who are everyone else. Given that you said that many people with disabilities want to work, I am wondering if you are concerned about what the minister's approach does to divide the two groups.

Mr. Martin: Certainly we have discussed that within our organization, and we do have some concern, yes, about that kind of a phenomenon taking place where people who have disabilities are seen as the "deserving poor" and those that are identified or deemed not to have a disability are seen to be somehow different and less deserving of public support when they are in need. So we have some concern about that. People with disabilities do not deserve to be poor either. We certainly want to improve the income of all people with and without disabilities. Everybody needs to have something to eat and a decent place to live. It does not matter whether you are disabled or not.

You know, as human beings, we all have to have a good quality of life. In Canada, we all should be able to have a good quality of life. We are a wealthy country, and we need to find a way of making sure that all people, disabled and nondisabled, are treated fairly by our society and are given the support that they might need at any given point in time in their life.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Martin. We appreciate your presentation today.

I have just been given information that Mr. Starmer from the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce is unable to be with us after this morning, and I wonder if there is leave of the committee to allow him to speak now. [agreed]

I would also ask then is there leave for me to canvass the room to see if there are other people who are unable to come back after this morning and allow them to make their presentations this morning before noon?

Mr. Martindale: Normally, we accommodate requests like this. But I do have a concern that there were people here last night who did not get on and came back this morning, and I think we have an obligation to treat them fairly too.

Madam Chairperson: I totally agree. So are you saying that you will agree with the canvassing of the room or not?

An Honourable Member: The government has the majority; it is their will.

Madam Chairperson: What we will do, then, is canvass the room to see who was here last night. If those people who were here last night and are here again this morning, and if it is going to be difficult to come back a third time, I wonder if you could make yourself known to the Clerk if you are interested in making your presentation this morning. Then, if there are others, as well, we will try to accommodate whomever we can before twelve o'clock today.

As agreed, then, we would now call on Mr. Starmer from the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce.

Good morning, Mr. Starmer, and welcome. Do you have a written presentation for distribution?

* (1110)

Mr. Graham Starmer (Manitoba Chamber of Commerce): I wish to apologize about that, and I will see that it gets to the committee as soon as I go back to the office.

Madam Chairperson: That is fine. Please proceed.

Mr. Starmer: Madam Chair, members of the Legislature, my name is Graham Starmer. I am the executive director of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce. The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce is a nonprofit organization representing 77 Chambers of Commerce, 9,000 businesses and 270 direct corporate and association members.

I appreciate this opportunity to make a brief appearance today before your committee. I speak in favour of the resolution or rather the legislation, Bill 40, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendments Act. The particular focus of my comments today is directed towards a section of the act termed by the press as workfare.

First, let me say that I believe that more information could have been made available concerning potential implementations of a number of the provisions of this act and that this may have caused confusion amongst the presenters and the groups involved in doing presentations. A scan of the current models of workfare in other provinces and the U.S. has serviced extensive criticism of these types of programs. There are books reviewing books, there are excellent websites of anteworkfare advocates, many of which have expensive and sophisticated websites, more than the chamber could, in fact, afford to produce themselves.

When simply distilled down, there are a number of major stumbling blocks to the success of any workfare. One, is the availability of jobs; and two, is the education or skills required to fill those jobs. There is a train of thought supported by many respected organizations that persons on welfare who are on social assistance for prolonged periods of time become dependent and that their initiative decreases. I believe this frequently occurs as a result of continued rejection, rejection because their skills are insufficient, that there is no previous experience or a method of applying for a job has been faulty. This brings to a Catch-22 position of many of these persons. How do you obtain experience, skills and learn job language? This portion of the act provides for an incentive for persons to get over that barrier of rejection and learn some of these skills.

One program which I personally have been involved with over the past year has been Youth Serve Program. I cannot speak highly enough about this program which gives our youth the opportunity to learn skills through volunteering within not-for-profit organizations or groups. A number of these youth have, in fact, since working within this program learned necessary skills and now employed successfully this summer.

I want to return to the two major stumbling blocks which I perceive, and that is there are currently more jobs available in Manitoba than there are employees to fill them. We need tool operators, early child educators, manufacturing technicians, drywall installers, hog barn managers, machinists, daycare managers, accountants, to name a few. There are close to 60,000 people receiving some form of welfare in this province. There is a workforce in itself there.

While a number of these jobs may require experience and education, it is good to start work with a community service organization. Many provide the initial elements that job search candidates may require to be successful. This is a good start to get people over the barrier of rejection and to become mobilized. We, the business of Manitoba, need more skilled workers and while we are attracting persons to this province from other provinces, we have here a potential pool of talent which can be tapped.

The chamber has diverse representation across the community, and while other sections of this act fall outside the usual parameters which we would discuss, in recent discussions with the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, to name one, they are supportive of this act, because their involvement with the community has developed numerous programs from which they can develop their skilled labour force. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Starmer.

Ms. Cerilli: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Starmer. I am wondering if you are aware, during the NDP administration—I am most familiar with the Pawley administration actually,

and worked in the civil service for part of that time in a department that did deliver some programs that were taking social allowance monies and putting them into programs that were successful in making people transition on a more permanent basis, providing the skill, training, the supports necessary.

I am wondering if you are familiar with some of those programs, the New Careers program, the Access program, the Gateway programs. Some of them were referenced last night in other presentations. So I am wondering if you are aware of those programs and the success of those programs and the way that they have been reduced over the last number of years.

Mr. Starmer: One of the factors that I have come to learn, and we frequently discuss these types of programs with the government, is that they are moving more and more towards identifying the productivity of these programs and trying to identify benchmarks of success. They are determining if these particular programs have proven successful and whether they are going to be renewed.

The chamber is very supportive of this process in order to determine how functionally successful they are. A good example is that we are currently working with one of the secretariats to try to develop a program for high-risk teens and involving them, improving their self-esteem and working with businesses to try to develop the high-risk teens' skills. So each of these programs is held in its own individual benefit to the job force.

Ms. Cerilli: I am also wondering if you would share a concern that programs that utilize rates of welfare, sort of the program that would have people work in positions where they are not getting at least the minimum wage, where they are getting sort of a lower welfare rate, if that is problematic, if you would share a concern that that is problematic.

Mr. Starmer: I think it is problematic with people who believe that they cannot work. Many people use volunteership as a lead-up to future employment. Many employers determine whether the employee or the potential employee is a viable employee through volunteer work,

through casual jobs. That is how these businesses determine whether they wish to move to a long-term basis. I think that we are just dealing with semantics really. It depends at what stage you are alluding to.

Ms. Cerilli: Just to clarify, then, the chamber would support having people work at a rate of pay less than the minimum wage on either a temporary or a longer-term basis, if those people are coming through this social allowance program.

Mr. Starmer: I think the chamber would support individuals volunteering for jobs to gain experience. If this meant honorariums or—I think that there is a basic of minimum wage here when you are talking about full-time employment, but when you are talking about gaining work experience, I do not necessarily feel that you can put a value to that. The value is to the employee who is looking for employment to gain those skills.

Ms. Cerilli: So just to clarify so that I am clear about what you are saying then. You think that it would be acceptable for a short period of time to have people volunteer to take a position while they are still earning their welfare rate of income and that would try and help them transition. Then, after that, there would be the expectation that they would have a full-time job that would be higher or at the minimum wage.

Mr. Starmer: Correct.

* (1120)

Ms. Cerilli: Okay. Do you have a sense of how long that period might be?

Mr. Starmer: I think that would be determined due to the complexity of their skills learning. We have individuals who are very fast at learning new skills, and we have individuals that are not. I am not sure that you can necessarily put a time frame on that. It would have to be evaluated as you go along.

Ms. Cerilli: One final question, because I raised this last night, as well, with one of the questions. Are there are a number of programs that have been tried in various jurisdictions like that, and

one of the problems is the retention rate that moves people into those full-time permanent positions. I am wondering if the Chamber has done any work with its members or the business community to try and evaluate that, to try and encourage there to be more retention of those permanent full-time positions. Is the chamber involved in any of that kind of work?

Mr. Starmer: No, we have never evaluated that clearly. I know that some of the major organizations like Investors Syndicate and Great-West Life do maintain an idea of what the reasons for their loss of staff are, but I do not know that it has ever been done on a provincial scope, not by the chamber, anyway.

Ms. Cerilli: I am just wondering, if you think that that would be something that would be appropriate to do to try and ensure if these programs are going to work, then it is going to mean that there has to be that long-term commitment.

Mr. Starmer: Any evaluation system to determine the viability, we would concur with.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks very much, Mr. Starmer, for your presentation. It sounds to me as if there are businesses out there, certainly that you know about through the chamber, that are prepared to mentor and support individuals who might be looking to gain skills that they might be able to use on a resume, that, in fact, could lead to full-time and meaningful employment. So I just want to say thanks to your organization. I would hope that we can work together as we move to implement the legislation to ensure that there is mentorship and support for those that need that and need to build some self-esteem and move forward.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Starmer. We have canvassed the room of people who were here last evening and who have arrived today. There are three presenters who have requested to present this morning because they are unable to come back. Is there leave of the committee to allow these three presenters to present at this time? They are Pauline Riley, Blair Hamilton and Rhonda McCorriston. Blair Hamilton is replacing Allen Bleich from the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

At this time, then, I would like to call Pauline Riley from the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women.

Good morning, Ms. Riley. Do you have papers for distribution? Thank you. Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Pauline Riley (Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women): Thank you very much for offering me the opportunity to speak. I am actually speaking on behalf of the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women and the Community Action on Poverty and the national antipoverty organization.

Firstly, I would like to open this presentation by stating that all the above organizations are not, in principle, opposed to real job training, education, welfare reform, or drug rehabilitation programs. We are not antiwork or pro-dependency and, furthermore, we are not opposed to change and ask that you do not dismiss our presentation as being merely from another special interest group. We do not disagree with trying to help social assistance recipients get decent employment or training that will lead to jobs if that is what Bill 40 and previous Bill 36 is supposed to do. But from where we are sitting, it does not look like that.

The current amendments threaten to kick thousands of people off welfare when there are only five thousand jobs available and most of the jobs available need skills and training. People on welfare want to work, but the jobs that are available are usually of low wages and offer too few hours to support themselves or their families or are jobs which require a high level of training. To suggest that cutting grass and painting fences will lead to employment is absurd and offensive.

The social programs currently in place for people who cannot find work or find jobs are inadequate and few and far between. In my experience, our communities are full of people on assistance who choose to volunteer their time and are more than willing to work. The question also needs to be asked, how do you expect inner city organizations to assist with the community service activities and forced volunteering? All our inner city organizations are already stretched paper thin and will not be able to train or

supervise additional workers without diverting attention from their current workloads.

In society, we are respected and judged by the wages we earn. All jobs in our communities should provide a decent living. Forcing people to volunteer will not lead to a sense of dignity or pride. It will further stigmatize people on welfare. The fact is, the real problem is simply there are not enough jobs available for all recipients. These types of welfare reforms do not get at the real problem. Bill 40 will indeed reduce and eliminate people from welfare rolls, but will it solve the problem? What will happen to the people who are cut off? I do not suppose that matters so long as the welfare rolls go down.

Your government only needs to look to New Brunswick and Quebec to see two failed models. Quebec abandoned their program after seven years, and New Brunswick after it cost \$177 million. The Quebec study found that workfare was a revolving door. There is also little incentive for employers to hire when they can get their low-skilled tasks performed at government expense, so reducing paid positions.

Bill 40 also forces people into drug rehabilitation. Will this solve the problem? All drug counsellors will tell you that addicts who are forced into counselling do not succeed. The best way to beat a drug habit is to want to go for treatment. Forcing persons into drug rehabilitation is not the way to go. Further to this issue, where are the treatment programs? Currently there are upwards of 200 people waiting for treatment at St. Norbert Foundation and a 15-month waiting list at the Laurel Centre.

The recent press releases indicate that an extra \$500,000 will be put into the system to help addictive parents on welfare. We do not feel that this will be adequate. In fact, this will not even cover the backlog. We are also concerned about welfare workers determining who has an addiction problem. Since when have these workers been trained in dealing with these types of assessments? What type of training will the government institute to address this issue? If parents are forced into drug treatment, what will happen to their children? Where are the child care places for the children? The province currently has an overloaded caseload for Child

and Family Services and children are being kept in downtown hotels at a cost of hundreds of dollar per night, and over recent years the foster care program has been hacked and underfunded. We suggest that this is a poorly thought out attempt to deal with an extremely complex problem.

Mr. David Faurschou, Vice-Chairperson, in the Chair

We further state that regarding the move to force young people to attend school is hypocrisy on the part of the current government, when, in fact, they were the ones who a few years ago cut successful programs such as New Careers, Student Social Allowances, and Access programs. Why has this government not invested in the youth of our community? Why has this government not developed training and apprenticeship programs, and why did you axe money and cut services?

Spending time and encouraging youth to stay in school in itself is a positive aspect, but zeroing in on welfare recipients and threatening to cut them off is not the answer. Only 4 percent of welfare cases are aged under 20 years of age. At the age of 16, all students have the right to quit school. You could find other ways to keep young people in school, and we suggest that you start by reinstating the programs which you scrapped.

Let us examine this Bill 40. What is it really about? The newspaper headlines state: Province plans workfare program; welfare reform. There is nothing in this bill that speaks of reform. There is no program or adequate money in place to implement these measures. These amendments will cost money, will not produce jobs. This bill is a piecemeal attempt at punitive reform. The press release states that new policy initiatives would build on the successful welfare reform strategies from 1996. What successes? Did Bill 36 work? No. Despite your get-tough policies, you have miserably failed to move people from welfare to work, failed to create jobs, cut back programs and, in general, failed the poor and the working poor of this province.

The press releases and media coverage leading up to this bill were designed to lead

people to believe that you were at last getting tough on welfare bums. Well, the truth of the matter is that three years ago, under Bill 36, the wheels were already set in motion for punitive and regressive welfare reforms, including workfare. At that time I did speak against Bill 36, not because I am opposed to reforms, but because the reforms put forward did not offer any real alternative or concrete thought-out plans which would enable people to receive meaningful job training and employment.

* (1130)

Bill 40 is just one more piece of inflammatory material being thrown on your pre-election campaign bandwagon. Why else are we being subjected to a daily bombardment of black-and-white barn-raising commercials which show us a time when a community worked together? Well, we do not have many barn-raising parties in Manitoba anymore because most of our small farmers have been squeezed out by agribusiness. I will also add to that that those good old days also included thousands of workers who were unemployed, and since that time we have fought long and hard for a social safety net that would treat people with dignity and respect. A country or province, as the case may be, will be and is judged on how it treats the most vulnerable in the society. These commercials and Bill 40 are repugnant and offensive and have been only designed to tap into some nostalgic place in the hearts and minds of potential voters. The good old days—give me a break.

The "pull you up by your bootstraps and find a job" attitude does indeed seem to be very popular in an age of cut-and-slash politics. Everybody would like to blame somebody for the state of our economy and our social problems, and your government is attempting to tap in and feed right off that feeling. We say: shame on you; you really are scraping the bottom of the barrel. This bill is totally lacking in substance, and the poor are being used as a pawn in a Tory extended election campaign. This warmed-up, warmed-over bill will do nothing to solve the social economic problems of thousands of Manitobans on social assistance. We feel that it is a pathetic attempt to score points for the upcoming election and that you are

trying to do this off the backs of the poor. It is an attempt to drive a wedge between the working poor and social assistance recipients. The Tory government is stooping lower than a dog's foot bottom when it tries to portray all welfare recipients as lazy, bad parents, addicts, high school dropouts and cheats. And you dare to pollute our airwaves with TV advertising to promote these myths and stereotypes.

Your smoke and mirrors will not fool the people of Manitoba. Your warmed-up bill will not fool the electorate any more than they are impressed by your reheated food or your hallway medicine. If you had presented us with a bill that held some promise of meaningful change to the welfare system, one that would benefit all Manitobans, then I would not find it necessary to stand before you today to oppose this bill.

There are many examples of reform that you could have followed instead of the path you chose of blaming and further ghettoizing and marginalizing the poor. Wielding a big stick over the heads of poor, of people on social assistance, is not a hand up. This is like being hit over the head with a two-by-four. The public is being led to believe that we have a huge problem that needs these kinds of punitive measures. The people of Manitoba deserve better. The poor people of Manitoba want to work and be productive. They want and deserve realistic incentives and opportunities to enable them to contribute. They also want a government that they can trust, one that will act with compassion and understanding and not like schoolyard bullies. What we need here is a common decency revolution. Thank you.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Riley.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Thank you, Ms. Riley, for your presentation. In your presentation you talked about addictions, and I wanted to make a comment about addictions and then ask you a question. My experience with the women's community and in conversations I have had recently with people who work in the field is that, contrary to what the minister indicated last night, there are not really services that target women and provide the special services for women, because the reasons women become

addicted and continue in their addictions are quite different than those for men.

I do understand that there is \$500,000 going into the St. Norbert addiction centre, but I also understand men attend the St. Norbert addiction centre and the women can take their children. There have been cases where they face not only men—and I do not think the best place for women to heal is around men, but it has happened that a woman has faced a man who has actually been her abuser in an earlier phase of her life.

I am wondering if this is your experience, because I know that you are the provincial co-ordinator for the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women, so that you must be frequently dealing with women who have serious problems. So I wonder if this has been your experience, and I am also wondering if you are aware if there are any of the kinds of services I am describing available for women in this province, that is, real services where women could take their children and do their healing apart from men.

Ms. Riley: I do have quite a bit of contact with women in the community, and one of the problems that I am told is that there is a long waiting list for people to get into treatment. So, even when a person makes that decision and says, I really do need treatment, and that obviously is the best time for people to go into treatment, when they make that commitment, recognizing their own problem, there are very, very long waiting lists, which, I think, are pretty detrimental to women, because they make that commitment, they try to deal with their family situation in order to go into treatment.

There have to be special programs for women and children in treatment. They do have to be separate from men, because a lot of women are in addictive situations, and this has come out of abusive relationships, so there has to be a fine balance. I realize that the current government has put money into place for services and that there have been attempts to deal with this, but I think it needs to be enhanced and it needs to be looked at very, very particularly from a woman's perspective and that there should be separate facilities. I mean, it could be in the same organization, but very separate programs, and

certainly we need more of the programs, because the women I speak to say it takes far, far too long to get into the program, and they are ready to go, but they cannot get in.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Ms. Riley, for your presentation. I know that you have been somewhat critical of our party, and we probably agree to disagree on some of the things that you have raised in your presentation, but I guess, given your strong opinion that this bill is wrong-headed, would you think that all members of the Legislative Assembly who voted in support of this bill would be wrong-headed in their decision?

Ms. Riley: Can you repeat that question?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I guess my question would be would you be extremely disappointed if all members of the Legislative Assembly voted to support this legislation?

Ms. Riley: Yes, I would.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Riley, for your presentation today.

Ms. Riley: You are welcome.

* (1140)

Madam Chairperson: The next presenter we have is Blair Hamilton, representing the Canadian Union of Public Employees for Manitoba. Mr. Hamilton, do you have papers for distribution?

Mr. Blair Hamilton (Canadian Union of Public Employees—Manitoba): Madam Chair, my name is Blair Hamilton. I am the recording secretary for the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and one of the reasons I am here to speak to you is because I have been working in social services for about 14 years now, almost exclusively within low-income communities, and I have talked to and worked with hundreds of people in a variety of capacities, including job training and community economic development.

should also mention as a footnote, I was fortunate enough to be appointed to the Minimum Wage Review Board recently and, as part of the deliberations and outcome of that, I guess I am a little dismayed to see the Chamber of Commerce here, looking to use this legislation as a means to avoid paying the minimum wage, to look for a subsidized workforce, and it seems to me perhaps the Chamber of Commerce needs a hand up and not a handout.

So with that I will go to the text of the presentation. On behalf of the 23,000 members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees in Manitoba, thank you for this opportunity to express our views on Bill 40, and, in particular, our concern that this government appears to be stigmatizing social assistance recipients rather than providing much needed programming. The Canadian Union of Public Employees represents people working in hospitals, nursing homes, municipalities, daycare centres, school divisions, universities, public utilities and social service agencies throughout the province.

At the outset we would like to state that we are concerned about the short notice the government gave for these hearings. It does not give the people of Manitoba the opportunity to digest the contents. I would also say that the absence of regulations makes it difficult. Truly meaningful input would require some more time for Manitobans to prepare and sign up for these public hearings.

Bill 40 has two key elements, we would suggest. Section 5 identifies the three activities that the government believes every welfare recipient should undertake: addiction treatment, parenting courses and education and training.

The second element lays out a penalty for not undertaking two of these three mandatory areas, namely, addiction treatment and education and training. The proposed amendments are silent on penalties for single parents refusing to take parenting courses.

The members of CUPE, like most Manitobans, are in support of assisting social assistance recipients to receive gainful employment. Our opposition to this legislation

is primarily in three areas: (a) the stigmatization, discrimination and poor bashing that this approach entails; (b) the lack of positive programming versus coercive measures; and (c) the apparent motivation behind this legislation.

Further to stigmatization, we have seen in recent television ads which suggested the government wants to offer welfare recipients a hand up as opposed to a handout. We would characterize Bill 40 as the hand that is slapping those least able to defend themselves in our society. It is about denigrating those in the need of temporary assistance.

For example, Bill 40 will force welfare recipients to participate in parenting support programs. Legislation and agencies already exist to ensure that children are properly looked after by their parents. Bill 40 unfairly presumes that social assistance recipients are less capable of parenting and consequently stigmatizes them. Bill 40 also tries to draw public attention to the fact that some persons on social assistance have substance abuse problems by insisting they seek treatment for it. Again, why single out welfare recipients in this regard? Why does the government not propose to implement broad-based addictions treatment programs that can assist all Manitobans whether they happen to draw social assistance or work in the Legislature?

Perhaps our greatest concern about this bill is the requirement that welfare recipients will be obligated to undertake any education or training as required by the director or municipality. The insinuation, of course, is that welfare recipients do not really want education or training because they do not really want to work. This common sentiment is unfortunately based on a combination of ignorance and meanness. It ignores the fact that only 22 percent of welfare recipients are deemed employable. It also conveniently overlooks the evidence that suggests poor people do not want to work to improve their lives.

Long queues appear whenever decent jobs are offered. I can tell you that I sat down, working on a project a number of years ago, with Juergen Hartman from the City of Winnipeg who related the story about the City of

Winnipeg's offer of employment cleaning up the sewage-soaked basements a number of years ago, and they were literally overwhelmed by the number of phone calls. People were working at a decent but not an exorbitant wage and doing some pretty smelly and disgusting work for it. People do want to work.

Mandatory training is weak policy but good politics because it reinforces stereotypes and gives a semblance of government action.

Lack of programming. This bill does not talk about job creation, nor does it provide examples of programs that will actually help welfare recipients. Two days of public hearings clearly do not allow any input from those perhaps best positioned to provide meaningful input: recipients and those who work with welfare recipients. The fate of the Taking Charge! program is revealing. Taking Charge! was largely an uncoercive, voluntary program that did have some success in getting people back to work. The program included some life skills training and some ancillary services like child care that made it easier for people, and it was also delivered through a number of community partners. I do not want to be an unabashed booster of that initiative, but it did have some positive elements and some successes. I think there are things that can be improved upon there.

One of the shortcomings was the 52-week training limit, which was sufficient for some people who were more employment ready, but a lot of recipients had longer-term training needs, including literacy. Taking Charge! is just one example of a possible model that could be improved. People have already mentioned Access, BUNTEP and New Careers. A number of those programs have turned out professionals, not merely minimum-wage workers.

Although this government has the majority to push the bill through the Legislature—with the speed that this bill is proceeding at, we must assume that it is the government's intention to do this as early as possible—we would urge the committee to renounce this proposed scheme of mandatory programs and recommend instead that positive voluntary programs be set up.

The lack of detail and specific programming leads one to believe that this bill has been motivated by one of two considerations. Either this government is testing the waters relative to a full-blown welfare program, or this is simply election posturing. In the first instance, let us state our unequivocal opposition to welfare. We will address that issue more fully if a program is introduced, but let us state now that, wherever it has been tried, welfare has failed completely to provide decent jobs to social service recipients. It was both a fiscal and social failure in New Brunswick, it cannot get off the ground in Ontario; and it was found by the Quebec human rights tribunal to contravene provisions of the Quebec charter. The American experience, expensive websites notwithstanding, is not any more illuminating.

If it is not the intention of this government to later introduce a welfare bill or program, then the present Bill 40 is really best seen as the most cynical of political manoeuvres. An attempt by this government to gain political mileage by attacking a vulnerable segment of society. By introducing this bill as part of a law-and-order platform, this government is implicitly criminalizing poverty. It has confused attacking poverty with attacking the poor.

To conclude, we would urge the government to withdraw this legislation and undertake a meaningful consultation with social agencies, the voluntary sector and social assistance recipients that can lead to humane, fair-minded and cost-effective approach to welfare reform. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Hamilton, for your presentation.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks, Mr. Hamilton. I am sorry that I had to leave for just a minute or two during your presentation, but I have had the opportunity to catch up by reading through the presentation. I then would presume that you might believe there might be opposition to this bill when it comes to a vote in the Legislature?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, I would expect there to be. I think morally there should be. This bill is wrong-headed. There are better alternatives.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Hamilton, for presenting a brief. We have heard from many presenters that people are already doing a lot of volunteer work and that people want to volunteer. Perhaps what people need is more opportunities to volunteer. Would your organization have concerns about volunteers taking away jobs from paid workers? If so, do you think that the bill should be amended in that regard?

Mr. Hamilton: Well, certainly, we are not interested in seeing people who are paid below the minimum wage or below existing collective agreement rates, for that matter, come in and do work that is already being done. We are particularly concerned when those types of programs, as have in other jurisdictions, are introduced to let that work be done without proper workplace health and safety provisions where employment standards do not apply or other provisions of a collective agreement.

One of the reasons the city of Winnipeg was able to survive the recent flood so well is because it had a trained and easily managed workforce ready to go. I think when you are talking about volunteers, and this kind of ad-hoc delivery that this would imply, you do not have that ability to respond. So I think there are a number of down sides.

* (1150)

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Hamilton, for your presentation this morning.

Our final presenter this morning is Rhonda McCorriston, private citizen.

Rhonda, would you please come forward. Do you have papers for distribution? Welcome, Ms. McCorriston, and please proceed.

Ms. Rhonda McCorriston (Private Citizen): First, I would like to thank you very much for listening to me today. It is an honour to be here.

I first wanted to draw attention to the number of people who have come to speak

against this bill. I have been reading some of Jeremy Rifkin and stuff like that, and I guess what I wanted to say was that when we are talking about putting people who are unemployed to work, agencies and organizations that come up here and speak against empowering people to go to work, I wonder if maybe that is to enable them to keep their positions too.

I notice the people who presented today up here for anti-poverty organizations sit on organizations and boards and are involved in community activities. I feel that is very lucky for them because many of the people whom I work with daily are not involved, do not feel that their voices are being heard, do not feel that they are having anything that anybody else will listen to. That voice comes from being involved. It comes from being involved in your community as a volunteer, as an employee, as somebody who is respected, and that voice comes from feeling like you have something to contribute and to continue it. So I wanted to start there.

I also just wanted to draw attention to the number of people who came up here and spoke today about the rights for women and children who were, in fact, not women or children.

I speak to you today as a private citizen of Manitoba and a taxpayer. I also want to address you as someone who works in the inner city. I want to talk to you as a community member, as an elected community representative for the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, as an educator, but, most importantly, as an ex-welfare mom.

Welfare has a very important role in our community and in our society. It guarantees that children are fed. It assures families that they can remain intact, and it provides simple securities for families. These are rudimentary needs and I adamantly defend them and the need for them and the right of people to expect the social support network will remain.

I do have same grave concerns about a bill that sits before you today, and I humbly request that you consider these points in the near future.

Just as you and I do not share the same faith and religion, the same family or cultural traditions or the same political perspective,

occasionally, not everyone will find the same healing and success for recovery in treatment programs. It is imperative that citizens can self-determine the right path for recovery. Recovery does not need to be immediate, and there does need to be a gentle nudge to make people seek treatment. But people need choices about the programs that are available for them. I do strongly support, and I believe that the people who have spoken too, do support treatment programs with people being gently nudged or compelled into going, but we need to be really careful about what programs those are because we cannot line it up and say everybody needs the same treatment program.

People addicted to drugs are killing themselves. We do not need to support anybody's right to kill themselves. It is not a right, and when we say that people have the right to make choices for drugs, what we are saying is that people have the right to take their own lives, and I cannot support that. No responsible community member or citizen could support that right.

I am both afraid and excited about the prospect of enforcing parenting programs. I am afraid that the fundamental reason that parenting programs are being enforced may stem from the stereotypical image of social assistance parents as bad parents, and that offends me. I am concerned the bill itself reflects values and ideas that may not be cornerstones of all cultures, and therefore we may not have come very far in that respect arena. But I am most afraid of the design and delivery and purposes of the programs. There are models of excellent parenting programs out there that the Honourable Mrs. Mitchelson and other members of this community have seen and heard about.

The head start programs, the even start programs from the United States, all those programs and community-based programs are amazing in their design and delivery, and I think there would not be many community people who could be against such a program.

I am suggesting programs that strive for developing parenting-childing bonds by exploring parenting issues through discussion, child development programs as well as goal

setting and career pathing for young moms. Our parents deeply love their children. I have been working with these moms and dads for a number of years, and I defy anyone to try and convince me otherwise. These moms love their children with the same intensity as you love your children and as you were loved. Parents, especially young moms, need to learn about hope. They need to plan for better tomorrows, and they need to learn to delight in their children.

This does not come from a paternalistic, public health-driven, clean-up-our-kids campaign or agenda. It comes from embracing the good work done in the community level and empowering our families through the women, young and old. Models that work include head start programs, Andrews Street, West Broadway Family Centre and other community-driven resource centres. I am excited about a prospect for young parents and young women having an opportunity to experience this kind of parenting support. There is a grave cycle of poverty and dysfunction that is rooted in babies having babies.

Obligation to education and training. This part is the part that excites me the most. This is an excellent initiative, but I think we need to be a little bit cautious about what programs that we are supporting. Programs have to be relevant. They have to be accredited or certified. They need to lead to real jobs and careers. Programs need to be education and training for employment. Personal plans need to be explored. If we try and place people in jobs that are not suited for them after a long period of unemployment or after being unemployed and they hate it, we are just providing opportunities for people to avoid this process again.

Secondly, supports for people in education and training are important. People need transportation, daycare, and training allowances. It costs money to leave your house every day. It costs for morning coffee; it costs for pop in the afternoon on a hot day; and it costs to attend many learning activities. I hear from parents all the time who do not send their children to field trips at school because they cannot afford it. I know of people who have been walking in 30 below over to our programs because they were getting the \$50 in a pocket for the bus pass. I

think that we need to be really very careful about making sure that people can afford to attend programs.

I have sat with people from the United Way, I have sat with people from different organizations who say our community does not go out, our parents do not get involved in their kids' education, our parents do not volunteer. All those things cost money. To even visit your children in the hospital, if you have one child in the hospital and two at home, you have to pay for a babysitter. It costs transportation to get down there or parking. Everything has some kind of related cost.

We were offered opportunities to go to the Ex this year. We were given free passes to go to the Ex this year, and we did not take them because what are our families supposed to do when they get inside the door of the Ex? They are standing there, and they have not got money for rides. They have not got treats, and everybody else does. Everything that is even free has costs related, and we need to keep those things in mind.

Speaking as a public representative from the Aboriginal Council but also speaking as an ex-welfare mom, I do believe that there are a lot of people in our community who do need a nudge. Sometimes it is really hard for people to stand in front of you and say: you know, there are those who are choosing not to work. There are. The facts are that there are people who will not come to training programs. We have a hard time all the time filling up the training programs. We offer high school programs free of charge. We offer construction programs.

There are all kinds of programs that are available out there, and people who say that there are not programs for training, I disagree. Not everybody can be trained to be a doctor today, but each one of us had to start somewhere too. Maybe training people to be health care aides and then training them and providing opportunities for them to make the kind of money that they can make to then seek other health training to be R.N.s and then to become doctors, that needs to be a choice. But none of us were given the opportunity to just walk in and make that kind of training and educational

funding and get everything free, and I think that that is something we need to look at, because everybody needs to start somewhere.

A gentle nudge is what some people need, and I strongly believe that in our community with the people that I work with—I work with over a hundred students every year who are aboriginal adults. I spoke this morning about coming here today to my aboriginal adults that I work with, and there was not one of them who were against the educational and welfare reforms. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. McCorriston.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you for your presentation, Ms. McCorriston. I wonder if I could ask you a question, and you may not want to answer it, which I would understand, but I wonder if you would tell us how you—you describe yourself as an ex-welfare mom, and I wondered if you would mind telling us how you managed to leave welfare.

Ms. McCorriston: I separated from an abusive relationship. I went back to university. I worked part time in a bar serving alcohol. I was on assistance at the time. I was also involved in the Access program at the university. During that time I also worked to support my children by working evenings.

Ms. McGifford: You are aware that the Access program has been cut?

Ms. McCorriston: I understand that the supports are there. The funding is not available, but I understand that people also on social assistance right now can attend the Access program and that books and tuition will still be provided for them.

* (1200)

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Ms. McCorriston, for your presentation. You used the expression "gentle nudge" in describing this bill. I am wondering if you realize that this bill provides for cutting off people's benefits entirely, which means they would have no income, no shelter, no food. Would it be more accurate to say that it

is a big stick? I mean, you might agree that it is still necessary to get some people into education or training or parenting programs, but is it really a gentle nudge?

Ms. McCroriston: For two years I have been running a piece of our project called compulsory volunteerism. What we do is we expect our students to go out and volunteer in the community for 12 to 18 hours a month, and that is part of what they have to do to give back to the community and to give back to our program in order for them to be able to be a part of the program. Whether people appreciate that or not, that is just the way I do things. As a matter of principle, I have heard of students who meet each other in the elevator and they say: I have to get up at eight o'clock tomorrow morning and do my volunteering. The other one says: well, why do you just not go? She says: I cannot do that; I am needed there.

I strongly believe in the whole idea of compelling people to make advantages in their own life. If you have lived with cyclical poverty for a long time, you do not realize how great it can be without it. I believe it is a gentle nudge, and if it takes a big stick sometimes, that is what it takes too. Yes, I do support it.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Ms. McCroriston. I know we have had the opportunity to talk from time to time, and I really do value the contribution that you make to those in our community who need your support. I also am very proud of the accomplishments that you have made personally and individually, and I think that probably gives you the drive and desire to see other people move forward in their lives and see some positive results and some hope.

So I thank you for your presentation. I hear the concerns around some of the issues that you spoke about and some of the hope you have for other parts of the legislation. I do want to commit to you that we will work very closely with you to ensure, as we are implementing the legislation, we seek your input, because I think you certainly have some valuable contributions to make to ensure that we achieve the kind of success that we anticipate we will achieve as we

move forward with this legislation. So thank you.

Ms. McCroriston: Thank you, and I also thank you very much for the input and the support that you have allowed us to have already. We think that there have been some good advancements made in regard to the way that we have been empowered in our program to make decisions for our learners. We look forward to continuing that relationship. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. McCroriston.

Seeing that we still have a number of presenters who have not had an opportunity to present, it is obvious that we are going to have another session at some point.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, I would recommend that we follow the normal process, which would be to keep scheduling hearings on this bill until we are finished with all the presenters.

Normally, the next opportunity would be at three o'clock until six and from seven until we finish. You know, normally we keep going. In fact, last night was very unusual with the government asking to adjourn at ten, and then we actually adjourned at eleven.

Also, in terms of fairness to the presenters, it is not fair to ask people to come back morning, noon and night repeatedly. I think we should finish this as expeditiously as possible which would be the normal process.

Madam Chairperson: I do not have any control over that. That will be the decision of the House leaders to negotiate, so, I am sorry, I cannot make a standing on that at the moment. All we can do right now, I guess, is to thank all the presenters who were here this morning, to also thank everybody for the patience in waiting for their presentations to be made.

[interjection]

Ms. Cerilli: I just want to follow up on what the member for Burrows was saying and to suggest, even though we cannot make a decision on

sitting at three o'clock, if we could canvass the room and see if there are presenters here this morning who would prefer to come back for three o'clock and resume at three o'clock and make their presentation this afternoon.

Madam Chairperson: As the Chair of the committee, I do not have that authority to make the decision as to when this committee reconvenes.

Ms. Cerilli: No, but we can canvass as we have done—

Madam Chairperson: I do not see any point in doing that when I have no control as a Chair to make the determination.

[interjection]

Madam Chairperson: Sir, I am sorry, but you are out of order. We will canvass the room at this point in time. Because it is now twelve o'clock, and past 12, as predetermined earlier, committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 12:10 p.m.

**WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS PRESENTED
BUT NOT READ**

Re: Bill 40.

As a concept that those people receiving assistance should provide some sweat equity to receive their issue, workfare on the surface is reasonable, but the manner in which it is to be implemented is in question. As of the latest information, the people involved are volunteers for community service. My questions are:

1. Who will cover the cost of transportation? Will the recipient be expect to cover it from his own very thin pocket?

2. The extra cost of food while on the job.
3. The cost of safety clothes and, where necessary, safety equipment and compensation should an injury be incurred while working.
4. The costs of care for children of those involved.
5. If the people in question are actively looking for regular employment will they be exempt and not lose because of their efforts, as the work is mostly during the hours when they would be doing so?
6. That those addicted to drugs or alcohol be forced into rehab will have little effect on their eligibility mostly until they themselves are ready to actively participate in programs necessary, will find a way to circumvent the programs and participate only enough to keep their benefits.
7. That mothers with children under 18 with disabilities, even though they are routinely not recognized as such by the government agencies, be exempt as any action they take will cause Child and Family Services to apprehend the children in question because of neglect on their part. These children must be properly supervised at all times and both child and parent protected.
8. That the young parents of minor children attend not only parenting programs but are enabled to adhere to the law and further their education and, again, the necessary job skills to become gainfully employed with available child care, at reasonable rates, be supplied to this end.

Bev LeBlanc
Private Citizen