

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AMENDMENTS

Tuesday, December 19, 1989

TIME — 10 a.m.

LOCATION — Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRMAN: — Burrell, Parker (Swan River)

ATTENDANCE - 10 — QUORUM - 6

Members of the Committee present:

McCrae, James (Brandon West, PC)
Oleson, Charlotte (Gladstone, PC)
Burrell, Parker (Swan River, PC)
Cheema, Gulzar (Kildonan, L)
Gilleshammer, Harold (Minnedosa, PC)
Kozak, Richard (Transcona, L)
Mandrake, Ed (Assiniboia, L)
Praznik, Darren (Lac du Bonnet, PC)
Rose, Bob (St. Vital, L)
Storie, Jerry (Flin Flon, NDP)

WITNESSES:

Hodgins, Winston, Assistant Deputy Minister,
Economic Security Division
Sexsmith, Doug, Director of Field Operations
Bentley, Sue, Senior Analyst
Sopuck, Caroline, Special Assistant to
Minister of Family Services

MATTERS UNDER DISCUSSION:

Bill No. 67—The Social Allowances
Amendment Act.

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Clerk of Committees (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk-Fitzpatrick): Will the committee please come to order. We must proceed to elect a Chairperson for the Committee responsible for Law Amendments. Are there any nominations for the position?

An Honourable Member: Mr. Burrell.

Madam Clerk: Mr. Burrell, will you please come and take the Chair. You are the Chairperson.

Mr. Chairman: Order, please. The Standing Committee on Law Amendments will be considering Bill No. 67, The Social Allowances Amendment Act. To date we have not had any interested members of the public register to speak on this Bill. Should anyone present wish to appear before the committee, please come forward and identify yourself to the Committee Clerk.

Since there are no presentations regarding Bill No. 67, we shall now proceed with consideration of the Bill.

Does the Minister responsible have an opening statement that she would like to make at this point?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): No, I think we could just proceed. It is fairly straightforward, we could just proceed with the Bill. I do not really have any comments at this time.

Mr. Chairman: Does the critic from the official Opposition Party have any brief remarks to add at this point? Mr. Rose.

Mr. Bob Rose (St. Vital): I do want to say that it is acknowledged that there were no interested parties coming here, and I guess they were disinterested because the Bill is just a very minor band-aid approach to a very serious problem in the province. I know that the report of the Social Allowance Review Committee is out in regard to a one-tier system in Manitoba. I think if that report had been looked at, this Bill would have been superfluous. It would have been redundant and not necessary.

I am a little concerned. I think it is usual for MLAs, in particular critics of the Opposition, to get copies of reports like that. To my knowledge none have been circulated. Fortunately we were able to get a copy of it ourselves through our own sources. I think it is a good report. It follows reports in 1983 and 1988 and other reports in the meantime that have virtually studied this system to death. The recommendations from virtually all of these reports come out the same. There is really, other than one or two small refinements, nothing new in this report that just came out within the last couple of weeks.

* (1005)

Certainly, if the Minister and her department were really serious at any time about overhauling the social welfare system in Manitoba, they could have merely saved money on the 1988 report. They have gone back to the 1983 report that basically had the same recommendations. It would not have necessitated this band-aid approach at this time. I would like to start out by asking the Minister this: has she read the report that was given to her a couple of weeks ago? Does she feel that there are any further reports that need to be studied, and if we might see some recommendations implemented forthwith in the new year?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Rose, I will now ask the critic from the Second Opposition Party, and then I will come right back to you—if they have any comments to add at this point.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Chairperson, I would just add to what Mr. Rose has said about a band-aid

approach. I think the whole issue of social assistance has been studied rather thoroughly. I think most people would agree that there is one solution, and that is to try the single tier. Obviously the question of the allowance levels and so forth need to be addressed as well. I know the Minister has made some announcement of an increase in the rates, but I think there are many people who believe that the rates are still inadequate, particularly for specific individuals and their special circumstances. This obviously is a positive small step.

I guess the question that we have to ask is whether the Minister has any intention of moving to a single-tiered system? If not, why not? What impediments are there other than the issue of some additional costs? I think, certainly from our side, that we believe that if there is some additional cost that brings justice, then that cost may be supportable. There are clearly inequities between the various levels that provide social assistance, and in some cases the treatment of people seeking assistance is callous, to say the least. That remains a problem in parts of the province.

This amendment obviously is a small improvement, but we still believe that the whole issue has to be addressed head-on and someone has to show some leadership. So the Minister, in responding or in answering questions, may want to address those questions as well.

Mrs. Oleson: In regard to the comments by the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose), I just received the report he is referring to last week. It was presented to me and I had not circulated it. I had an agreement with the Members of the committee that it would not be circulated until I had a chance to discuss it with staff and also Cabinet, so I am rather surprised he has a copy. However, having said that, he has obviously not read the report, because it does not make the same recommendations exactly as the Ryant Report of 1983.

We had gone to this conciliative approach which was welcomed by the people that are delivering social assistance in the municipal system now. I do not think there was anyone on the committee who did not feel it was an excellent exercise. They had a feeling that they had had, unlike previous actions by previous Governments, some input and say in how delivery should be made, and they all felt it was a very valuable exercise. That has been expressed to me many times.

They also have expressed to me that—what we are embarked on today with this single parent system—they felt that was a very positive step, and we are very pleased that was being done. That was, as you will recall, recommended by the Women's Initiative. We immediately acted upon that and announced it, but of course it took some time to implement, as any change of this type does, and the legislation had to be changed to allow it. Hopefully the legislation will pass and it will be able to go into effect pretty well immediately.

* (1010)

The Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) indicated that this was band-aid. I believe the Member for St. Vital

(Mr. Rose) also mentioned that. Band-aids that cost \$2 million for a three-month period of a fiscal year, to me, are not band-aids. This will cost us \$5.6 million on a full year basis, so this is not what you would consider a band-aid. The people who are affected by this have expressed a great deal of pleasure that this is to happen. It will cause changes to be implemented which will help people in a very serious crisis situation in their lives. It will expedite their movement onto social assistance, should they need it, in a much easier fashion. They will not have to go to one level for a short period, and then reapply and go through the whole motions again.

The people who will be affected by this are very pleased, and I am very disappointed that the Members consider it a band-aid. It has been recognized for some time that all is not perfect in the social assistance delivery in the province. There have been problems identified. I identified many of them myself when I was in Opposition and was the critic of this particular area.

We had indicated during the election that we felt that regulation was the way to go, and we have discussed that with the municipalities and people affected in that way. They have come up with a proposed solution which will of course have to be discussed within the department and in Cabinet. Then I intend to circulate the report.

Mr. Rose: As usual, the Minister is absolutely wrong. She makes allusions to the fact that I have not read the report. It is highlighted all the way through. I have read it twice—

An Honourable Member: Who highlighted it for you?

Mr. Rose: Yes, you can heckle. You have had a bad week and you can continue on into this week. The Minister says also that it was not a band-aid approach, and as usual when we talk about social assistance she likes to laugh and giggle and make smart remarks. That is not solving the problem. It is not getting cooperation from anybody.

If this Minister, on any occasion, and I have not seen it once yet, would spend some time in the areas of Winnipeg and in Manitoba where there are disadvantaged, she would see very clearly, Mr. Chairman, that this is certainly even less than a band-aid approach to the overall problems. The problems that are causing 60 percent of our core area children to go to school this morning hungry, the vandalism, the crime that goes on, the use of drugs, because of their depressed state.

I take exception to the fact of her calling costs and costs and costs. I have stressed it time and time again, let us take the approach of other jurisdictions in this country, that this is not a cost. This is an investment, an investment so we will have to have less law enforcement, less jails. We will not have to retrain students after they are out of Grade 9 or 10 or 12, or whenever they cease education.

If the Minister would take occasions like on December 4—and I know the Ministers are busy—when there was

a candle vigil of seven denominations held in St. Matthews Church. There was not one single person from the Government or to my knowledge—if they did, they did not come forward—not one person from any Government department came forward to take the trouble to see what the housing problems were in Winnipeg and indeed in Manitoba, and to give some sort of moral support to these people, to show that they care. I think that is why nobody showed up today, because they are just getting a deaf ear from this Government, from this Minister, and band-aid approaches to the situation will not be the answer.

* (1015)

I repeat, Mr. Chairman, that in my view, and having read thoroughly—which is something I do not think the Minister can actually say, that she has read the 1983 and perhaps she read the 1988 report, I do not know. I have read them all at least twice and read them thoroughly. There is not anything substantially new in this report. The institution of a one-tier system is a very simple thing. It is almost academic, and as a matter of fact it is the law of Canada under the Canada Assistance Plan.

In that regard I wonder if the Minister could let me know the status of the case that is soon to be before the Supreme Court of Canada, that alleges the illegality of the system in Manitoba not being one tier, as to whether her department is following those developments and if she can tell me when it is expected to be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Mrs. Oleson: No, that case is before the Supreme Court. Staff advises me that the case will be heard in the spring and we will be interveners in that case.

Mr. Rose: Has the date been set?

Mrs. Oleson: No, we do not have the exact date, but we understand that the case will be heard in the spring.

Mr. Rose: Will the case be heard in conjunction with any other appeals from Manitoba?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, as I understand it, it will deal with the one-tier system and the overpayment, the two items that Mr. Finlay had brought before the court.

Mr. Rose: That means a deduction, the deductions presently taken off by the Province of Manitoba to overpayments on social welfare cases, which in spite of the federal court of Canada's ruling that it was illegal, still continues to this day if I am correct. In Manitoba, these illegal deductions are continuing.

Mrs. Oleson: That is for the court to decide whether they are illegal. There has been no change. The deductions are still taking place where they are warranted.

Mr. Rose: I understand the date for the Supreme Court is, I think, February 15. So if we are counting on the spring—and I certainly hope that February 15 is the spring, but I do not think it is according to the calendar.

Mr. Chairman, there are other things that are real inequities in this province in the social allowance system. We are really disappointed that this Bill was not more encompassing, No. 1, as a one-tier system which would be very easy to institute and not very costly when you figure the benefits of an investment of that type in bringing the level of dignity up for thousands of Manitobans who deserve this and are entitled to it under the laws of Canada.

I wanted to ask one specific question as to whether the Minister has, since she has been in office some 20 months, looked at the situation where there is a top of \$50 on earnings in the Province of Manitoba for people on social allowance; and whether indeed that should be raised after something like 20 years, to be brought in line with approaching the 1990s; whether she feels this would be a good move, and whether she feels as I do, that it would be an incentive for people to go out and get work experience and have some of their time spent on that rather than looking at four walls in many cases; and whether indeed it might lead to full employment for lots of the people and as an initial step would cut down some of the costs of social allowance in this province?

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, I sympathize with what the Member is saying because that has not been changed for some time. I have asked my deputy to have a look at it and bring some recommendations. We will have to look, of course, at the cost implications, as much as we have to always think of cost, but it has to be considered. No, it has not been changed for some time and we certainly will look at it.

Mr. Rose: Taking into account that the Government of Ontario injected an additional \$450 million into the social welfare system this year, which puts Ontario one step ahead of us once more, one further step ahead of us, and the fact that lately reports are very strong on migration out of this province, certainly it would appear to be that Ontario feels that is a progressive step and it is not costly to the economy, and as a matter of fact, it improves the quality of life in Ontario.

I would like the Minister's comments, if I could, as to whether she is anticipating even spending a small percentage of the money that is newly expended in Ontario, particularly on things like the special needs allowance and excess special needs in this province which have not been updated for years and years and years.

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, I am aware that the special needs has not been changed for years and that is something else I will want my department to take a look at as well. The Member should remember that just recently I announced increases effective January 1, 1990, of 4.9 percent in one aspect of the social assistance, that being the necessities; also, that we will be increasing the rents in conjunction with the Rentalsman's 3 percent. So we are not ignoring the system, and we are doing these incrementally as is the custom in Manitoba to make it effective the 1st of January.

* (1020)

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, we did note that earlier. We also note that the inflation is 4.9, and was barely keeping up to the rate of inflation. The latest figures are that inflation is running higher in Manitoba, in Winnipeg particularly, than any other point in Canada. Whether the Minister will do like she said last year, promise to keep an eye on inflation which—maybe they had kept an eye on it, but they certainly did not open their pocketbook in 1989 in regard to that.

When the City of Winnipeg increased their rates on October 1 they took into account a 17 percent increase in the food allowance and this was brought about not only by an inflationary rise in the cost of food, but also the fact that Agriculture Canada had revised the nutrition Food Basket for Canadians. I do not think, and correct me if I am wrong, that the Minister and her department took this into account, the new Food Basket when they computed their figures. I would like some explanation of that if they did or did not or whether they will consider it in the future.

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the staff consider all of these when they are making recommendations for changes to the assistance. The Member will recall from discussions last year that we take an average of the cost of living. We take it over six months or nine months of the year anyway to arrive at a figure so we can get the mechanism in place to increase on the 1st of January. He is right. I believe it is Agriculture Canada who came out with the nutritious Food Basket Estimate which was, I believe, 12 percent. There was also another study done that would have resulted in 2.4 percent. That is the economic Food Basket as they considered for low-income families.

We chose not to use that 2.4 percent. We chose to use a rate of 4.9, which is just a little above the average for basic necessities. So we arrived at the 4.9, which translates into a spending of \$5.3 million.

Mr. Rose: What I hear the Minister saying, I think, is that her department and this Tory Government does not really feel that the new and nutritious Food Basket brought out by Agriculture Canada is an entitlement for those people who are disadvantaged in this province. I think that one of the reasons they upgrade the Food Basket is that they want to improve the well-being and particularly the health of people on social allowance.

I would think that would be again, Mr. Chairman, an investment in making sure that Canadians, particularly young children, had more updated nutritious foods that are available. There would be an even more substantial saving in health costs and other social problems if that was so. I was just wondering if the Minister would reconsider that position and make sure people on social allowance in Manitoba are entitled to be able to purchase the more nutritious Food Basket as outlined by our federal Government.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, I must say that when we consider what changes are going to be made, the staff does consider all these things. We, this year, arrived at the decision that the 4.9, which reflected the increases in cost of living, was the way we should go. If we had

followed the thrifty Food Basket one for low-income people, which was also an option, we would not have been increasing at all. We chose, I guess what you would call, a middle-of-the-road approach.

The Member has to bear in mind that this 4.9 should certainly make it easier for people to purchase nutritious foods. No amount of money that we would give would ensure—we cannot legislate what people, and we would not want to—exactly what people buy in the line of food and what they feed their families. We have to encourage them, of course, to use their money wisely and to buy nutritious foods, but we cannot legislate that.

* (1025)

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, it goes without saying that you cannot legislate it, but it also goes without saying that if you give people more money for food by and large most of them—and we have seen the audit of the department, we have seen that the people who are on social assistance in this province are pretty responsible people. They have real needs. The audit revealed very few abuses of the system and I think we are dealing with knowledgeable people, informed people.

I think if you would give them a few more dollars they would spend that on more food, particularly for children, and more nutritious food. Sure, there will be abuse of the system and it will go in other directions, but by and large it will go for the right reasons. Therefore, I do not think the Minister fears that—if she thinks as some other Manitobans that if she gives another few dollars a month for food it is going to go to liquor or cigarettes or something else, I think she has the wrong view of where social allowance money goes and its needs and the abuse of the system.

I would suggest again that she go out and get some first-hand knowledge of the type of responsible people. The overwhelming majority, as the audit would show, are responsible people who for one reason or another are temporarily, or for some period, disadvantaged and have to fall back on the right of every Canadian. That right is that they have the right to the basic necessities of life. In this province, the people are not getting the basic necessities of life.

The Minister likes to boast of a 3 percent increase in housing. Well, I want to tell you there is only one word for that, under today's conditions and the amount of time it has been brought to her attention, the inadequate, unhealthy, unsanitary housing which many people live in in Manitoba, and particularly in the north end of Winnipeg, is a disgrace to say 3 percent.

That does not even keep up with the rate of inflation. It keeps up with what the guidelines are, and they are just the guidelines by the Government. Three percent does not take into account if a person upgrades the plumbing, or wiring, or the roof, or any portion of the house and it comes to another 3 or 4 or 5 or even 10 percent. That can be added on to the rent. It appears the Minister and her department has made no allowance for that. Therefore, there is absolutely no

encouragement for the people, certainly for the people who live in that housing, to ask for improvements because they will have to take it once more out of their food money.

Second of all, if that money does not come there will be absolutely no incentive for the owner of the building to upgrade it. There seems to be, and I can stand corrected if I am wrong, I do not see anything in the legislation which allows for increases above 3 percent so the housing stock we have now, which is very inadequate by any standards and agreed by all people in the industry, will continue to deteriorate and become worse and worse and worse. This is not something to be proud of in Manitoba. It is not something for a Minister to be proud of. It is not something the Tory Government should be proud of.

Even as a Member of the Legislature I am ashamed to see such deplorable conditions that people have to live in in Manitoba.

* (1030)

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, the Member should be aware that in most cases the department pays the actual rent incurred for people and we do have some flexibility to go beyond those guidelines. The Member should be aware that you have to have guidelines. We have those in place, but there is some flexibility to go beyond those in specific cases. The staff are aware of that and they exercise that. There are many people that because of one circumstance or another need a particular type of housing, and we recognize that and we allow for that.

Mr. Rose: It brings me to another area of questioning, and that is, there are guidelines. There are guidelines perhaps but—and incidentally the Minister did not address that directly, guidelines in regard to improvements, which I do not think there are any guidelines. The guidelines I think she is talking about are where special need exists that they can exceed the housing guidelines for other reasons. I see on many occasions they do, and on many occasions they have after I personally investigated some of these things. It is a discretionary thing on the part of the department. I really wonder why it is that some people who have resources of one nature or another can get more than some other people who may be timid or have less resources, and I have some problems with that discretionary attitude on it.

But more than that, the discretion varies from person to person, the workers in the department. I have had a lot of direct contact with people in the department and have got a lot of very valuable co-operation and assistance from them, but I find some of them are—how would you put it to be kind—sort of underqualified or undertrained for the job in dealing with welfare recipients, with being maybe not quite as compassionate and understanding as they should be. I am wondering what program—and I know this is a recommendation of the last two reports, I do not think it is in this report here—of upgrading and training of departmental staff at all levels so they are kept up-to-date and trained in line with new developments. I

wonder what training programs or retraining programs are in effect in the department to see that there is a continual upgrading of the skills of our employees in that department.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: The Honourable Minister, before I turn it over to you, I would like to remind all Honourable Members that the comments given this morning should pertain in some way to the Bill we are now discussing, Bill 67. I realize that you like to get everything off your chest before we get into the meat of the thing, and that is fine with me, but we will have to get around some time or another to discussing Bill 67. I am sure the Second Opposition Party agrees with this approach. We have used it in most of the committees, that you can blow off air, and so on.

Now I will turn it over to the Minister, and then maybe Mr. Rose will relinquish it to the other guy for a while. Okay? Fine, as long as everybody is satisfied they are getting a fair shake. The Honourable Minister.

Mrs. Oleson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Member asked about training and upgrading. We use the Civil Service Commission for some of this evaluation and so forth, and there is an annual review of staff and the performance of staff to make sure that they are doing their job properly. Also, they are encouraged to do some training, and there is some training within the department. They are also encouraged to do upgrading on their own as well.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, I think this information is valuable to myself and our Party, and the Second Opposition in the House. I just did have one last area to explore. It had to do with this training aspect, and that is on a specific matter. Some few months ago the Minister hired what I think they would call a special advisor. I had mentioned this in the House, and it is my observation that since we have this special advisor, my relationship and my Party's relationship with the department seems to have deteriorated. I bring in one particular case where the Premier was written to on—we have the copy of the letter on the 23rd of November in regard to a Jerry O'Sullivan case—which seemed really ridiculous the way the department was handling it. It is now a month later without any resolve.

We were dealing with the department last weekend, last Friday, in Brandon, and we seemed to be getting close to a resolve on this matter, in getting some satisfaction for the people that had been forced to move out of their house because of the lack of compassion by the Economic Security Department. Then only on Friday—that was on Thursday, pardon me—then only on Friday to learn that a gag order, such as was given to the Education Department, was placed here, and they were told to no longer talk to the official Opposition on the matter.

We wonder if this is a new policy of the Government where they are not interested in the Opposition helping people in Manitoba with their needs, or whether it is just something that has just been overlooked by somebody in her department.

Mrs. Oleson: I can tell the Member categorically that I have issued no gag orders, and my staff are free to discuss matters with you. I think, though, for the sake of expediency, it is usually better—I found this, the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose), when I was in Opposition—it is really a better approach than going directly to line staff to phone either the Minister's assistant or the Minister's office, and go that route. Not that I am saying you have to, but I think that is probably the best way to go about it.

One of the problems which arises when Opposition MLAs do go to line staff is that it puts them in an awkward position in that they are not sure how much information they should be giving. They cannot give information—I do not know what sort of information the Member is asking for—but they cannot give information from files on specific cases because of confidentiality. That is a given. That then makes it difficult for staff to, in some cases, deal with the specifics of the matter that the Member is raising.

So, if the Member is having difficulty in getting information or getting help for people—and we certainly want people to get what they are entitled to—if there is a problem, then I would like to know about it. If the Member is not getting satisfaction, I would advise him to phone my special assistant, and she would then in turn get the information from the department and make sure the Member gets it.

With regard to the Member's common complaint about how long it takes to get information back, I sympathize with him because that has been one of the frustrations I have had, as Minister, is the length of time. Maybe I have been unfair to my staff in asking them to speed things up, because they do have to find a great deal of information and put it together, and it has to then come to my desk to be signed. These things take some time. So I do not think the Member should get too upset at the length of time as long as he has brought the matter to our attention and we are doing something about it, then that should be his main intent, that something be done about the problem and the person get proper service. That is, after all, I am sure he would agree with me, the overriding intent of the whole thing is to be sure that people get service, then we would get back to the Member as soon as we possibly could with the information.

* (1040)

If the Member is having problems getting information, if you phone directly to my assistant, I think we could expedite that matter.

Mr. Rose: If I could, Mr. Chairman, I apologize to the critic.

I want to say that is why I brought up this special advisor. We used to have some reports, but since that advisor came in there, my file on unanswered letters, memos, and phone calls is growing and growing and growing. This makes the public believe, not only that the Government does not care about the situation, but also the critic in this case, and I have a hard time giving explanations as to why I cannot get answers. The file grows and grows.

In this particular case, when the gag order was put on, Mr. Chairman, I did write directly to the Minister, and I would hope that the Minister could at least very shortly acknowledge this and get a solution to it, because it is something that should not be waiting another month or two for results. I thank you very much.

Mrs. Oleson: I would just like to repeat, in case the Member did not hear it. I have issued no gag orders. I want that very clear. Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, just one more thing. If the Member has, as he points out, a large stack of unanswered letters—I do not expect that you want to put that on the record—but I would like to know about that, and if you would speak to my assistant and let me know which letters you feel have not been answered, I certainly want to know about that.

Mr. Storie: First, Mr. Chairman, I want to comment on your recommendation that we speak to the Bill. The Social Allowances Act has been opened for amendment. Individuals Members are encouraged to make amendments as they see fit. Of course that means the discussion necessarily has to be broad based. You will forgive us if we explore some territory that is not necessarily in the Bill. The Act is open and we can make amendments as we see fit within certain guidelines.

A couple of questions for the Minister. The Minister says that this amendment is going to cost \$2 million. Is that the provincial cost, or who shares in this cost?

Mrs. Oleson: It is done through cost-sharing or through CAP, but we have to up front put up \$2 million for it, just that part of the year that this will be enforced for this fiscal year. The net cost for this year will be \$1 million, for the whole fiscal year, \$2.6 million.

Mr. Storie: Just so that we are clear, when the Minister pleads poverty and says that this is a major advancement rather than a minor band-aid amendment, which we are suggesting it is, the cost is actually \$1 million. When you compare that \$1 million to the cost of the budget or the cost of the provincial budget of providing social assistance, other parts of the safety net for families, it is not an overwhelming amount of money.

Mr. Chairperson, just so we can understand more fully what the Minister is proposing in terms of the social allowance rates. She has announced that there is an increase to the necessity basket or whatever she termed it. I am wondering if she can indicate whether there was any additional increase for recipients of the social assistance from the North.

Mrs. Oleson: People living in the North have historically had a higher rate than the South. I understand it is 10 percent for those living within a certain distance of a larger community, say outside of Thompson or The Pas, and 25 percent for remote communities. That is 25 percent above the rates.

Mr. Storie: No, Mr. Chairperson, that was not my question. I understand that the rates are different. My question was, has there been any additional increase

above the 4.9 percent to the rates already in place for northern communities?

Mrs. Oleson: No, they still get the same additional support, but no, nothing new this year.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, I think I would argue and I am sure that many Northerners would argue, certainly those who are receiving benefits, that the additional costs need to be recognized, and I suppose logically one would come to understand that if there is an increase in gasoline tax, for example, or gasoline costs, that increases incrementally the cost of a food basket in Norway House or in Pukatawagan or anywhere else. The decrease in transportation services and the increasing cost of transportation means that Northerners need much more than 4.9 percent. Inflation in the North certainly runs significantly higher than it does in Winnipeg.

I think the Minister would be well advised to review the rates for the North, and not just remote northern communities—the North—including some major centres where the costs are between 10, 15 and 20 percent higher. I argue that should have been part of the announcement the Minister made when she increased the rates for the necessity food basket or the necessities for people on social assistance.

I had another area I wanted to discuss, and that was the employment and training aspect. The Minister referenced the incentive rates. I do not know the official term for that, but where people can actually keep some of the additional money that they earn. I wonder if the Minister could indicate whether there has been an extension or a new agreement between the federal and provincial Governments, allowing for training and employment programs to utilize CAP and provincial money.

Mrs. Oleson: We understand that the federal agreement is to be extended for another year, but the Member will also recall that we do have programs in place, like the Gateway Program which I announced, which is to help social assistance recipients through training in school and on-the-job training to help them gain employment and be self-sufficient.

We also of course have the single parent social assistance program which was started by the Member's colleague. When the women's initiative went out in the round that was one thing that was mentioned to them, that this was a good program, and that it should not be taken away. I had no intention of taking it away, but it did reinforce to me that it is a valuable program, and so that is why we increased funding to it this year.

Mr. Storie: The Minister will forgive me if I do not have all of the facts at hand. I am not normally the critic for this area, but the Minister says there has been an extension of the program. I assume she is referring to the program that was signed by then Minister Epp and the provincial Government for some \$12 million to be spent on employment and training for social assistance recipients. The Minister is saying at this point that all we have done is extend that. I would argue that is one

of the areas where we stand to gain as a province the most benefit.

When I say the province, I mean the people who live here including the recipients of social assistance. I am wondering why the Minister has not pushed to have that allocation doubled, tripled or quadrupled. Why are we not demanding that money that is being spent in the province be spent in the most useful and productive way, not only for the province, but for the individuals? Why are we not spending that money training people or employing them?

Mrs. Oleson: The Member will recall that I just said that we had not only that, but the single parent one. We also introduced a new program called Gateway which is, in a sense, similar.

* (1050)

I must tell the Member that in discussions with other Ministers across Canada, one of the things that was stressed was that programs that are most successful in getting people back to work are programs which include not only classroom instruction, but also on-the-job training with a particular company which then has an obligation to keep them on. This Gateway Program, from the limited experience that it has, we feel that it is being very successful in that people are being trained and put through and are retaining jobs. There is never 100 percent success rate of course though, as the Member would know, but we feel this is a good, worthwhile program and we will certainly hope that it continues.

Mr. Storie: Perhaps the Minister could indicate how many people she expects to take advantage of the Gateway Program.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, I could just give the Member some numbers here. In cycle one, which was September '88 to September '89, the number of participants who started the program is 110, and that completed the classroom component is 91, and the number of participants placed in employment was 82. So that is just one cycle of that particular program.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairperson, well, obviously that is the model I was talking about; I said, training and employment. I understood that the original agreement between the province and the federal Government to use capital funding was to support models of that kind.

I guess the question was whether the Minister is interested in launching a full-fledged initiative which would cover the province, which would encourage better utilization of our collective dollars. I just think it makes sense and I am certainly anxious, and we, as a Party, are anxious to see that kind of thing proceed. I think it was a long overdue initiative. However, I will leave that for a minute, I would like to talk about a couple of other things.

One was the follow-up to the comments I made earlier. Logically, the way we would like to be proceeding at this committee would be to introduce amendments that would give us a one-tiered system.

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I had not received a copy of the latest report on the social assistance network that was available to my colleague from St. Vital (Mr. Rose), but when the Minister said, and I think she meant it quite sincerely, that it had been a consultative process, I said to myself, consultative in her mind means she talked to a few bureaucrats and people who are not users of this service.

I looked at the list of people who are involved and it is the UMM, MAUM and the city, and basically people who administer the programs, but not the users. In fact this may be the view of the administrators of these programs—they may want to be involved—but it does not reflect: a) the need of the people that we are serving; or their views on how that service is provided.

The conclusions they come to are not much different than the conclusions of the Ryant Report, but I think the Ryant Report was written from a different perspective. It was written from a perspective that these people need and deserve to be treated fairly, and with justice, and humanely, and what we want for ourselves, we want for these people as well. This is piecemeal, and the cost, although it is going to benefit some people, and it may be a small step in the right direction, it is certainly no major commitment to justice and fairness for the people who need some help. It is no major commitment.

The Minister—we did talk a bit about the employment training and the Gateway Program, but the fact of the matter is that there are 10,000 fewer full-time jobs out there now. There are thousands of people leaving the province. The problems people on social assistance are facing are escalating. We are going to have the introduction of new taxes, a goods and services tax, that is going to press these people even further.

I frankly do not believe that most municipalities are perhaps capable of meeting the needs out there if they are required to contribute in the normal way, and I do not think the current system is at all designed to make sure they can cope with the coming economic reality that they face. So I think this is quite inadequate, and perhaps the Minister should be withdrawing this Bill.

Perhaps the Minister should be going back to the drawing board and saying, we are facing something quite new for these people, all of the people who are receiving social assistance. Never mind their circumstances, whether they are single parent, or the working poor, or the disabled, the fact is we need some major adjustment and this is tinkering. I am sure that the people who will benefit from this amendment are pleased, but they are going to be pleased in poverty. They are going to be pleased within a system that still is not going to meet all of their needs and is not going to be serving us that well either. So I think the Minister should be bringing forward something more substantial than this, based on, I think, everyone's expectations of what the next couple of years is going to look like for these people and for our province.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, I really do not have a great deal to comment on, other than I am glad to hear the Member at least admit that this is a step in the

right direction and it will affect quite a considerable number of people.

The meetings with the officials, not administrators, of MAUM and UMM, et cetera, were in consultation with elected officials from those particular fields, plus one of the persons on that committee was also an administrator with a town and we needed their input as well. We already have the input from the Ryant Report and so forth about the needs, and I am not going to take that particular report and now forget about it. That is not the intent. It was a report that I asked for, a consultative report, in order to move forward, and in the interim this step is being taken that we are doing today. I certainly intend to discuss this with others before definite action is taken.

The Member says there was no one on the committee from the groups, of course, that use it. In fact, it was the groups who are delivering. We wanted to get some input from them, in particular, in this exercise. We do know the problems the people have who are receiving assistance, but I still will want to discuss this with some of those groups before we do definitely go into any action as a result of this. The door is not closed there. This report is then something to work forward with.

Mr. Storie: Well, I just point out the difference in perspective. The Minister had a chance to appoint a panel, a group, a committee to examine the whole question of how we deliver social assistance, and she chose to choose a panel that consisted of no one who was a recipient of these benefits, chose instead to ask the administrative questions: how can we administer this; or do we want to change the administration structure.

Mrs. Oleson: How can we better serve the people.

Mr. Storie: I do not think that question was asked at all.

Mrs. Oleson: It certainly was discussed by the committee.

Mr. Storie: Well, again, it is perhaps difficult for the Minister and myself, or some others who have never been on the receiving end, fortunately for us perhaps, to talk about how to improve the system, but I think the shortcoming is that it reflects the views of people who are delivering the assistance and whose views probably do not reflect the reality, faced by the people receiving the system, very well at all.

* (1100)

I think it is a major flaw in the report, and I think it shows up a major flaw in this Minister's view of what she is about and what this Government should be about with respect to this department. This is not—in fact, I think we are being penny-wise and pound-foolish by not proceeding more aggressively in terms of changes, because we are affecting a whole generation of people who are struggling, who, as my colleague suggested, live with poverty and oppression, uncertainty, and we are doing that needlessly. I think that the Minister should

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admit that the way the committee was composed was a mistake. If she really wants a true view of what recipients feel like and what they need in 1989, it should have reflected that in terms of the composition of the committee.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, the Member is entitled to his views, but I think it was very worthwhile. The exercise his Minister went through after six-and-a-half or so years in Government—and all these things were happening then, this is not new—the exercise he went through caused nothing but discord with the officials who are delivering service.

I wanted to make them part of a solution to a problem. They have very willingly, and are very pleased with the exercise we went through to do that. My goal is better service to people—the ultimate goal of this. It is not to better serve the municipalities, it is to better serve the people who need our assistance.

Mr. Storie: Then the simple question, Madam Minister, is why did you not ask the people who are being served, at least have 50 percent of the representation reflecting their needs and their views of how the service is being delivered, and where it is adequate and where it is inadequate?

Mrs. Oleson: No, this is not the end of the exercise, as I said before to the Member. We fully intend to talk to the groups affected by this.

Mr. Storie: Is the Minister at all interested in the concept of a single-tier system?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, you could not be a Minister in this department and not be interested in the whole—I am interested in the whole delivery system of social assistance. Obviously, I have been for sometime, even before I was the Minister.

There are many considerations in moving to that. I think this is one step in removing some people from municipal jurisdiction into provincial, which will go a long way to helping those people. As the Member himself has said, it is a step in the right direction. We are not making a sudden shift. We are doing things in an orderly fashion.

Mr. Storie: I appreciate the Minister may be interested. The Minister may be interested in astrology for all I know. My question was, I hope, a little more substantial. The question was: is this Minister prepared to act, to implement a single-tiered system?

Mrs. Oleson: All these things will be considered. I want to still consider this latest report and how we are going to act on it.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, I think you can adapt some . . . The discussion has brought on a couple of things. I hesitate to mention the Manfor Report, because we certainly knew what happened to the committee when that report surfaced. We do not want that to happen again because this report has surfaced.

I do not quite understand the confidentiality, and it seems to be reminiscent of that report, in that everybody

seems to have the report except the Opposition. It seems to have been kept a secret from them. I have the report from two of the four authors, participants in the report, and that was volunteered by them. I do not think the people who made the report share the Minister's feeling that it should have been kept confidential for any period. I would think that the Minister would share these sort of things with the Legislature when she gets it in her hand and has sufficient time. It is a fairly—

Mrs. Oleson: That is what I am saying, in sufficient time it will be shared.

Mr. Rose: It is only a few—20 or so pages, Mr. Chairman, so it is not that . . .

During that conversation the Minister said she was interested in the input, or she would look for interested groups to have input into the system. She knows there are two advocacy groups in the province, that is MAPO and SACOM. I wonder, along that line, if the Minister could tell us what her and her department's involvement has been in the 20 months they have been in office with those two major and important advocacy groups in this province?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, I have met with both those groups. I am at a loss to remember exactly how many times, but I have met with those groups the Member has mentioned, and discussed, particularly with MAPO, a broad and cross-section of needs in the social allowance field. I have welcomed their input. I have also met with SACOM on two or three occasions and they have also met with my staff and received information in order to do the study they are doing.

Mr. Rose: Two or three times in 20 months does not seem to be keeping in touch, but I will take the Minister's word for that in spite of the fact I have been to every MAPO and SACOM meeting in the Unemployed Help Centre. In my memory I do not recollect ever seeing the Minister at any of their meetings. As a matter of fact, I think it would be on very few occasions, if any, where any of her staff was there. I really question her interest in those groups.

I wonder if the Minister could acknowledge that MAPO, the major advocacy group, is in very deep financial problems, and if it continues like it is the one voice for the underprivileged and disadvantaged in Manitoba will fold; whether she is aware of this problem; and whether she would anticipate, either through her own department, or other departments like the Core Area Initiative, or other agencies, whether she would be interested in assisting them to keep afloat, so there would be a voice for the working poor and people on social allowance in Manitoba.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, the Member says he has been to MAPO meetings and has never seen me. No, I have not been at their annual meetings or so forth. They have been in my office to meetings on several occasions.

I do have in my department at least 200 agencies that we fund, so I do not get to meet with them all as

often as I would wish. I just thought I would mention that to the Member. Certainly it is not through lack of interest, it is through—and I always have said that if someone made an extra day in the week someone would spoil it by calling a meeting anyway. So there is not sufficient time to meet anymore than I do.

With regard to MAPO and their financial problems, I have a meeting set up with them to discuss that problem. I am aware of their financial problems.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, I might just point out that the Minister does have staff and it would be at least encouraging to see some of them attend some of these meetings.

Mrs. Oleson: Could I speak to that? Excuse me, before you go on—Mr. Chairman, may I remark on that, please? He wants to enter another subject and I would like to interject at this time.

Just to the Member, I should make you aware that my staff do meet with MAPO from time-to-time and any other group, so there is continuity of involvement with staff with many of these groups and MAPO in particular.

Mr. Rose: I would suggest that is not the feeling of these organizations. I cannot speak for them, but it is certainly not the feeling I get and it probably answers the question of why we are so out of touch with the needs of these people, and that we do not have regular contact, and we do not have effective contact. We do not have meaningful contact with them.

I wonder if the Minister could tell me what people in the province on provincial assistance receive Christmas allowance, an additional Christmas allowance, and what was the percentage increase this year in that allowance.

Mrs. Oleson: No, we do not give a special Christmas allowance, to the Member. It has never been done to my knowledge in this province.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, we see the City of Winnipeg has many allowances which are not in the provincial fund. We see them give Christmas allowances, an increase of 14 percent this year. We see them on SAFER and Plus 55 programs not make deductions, so really indeed what we have here is a three-tier system in this province. I think the Minister would acknowledge that.

* (1110)

I have, Mr. Chairman, a question in regard to the Bill on Section 3(2)(a) -(interjection)- Yes, I think there has to be an amendment to this Bill by the way too, especially if we keep talking.

As of December 18, 1989, to all persons outside of the City of Winnipeg who choose to apply for social allowance on or after that date, could you explain that to me, that clause, exactly what it means?

Mr. Chairman: Is it the will of the committee to go through the Bill clause by clause now, or did you just want to briefly go over this?

We have no choice. We have to go through it clause by clause.

Okay, we can do anything by leave. Is it the will of the committee to go to this particular clause? I am taking your word for it, Storie.

Mrs. Oleson: The Member was discussing 3(2)(a) outside the City of Winnipeg. That indicates that we have given the authority to take people directly, on and after that date, onto provincial assistance so they will not within a two week span have to apply twice to get onto assistance. It is a phase-in approach.

I will be bringing forth an amendment to Clause 4 later to reflect that because of the timing of this discussion, but that is to phase it in so they will not have to apply twice. It would not make sense for them to apply today for social assistance, to be taken onto the municipality, and then on the 1st of January have to reapply, so that is a phase-in approach.

Mr. Rose: Would that indicate then that—presuming this Bill passed on the 18th which it will not, let us use today's date, the 19th—if somebody applied today in a town that had a very low social allowance figures they would get the provincial figure, but somebody who was already on social allowance in that town would get a much smaller figure, would continue at the lower rate. In other words, there would be no retroactivity to it.

Mrs. Oleson: It is possible for that short time, depending on the rates that were paid in that municipality, but the Member of course has to be aware that you have to have a cutoff or a start-in phase, you have to set a date but that could happen for that short period of time.

Mr. Rose: So these people would have to reapply or they automatically become on the provincial system on January 1 of 1990 and if so they are automatically on it, why are they not automatically on it as of December 19 rather than those who are already on it on the 18th reapplying on the 19th?

Mrs. Oleson: Yes, there are quite a few cases coming onto this. For an orderly transition, on one particular day, give a day, it would be very difficult for staff to suddenly, automatically deal with all these cases. So this is a phase-in approach in order to administratively do this in an orderly fashion. With the December 18 date it makes it easier for people so they do not have to apply twice. They can apply on or after the 18th and they are on provincial. So there are steps being taken in an orderly fashion so that the staff can deal with people who are applying.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, there is a different criteria, and for a good reason, applied to the City of Winnipeg, and there is a different criteria applied to those people who are outside of the City of Winnipeg. I wonder why this clause does not read that on the effective date when this Act comes into force, that all those people outside of Winnipeg will automatically come onto provincial assistance.

The cheques do not have to be made right away; it could be a retroactive payment back to that time. It

could be phased out over the month of January because they are going to get lots of inquiries and lots of complaints about this, and I do not know why it would not be written right into the Bill so that there would be less inequity in the way that one neighbour could be getting one figure of social allowance under identical conditions than the person living right next door to them in a given town. I think that is silly.

Mrs. Oleson: That is possible, but in any transition period there have to be dates set so that the thing can be done in an orderly fashion. Sometimes it seems very simple to us who are not doing the mechanics of it, but the staff assure me that this staged approach is what we need to do this in an orderly fashion.

Mr. Rose: I would suggest that we will look at putting an amendment to that clause so that anybody receiving social allowance on that date will be entitled to the new rate. I will check first with the critic from the third Party.

I have one last question and then we will go through it clause by clause, and that is, we have a vastly increasing number of unemployed in this province, and UIC has acknowledged particularly in some rural centres that I have talked to that their system has slowed down by a further four or five weeks and that necessitates a much increased volume of people going on short-term social allowance in this province, and all the accompanying confusion and bookwork.

I am wondering, and I know it does not apply to the Bill but it is an opportunity to ask here because it does affect the payments in Manitoba, whether the Minister has been in contact with any federal officials to see if the system of UIC in towns like Selkirk that serves a great deal of territory including towns like Pinawa, et cetera, whether they would be looking at increasing their amount of staff and facilities they have there so that UIC benefits can be sped up. Obviously, the benefit for us as a province is that we will have less applications for social allowance, and not only save the clerical work during a very busy period of year, but also will have the ensuing saving on social allowance payments.

Mrs. Oleson: I have had no specific contact with the federal officials on this. My staff do meet with them from time to time, but I will ask them to look into the problem that the Member has raised.

Mr. Chairman: We shall now proceed with the Bill.

Mr. Storie: I am sorry, I think I missed the Minister's answer to the question. Is there any way to make this retroactive—the intention was obviously to have the date fixed at December 18 and that cannot be met—to December 18? Is that kind of amendment out of order, is it difficult, does it complicate something else?

Mrs. Oleson: I have an amendment to No. 4 to make it retroactive but as it is written in the Bill, not contemplating what the Member is discussing. The amendment I have will answer your question.

Mr. Storie: Okay, fair enough. If it is retroactive, she is going to make an amendment on 4, let us see what it looks like.

Mr. Chairman: Do you want to consider it clause by clause, so we can get the amendment in?

An Honourable Member: Yes, that is okay.

Mr. Chairman: We shall now proceed with the Bill. The Bill will be considered clause by clause. During consideration of the Bill, the Title and the Preamble are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order by the committee. Clause 1—pass.

Clause 2, 5.1(c) amended—

* (1120)

Mr. Storie: I realize that you, Mr. Chairperson, have not been part of the committee process for a length of time. Quite normally, we pass Bills page by page and where there is an amendment the person puts up his/her hand and says, I have an amendment to Clause 3 on page. So let us pass page 1. Let us go to page 2, item number, Clause No. 4 where there is an amendment. I can assure you that it is done in virtually every committee. It is the will of the committee. The Clerk may deem items 1, 2, and Clauses 1, 2, and 3 to have passed.

Mrs. Oleson: That is for No. 4 on the other page. We could pass page 1.

Mr. Chairman: I am advised that the reason she wants to go clause by clause is that if there is any clause which needs amending while it is stuck out in the open, I suppose.

Mr. Storie: No, we do this all the time, a hundred-page Bill, page by page. We are on page 2; we passed page 1, clauses.

Mr. Chairman: Is it the will of the committee to do it page by page?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, then we will do it, we will satisfy everyone. We will do it in a block of clauses.

Clause 1 to 3.1—pass.

Clause 3.2 to 3.4—now we have an amendment coming in.

Mrs. Oleson: We could pass Clause 3.2.

Mr. Chairman: Clause 3.2—pass.

Clause 4—the Honourable Minister.

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, I move that Clause 4 be amended by the following amendment:

4. This Act is retroactive and is deemed to have come into force on December 18, 1989.

I move this motion with respect to both the English and the French texts.

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Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, with respect, that does not solve the problem. . . . 3.2(a) it makes it retroactive . . . et cetera, et cetera. So that will not solve the problem that people outside of Winnipeg, who are on social allowance as of December 18, will not automatically get the increase to provincial allowance. In some towns the amount of allowance they get is very, very small. There may be a discrepancy between the same individual from the same region and how did he get that -(inaudible)- I would think that could be corrected by either a committee meeting weekly or by an . . . are receiving social allowance on that basis. If it is the intention of the committee to have a payment start to rural and outside of Winnipeg on December 18, one of those two would probably be the simplest way is to . . .

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, the original intent of the Bill and the effective date will be January 1. What the Member is saying would have taken place anyway without this. To do an orderly transfer and transition from one program to another, the department needs this type of time frame in which to do it. That is why the effective date for those as dealt with in Clause 3 (a)—yes, it was done in that way to provide an orderly transition so that there would not be a bottleneck and so that we could serve people better.

An Honourable Member: December 18 to the 31, and that could be substantial in some areas.

Mrs. Oleson: The alternative is, of course, just to make it effective on January 1, and that would solve your problem, too. In order to do it in an orderly fashion, we want the authority to commence this on December 18. I do take seriously the Member's reasoning, but these people were going to be on that and, presently as the way the system works, they were on the municipal allowance for 90 days. What we are doing here, what the Member here is talking about is a two-week span in which they may or may not have less funds than they would on provincial assistance. I think if the Member will bear with us, in order to do this in the orderly fashion with which we hope to, that he allows this to go through.

Mr. Rose: It is the Government department that will have to bear the criticism from people. I do not think it is an administrative problem. The number of people involved will not be onerous, and I see no reason why the Government, why the department could not start making all payments to people as of December 18, be that which is effective for the provincial welfare system. It may mean that some of those people do not get those additional cheques until the middle of January or late January, perhaps February. It does remove an inequity.

The fact that somebody living next door to somebody else and both of them on social assistance with exactly the same circumstances, one family might indeed in some areas received for that two weeks close to \$1,000 more than the other one, and for what reason, just because a date is wrong or an arbitrary date in a Bill. I think that is another inequity in the system and that it should be corrected here while we are on it. It is not onerous to the department and can be done.

Mrs. Oleson: The Member should be aware and I am sure he does realize that this is just for new clients. The existing clients who are already on the roles now will come on to it on January 1, so in the whole transition there will be maybe some inequities. But in order to change it in an orderly fashion we need this date.

Mr. Rose: I am certainly aware of that, but that is the problem. Somebody who applies on the 18th gets the provincial welfare immediately, and somebody who is already on at a very much reduced rate in some areas—it does not apply to the City of Winnipeg—will not get that increase until two weeks later.

Mrs. Oleson: There is another wrinkle in this, Mr. Chairman. That will be that if they become effective on January 1, they will have to apply twice where we had hoped that they could apply once. As in anything, you have to set a date or draw a line. There is always somebody who can have a problem over it. No matter where you set the telephone districts, there are people across the road from one another who have to phone each other long distance. No matter what field of endeavour you get into, you have to draw a line or set a date, and it is not perfect.

Mr. Rose: I thought I heard the Minister say earlier that those people who did go on it on December 18 would not have to apply again on January 1. They would automatically have stayed on that system.

Mrs. Oleson: That is the intent of this Bill. Yes.

Mr. Rose: So you just contradicted yourself there, I think.

Mrs. Oleson: No, that is the intent of this Bill, but if the Member is saying that we change it to the actual intent date, then they would have to apply. If the 1st of January, then they would have to apply twice.

* (1130)

Mr. Rose: I think it is just another case, Mr. Chairman, of not being able to show the Minister how you can simply, easily correct an inequity in the system. If the NDP do not support an amendment, there is no use really for me to put it forward, but if they feel that they want to go from a three-tier system to a four-tier system for a period of two weeks, then I am certainly not the one who is going to get the flak. I am not the one who is going to make arbitrary decisions and discretionary decisions that somebody was jobbed out of \$800, or \$500, or \$300, or \$1,100, and that the Government is faced with a dilemma of people complaining to them for the next two or three months and phoning our department. That is their problem and that is the NDP's problem. I put the problem clearly to the Minister, clearly to the NDP. If they want to support an amendment, so be it.

Mr. Chairman: Is it the will of the committee to pass this amendment to the clause?

Mr. Storie: Mr. Chairman, I recognize that I think the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) does have a point, but

I want the Member for St. Vital that I am not supporting an amendment that complicates the lives of another 2,000 or 5,000 people. I do not know how many people would be affected by this. The department seems to indicate that it would create a situation where people would have to apply twice. I am not familiar enough with the system to say yes or no. I think the Member for St. Vital has a point. Some people are going to be affected negatively by this particular approach. I guess it is a question of whose lives we are going to complicate more and at what price.

I have to say that I think the Minister's explanation, if the facts she has given us are right, are more compelling. If the facts that she has given us are right, it is going to create a situation where people apply twice.

Mr. Chairman: Is it the will of the committee—Mr. Rose.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, we would like it clear that if certain parties get it on December 18, will they, or will they not—there seemed to be a contradiction here—have to reapply on January 1 to get that provincial assistance?

Mrs. Oleson: Mr. Chairman, new clients applying on or after December 18 will not have to go to the municipality. They can go directly to the province and the municipalities will advise them of that, the way this is presently written.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, I would assume there that anybody who is on social assistance outside of Winnipeg today who could, under an amendment, automatically go to provincial assistance would also not have to reapply on January 1.

Mrs. Oleson: The municipalities and the department are working together on this and it will be a transfer, but it is my understanding they will have to make application, people who are already on the rolls. I mean, there will have to be some sort of application filed with the province to put them onto the roll. That is existing cases that are on there now. They do that now anyway.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, I am just flabbergasted that we are making a mountain out of a molehill here.

An Honourable Member: Guess who is doing that.

Mr. Rose: This could simply be done in a department, and I am sure that people in the department realize, with just a mere stroke of a pen. There is no sense at all for reapplication. All the criteria are already set—

Mrs. Oleson: Is the Member telling us that there is no need for applications? Just walk in and receive cheques. Is that what the Member wants?

Mr. Rose: I want to say this—

Mr. Chairman: Excuse me. It is the Honourable Minister's turn. We have had ours.

Mrs. Oleson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The staff point out to me that for CAP, for cost-sharing, there has to be an application filed.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Chairman, an application has already been made out somewhere in the last 75 days. All the criteria are there—

Mrs. Oleson: Not for provincial welfare.

Mr. Rose: The fact of the matter is that if this province had, both in the previous Government and this Government, enough sense to follow the Canada Assistance Plan's guidelines, they would not be in this problem because there would not be two different sections in Manitoba. But I want to say this, that if we are so dense we cannot understand a simple problem like that, then I would suggest that the Minister is entitled to all the ensuing problems that will come because people are underpaid. That is an inequity in the system, and that is all I have to say on the subject.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Rose. Shall the amendment to the Bill pass—pass; Clause 4, as amended—pass; Preamble—pass; Title—pass. Bill, as amended, be reported.

Is it the will of the committee that I report the Bill as amended? (Agreed)

The hour is now 11:38 a.m. Shall the committee rise? Committee rise.
I would like to thank the committee.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 11:38 a.m.