



Second Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

40 Elizabeth II

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

LIB - Liberal; ND - New Democrat; PC - Progressive Conservative

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ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	ND
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	ND
CARR, James	Crescentwood	LIB
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	LIB
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	ND
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	LIB
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DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
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DOER, Gary	Concordia	ND
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ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
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REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
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VODREY, Rosemary	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	ND
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	ND

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, June 21, 1991

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this morning, from the University of Manitoba Student Parliament, 12 students. They are under the direction of Scott Murray. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey).

Also this morning from the Sandy Lake School, we have twenty Grades 8 and 9 students. They are under the direction of Jack Coulson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer).

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Manitoba Hazardous Waste Management Corporation Fourth Annual Report for the year 1990.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Supplementary Information for the Alcoholism Foundation of Manitoba.

* * *

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the banter across the way, I apologize. I was going to pay tribute to 25 years of public service and elected service to Harry Enns to start the session, the member for Lakeside.

An Honourable Member: Can we assume there will be no questions on Oak Hammock?

* (1005)

Mr. Doer: No, I would not make that assumption, Mr. Speaker. I would not make that assumption at all.

We will look forward to paying tribute to Len Evans next week for his 22 years of elections and the celebration of the Schreyer government's election in 1969, as well.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Shoal Lake Mining Ban

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

The public of Manitoba is having an opportunity now to review the regulations dealing with the Shoal Lake watershed on the Manitoba side. All Manitobans are concerned about the water supply and the security of our water supply dealing with the Shoal Lake water situation, and we are very concerned about the regulations that the government has proposed for the Manitoba side of Shoal Lake.

Mr. Speaker, we believe, and many others believe, that there should be a total ban on mining on the Manitoba side of the Shoal Lake watershed. We believe that this will be consistent with our position with the Province of Ontario dealing with the total ban on mining on the Ontario side of the Shoal Lake watershed and give us the consistent position to argue against the Consolidated Mines and the hundreds of other potential mines that could go forward on the Ontario side.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier: Why do the regulations that the government is proposing not have a total ban on mining on the Manitoba side of the Shoal Lake watershed?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): We are rather pleased with the structure of the regulation that we are proposing for the Shoal Lake area. The fact is that under this regulation there will be no development allowed within a kilometre of the shoreline.

The second area will severely restrict activities and go to the limits in terms of protection of any discharges that would be potentially dangerous to drinking water. I would ask the member opposite to consider that the regulation is even as specific as to say that all developments are prohibited in Areas 1 or 2, which are located within 1,000 metres of Shoal Lake, Indian Bay or Snowshoe Bay, including developments on islands.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, again, review of the regulations by surveyors and other groups that are dealing with the regulations tell us that the designation of the two areas may only cover approximately 11 percent of the watershed and so, therefore, we have a situation where, by example, we are having a two-tier system for one area of the province to allow for extraction of minerals and processing of those minerals outside of the designated area, something similar to what Consolidated is proposing in Ontario, and something similar to what other mines are proposing in Ontario.

I would ask the Minister of Environment or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) why they have not agreed to environmental suggestions and the City of Winnipeg suggestions to have a total ban, not an 11 percent ban, but a total ban on mining on the Manitoba side of the Shoal Lake watershed area?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I would refer to the section under Transportation of Dangerous Goods, the transportation of dangerous goods except for domestic quantities across a body of water within Areas 1 or 2 is prohibited.

Those are the kinds of regulations and controls that we have in place to make sure that there is no possibility of a discharge, accidental or otherwise, that would impair the quality of water that we are getting out of that watershed.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the Leader of the Opposition will work with us in the implementation of these regulations. I hope he picks up the phone and talks to Premier Bob and tells him that he wants this type of regulation implemented on the Ontario side of the border.

Mr. Doer: Well, not only have I picked up the phone with Premier Bob, I was able to set up a meeting with the Winnipeg Water Protection Group with Premier Bob, something that the Premier of Manitoba will not even agree to in the province of Manitoba. So perhaps the Minister of Environment would like to

talk to the person to the right of him before he lectures the New Democratic Party on the protection of water. This is a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker.

The City of Winnipeg and environmental groups are calling for a ban of mining on the total watershed. The government is coming forward with proposals on banning of mining dealing with 11 percent of the watershed according to independent surveyors.

The question, therefore, becomes: In light of the Premier's comments in this Legislature when we asked this question on November 19 that the severest of restrictions as can be done within the watershed to set the example with Ontario, why would the Minister of Environment not ban on the total watershed mining operations as has been recommended by environmental groups, as has been recommended by the City of Winnipeg, as we would recommend to the government, to the minister, so that we can argue very consistently with the Province of Ontario?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I am always impressed when someone can take figures and convert it either into a percentage or a total and try and build a case that is not there and make it appear to the public that they really know what they are talking about.

The fact is that a very small portion of this watershed lies on the Manitoba side of the boundary. The implementation of these types of regulations on the Ontario side of the border in the Shoal Lake basin will provide absolute protection for the quality of the water in that lake. These will be the strongest regulations on a body of that nature across the country. That is the kind of protection that people in this province are looking for, and that is what they want and they are going to get.

*(1010)

Free Trade Agreement - U.S. Impact on Manitoba

Mr. Jerry Storie (Filn Flon): Mr. Speaker, in a somewhat surprising revelation in 1988, the Premier of this province admitted that he had never read the Free Trade Agreement. It is becoming increasingly clear that not only has the First Minister not read the Free Trade Agreement, he does not seem to care what its impact is on Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday he continued to display his ignorance about this Free Trade Agreement and its impact on Manitoba by suggesting that there had

been no change in tariffs which might have affected the closure of the Tupperware plant in Morden.

Mr. Speaker, will the First Minister today tell the people of Manitoba that he will in fact read the Free Trade Agreement and that he will also provide information to this House about what other businesses are going to close in Manitoba as a result of this agreement?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, what I have done is read the words of the people who own and operate that Tupperware plant. They have categorically said that plant closure would not have been stopped regardless of the Free Trade Agreement. The facts also demonstrate that within the past year 1,300 jobs of Tupperware in the United States were reduced. Those are both facts that the member for Flin Flon chooses to ignore.

The other fact that he chooses to ignore, of course, is the survey that was done by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that clearly—

An Honourable Member: Blaming you for high taxes.

Mr. Filmon: No, they have recognized that this government has done its job. In fact, I will quote them on the issue—but that the former administration did nothing but drive up taxes and put on such new and innovative taxes as the payroll tax that added \$80,000 annually to the cost of operation of that Tupperware plant in Morden, that added to the corporate tax rate, to the corporation capital tax that they were paying, that added all of these and many more levies that made a plant that was brought in by a Conservative government in 1979 uneconomical during the '80s due to the efforts of the NDP government in driving up the taxes to the second highest level in the entire country.

There are plenty of surveys, there are plenty of comparisons that demonstrate that, and this—the party of taxes of course—now celebrates the loss of jobs which they try and foist off on somebody else, Mr. Speaker.

The fact of the matter is that the same thing is happening in NDP Ontario. There are stories every day about all of the things that are contributing to it, the high taxes, the high deficit and indeed the very difficult circumstances to operate that are being caused by the NDP administration in Ontario, an exact parallel to what happened here in the 1980s.

* (1015)

Mr. Storle: Mr. Speaker, there are none so blind as those who will not see.

Yesterday, I attended a meeting of the Council of Canadians. The guest speaker was Maude Barlow who has been studying the free trade issue and its implications for a lot of years. She will tell the First Minister, if the First Minister has the intestinal fortitude to sit down with her, that he is blind.

The First Minister wants to continue to refer to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business study with respect to taxes. This minister has had four budgets to correct any inequalities that he sees. I quote from the CFIB report that he is quoted from, and it says: When comparing Manitoba to the United States, payroll taxes are higher in the U.S. than in Manitoba, corporate income taxes are similar, provincial sales tax systems are very similar among the region.

Mr. Speaker, this problem is a free trade problem. The jobs that used to be in Morden are in Tennessee and South Carolina. When will this minister accept responsibility for his position on free trade and start to prepare a plan to improve the circumstances of Manitoba business and the workers in Manitoba—when?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, again the member conveniently forgets the fact that the CFIB said, because of the fact that we removed the payroll tax from small businesses, they are not negatively affected by that. That does not help the Tupperware situation. They are affected by it.

These are the people who day after day after day demand that we spend more money. Spend money on health care; give more money to the municipalities; give more money to the City of Winnipeg. They tell us to do all of that and at the same time reduce taxes.

This is the greatest hypocrisy that we have seen in this Legislature. This is what the Financial Post says about NDP policies: Last straw, NDP final blow as Ontario faces slow flight of investment capital. They go on to talk about all the things that have resulted in 213,000 jobs being lost in Ontario in the first five months of this year versus the first five months of last year under the NDP government. It is NDP policies that have left us in this hole. It is NDP policies that will drive us further into a hole if they are allowed to operate in this country, and we will not allow that to happen in Manitoba.

Business Closures Government Strategy

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, we have asked on a number of occasions for some action from the government. It is quite obvious from reports and comments from the First Minister and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) that they did not even know, nor did the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) apparently know, that 160 people were going to lose their jobs. What happened to co-operation?

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour or the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Will the province of Manitoba now form a death watch for companies in Manitoba, so that we can at least attempt to intervene in some constructive way to prevent these kinds of losses, so that the province can at least attempt to alter the circumstances that are creating this loss of jobs in Manitoba? Will those three, Ministers of Labour, Industry, Trade and Tourism, and the First Minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, the point that the member for Flin Flon raises is one of the functions currently that the Labour Adjustment Unit undertakes when it has notice, when it is aware of a situation.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, who know very little of what they speak, particularly the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), say this, but I will tell you, there are a number of companies in this city that were in danger of closing because their product lines had finished in the marketplace, and this Labour Adjustment Unit has been working with them to apply new technology and has saved far more jobs than the member for St. James will ever realize or know.

Health Care System - National Standards Responsibility

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question is to the Premier.

On Wednesday, federal Health Minister Benoit Bouchard, in a statement that was later quoted in *The Globe and Mail*, questioned whether the enforcement of national health care standards had to be the responsibility of the federal government. He suggested that the provinces could determine

national standards, but all too often we have realized how difficult that consensus is. Most recently, the Education ministers have all agreed to national testing standards, with the exception of the province of Ontario.

Given that there are already provinces, such as Quebec, who have started dismantling universal health care by way of user fees, can the First Minister tell this House whether he and his government support the abdication of responsibility by the federal government and the establishment of national standards in medicare?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): No, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we ought to have continued national enforcement of standards. I believe, though, the major piece that is missing in that particular requirement is that the federal government is, at the same time, starving us for funds to be able to meet those national standards.

This year alone, for instance, we had a reduction in cash transfers on EPF to the Province of Manitoba, some \$36 million, but despite that, we raised the spending in health care some \$90 million. A continuing erosion of the federal financial commitment is causing us serious problems across the country, but at the same time, the federal government, I believe, ought to ensure that we do have a standard across the country that is the highest standard we can possibly afford and is also enforced by the federal government so that there is an assurance of standards across the country.

Having said all of that, the major problem is that the federal government cannot expect that the provinces can continue to put in the money to offset their withdrawals by way of EPF transfer reductions to the provinces.

* (1020)

Health Care System - National Standards Responsibility

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question to the Minister of Health.

There is no question that national standards and funding must go hand in hand, but if the federal government is willing to opt out of standards, it would appear to us that this will lead to an even further deterioration of funding.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House, if, in his dinner meeting with the Ministers of Health across

the country, Mr. Bouchard also indicated to them that the federal government was willing to opt out of the establishment of standards and pass that responsibility over to the provinces? What was his reaction to that?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): No, Mr. Speaker, that was not part of the presentation made by the federal minister. What was, I think, a reasonable achievement out of Wednesday evening's supper meeting with the federal minister was an understanding transmitted from ourselves as provincial-territorial ministers to him as federal minister that we work in a very co-operative fashion, put narrow partisan politics aside, and try to work on resolution of health care issues on a national scale because all provinces and territories are faced with the same challenges.

We invited him to be part of that, and the point was made that the provinces would find it difficult to accept the imposition of national standards, that if national standards are to be imposed by the federal government, the provinces want to be part of the setting of those national standards so that, as the deliverers and those with the knowledge of the system, the hands-on operation of the system, we have input into that. That, I think, was acceded to.

The point that I made is that, if national standards are to be the end goal, and I do not have objections with that, they must be commensurate with a funding formula that is not declining in terms of cash contribution to the provinces but, in fact, recognizes a partnership role not only in setting of standards but in financing of same.

Funding

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, there are seven provinces whose per capita incomes are below the per capita average. They are designated, as a result, as have-not provinces.

Can the Minister of Health tell this House if, in their meetings in the fall, the seven provinces so designated will present a united position in that a recent study clearly shows that the funding cuts by the federal government to EPF have impacted most severely on those particular provinces?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether my honourable friend would go to any national meeting promoting Manitoba as a have-not province. I tend to shy

away from that and speak of the opportunities in Manitoba, the kind of investment climate and the kind of course we are on to make Manitoba a better place to be for Manitobans and Canadians. I do not accept my honourable friend's have-not mentality of Manitoba. That is foreign to me.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the methods by which the federal government is going to participate in funding of health care, that will be subject, I think, to substantial discussions this fall.

Now, one of the second issues that came up—and I would like to share with my honourable friend so she understands where the provincial-territorial ministers are coming from. We have established a working relationship with our respective Finance ministers as much as two years ago so that we suggested to the federal minister that any decisions, in terms of how the federal government partners in financing health care to assure the medicare system across Canada, provincial-territorial Ministers of Health ought to be part of that process.

* (1025)

Low-Income Families Government Initiatives

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, 40 percent of the people in Manitoba living in poverty are children. This statistic shows itself in many social problems, only one of which is education where poor children are twice as likely to drop out of school as nonpoor children, to repeat grades more often and are much more likely to have emotional problems than children who come from families with an adequate income.

Can the Premier tell the House today why his government is ignoring the desperate plight of these families, these children, by cutting back programs that would assist them to break the cycle of poverty?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, this government has consistently given a very high priority to Family Services funding. I invite the member for Wellington to compare the budgets of this administration year upon year in which Family Services funding has been the highest level of increase of any area of our budget. They have been running in excess of 9 percent for previous years, the previous two or three years. This year's budget 6.9 percent, despite the fact that our natural revenue growth—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Despite the fact that our natural growth rate of funding from our own sources was something less than a half of 1 percent, we gave 6.9 percent increase to the area of Family Services. Mr. Speaker, we know that there is never enough, that we cannot do all the things that we would like to do, but we make the area of Family Services a priority and have, budget upon budget upon budget.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, since May of 1988, over three years ago, when this government first came to power, welfare rates in the city of Winnipeg alone have risen by almost 50 percent. Can the Premier tell the House today what strategies this government has put into place in the three-plus years they have been in power and in the four budgets they have brought down in this government to help eliminate this problem?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member is talking about welfare rates or if she is talking about levels of participation in welfare. If she is talking about rates, we have maintained or exceeded the level of inflation and we have also this year, in addition to the normal rate increase of some 4.5 percent, allowed, of course, for them to keep the GST rebate which added another 4 percent to their income. If she is talking about participation, I noted with interest, as she did, the fact that at the municipal level in the city of Winnipeg the participation has increased by some 30 percent. I thought that to be reflective of, of course, the recession in which we are. So I looked back at what happened when the New Democrats were in government in the last recession.

An Honourable Member: Eighty-one—Sterling Lyon.

Mr. Filmon: No—yes, going back to '81, the welfare participation increased by 5.9 percent, but then when the New Democrats took office the following year, it increased 59.2 percent in that year—59.2 percent. Then again the following year, it went up another 31.6 percent. So, in two years, it increased 90 percent under the New Democrats, the participation of people on welfare in the city of Winnipeg for municipal welfare.

So I say, as we have said before, these are not easy times. We certainly hope that the recession will end soon, but when you compare a 30 percent

increase in welfare participation this year versus 90 percent over two years of the NDP government of the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (1030)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), if the both of you want to carry on a conversation, you can kindly do so in the messenger rooms.

The honourable member for Wellington has the floor.

Ms. Barrett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the Premier what job creation strategies, what strategies of any sort, has he undertaken with the City of Winnipeg and other municipalities to attempt to eliminate or decrease the unconscionable increase in the welfare rates and rolls in this city and province?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, the unconscionable increase, of course, is half of what it was under the New Democrats in the '80s. The fact of the matter is however that we do not want to do the kind of thing that was done under the NDP, that short-term make-work approach that resulted firstly in the only tangible lasting benefit, as the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), the Leader of the New Democrats, said when he was, of course, the president of MGEA, being those green and white signs that were all over the province and stickers that were on doors. That was the only lasting effect, plus a legacy of debt that choked the economy for years to come afterwards and continues to choke the economy.

What we are doing is doing our level best, despite the efforts of the New Democrats to the contrary, to keep taxes down in this province, and we have succeeded. We reduced by 2 percent the personal income tax rate. We also increased the deductions to families. We also reduced the payroll tax and we have also, of course, given incentives for corporations to enter into training and retraining to upgrade their staff and to invest in the human resource capital, despite the fact that New Democrats have argued and voted against all of those things.

As a result of these efforts, people such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and, of course, the Investment Dealers Association have

said that this has become a much more attractive place to invest. That is why Royal Trust is moving 200 jobs here; that is why, of course, MacLeod Stedman is moving their head office and 125 jobs here; that is why Western Glove Works has moved 165 jobs from southern Ontario to Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Oak Hammock Marsh Highway Upgrading Costs

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday of this week I asked the Minister of Highways and Transportation to tell the House what the costs were concerning the development of Provincial Road 220 from Provincial Road 67 to the Ducks Unlimited site. These costs would include for Survey and Design, the Acquisition of Right-of-Way and Utility Revisions.

Does the Minister of Highways and Transportation have the information available, and will he table any supporting documentation here today?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

Again, I want to indicate that in a little over three years that I have had the privilege of being the Minister of Highways and Transportation, we have had substantial increases in highway construction. From '81 to '88 we had continuing dramatic decreases from the previous administration in highway construction. However, the one thing that the previous administration did in July of 1987 was to take over the road to Oak Hammock, the 4 kilometres. The rationale why they took over that road was because an interpretive centre was being built at Oak Hammock at that time. Using the normal process that we do, in terms of how we ID roads that have to be upgraded, staff brought forward recommendations based on the traffic counts and 1989 is when the staff came forward with recommendations to take and upgrade the system of Highway 220.

An Honourable Member: Upgrade it, eh?

Mr. Driedger: Well, it was taken over in 1987 because of the need to take it over because of traffic, and in '89 staff came forward with recommendations having nothing to do with the present project on it. It had to do with the interpretive centre. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to table the rationale, the

breakdown of the program that we have in place which includes \$15,000 for Survey and Design in last year's program; we have \$28,000 for Utility Revisions and Acquisition of Right-of-Way for this construction year; we will be doing grading to the tune of \$268,000 in the next construction year; and we will be doing Base and AST in the year of 1993-94 to the tune of \$275,000, for a total of half a million dollars.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that this minister's department has offloaded roads onto the municipalities and forced them to take over the costs of maintaining these roads in the different municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talked a moment ago about another half million dollar cost onto the project for this project at Oak Hammock Marsh. Considering that the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) has said it is only going to cost us \$250,000 in this province, there is another half a million on there.

My question for the Minister of Highways and Transportation is: Considering that there was at committee meetings last night a presentation made that there was going to be nearly three-quarters of a million dollars, how can he justify, from his point of view, the half million dollars versus the presentation that was made at committee last night?

Mr. Driedger: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the member got his information from, because I have this from my staff as of today in the morning and can indicate and justify the expenditure of approximately \$500,000 based on the fact, not on the proposed project for Oak Hammock Marsh right now, but on the interpretive centre, where we have up to 300 vehicles a day which, basically, under the criteria that we always use, establishes this as a road that should be upgraded and ultimately hardtopped.

I have some difficulty having numbers indicate that, because of the proposal that is going on right now, this road was ID'd for that purpose. It had been ID'd long before that, and it is for that reason why they took it over in 1987.

Ducks Unlimited Headquarters Government Costs

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, since the Minister of Natural Resources has repeatedly stated that the only cost to Manitobans is a grant of

\$250,000, will the Minister of Natural Resources now revise his project costs for this Ducks Unlimited office complex and include the costs of construction for the provincial road, a cost that will be paid for by Manitoba taxpayers?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) indicated he felt sorry for people who have eyes and cannot see. I feel sorry for members who have ears and cannot hear, because I have just explained that this project was slated to go ahead regardless of any further activity.

Mr. Speaker, if nothing more happened at Oak Hammock Marsh than there is right now, we would still be following the same process in terms of building this road. That is what I am trying to indicate. The proposed project has nothing to do with the proposed construction and, as a result, cannot be affiliated with any costs related to that project.

Shoal Lake Mining Ban

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment.

Mr. Speaker, ever since this government became elected, they have been at pains to try and convince Manitobans that they are on the right side of the Winnipeg water supply issue. Despite this and all the words, rhetoric and the correspondence, our water supply is still very much at risk.

Two things have happened relatively recently which proved that. First of all, a news release is issued by the Ontario New Democratic Party entitled, Ontario supports sound mining development on Shoal Lake. That occurred in December of last year. Secondly, this government came forward with regulations ostensibly to ban mining, which banned 11 percent of the mining in the watershed—11 percent, Mr. Speaker.

The question for this minister is simple, and it is very important for the 600,000 Manitobans who receive their drinking water out of the Shoal Lake watershed. I ask the minister to be forthright with those people.

Does the minister believe in a ban on mining and other activities which would potentially affect adversely the water supply for 600,000 Manitobans or not, because if they do, what are they doing to achieve that? Why have they put in place an 11

percent solution here, Mr. Speaker? Why have they not done anything to convince the Ontario government to do the same thing?

* (1040)

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I guess I am tempted to refer to the comments of the Minister of Highways and Transportation a moment ago, but the fact is, when we are looking at the Shoal Lake area—and a prohibition on actions within 1 kilometre of the shoreline effectively stops any possible opportunity of damage to the quality of that water. When I look at some of the negotiations that we have gone through over the last couple of years in discussions with various authorities, we have had to push, including the City of Winnipeg, to make sure that we do have the ability to prohibit the use of pesticides, to prohibit actions that could be contrary to the best interests of the quality of that water. I will put these regulations up against any standard in terms of water quality protection.

Mining Ban - Ontario

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I trust that the minister is not questioning the survey certificate from Pollock & Wright, which indicates that the mining ban applies to 11 percent of the watershed.

Can we take it from this minister's defence of his regulations that he would be satisfied with a similar 11 percent ban in Ontario, because that was one of the purposes of coming forward in Manitoba, was (a) to protect our water, but (b) to send a message to Ontario as to what we want? Is this what he wants from Ontario, an 11 percent solution?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and now the Liberal opposition want to talk about percentages. They do not want to talk about the realities of where the protection needs to occur, which is within the shoreline area of the water that we are talking about, 1 kilometre back from the shoreline and including any developments in the second area of where they could flow into the Shoal Lake basin, from the basin into the waters.

This regulation takes into consideration the drainage basin. The drainage basin on Manitoba's side is very small, and the province of Ontario is going to have a very significant portion of land

around that lake severely restricted if they accept a similar regulation to this.

If the member wants to talk about areas, then I invite him to look at the area map and see where the drainage basin lies in this province and it is very small.

Environment Act Shoal Lake Protection

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the minister does not understand the concept of a watershed and he better learn fast. I am prepared to table—I am going to prepare, so he can learn (a) the map and (b) the survey certificate, so he can learn what a watershed is and what he has actually protected us from.

Mr. Speaker, finally, for the same minister: The new Mines Act, Bill 6, the whole thrust of it is to incorporate what were regulations into the act. Why is this minister not prepared to do the same thing with respect to the protection of Shoal Lake? Why is he going in exactly the opposite direction and putting into regulation only and not giving Manitobans and Winnipeggers the security of provisions in The Environment Act protecting their water supply at Shoal Lake?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, all of these regulations are adopted under the strength and the authority of The Environment Act, which was put together originally by the party now in opposition, an act that is considered to be quite strong in terms of its ability to enforce the intent. I can tell you that under these regulations we will have the ability and the capacity to enforce the type of protection that we are dealing with.

The member wants to argue about acres and percentages. If he thinks I do not understand watersheds, then what does he think the shoreline means? Is that not part of the watershed? Is that not where the pollution comes from if it is going to get into the water?

The protection is there under this regulation. If Ontario adopts a similar regulation, we will be in good shape.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Nonpolitical Statement

Mrs. Rosemary Vodrey (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, may I have—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Does the honourable member for Fort Garry have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Is leave denied? Does the honourable member for Fort Garry have leave—(interjection)—Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is apparently having some problems here today.

Now, the honourable member for Fort Garry wants to know if she could have leave to make a nonpolitical statement. Does she have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, Victoria General Hospital will celebrate an anniversary this weekend. While the hospital has served Manitobans for 85 years, it was 20 years ago this month that the Vic opened its doors at its present Pembina Highway location.

The Victoria has a reputation as an innovative leader. The Vic's same-day surgery program is no doubt a premier program of its kind in Manitoba. Victoria Hospital's laser surgery program is another example of responding to the call to innovative methods. Their use of the CO2 and the YAG lasers makes them another leader in Manitoba.

The Victoria continues to serve its community as a provider of the best health care services possible while maintaining a fiscally responsible management style.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Victoria General Hospital on 20 years of valued service as a member of the Fort Garry community. I also congratulate the staff, the people who are responsible for transforming the bricks and mortar we call hospitals into the centres for caring professional service we have come to expect. Thank you.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): May I have leave to make a committee change?

Moved by the member for Point Douglas, seconded by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural

Resources be amended as follows: Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans).

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I move, seconded by the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) for the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) for the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rose), the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) for the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) and the member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) for the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson). These changes are for Friday, June 21, the 1 p.m. session.

I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources for Monday, 10 a.m. session, June 24, be amended as follows: the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) for the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) for the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) for the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) and the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) for the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

* (1050)

Nonpolitical Statement

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupert's Land): May I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Rupert's Land have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave? Agreed.

Mr. Harper: Yes, today is June 21, the summer solstice day. We have the longest daylight today and also today is the Aboriginal Solidarity Day. June 21 has always been designated as a day for aboriginal solidarity.

I would like to invite members of the Chamber to join the aboriginal people in this day, as we call it, the Aboriginal Solidarity Day, in joining us to reflect on ourselves as aboriginal people and look at us as who we are in this country as the first peoples, the

first inhabitants, the first citizens of this country. I know that we as aboriginal people have done a great contribution to this country and we want to reflect those positive things that we have accomplished as aboriginal people. Today is a day to do that, to reflect on that, to look at ourselves as aboriginal people, to look at our rich heritage and our culture.

As you know, aboriginal people, one of our basic fundamental philosophies is to share and care. When we look at our traditions, on our values and the things that we believe in, and look at our future and to look for those positive things that have carried us through time and history, we want to be able to reflect on that today.

As I often say, what makes a person great or what makes a nation great is that it is not what you acquire materially that makes you a great person or a great nation, what makes you a great person or great peoples or a great nation is what you are able to give and share with other people. Certainly as aboriginal people in this country, we have always had open arms to many people who have come to this place, our homeland, which we call today Canada.

Today we want to reflect on that in terms of the positive developments that we have made, and we are hopeful that other people will join us in the Walk for Solidarity today for aboriginal people.

Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you call second reading, Bill 68, and then debate on second readings, Bill 44 and then Bill 70.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 68—The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act (2)

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), that Bill 68, The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur la Ville de Winnipeg be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased this morning to be able to introduce for second reading Bill 68 to amend The City of Winnipeg Act.

Bill 68 contains amendments aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of local government of the City of Winnipeg. It also contains a number of amendments requested by the City of Winnipeg.

Turning first to the changes to City Council, Mr. Speaker, Bill 68 proposes to reduce the number of Winnipeg wards from 29 to 15 and the number of community committees from six to five.

Since council is to be reduced by approximately half, the size and composition of the city's Executive Policy Committee is to be also modified. Currently Executive Policy Committee consists of 10 members of council: the mayor, who chairs and appoints the deputy mayor, the chairpersons of the city's four standing committees, and four councillors elected by City Council.

Under Bill 68, Executive Policy Committee will consist of six members: the mayor, the deputy mayor and the four standing committee chairpersons. The mayor would continue to chair and appoint members to the Executive Policy Committee.

Also, Mr. Speaker, four resident advisory groups will remain unchanged. There will continue to be one councillor elected from each ward, a three-year term of office and a mayor elected at large.

I would like to point out that the changes to restructure Winnipeg City Council are intended to build upon the civic reforms legislated in 1989. I refer here to the amendments to The City of Winnipeg Act which strengthened the mayor's role on council and Executive Policy Committee, created the position of a presiding officer of council and clarified the role and responsibilities of the executive committee.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, is committed to enhancing urban government in Winnipeg. With the legislation passed in 1989 and with Bill 68 which is presently before us, this government has been pursuing the following goals of civic reform: to make the political accountability of the city's elected representatives more visible, to enhance political leadership within City Council, to promote effective urban government and to balance the consideration of local area need with what is needed for the city at large.

During the public meetings held by the Winnipeg Wards Review Committee on reducing the size of council, there were those who expressed the fear that a smaller council would diminish local government representation, accountability and responsiveness to citizens. They believe the effectiveness of local government is related directly to the volume of city councillors.

We disagree, Mr. Speaker. Those fears were raised in 1972 when the numbers were reduced from in excess of 100 to 50. Those fears were raised again in 1977 when council was reduced from 50 members to 29. Both reductions, incidentally, introduced by NDP governments. Those fears have not been realized, with a full-time council representation could, and I stress could, in fact be enhanced as opposed to reduced with a smaller council. Having all members of Executive Policy Committee appointed by the mayor will focus accountability for overall policy development on the mayor and his team.

It is important to give these powers to the mayor as long as Winnipeggers wish to elect their mayor at large. A smaller City Council will lead to more effective civic management. Larger councils do not necessarily mean citizens have better quality of representation. In fact, in Winnipeg a large council has proven to be dysfunctional for a number of reasons.

First, Mr. Speaker, the cumbersome size of council has tended to produce parochialism and competition among those who represent individual wards. That competition will continue even with a smaller council, but it should be less pronounced for two reasons—fewer wards and, therefore, fewer occasions for ward politics. The mayor and executive committee will be more visible and more vulnerable if they present city-wide policies that are poor or based on ward politics as opposed to the city-at-large concept.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the concept of Unicity is presently not well served. A city-wide perspective in policy development and budgeting has been lacking. It was lacking when I was there as one of 50 members of council. It was lacking when I was there as one of 29 members of council. If a reduction to 15 councillors with a strong mayor does not change things at City Hall, then other possibilities will have to be examined in the future.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, timely decision making becomes more difficult with a large council, particularly one that is not presented with comprehensive policy objectives.

The Unicity structure of Winnipeg's local government was created in 1971, and it was intended to balance local needs and objectives with a city-wide perspective in policy development, budgeting and decision making by council.

At the same time when it was created and remains today, the Unicity model of civic governance is unique. It has no comparable precedence in Canada. So given the uniqueness of this Unicity model, it is understandable, in fact inevitable that modifications have been made to the structure since its inception in order to have Unicity more effectively accomplish its overall goal, namely, to balance local community and area-wide needs.

In short, Mr. Speaker, the Unicity structure has been evolving gradually since 1971. In 1977, council was reduced from its original size of 50 to 29 councillors and the 12 community committees reduced to six. In 1989, legislation was enacted to introduce structural changes of City Council, now in 1991, through Bill 68, further improvements to the civic structure are being put forward for consideration by the Legislative Assembly.

* (1100)

The imbalance in the emphasis on individual ward needs is being redressed, not only by reducing the number of wards, but also by reducing the number of community committees, scaling down Executive Policy Committee by eliminating the requirement for electing four councillors at large to sit on that committee. There seems, Mr. Speaker, to be no evidence to suggest that larger councils are more effective at meeting the needs of citizens and managing civic affairs. In fact, the trend among Canadian urban centres is toward smaller councils.

The size of Winnipeg City Council is comparatively large. Having the city represented by 15 councillors will bring Winnipeg in line with other Canadian cities. Each councillor will represent a population of approximately 40,900 people. This compares favourably with other western urban centres of similar size, such as Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton, which have approximately 45,000 persons per ward.

I should add that those other centres do not have a civic Ombudsman's office, Mr. Speaker, who can

be expected by its very existence to encourage better direct service from civic bureaucrats to the citizenry.

The proposed changes in Bill 68 are to come into effect for the 1992 fall civic election. I believe that a smaller, more cohesive and balanced political structure can prove to be a positive step towards good government for Winnipeggers. There is no guarantee, for effective local government depends not only on structural reform but also on the quality of representation and leadership offered by those who are elected.

Bill 68 also contains the amendments requested by City Council. The first, legislation is being amended to enable Winnipeg City Council to hire an external auditor to undertake attest audits, and determine the fairness and accuracy of the city's financial statements. In permitting council to contract out attest audits, the city auditor would have more time to undertake operational audits related to the economy, efficiency and productivity of the city's expenditures. It is becoming increasingly common among Canadian cities to contract out attest audits. For example, the cities of Halifax, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Regina, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Calgary all contract out their attest audits.

The second amendment requested by council concerns employee pension plan legislation. Bill 68 would amend the existing highly prescriptive and restrictive provisions in The City of Winnipeg Act and instead delegate to council the authority to determine, by bylaw, the duties and responsibilities of employee pension boards. The city's pension bylaw would have to comply, of course, with the provisions of The Manitoba Pension Benefits Act which ensures that funds are properly protected and accounted for.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, Bill 68 contains amendments dealing with municipal election expenses. In 1989, The City of Winnipeg Act was amended to include legislation on election expenses. The current provisions enable City Council to determine, by bylaw, the maximum amount of a campaign contribution to a candidate for mayor and councillor, and the maximum amount which candidates for mayor and councillor can spend on election expenses. Since passage of this new legislation, Winnipeg City Council has asked that the act be amended to prohibit political parties from making contributions and to include provisions

which specify how surplus contributions are to be dealt with.

An amendment to exclude political parties from being eligible to make campaign contributions is considered desirable in order to ensure that the support of federal and provincial political parties does not create an unfair advantage for any candidate by using provincially tax-supported funds for this purpose.

Since the act, Mr. Speaker, is silent on what council should do in the event that a candidate collects surplus contributions, we consider that an amendment is in order. Bill 68 contains the following changes.

Federal, provincial political parties are to be excluded from being able to make campaign contributions to candidates running for municipal office. Where a candidate for office receives an individual contribution which exceeds the permitted limit, the candidate shall return to the person who made the contribution that portion which exceeds the limit. Where a candidate's total contributions from all sources exceeds the limit on election expenses, the excess contribution shall be held in trust by the city for use by the candidate in the next election. If the candidate does not seek re-election, the surplus funds revert to the City of Winnipeg.

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, the fee for service which the city is required to pay to utility companies who collect the city's electricity and gas tax on its behalf will be brought in line with provincial rates of compensation to utility companies. This change in fee structure will save the city approximately \$520,000 annually.

The last amendment required by City Council deals with the installment payments for property taxes. The city may wish to introduce a 12-month installment payment scheme for those ratepayers who wish to pay their property taxes by installment. Bill 68 includes an amendment to permit council to establish an installment payment program. Ratepayers would have a choice between installment payments or continuing to pay on an annual basis.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Bill 68 is primarily focused on civic reforms that are intended to improve the political structure and processes of the City of Winnipeg and enhance the city's effectiveness and ability to provide leadership within its own areas of jurisdiction. The reforms put

forward in Bill 68 will balance both local and city-wide interest within the city, promote increased accountability to the electorate.

Mr. Speaker, I recommend Bill 68 to the honourable members of the Legislature for their consideration and adoption.

Thank you.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 44—The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), Bill 44, The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Régie des services publics, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave? Agreed.

The honourable member for Transcona, who has 15 minutes remaining.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to continue my comments on this Bill 44 and pick up somewhat where I left off the last time we were debating this bill.

The reason that the government has introduced this Bill 44 is to allow Centra Gas to have something that the other utilities in this province have, and that is the ability to cut off service to customers with delinquent accounts. This, the government tells us, is the reason for this Bill 44 and that it is costing the gas company a large sum to progress its claims against corporations, companies and individuals, consumers, with delinquent accounts through the courts, and that the company in its destitute state needs this change to allow it to remain a viable entity.

* (1110)

Of course, when one views the last-known balance sheet for the company, one might note that Centra Gas does face a large dollar value in its

delinquent accounts. One might also note that this company had operating revenues in excess of \$200 million, hardly a shortage in the cash flow department. In fact, this company has had its cash flow in excess of \$200 million per year for many years now, since at least 1985.

In the most recent report, operating revenue was over \$210 million, an increase of some 10 percent, while the operating profit jumped by some 25 percent to over \$23 million.

The one fact that I find most astonishing in the statement from the company, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that this Centra Gas Company has had a level of deferred taxes up to the end of 1989, deferred taxes of nearly \$29 million. Considering the program cuts that this government has heaped upon the Manitoba population in this budget year, and probably beyond, one has to wonder what this province could do with this \$29 million to protect the desperately needed programs and employment.

While the notion of a reasonable profit for a company is not a foreign thought for me, I must question what are the reasonable limitations that this government has on its mind when it seeks to give this one particular company the opportunity to increase its profit margin near or beyond the range of 14 percent. Standards of an industry of this size would be in the range of between 7 percent and 12 percent, Mr. Speaker, with nearly 10 percent being the norm. Why over 14 percent, I ask. Why does this government want to have this particular company given the opportunity to have its profit margin beyond the normal range?

Another question I have is, will the Public Utilities Board in the future ensure that the rate increase of the gas rates for consumers will not get out of hand by allowing this company many yearly increases? The PUB must now, more than ever, seriously consider the ability of the consumer to pay, since for a large number of Manitobans that ability is going to shrink due to the wage controls of this government.

A large part of the public interest surrounding this Bill 44 was brought on by Centra Gas itself by way of its advertising campaign at the beginning of this year. No doubt this advertising has added a significant bill to the company's cost, and next year at tax time they will be able to write off this increase in its expenses against what should be its taxable income, thereby once again depriving the Province of Manitoba of scarce tax revenue.

While I am concerned for the well-being of the company and its employees, I am more concerned for the well-being of the many families in this province that are on fixed income or social assistance, in most cases due to circumstances beyond their control. As I spoke on Wednesday last on this bill, I questioned the carte blanche rights that appear to be given to the Centra Gas Company.

In the example that I used, one which actually occurred in my constituency last fall, was the family on social assistance due to the medical problems of the breadwinner of the family. This family was within hours of having their utility cut off due to the heartless attitude of a bureaucrat who refused to accept the offer by the family to pay a portion of their bill. Had it not been for the intervention of the city councillor Rick Boychuk and myself, this family would have been left without an essential utility service. This, Mr. Speaker, is the reason that I am suspicious of the need for this government to give the gas company the power of determining the suitable level of payment for delinquent accounts.

There are some sections of this bill, Mr. Speaker, that are good and address the concerns that I had on specific matters, but the proposed regulations do not answer my concerns for the need to have a determined third-party appeal process. Nowhere do I note any obligation by the company or the PUB to notify disconnected consumers of the appropriate appeal procedure to be followed when the disconnection, or reasons given by the company, are in dispute.

While I recognize the need for the company to bring down the level of its delinquent accounts, Mr. Speaker, there are, in times of recession or depression, as we now find ourselves in, the need to be ever vigilant of the conditions of those who are unemployed, on fixed income or are on social assistance.

There was some discussion previous, Mr. Speaker, where the ICG company itself, in the beginning of the debate on this issue, had proposed, by way of many means of advertising this fact, that they were going to apply for a \$90-per-year increase to the consumers of natural gas in the province of Manitoba.

That, of course, caused considerable ire, particularly in my constituency where I received many phone calls on the issue. People were concerned, as I talked about on Wednesday, about

some of the deadbeats, whether they be individuals or corporations, that had the ability to pay and chose not to pay the bills.

In the statement that was released by this government on May 14 of this year, and I will quote from the document, Mr. Speaker: "Manitoba natural gas consumers will no longer be asked to carry the financial burden of customers who have not paid their bills" If we tie that together with the fact that right now—and this is a statement by a member of the gas company—that the average customer, right now, pays \$60 a year to cover the debt that this company carries.

The question that I have, Mr. Speaker, is that once this bill becomes law and the regulations come into effect, considering the statement that was made in the government news release by the minister, will this minister and the PUB be asking this company to roll back the costs for consumers of this province by \$60 a year? I am not sure whether the minister is going to listen to these suggestions and ask this company, and the PUB, to roll back these bills, because if they are able to collect on the delinquent accounts, as this bill will allow them to do, then their costs should be substantially reduced and, therefore, they should be obliged to roll back the \$60-per-year fee, a savings of some \$12 million to the consumers in this province.

Another concern I had, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the consumers of this province appear that they are going to be subsidizing the construction of the pipeline to feed natural gas product from the production fields in the west through to the eastern U.S. seaboard. Of course, we have to be very conscious of the fact that this company is trying to expand, and we hope that they are not trying to do it at the expense of the consumers in this province.

The other concerns I had occurring concerned the lock-off procedures and the dates that were in place to allow them to lock off, and the fact that they will be locking off the services to customers between October 1 to May 14 of each year—will not be allowed to lock off between October and May.

An Honourable Member: Get it right.

Mr. Reid: It is not the first time that I have misspoken myself, and of course when I do catch myself I will correct the record, and I thank the minister opposite for his assistance in this matter. -(interjection)- Yes, he has, and it has been noted over the discussions we have had on this subject,

over a period of time, that the minister may have misspoke himself on the odd occasion as well, as we have seen particularly in the Pines Project debate that has been going on in this Chamber for a number of weeks, Mr. Speaker.

There was some debate in this House on trying to speed up the process of having this bill go through to committee stage and to have it go through third reading to become law. Of course, looking back at the press release from this government dated January 24, 1991, the minister at that time, the honourable member for Portage la Prairie, indicated that he plans to introduce an amendment to The Public Utilities Board Act in March.

Well, I believe, that the actual bill itself was introduced in May of this year. I am wondering why the delay there and why the urgency to have this passed through the House with all expediency at this time. Is it to accommodate the wishes of the corporation or is it to meet the needs of the people of Manitoba? I suggest that the former other than the latter is the case.

Centra Gas has, of course, always had a recourse to pursue their delinquent accounts and that was through the courts. Of course, from what they have indicated that has not been acceptable to them, because from the indications that they have released in their documents that they were only able to recover a portion of their costs which did not meet their needs.

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

One of the press releases that was dated in December 1989 going back to the urgency of passing this bill through this House, the ICG vice-president at that time, ICG vice-president general manager, indicated that they approached the government and that the government had indicated that they feel it is not on their political agenda right now. Yet, we see the urgency of this government to pass this matter through to give this corporation the opportunity to recover its delinquent accounts.

* (1120)

My concern in my debate on this bill is that the government will keep in mind, at all times, the needs of the people of Manitoba, those who are unable or least able to defend themselves or to represent themselves, when there comes a case of having their services terminated or cut off.

There are many other areas in this bill that cause me some concern. As I said earlier, there are some areas that are good as well. I think it is a logical progression that this bill moves in the direction of allowing this gas company to recoup its accounts that are in arrears to give it the opportunity to have the same recourse as the other utilities in the province of Manitoba.

Of course, this company, this natural gas is a public utility and as such, I think, should be representative of the needs of the people of the province. There were some plans in years gone by where this utility was in the process of possibly being put into the public domain, another Crown corporation. I must state for the record that I, myself, am in support of that.

I believe that this is an essential service and it should be under the control of the Province of Manitoba as a Crown corporation. I think that was a move in the right direction, and unfortunately, we did not see that go through to its final conclusion. Hopefully, in the future that will become a reality.

In the debate over the years on allowing the gas company to have its rate increases and to have the power to terminate or disconnect service for delinquent accounts, the gas company itself made promises that if the gas company erases some of its \$7 million in revenue deficiency, the gas company customers may expect a downward adjustment of their home heating bills. I hope, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the company itself will keep this in mind and that they will seriously make application to the Public Utilities Board to reduce the costs to the consumers of Manitoba—

An Honourable Member: Do you expect that?

Mr. Reid: No, I am not that confident they will do that, but I hope they will do that out of a gesture of good faith to the people of Manitoba.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

In my closing statements, Mr. Speaker, while it is the responsibility of the Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) to work to ensure that business and consumer needs are met, the responsibility of being a minister of a Crown responsible for the well-being of the citizens of Manitoba must take precedence.

I trust the minister has heard the concerns that I and my colleagues have raised on behalf of our constituents, the people of Manitoba, and she will

ensure that the safety of all Manitobans are guaranteed by this new law and this new policy. Thank you.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues in speaking to this very important bill, Bill 44. It is a very important bill, because in a bill like this we are dealing with some conflicting principles, both of which are noble and desirable.

One principle is the protection of our most vulnerable people for an absolute vital energy source in a very, very cold climate. The other principle that this House shares is the absolute principle that people should pay their fair share and others should not have an unfair burden to pay somebody else's share because somebody is taking advantage of a situation in our society.

That is why this bill is not—this Legislature has more responsibility when dealing with those principles than just blowing with the wind or going with all the phone calls we get or whatever else. We have more responsibility than just going with the quick and easy vote and a quick and easy time when there are two conflicting principles.

I know this is a bill that we have to debate, because we have to be very conscious in our mind and this Chamber has to be very careful in our debate as we poke this bill and we push the various provisions in this bill. As we examine the clauses in this bill, as we examine the sections of this bill, we have to be very careful that the principles that are in conflict are balanced in such a way that Manitobans and all Manitobans—all 1,090,000 Manitobans are getting a good and honest debate on tough and very important principles.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind members of this Legislature when they talk about their phone calls and their letters that you are not going to get a letter or a phone call from somebody who does not have a phone or somebody right now who may be the most vulnerable who is now spending the summer on the riverbank as part of the homeless people in our society who will not be following every word and every nuance of this bill and will not be following the debate as it moves from one hearing to another and will not know whether this bill was introduced on April 1 or April 2 or whatever else. You will not get a phone call or letter from those people but, whether we like it or not, the responsibility we have is not just to balance off the people who are phoning us and

writing us on the one hand. We have to balance it off with the people who are not going to phone us or are not going to write us. They could be the ones who are most vulnerable when we 57 members deal with this bill.

I would remind people in this Chamber that it is probably easy to categorize—and I have heard the debate being deadbeat or nondeadbeat—I think we should be honest about what we have to deal with on the principle of who is not paying their bill. There are corporations not paying their bill and they should. There is no question about that. This bill starts to address that. There are individuals in our society who are not paying their bills when they know better and can afford to pay their bills. They should, and I support that in this bill, the principle in the bill.

Mr. Speaker, there are individuals, a very, very small minority of people who will not be reading the advertising, will not be listening to the radio, will not be listening now to Peter Warren on the Provincial Report. They will not be listening to this stuff. Whether we like it or not, there is a great number of people who are homeless in our society today and the mayors of Canada—it is not unique to Manitoba and it is not unique to Winnipeg—in a rather dramatic way in Montreal just recently raised the issue of the homelessness of Canadians now as a new phenomenon.

We used to think that was kind of akin to New York City—you know, the scenes of street people wheeling their worldly possessions in a cart or a bag. They call them bag people in New York City. We used to think that was rather an American phenomenon, Mr. Speaker, in a kinder, gentler society, if I may use those terms, that we would not see that kind of situation, or we did not experience that situation in Canada.

Recently, and I would ask all members to be very conscious of this, the mayors of this country, the major mayors of the 12 or 14 major cities in Canada stated to all of us that the homelessness problem and the poverty problem is growing and growing and growing, and this is now becoming a problem of epidemic proportions in our country of Canada. That was not something that would be raised by political figures, politicians or public figures before, and that is something that we have to debate fully when we debate this bill and its principles before the Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I have a little experience with people who are homeless and people who operate basically on the streets. What I have found is they are nowhere around traditional buildings or shelters in the summer. They spend a lot of their time—I could take the members opposite—right now I could take you to a couple of places where a number of homeless people would be sitting on the river, right this moment. I could take you right there. I know the three or four spots where a group of people congregate.

* (1130)

Mr. Speaker, there are people of sound mental presence in that group of people now on those riverbanks. I would say to the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), and I am sure he has studied this bill, there are people who I would classify, and I am not a professional, but there are people who I would consider to be mentally handicapped, as well, in those groups of people who are now part of our homeless segment.

When we are dealing with a bill like this, and you have notices and you have appeal mechanisms and you have all these kinds of legal and paralegal kinds of bodies and quasi-judicial decision-making bodies, you have to understand that this works for 99.5 percent of the population, maybe even more, but the half a percent of the population who probably do not even vote, do not read the newspapers and do not follow the debate are the ones that we have to worry about in this Chamber, in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that those people are the ones who, after the summer is over, will seek shelter in the winter months wherever they can find it. They may not be aware. All the individuals may not be aware that their gas has been cut off between a certain date, April to October, that not only has their gas been cut off, but it will not be turned on again in October, that they had the right of appeal to the Public Utilities Board to challenge the capriciousness or lack of capriciousness of the gas company for cutting off the bill.

Mr. Speaker, they may not even know that the gas is cut off and the heat is cut off until you get your first day at 30 below zero in the middle of winter in the province of Manitoba, and maybe, a day later, it is too late. There have been people in our city—and the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) should have studies and should be presenting these studies to the Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mrs.

McIntosh). There have been people, tragically, who have frozen to death on our streets. It has nothing to do with the gas bill.

There are people who have frozen on our streets. In the last blizzard, we had an individual who froze to death. I think in the November 8 blizzard of 1987, a person froze out of the Main Street Project. There are people, Mr. Speaker, who have frozen to death in their shelters. There have been people who have been frozen to death in their shelters where the gas has been cut off.

Mr. Speaker, we should be very, very concerned about those half percent. I remind the Conservatives opposite that it was Burke who said to his constituents—Burke is a famous conservative thinker—that being a member of a parliamentary majority or being a member of a parliamentary representative means that you do more than just represent the majority of opinion.

You have to represent the conscience, the conscience of society, even when 99 percent of the people are opposed to the position you are taking. We in this Chamber, the minister and the Minister of Family Services have to represent, yes, the 99.5 percent of society who want this bill and, yes, more importantly, that half of percent who do not understand this bill and could be in a life-threatening situation with the passage of this bill.

Those are the issues of conscience I have to deal with and, I think, all of us have to deal with in this Chamber. Those are very, very important issues. This is not the kind of bill that you just pass with two or three speeches, rubber-stamp it and let it go to committee because it is politically popular. It is not that kind of bill, because there are the vulnerable people, as I say, who do not even vote, who we are making some very big decisions for. That is why we are conscious of the clock and we are conscious of those people who are not conscious of the clock.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to pay very close attention to this bill because he is the one on the government side who has to represent the mentally handicapped; he has to represent the homeless in a lot of cases; he has to represent the people who are in the food kitchens now, the Harvest and every other location now where they cannot cope with the poverty that is going on.

I know the Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) is

representing the concerns of consumers, and 99 percent of the consumers, if the government is able to pass on the savings, will benefit if this bill is passed, if the savings are passed on to the consumer. It is right and proper that the minister is trying to deal with this in this bill, and that is a responsibility, but it is also the responsibility of members in this Chamber to be 100 percent sure on the more vulnerable people, on that half a percent who will not read all these quasi-judicial sections and will not be reading the notices or the Centra Gas ads or the newspaper ads, the TV ads, or even if they did, there are some who will not be aware of the consequences.

There are mentally handicapped people who are homeless, and they do move into shelters in the winter. Not all of them are in interventionist care of the government; there are groups of people who prefer to be on the streets. They move from the riverbanks and other locations, the parks, in the summer, to locations in the winter without any knowledge of what has gone on to the shelters that they usually had that are maybe cut off in the summer during a technical period of time.

I want the government to look at this very carefully, as we will. I mean, we all know which way the wind is blowing, and it is easy to just vote every time a couple of letters and phone calls come in, but I would remind the Conservatives and I would remind all of us of the Burkean responsibilities, as parliamentarians, our responsibility to that half a percent. I am wrestling with it because I support the idea of everybody paying their fair share. There is no question about that. Nobody in this Chamber does not want to take the unpaid bills and return that money to the consumers, there is nobody. It is that one vulnerable person this winter that I am worried about, that one vulnerable person next winter or the winter thereafter.

Now the argument against our concern—and it is legitimate. I mean, Hydro now does it, so why should we have one standard for the gas company and one standard for Hydro? It has just been our experience, Mr. Speaker—and I have talked to people before the regulations were in place. We have some examples with the Thompson utility, and the minister should check back his record of his welfare workers in Thompson which has the right to cut off. It has been our experience that the action of Hydro as a public utility and the sensitivity they have with government social workers and

community-based social workers is different than the experience we have had from private utilities.

I would ask the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to take a study of the experience his workers have in Thompson, dealing with Hydro versus dealing with the gas company in Thompson, because there is a difference. He will find, from those people—and I would ask the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) to check that out because it is far better to check it out in the couple of weeks we have to deal with this bill than check it out next December.

He will find there are examples where his social workers have arranged for people to get their gas restored, and the company has come back and said, you need to put a \$200 deposit on this. You not only have to pay the \$300, but you have to put a \$200 deposit on. The person cannot afford that, the province will not forward the money and they are sitting there in a very, very vulnerable situation in that community with very, very severe winters. That is somebody who has the capacity to ask for it. That is an individual citizen who also has a social worker. So, therefore, I believe, eventually that will get resolved.

It is the homeless and the mentally handicapped that I am worried, who do not have a social worker, do not have a group home, do not have anything, they are on the streets and coming back, that I am very worried about them.

When you ask about the example of Hydro versus a private utility, intellectually and legally they are consistent. It is a good argument from the Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), and I respect her argument on that issue. Legally and technically what she is proposing here appears to be fairly consistent with what we do already for Hydro.

* (1140)

We have found case by case, and situation by situation, episodic case by episodic case that there has been a different ethic, and I do not know whether we can project that onto Centra Gas. I think the government should be very aware of it, because believe me, if one person freezes to death in this winter with this bill in a gas place, it is going to be a very serious coroner's inquest of why it happened and what happened and what did we collectively do to contribute to that situation.

The key issue is not only the appeal process the minister has placed in this bill, and I respect that this again will work for 99.5 percent of the people, but what is the appeal process or what is the protection? What is the safeguard? What is the bottom line safety net for those half a percent, or maybe even less who are homeless, mentally handicapped, potentially, not following through on the legislation, not in any kind of shelter during the summer? They arrive at a shelter in the winter and are not even aware of the fact the gas is cut off until the first day hits at 35 below Celsius or Fahrenheit, I do not care what it is. You can freeze to death pretty quickly in this country, in this province of Manitoba, without heat. It does not take a long period of time.

Mr. Speaker, these are the principles that we are wrestling with in the bill. We take our responsibilities very seriously on this bill. As I say, this is not the white spruce emblem bill, whatever it was called. This is not a bill that you get a lot of phone calls on and you just sort of pass it because you do not want to be on the wrong side of an issue. You do not just get up with a couple of speakers. You have to poke this bill around. You have to poke your conscience around. You have to poke through the majority of people who could potentially get a savings and that is what we are doing in the debate. That is why we will not be critical of the timing of the bill, being May 15, even though that was two weeks after the member for Portage raised it. We will not be critical of the timing of the bill unless we feel the government is trying to play opportunistic politics with the opposition in saying we are stalling the bill in the Chamber. That is being said, Mr. Speaker, in radio shows, et cetera.

Surely to God, surely a bill that could affect the life and limb of a Manitoba citizen, surely we should not play opportunistic politics with those kinds of issues. A bill comes in on May 15; it is not our responsibility. It is not the responsibility of the opposition for the timing of when a bill is introduced in this Chamber. It is the government's responsibility.

I would ask that the government, when we are wrestling with those principles of the most vulnerable, keep to the high road, because I am willing to get into the fight. I do not think it is very dignified about the delay of the bill till May 15 in this Chamber. I am willing to cite chapter and verse of when it was called and when it was not called. I am willing to get into the question that was raised by the former Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs

cajoling his own member and minister to bring this bill in on time. I am willing to get into that issue, but I do not think that does this Legislature any service at all.

Mr. Speaker, we do have a time line allegedly, but a time line can be amended. A time line can be amended by this Legislature any time that the majority of this Legislature feels that is in the public interest. I would suggest to the minister and the government opposite, when it comes to the principle of debating a bill versus the imposed principle of a corporation that we should have, it is not an either-or situation.

Democracy should never be short-circuited and debate on vulnerable people should never be short-circuited because a bill came in late or that we do not have the ability in the middle to make an amendment to get a phased-in period of time. I suggest to all of us, we stay to the high road on this issue, because we are committed to staying to the high road. I want to say that right now as we wrestle with those challenging principles.

I would say that to all members opposite, stick to the high road, because it is fairly important. Mr. Speaker, I would say this to the government minister and I would say this to the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), if at a point in time, in terms of dealing with this bill, something is raised that concerns you, stop, look, listen and we can still deal with this bill by putting in any kind of amendment to phase it in. I mean, we have the authority to do that.

If you need an extra couple of days because it came in on May 15, because something is raised ultimately in committee, or if the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) raises some issues that we are aware of from social workers dealing with these same situations in other communities, take the time. You can always put a proviso in the bill that this bill hereafter will be a cutoff date from here on in, but blah, blah, blah and the phase in. This Legislature has that authority.

Never get yourself and never should we get ourselves in a "you have to pass it by this date otherwise we lose 75 years of billings" or whatever, because that is not true. Talk to the dean of the Legislature. He has showed us how you can pass bills to do almost anything, but he can also show you how to pass bills to take your time. With a majority, you can. If something comes up in a committee, do

not feel compelled to rush to bring it into third reading. Take an extra couple of days. You can move amendments to phase it in so it has a different phase in this year than next year.

It is more important to get it right for that half a percent who are not going to vote, are not going to write, are not going to come to the committee and are not going to vote. It is better to get it right for those half percent than have a situation in this Chamber in January next year where we, in opposition, are raising questions about a person, who is vulnerable, who froze to death in a shelter where gas was formerly provided. Let us be very aware of the other side of this debate.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we will be listening and watching very carefully in the debate on this bill as it goes along. We will be very careful to watch how this appeal process will work -(interjection)- Pardon?

An Honourable Member: I said, indeed, we will be careful.

Mr. Doer: Yes, and I respect that. We will be very careful of how this appeal process works, and we will be asking some very pointed questions to the minister for the record on how she will protect with her legislation, how she can give us the guarantee for that half a percent who are not going to be at the committee, so that in our consciousness we will feel comfortable that by acceding to the will of the majority, we have not in all consciousness put the life and limb of our most vulnerable citizens at risk.

Mr. Speaker, we want all members of society who can pay their fair share to pay their fair share. I can give you chapter and verse of the NDP reeling on for years about corporate taxation. That is the same principle. Those who can should pay and we have always said that. It is not inconsistent for us to be -(interjection)- That is not even Burke. I like when the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) after 25 years quotes more of Tommy Douglas than he does of Brian Mulroney, but I think he is on the right track with Tommy Douglas over Brian Mulroney, or Wordsworth.

We are going to be watching very carefully. We are going to be asking the minister very carefully some questions about the lock-off and the most vulnerable. We want people to pay their fair share, and we do not want others to have to pay more because others have not paid their fair share. I want that very clear.

We also want the debate to be as long as possible so that we are sure. We would suggest to the minister that we are aware of her time lines and the time lines. Let us be very careful because we can always amend a transition clause in any bill. It has never been an either/or in terms of democratic debate on bills like this. It has never been that way.

I would also say that we should all play the high road on this bill, because we all are trying to deal with it from the majority perspective of paying too much for gas and the other perspective that we have to represent the silent and sometimes silenced very, very small minority. We want to accede to the one principle, and we want to ensure protection of the most vulnerable on the other principle.

We also want to ensure, Mr. Speaker, because—and I can go into a whole lengthy dissertation on free trade in gas and the industry. It is an interesting industry, because on the one hand we fought for the deregulated gas environment in Alberta. When the Alberta government deregulated gas, they were hoping the prices would go up, but of course the prices went down, and we had to fight to get some of those savings on to consumers. You look at the gas prices in 1986 in Manitoba, and you look at the gas prices in 1987. There was a great fight and disagreement with the former gas company before it was taken over by Centra Gas to take over the public energy utility in Manitoba.

* (1150)

In fact, I even remember the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) saying that he believed that the gas company should be taken over. He was the only one who said that, but there is an interesting debate about whether monopoly energy authorities—and we are not talking about competition now, we are talking about monopolies—should monopolies be in the public sector, or should they be a private sector monopoly in vital industries like energy, particularly in a cold province?

It is interesting, you know, Mr. Speaker, because in this industry, we have a deregulated supply with gas in Alberta and northern Canada, some in Saskatchewan, deregulated, but many of the gas utilities now own the supply. Many of the gas utilities own the supply, and many of the gas utilities in Canada have now changed their perspective from being a Canadian market to a North American market.

It is interesting. I always find it interesting that Centra Gas is owned by Western Canada Gas, and Michael Phelps, who will probably read Hansard, is the CEO of Western Canada Gas. I went to school with Michael Phelps. I do know him. I met him when the gas takeover took place. He was a couple of years ahead of me. He actually worked for Marc Lalonde at one point and helped develop the National Energy Program which I thought was rather ironic now that he is the CEO of Western Canada Gas. The member for Arthur (Mr. Downey) who is a great believer in free trade should be aware that Michael and his other counterparts are also on the board of directors of U.S. marketing firms and very much in the business of taking gas down to the United States.

Now that is the argument we used when we first tried to get the price dropped in Manitoba, because it made absolutely no sense for us to see the former gas company take the gas from Alberta, ship it through Manitoba, and have one price in Winnipeg and another price, 70 cents to a dollar lower, in Thief River Falls for gas that came through Winnipeg. Believe me, it had nothing to do with taxes; it had everything to do with the monopoly.

Mr. Speaker, the gas industry is interesting. We have a deregulated environment on the supply side, but much of that is now controlled with contracts that have been made with the suppliers. On the carrier, the pipeline is a monopoly owned by Bell Canada, by the way, a conglomerate—I notice Paul Edwards was quoting from Monsieur de Grandpré yesterday, that great believer in workers adjustment, Monsieur de Grandpré, CEO of Bell Canada, the owner of TransCanada Pipeline and other many, many stocks and shares. Then at our home, the gas that comes into our home is now under a monopoly.

It is a really curious industry that is being, I think, when you take a supply of a finite energy, a supply that will last a finite period of time, and take it from a population of 26 million people and distribute that to a population of 250 million people you, by definition, have made that energy more scarce because it will be spread amongst fewer people and, by definition over time, if you look at the markets, you will, therefore, be charging ultimately more money for a scarcer resource.

That is not part of this debate on this bill. The debate on this bill, Mr. Speaker, are the two principles; one, the most vulnerable who are not following the quasi-judicial process and the

legislative process here, and the other principle of everybody paying their fair share. We will want to know from the minister that everybody, when they do pay their fair share, that fair share is passed on to the consumers and not maintained by a monopoly gas company. Secondly, we want to ensure that the half a percent or the quarter percent or the one-tenth of one percent person who is homeless and not aware of all the sections of this bill will not freeze this winter with the action of this Legislature.

Those are the tests of this bill. I would suggest to all members of the Legislature, let us take our time, let us do it right, because it is a very important bill for consumers, yes, and for the life and safety of others. Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill 70—The Public Sector Compensation Management Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), Bill 70, The Public Sector Compensation Management Act; Loi sur la gestion des salaires du secteur public.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to—

An Honourable Member: He has been speaking for four weeks on this bill.

Mr. Ashton: It just seems like that sometimes.

Since I began speaking on this bill, it is interesting in terms of the public reactions. I know there are many people concerned about this bill, although I think the comments of somebody I ran into on the street the other day went perhaps a little bit too far, because this individual I ran into on the street was quite surprised that I was walking on the streets of Winnipeg and not debating in the House. He had understood I was talking around the clock.

I want to indicate that it may seem like that in terms of members of the government side, but they are going to hear, during this debate, extensive comments from myself as Labour critic for the New Democratic Party and from each and every one of our members, because I can say that, if we had any doubts, which we did not, about the unfairness of Bill 70, if we had any doubts about the fact that this was a Draconian piece of legislation, if we had any doubts that this bill singles out public sector workers

as a scapegoat for the government's own financial and economic woes, I can say that the response of the people who we have talked to since we began our fight against Bill 70 has reaffirmed each and every stand we took on behalf of fairness and public sector workers, on behalf of all Manitoba workers, because that is what this bill does, it threatens all Manitoba workers.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, since we began this debate, we have seen in this province something that has not occurred for more than 70 years. Not since the days prior to the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, not since the days of the OBU, the One Big Union, has every single union in this province been united under one roof working together on any issue. It may come as a surprise to members of the Conservative Party, who continue to stereotype the labour movement and working people, and that they often do not understand that this government—this government does not understand that working people have different organizations that represent them, different unions, different union locals, different federations. In this province, there are several, the Manitoba Federation of Labour being the largest, affiliated, of course, with the CLC, but there are also unions affiliated with the Canadian Federation of Labour, and unions such as CAIMAW which are affiliated also nationally through their own federation. There are unions that are not aligned with any particular federation.

Mr. Speaker, this government, in its arrogance in bringing in this Draconian piece of legislation, has united each and every union, each and every federation. It has united Manitoba workers from one side of the province to another, from north to south and east to west, in opposition to this vicious attack on the working people of Manitoba, but you know, there are still some who refuse to see what is happening. The saddest example of that is the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) who throughout this debate has shown that he has abrogated his responsibilities to assure fairness for Manitoba workers.

* (1200)

This bill was introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). I asked the question to the minister in committee. Where was he when this bill was brought in, in terms of the cabinet and the discussions that took place?

I anticipated that he might have indicated some reluctance, not from some people such as the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), who I am sure was right there in the front line waiting for the chance to beat up on workers. I ask the question whether he might have better spent his time defending the interests of his own constituents in Morden, the 160 people who have lost their jobs while that minister stands in this House hurling verbal abuse to anyone who is convenient at that time, but doing nothing to stand up for his working people, the working people who have lost their jobs in his constituency through his failure to represent them in this government and as a minister of the Crown. We know that we are not going to get anything other than support for the vicious sorts of things this government is bringing in.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe the Liberals would like to make a committee change. If there might be leave to allow me to continue my comments afterward, I would like to be able to accommodate them and would ask for that leave. I certainly have not ended my comments. In fact, I am only just beginning.

Committee Change

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, if I may have leave to interrupt the—

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: What is your point of order, please?

Mr. Lamoureux: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I ask if there might be leave of the House—

Mr. Speaker: You want to make committee changes? Fine.

Mr. Lamoureux: Thank you. I move, seconded by the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: Crescentwood (Mr. Carr) for The Maples (Mr. Cheema).

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member did not have a point of order, but we thank him for the committee change.

* * *

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I am glad we were able to accommodate the Liberal House leader.

I want to say once again, we did not expect much from the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). We never

expect very much when it comes to working people. We see how he treats the people within his portfolio as Minister of Health, the health care workers. We see on a daily basis how he treats them, how he forced the nurses to go on strike to obtain a fair settlement because he would not be fair with them. We see how he treats doctors on the most basic organizational principles, the right to collect fees. We have seen with the operating engineers that the Minister of Health stands for nothing more in that particular case than breaking his own word when he said he would live up to the final offer selection selector's decision.

We expected something out of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik). What did the Minister of Labour say in committee on this bill? He said not only did he not have any objections to this bill, he said he fully supported it. Then he went further to launch into a vicious attack on the leadership of the labour movement in this province and, more incredibly, suggested that he knew the views of the members of the Manitoba Government Employees' Association better than they did, better than their own democratically elected representatives.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I note that Mr. Peter Olfert, the President of MGEA, has challenged that minister to run against him. If the minister will not do that, I would like to make a challenge to the minister today, to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), and that is, I challenge him to a debate in front of the public sector workers of this province, the members of the MGEA, the members of CUPE, the members of the Operating Engineers.

I want to ask, Mr. Speaker, if he will then accept the verdict of the public sector workers, not the one or two people whom he referred to in committee, whom he has talked to, but the will of the majority, the vast majority of public sector workers? Will he then accept the fact that he does not speak for them?

Not only does he not speak for them in terms of their role, in terms of public sector workers, he does not speak for them as Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik). He has no business going around launching into their democratically elected leadership while representing the wishes of public sector workers. If the minister believes that, this minister who has followed in the principles of the former member for Portage—and the member for Portage used to joke about pink slips, Mr. Speaker.

This minister has delivered pink slips to Manitoba workers, hundreds of Manitoba workers. He smiles and he laughs, but the fact is he has given them the boot in terms of layoffs. Now he is fully supporting the actions of this government and giving the boot in terms of public sector wage freeze, Mr. Speaker. This minister has no credibility as Minister of Labour, none. If he had any before Bill 70, he has none today.

I do challenge him to that debate, Mr. Speaker. I challenge a debate with the membership of the MGEA, the membership of CUPE. I would have liked to have seen him at a meeting I attended last week when 250 CUPE members gathered for an informational meeting on Bill 70. I want to say that that minister would have been interested to hear the comments about his role, the role of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the other ministers in that government, because it was very clear that people could not believe that they were being targeted in such a vicious way.

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

They could not believe, and I asked them. I said the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) says he speaks for you. I am afraid I cannot repeat some of the comments that were made. They might be considered somewhat unparliamentary, but suffice it to say, there was not one person in that meeting who said that the Minister of Labour spoke for those members of that public sector union. They said that their democratically elected representatives in their fight against Bill 70 are speaking for them and speaking for their fellow workers.

Let us make that absolutely and fundamentally clear, because the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) is not speaking for Manitoba workers. In fact, I would suggest that we change the name of the Department of Labour and call it the department of big business, because this minister is not the minister responsible for labour, he is the minister responsible for big business and has to realize that he cannot voice off his own personal opinions, his own interpretation of what people in the public sector are saying.

He is the Minister of Labour. Where is the kind of impartiality that we normally expect from the Minister of Labour on matters such as that? -*(interjection)*- Well, the minister talks about people phoning his office. Would he like to also confirm that

people are phoning his office? I have been told when they express their concerns about this bill that they are lucky to have a job. Is that the attitude of this minister and his staff, blackmail the public sector workers phoning to express their opinion, who are turned around and told, you are lucky to have a job? Indeed, they are lucky with this government because at any moment, Mr. Acting Speaker, this government has shown no remorse whatsoever in laying off hundreds of workers, in eliminating 958 positions in the middle of a recession, 958 jobs.

An Honourable Member: Vacancies.

Mr. Ashton: The minister smiles and talks about actual people. When we went through committee the other day, the people who were directly affected—and the minister does not understand even what has happened. He smiles and says, well, some people have taken voluntary severance. Voluntary severance, Mr. Acting Speaker, what choice did they have, going on the redeployment list and having a limited chance of being rehired or severance?

This government talks about paying more and laying off more, that is the ultimate hypocrisy of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik). They laid off public sector workers first and then they brought in the wage freeze. They have done both, Mr. Acting Speaker. Their words mean nothing when they talk about layoffs, because they have shown that they will use the public sector as a scapegoat any time it suits them. They sit back and they laugh, and when we have spoken on this bill they have, in a derisory way, sung the words to Solidarity Forever. They think this is funny.

If they were to only take the time to get out of this building and talk to some of the people whom they have victimized by this bill—I ask you this question, Mr. Acting Speaker—would they find in talking to people who are just trying to make a living, just trying to get by, the clerks who work for the Manitoba government, not highly paid, certainly not as highly paid as the Executive Director of MTS who is receiving now an increase of \$20,000 more than the previous executive officer, CEO. That is more in the way of an increase than most people in those categories, in the clerical categories and in terms of people in other lower paid jobs in some areas make in an entire year. They have no problems giving that kind of increase to a highly paid individual, but will they take the time to talk to the clerks, to the telephone operators, to the people who work at

Manitoba Hydro? Will they talk to them and ask them directly whether they feel it is fair for public sector workers to pick up the price tag for this government's incompetence? That is what they are asking them to do.

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Are public sector workers underpaid?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister of Energy and Mines speaks. Are public sector workers underpaid? Does the Minister of Energy and Mines care to inform this House as to what his views are within Manitoba Hydro? Does he feel that it is fair that they should be paid zero? Does he feel that it is fair when Hydro workers, for eight out of the last 10 years, received raises less than inflation? Does he want them in this year to receive a zero-percent increase? I ask the minister, is that the position he takes? Should they receive zero percent, Mr. Acting Speaker? Should they receive zero percent, because the minister is responsible for the Department of Energy and Mines.

* (1210)

I would welcome his views on what the Hydro workers should deal with. I will welcome those views and the views of the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), the ultimate person who uses people as scapegoats, the ultimate individual, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs): Yes, Mr. Acting Speaker, the member for Thompson keeps challenging members on this side and asking us questions. Will he conclude his remarks so we can, in fact, have our Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), our Minister responsible for Hydro (Mr. Neufeld) and all members put their comments on the record? Will he give us that opportunity, or will he continue to deny us that opportunity?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): The honourable Minister of Northern Affairs did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Speaker, not only did he not have a point of order, he does not understand the principles of our parliamentary democracy. If he

thinks, on this bill, that we are going to sit back and allow this Draconian and, indeed, this fascist piece of legislation, which indeed it is, to pass unnoticed and uncommented upon; if he feels he is going to be able to get up as he did and persuade us to do anything other than debate this fully, he should have another think coming.

We will fight against injustice, Mr. Acting Speaker, whenever it arises. We will fight against unjust legislation. This bill is fundamentally unjust, and we will fight it at every opportunity. The Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), who is an expert at making people scapegoats—he has done it with Northerners. He has shown, in terms of his actions, where he stands. If he expects us to now turn around and sit idly by while he does the same thing with Manitoba's public sector workers, then he has another think coming.

As I said, Mr. Acting Speaker, we have seen throughout the past several weeks something that no one has accomplished before. The labour movement has been united, and Manitoba workers have been united. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) who sat in committee and said well, nobody has talked to him, I wonder how many public sector workers he has talked to. He likes to selectively pick.

He says his spouse works for the public sector. Well, many of our spouses, family members work in different areas. Indeed, I could, I suppose, espouse the views of what my spouse has said on this particular thing. I do discuss public issues with her. She certainly does not support this bill, Mr. Acting Speaker.

He might take the time to get out and talk to some of the workers. The Minister of Northern Affairs should listen to the comments that were made the other night in committee, because that is what the minister mentioned. That is fine. I accept that members will discuss political issues with members of their family and friends. I think that is to be expected.

I think it is incumbent on, especially the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), instead of sitting piously and smugly in committee and saying that he speaks for public sector workers, to get out of this building and take the time to meet with public sector workers, both the elected officials and the grassroots workers. I said before, I will challenge him to a debate with anyone in the public sector whom he

wishes to debate in front of. We could do it at a meeting of all the members of all the public sector unions affected, the 48,000 people. We could do it wherever the minister wants. We will do it at the Convention Centre.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the labour movement is organizing a protest in front of the steps of the Legislature. Perhaps the minister would care to debate in front of that protest whether he speaks for public sector workers. We may, if the minister does not care to address the rally, ask that very question to the public sector workers. Who speaks for them? The Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) or their democratically elected representative. I think anyone with any sense of what is happening on Bill 70 will acknowledge the fact that the Minister of Labour speaks for no one other than himself and his Conservative caucus colleagues when it comes to the views of public sector workers.

We have seen that happen. We have also seen something else since debate on this bill began, and that is, the weaknesses of this bill have become fundamentally apparent. I have asked this of the Minister of Finance; I have asked questions of the Minister of Labour. I have received different versions as to the impact of this bill in terms of its restrictions, if any, and in terms of the length of any freeze.

I asked the Minister of Labour in committee whether this freeze could be extended beyond one year, and the minister said that, well, the intent was not to do it, but it might be done if necessary. I asked the Minister of Finance in the House the same question. The Minister of Finance said, no, this will only apply for one year. Now the Minister of Finance has tabled a legal opinion that states that that is not the case.

You know that is the problem. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) says one thing, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) says another. The legal opinion says one thing, other legal opinions say another. If this government wants to be absolutely clear about this bill, the bottom line is what they have to do is be up front and deal with that question in the form of an amendment.

If this bill is indeed a one-year freeze, the bill should say that, and the government should not rely on conflicting views of different ministers. The government should not rely on the contradictory

legal opinions, the tangled wording of this bill. If it is a one-year freeze, call it a one-year freeze and let us debate that, because many people are not sure. Those who are bargaining, many thousands of Manitobans who are starting the bargaining process, are not sure about the impact of this bill.

It is not just the extent of the one year. There is a great deal of confusion out there about what happens. We have seen that this bill, for example, freezes all bargaining in terms of not only salaries and wage settlements but also contract language, even if both sides agree to it. Even if both sides agree, this bill freezes contract language, so there are people who are saying, well, we have everything agreed to except this wage freeze, and we cannot implement changes that are satisfactory to both sides. How much more chaos does this government want?

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Is that right?

Mr. Ashton: That is correct, to the member for Radisson. Not only that, to show you how twisted this bill has become, there are people who are included under the provisions of this bill and people are, at least initially, excluded who are members of the same bargaining unit. Take Klinik, for example. There are people who are excluded because they are nurses, doctors. There are people who are included. How do they negotiate? Are they now going to have subsection A as part of the collective agreement and subsection B? Are they going to say, well, you get a wage freeze. You can get whatever is negotiated. Are they going to say, well, you get a wage freeze and no change in contract language, but you get a wage increase and you get a change in contract language. Where is the Minister of Labour in dealing with those questions?

An Honourable Member: Do we know who they consulted to develop this bill?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, the question is raised, who did they consult with in doing this bill? I ask that question. Did they consult with the Minister of Labour? The Minister of Labour is a lawyer by background. I cannot believe that any lawyer who looks at this bill can see it for anything other than an atrocious piece of legislation, not just in terms of principle, but in terms of drafting.

Did the Minister of Labour, when it was discussed, and he said there was an internal committee and this had been discussed at the internal Cabinet committee, did he ever once raise the fact that this

was going to create chaos in terms of bargaining in the public sector, when you have people in the same contract who are affected, and those who are not, and many of them in the public sector, in the health sector, in particular?

I do not expect much from the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), Mr. Acting Speaker, other than his usual attempts to disrupt people who are speaking, and I would ask that you might suggest that the member not do that and listen for a change. If he would open his ears as much as he opens his mouth sometimes, we might get somewhere. I ask the question to the Minister of Labour, why is this chaos in place? Why is it in place?

* (1220)

That is not the only area, Mr. Acting Speaker, where there is chaos. I refer to the one-year provision, the extension to the private sector. We asked for and received a document yesterday—it was tabled by the Finance minister—a legal opinion as to the impact of the bill on the private sector.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has said this does not apply to the private sector. He has replied this does not apply to the private sector. The only reference in this bill to this being a public sector bill is essentially the fact that the title says it is a public sector bill.

Well, to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), if he reads this, what is the public sector? The Minister of Health, once again, in his usual arrogant way from his seat, tries to distract from the basic question as to why this bill? -(interjection)- Mr. Acting Speaker, the arrogance of this minister knows no bounds, and he spends enough of the time of this House during Question Period with his nonanswers without interrupting members who are giving speeches. I would ask that you ask him to quit his insults because I think it is rather unbecoming.

This minister, if he were vocal in terms of his own constituent interest, then the people of Morden might accomplish more than if he sits in his place and tries to insult members of this House who are trying to address a very important public matter—a very important public matter.

Once again, Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister of Health is interrupting from his seat. I would like to address the very important principles of Bill 70. I am growing quite tired of the arrogance of this minister who seems to feel he can—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please; order, please. I would like to remind the honourable members that the honourable member for Thompson does have the floor, and I would like to hear his presentation, so if we could have a little bit of decorum, please.

Mr. Ashton: I raised the question about whether this bill can be applied beyond the 48,000 Manitobans who are part of what might be called the broader public sector. The sections of the bill that refer to the powers of this government to bring in matters by a Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council make it very clear that this bill can be extended to virtually anyone this government wishes. It is one thing to have a legal opinion that says, well, no, the intent is very unlikely; it is very unlikely this could be done in context.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if that is the intent, why does it not say that. This bill nowhere defines the public sector. There are definitions of collective agreement, compensation rates, date of expiry, employee, employer, but there are sections in the bill that could be used to extend it to the private sector. If the intent of the government is not to apply it—a legal opinion on a bill that is not yet passed, that has only been drafted, I think, carries very little weight.

What about the words of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon)? Do they carry weight? We have seen they do not in terms of this issue. They have already broken their word on collective bargaining and final offer selection, very integral to this.

Mr. Downey: No, that is not true.

Mr. Ashton: The Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), if he doubts that, if he raises the question about what is true or not, I can show him the statements made by the Minister of Finance, the signed document signed by the Minister of Finance that said final offer selection would be in place, something that has been broken. We know that the Minister of Northern Affairs' words do not mean anything. We have also found that the Minister of Finance's words do not mean anything, as by the complete betrayal of the signed agreement in regard to final offer selection, the complete betrayal.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker, we are sick and tired of hearing Conservatives say, trust us. We are sick and tired of hearing Conservatives say, more of the same.

We are sick and tired of Conservatives breaking their word and their promise. We are not going to rely on Conservatives. We are not going to rely on their words on this. We want it in the bill. If they are going to say it applies to only so many Manitoba workers, let them say so in the bill, let them introduce an amendment that defines very clearly.

Then they wonder why there is so much chaos out there. The chaos results from the fact that this government, in its rush to victimize public sector workers and set them up as scapegoats, in its rush to throw out the process of collective bargaining within the public sector, in its rush to throw out the results of months of negotiations, six, nine months of negotiations in many cases, in its rush to throw out selector decisions that favoured the position of workers who ask for nothing more than a catch-up increase, in its rush to throw out impending selector decisions, as they did in the case of the International Union of Operating Engineers, in its rush to head off future selector decisions, in its rush to head off future arbitration decisions, this government has brought in a bill that is not only fundamentally wrong in principle but shows the complete mark of the incompetence of this government that we are seeing on an almost daily basis.

What kind of incompetent government says one thing and then brings in a bill that says something else entirely? Only a government, Mr. Speaker, that is being defined more and more by its arrogance and also by its complete failure, particularly in this case, to consult—even the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), I do not think, was consulted on this fully. He claims he was. I cannot believe that, because certainly the bill should have been different if he had input.

There was no consultation with public sector workers. They informed the MGEA 15 minutes before they made the press announcement. In every single one of the discussions between the Premier and public sector leaders from the labour movement, it was never once mentioned. This government made statements in December. This government made statements in January. They signed documents in regard to final offer selection. It was only when they found out that their position was not holding up with objective parties and selectors, in the case of the casino workers, that they acted in such haste. After their incompetence in terms of bargaining, after their incompetence in terms of the way in which they announced this

supposed wage—after their incompetence in the way they dealt with the public sector layoffs, after their sheer and absolute incompetence in dealing with public sector negotiations, they bring in a bill that is in itself a fundamental example of the incompetence of this government, the hypocrisy of this government.

I believe that they are going to have to make significant amendments to this bill no matter whether they change their view on the principle, which I do not expect, Mr. Speaker. These people who are making these decisions are essentially the political dinosaurs of labour relations. They want to go back to the “good old days.” The good old days for the Conservatives are the 1930s, and we are getting a multifaceted strategy to get back to the 1930s. They are doing it to us economically. We are getting the recession-depression.

We are getting back to a mentality that says welfare is better than work from this government because they have no job creation strategy. Now they are trying to do it on labour relations. The sad part is what plants are going to be left in this province after we see more Tupperwares, plants moving to the States, after we see more and more of that, Mr. Speaker, while this government sits by.

I suppose in a way their attitude on labour legislation might not matter that much, because they run the risk of having very few Manitoba workers in many sectors, particularly in the manufacturing sector, to be able to apply their Conservative ideology to. They will have very few guinea pigs left, because people are leaving the province in droves, both individually and in terms of businesses. That philosophy failed in the 1930s. It is failing miserably federally.

We are seeing that the Mulroney government has dropped to 14 percent and 15 percent in the polls. There are more people in this country who believe Elvis is alive than support the Conservative government and yet this government in Manitoba is running around—actually, I would suggest to them that instead of adopting those failed policies, Mr. Speaker, they might try and persuade people Elvis is alive, because they might have better luck than those failed policies of the Mulroney government that have driven us to the economic brink.

What I find most noticeable, and it must be quite the experience for new members of the House, particularly on the government side, is the degree of

arrogance of this government since it has had its majority. I think all governments become arrogant at some point in time to a greater or lesser extent, particularly when they have a majority. I do not exempt any party, Liberal, Conservative and New Democrat from that. It happens.

I have been the first one to say, Mr. Speaker, that one of the reasons that the NDP was defeated in 1988 was that the sense of not getting out of this building and listening to the concerns of people on some important issues—

Mr. Downey: Jim Walding

Mr. Ashton: Well, the Minister of Northern Affairs says Jim Walding got us on that. I think someone got Jim Walding, and that will come out in time. I do not want to digress. The important thing was not Jim Walding any more than the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) abstaining on votes.

There may be others. We may see members of the Conservative Party join the Reform bandwagon, perhaps even in this House. I will be interested to see. Perhaps members of that Conservative Party

will follow through and set up a Reform Party. It would at least be more honest in terms of giving a more direct indication of their true policies—but that arrogance, Mr. Speaker, that we find in all governments.

I put it to this government, in the very short period of time that they have been in place, if they listen to their comments and compare their actions and their words to when they were in a minority, I think they will see that on this bill and on other bills. I know it is an advantage to opposition members to have that arrogance, but it is not for the people of Manitoba.

I will address that when I continue my comments, Mr. Speaker, next week.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. As the designated speaker, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

The hour being 12:30 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, June 21, 1991

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