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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	Liberal
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	Liberal
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
CONNERY, Edward	Portage la Prairie	PC
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	Liberal
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	NDP
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	NDP
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Liberal
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	NDP
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNESS, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	NDP
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
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ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
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PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	NDP
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
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VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 9, 1992

The House met at 8 p.m.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed resolution of the honourable Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. McCrae), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchellson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, I just had a few moments before the break in the hours to make some initial comments, and now I would like to speak on this resolution and I suppose the proposed amendment.

When you look at the resolution and look at what it says, it says: "WHEREAS the government of Manitoba, based on the recommendations of the Women's Initiative Report, endorsed the philosophy that abuse is a crime and must be stopped."

I would hope that no members of the House would argue with that first WHEREAS and indicate in fact that it is not something that every member of this House and every member of this Legislature should support on behalf of all of the women of Manitoba.

It says also: "WHEREAS a public awareness campaign was undertaken in February, 1990, to promote awareness that partner abuse is a crime."

I think I have heard comments from other members of the Legislature in this debate today that have indicated that it was in fact a good public awareness campaign. I cannot understand why anyone in this Legislature would not support and endorse that concept and indicate quite publicly that it was a good campaign.

The third WHEREAS is: "WHEREAS the Pedlar Commission recommended the community must take an active role in reducing and eliminating domestic violence."

I do not think anyone can argue with that either. I think we all recognize and we all realize that not only does government, but all members of society have to look very closely at what is happening in the area of domestic violence, in the way it has become more open and more public and more women are

speaking out. We all should work toward that same common goal of removing and encouraging members of the community in a nonpartisan way, I must say, that encouraging and saying to community members and to all members of Manitoba that domestic violence cannot be tolerated. Then it indicates that:

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the position adopted by the government of Manitoba in declaring Manitoba as a domestic violence-free zone, where partner abuse is viewed as a criminal offense, and in adopting a tough stance against partner abuse."

I do not think that there is any member of this House that can argue with that or indicate that that is not a very laudable goal on behalf of the women of Manitoba.

* (2005)

I want to say at the outset that I believe that this resolution was brought forward in the context that all members, no matter what philosophically they believe, have the same common goal of attempting to eradicate and eliminate domestic violence in our society, and I hope that all members of this House would condone that and would support that.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the amendment that has been introduced is somehow doing a disservice to the women of the province of Manitoba, the women who need support from all legislators, no matter what political party they belong to, to stand up and take a common stand and say to all of those women: We as legislators will not tolerate domestic violence, and we will work together in order to eliminate the domestic violence that does exist out there.

Nothing has convinced me more that we as a province need to take this kind of a united stand than the experience that I had several months ago when we went on a northern cabinet tour and met with some of the more northern and remote communities. The one community that left a very lasting impression on me, which I shared with many of my colleagues, was the meeting I had with some of the women from Moose Lake. Those women presented a brief to me, as the Minister responsible

for the Status of Women, and they were desperate at the time. They were seeing their youth abusing each other; they were seeing their youth murdering each other in gang wars; they were seeing the instance where the young in their community were abusing alcohol and drugs and other substances, and they were extremely troubled.

It really hit home to me when they said that the women and the children in their communities were being both physically and sexually abused on a very regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to those women. I had difficulty comprehending the kind of life that they must live in that kind of a situation as they expressed to me the real concern that they had. I was determined at that point that I would come back and attempt to make a difference in some way in dealing with the concerns that they had raised. As a result of that meeting, we had some of the northern aboriginal women come in and meet with our caucus and explain to us what was happening to them in their lives as they reached out for some help and support.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that we answered their request by providing funding from this government for the healing circle that was held for northern aboriginal women in The Pas. I had the opportunity to attend part of that two-day conference and listened to native women express the hurt and the feelings of helplessness that they felt in trying to come to grips with keeping the family unit together and dealing with their lives and trying to make a positive difference. I came away from that even more determined to work with women in our aboriginal communities to help them to overcome some of the problems that presently exist.

Mr. Speaker, the policy that we have announced today is a policy that I think will lead toward support, at least a show of support, for those aboriginal women that so desperately need that right at this point in time in their lives. When we went over the policy with the women before we were about to announce it publicly, I raised the concern about announcing it a little too early and not having any concrete programs in place to address the issues or the policy statements.

* (2010)

When I raised that issue with the women, the aboriginal women, they indicated to me that in this very troubled time in their lives when they were dealing with the strength of aboriginal women

coming out and speaking out about what was going on in their communities, they wanted this government to show moral support for their cause and for those women. They wanted a policy and a statement of policy and goals that at this point in time did not have to have that action, but would show support for those women who were taking very brave steps and speaking out very vocally after years and years and years of keeping the silence.

Mr. Speaker, I really believe that today was a victory for aboriginal women in Manitoba, and it certainly can lead to a positive example for the rest of the country in dealing with the issues of violence that affect the aboriginal communities in a much, much greater way than the rest of Manitoba society.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely troubled that we have members of both opposition parties who are not today standing up for those women who so desperately need the support of our legislators. It does not matter what political party they belong to, but they need the support of all elected members in this House to show that we have care and we have concern for their plight and for attempting to resolve the issues that affect them most.

I am somewhat appalled to hear the negative comments made from both opposition parties and the lack of support for those most vulnerable in our society who need our moral support. They need us all to stand up and say enough is enough. We will not tolerate abuse, domestic violence, anymore, and we are all as legislators behind you as aboriginal women 100 percent.

I would like to hear those kinds of comments from all members of the House, and I would like to know that all members are, indeed, supportive and will get behind those women and encourage them to work in their culturally appropriate, traditional ways to end the abuse and to try to counsel within their communities for a better life in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the issue of domestic violence does reach across all segments of our society. I had to leave the House for a short period of time this afternoon to go over to a reception. The Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba was kicking off a week of celebration for immigrant women in the province.

I talked briefly about the introduction of the aboriginal women's policy, and I talked about the women who had been a part of this province for longer than any of us, through all of the waves of immigration. I talked about the need for all women,

from all cultural backgrounds and from all walks of life, to work together to attempt to make a difference. United there is strength among women, but when we divide into little groups that tend to have very local concerns, then we fail as women to address the needs.

* (2015)

I indicated too that women cannot work in isolation of the men within our community. In order to effect change there have to be both men and women working together to ensure that programs that are put into place, that communities that are attempting to deal with the situation are dealing as united communities. Everyone, whether it be men or women, does have to stand up and say enough is enough. We will no longer tolerate domestic violence or child abuse, and we all have to work together in co-operation toward that end.

I listened to the members of the opposition when they were critical of government for not doing anything in the area of domestic violence. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, and I do not think anyone across the way would expect me to agree, but I do believe that we have effected some change. When we took over as government some four years ago, we undertook the Women's Initiative whereby Gerrie Hammond, a member of the Legislature at the time, went out through the Manitoba community and met with different women's groups and different organizations and came back with the Women's Initiative and an action plan and a women's policy as a result of that initiative.

As a result of that initiative, this government has increased the number of wife abuse shelters in the province from a meagre three under the New Democratic Party when they were in power to some 12 wife abuse shelters today. I am not even going to begin to say that is enough because I know that there is still more to be done in that area. I know that opposition members were critical of implementation of the Pedlar report. I want to indicate that we had enough foresight to hire Dorothy Pedlar to look at and to review the justice system as it related to women. We have, as a result, begun to implement some of the recommendations and others will take a little longer.

I do know, with the budget on Wednesday, that some of the opposition members will have to eat some of their words on criticisms that they have put forward today about this government and its lack of initiatives, because we will see and Manitobans will

see that there will be money put in some of the appropriate places to implement some of those recommendations. Let the opposition not sit back and say that absolutely nothing has been done.

I do want to comment, too, on the Leader of the Liberal Party's (Mrs. Carstairs) response to the ministerial statement that was made earlier today. Without thinking or without consulting with one aboriginal woman that I know of in the province of Manitoba, she stood up and she condemned the very policy that aboriginal women for two years have spent their time and their energy working with government to develop. I say, shame to the Leader of the Liberal Party who has no understanding, has not done her homework or her consultation with those aboriginal women. She chose to condemn them publicly today in her response to the announcement of the aboriginal women's policy.

I have to give the New Democratic Party a little more credit than that, because they indicated they would wait with anticipation for announcements of initiatives and programming. I know that the women of Manitoba will be well served by the policy that was enunciated today and by the consultation process that will lead to action for the future of all aboriginal women in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the amount of money that has gone into dealing with women's issues and violence in the province of Manitoba under this administration, I do not think we need to take a back seat to any province. I think it is incumbent upon this government though to stress to the federal government that they do have a responsibility not only to the leaders within the aboriginal community but also to the women.

To that end, I am going to be meeting with the federal minister responsible for the Status of Women and asking for her co-operation to ensure that women at the grassroots level receive some of the federal funding that rightly belongs to aboriginal people for some of the issues and the concerns that they must deal with on a day-to-day basis.

I know that my colleague, the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), will be meeting with and will be talking to his counterpart at the federal level to ensure that, in fact, we have the support of the federal government to deal with those women in those communities who need support in such a major way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) for her comments on this

government's hiring of Marlene Bertrand, the former director of Osborne House, who has been recently hired into the position of director of Family Dispute Services.

An Honourable Member: You mean Wellington.

* (2020)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Did I say Wolseley? I am sorry, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). I stand to be corrected, but I am sure that the member for Wolseley also does commend the appointment of this government. When we talk about dealing with women and abuse and shelters, I want to say to you that there is no one better able to deal with those issues, and to recommend to government ways of handling domestic violence in our society, than Marlene Bertrand.

I want also to say that it was under this government that the first funding to an umbrella organization for aboriginal women was provided, and the Indigenous Women's Collective, which received no funding under a New Democratic administration, now receives core funding to carry on its activities.

We as a government have funded the first aboriginal crisis shelter for women. We have crisis lines that provide services in English, in French and in aboriginal languages for those women who need that kind of service. We have provided money to northern and urban resource centres that deal with aboriginal women and aboriginal women's issues. We have included many aboriginal women also on boards and commissions and working groups that will deal with the issues that have been presented from the Pedlar report, from the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and now addressing the needs that have been presented today through the aboriginal women's policy.

Mr. Speaker, we have done positive things. We will continue, as resources permit, to expand and to enhance programs for women, for domestic violence, and specifically for our aboriginal women, as time goes by and as women identify the needs and the programs that need to be put in place to assist them.

I am going to finish my comments now by saying that, indeed, violence against women and children is intolerable, it is unacceptable, and I would have liked to have seen both opposition parties stand in their place and say, yes, we agree, we support, and we all need to work together. Not only those within this Legislature but those outside of the Legislature

need to work together to ensure that women in this province are treated in a decent way when it comes to violence and abuse.

I do want to repeat again, Mr. Speaker, that I am disappointed that, in a nonpartisan way, both opposition parties could not stand up and say for the benefit of the women of Manitoba, especially on International Women's Day, that they in fact will not tolerate, will not condone and will not support abuse and domestic violence in our province and that they would not make a commitment today to work together, not only with this government, but with the women of Manitoba to effect that change and that difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I want to start off my remarks this evening by saying that I am pleased to rise in this Chamber to speak on this resolution on an issue that everyone in this Legislature agrees with, namely that domestic violence cannot be tolerated in this province any longer.

Before I would do that, however, I would also like to say to you and to this Assembly here that I feel good about myself this evening in spite of what people may think of me or say about me. I have a clear conscience. I sleep well at nights, and I can also get up in the morning and look at myself in the mirror and feel okay with the person staring back at me.

* (2025)

I would also like to point out that I do not have or do not purport to have a monopoly or hold the key to human decency or compassion as has been suggested at this Assembly this afternoon by some members.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that everyone, every person, has some human decency in her or in him. Whether they be poor or well off, whether they be weak or strong, whether they be aboriginal or nonaboriginal, whether they be men or women, I believe that every person, every human being, has some decency, some positive characteristics and, yes, at the same time, because we are all humans, I also believe that all of us contain flaws in our characteristics and in our persons.

I want to say, however, that although I consider myself, not all the time, but for the most part, to be a balanced individual, I try not to react to things such as I saw and heard happening and being expressed

as I saw and heard happening and being expressed here this afternoon. At times like that, Mr. Speaker, I feel a little bit disillusioned. I know that I have been here in this Chamber now for a little over a year and when I see things like that happening and exchanges like that taking place in this Chamber, sometimes I wonder what I am doing in this Chamber and I have to go back and reassess whether I can contribute something that is positive to this Chamber.

This afternoon, like every human being subject to human failures, I reacted within myself. Afterwards I told myself, no, you are not going to do that; you are going to be positive. That is what I am trying to do this evening, Mr. Speaker, but after having said that, I also want to be truthful. I want to be honest and not everybody will necessarily agree with everything that I have to say here this evening, but that is okay. If you or other members of this Chamber cannot find it in their way to agree with some of the things that I say here, that is fine, just leave it here. I would also hope that whatever I say to this Chamber, if somebody else can use it, please take it with you.

I want to speak to the resolution now, and I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that first of all as I read the resolution, and again I want to be truthful and I want to be bluntly honest, and while being bluntly honest some people might not like it. That is okay too. The resolution as I read it does not say anything about aboriginal people and yet I sat here for the most part this afternoon listening to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) going on a tirade against aboriginal people. I do not think that was the honest way to go about the debate that we had this afternoon.

* (2030)

I also note that from reading the resolution, the resolution is devoid of any mention of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. Again, I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that this afternoon the Minister of Justice spent a great deal of his time attacking aboriginal people, particularly those chiefs including myself as a former chief of my band. When I was chief of my band I tried to the best of my ability to work for the people of my band. I tried to the best of my ability to represent the interests of my people. I know that members on the government side, including ministers, will agree with me that I work very hard in trying to represent the interests of my people.

When I was chief of my band, Mr. Speaker, I know that ministers on the government side will also attest

to the fact that I was always willing to negotiate. I tried not to be unreasonable. Indeed, some of the ministers, now that I am in this Chamber, always like to refer to those days when they and I and my council were negotiating. We got a lot of things done during those negotiations that we carried out with whoever was in government, whether they be New Democratic governments or Progressive Conservative governments. The bottom line that I want to emphasize here is that I tried to the best of my ability to represent the interests of my people.

The minister also, and ministers, this afternoon challenged me: Where do you stand on violence against aboriginal women, although this resolution makes no mention of aboriginal people? Mr. Speaker, I know where I stand. As I told you earlier, I have a clear conscience. I can live with myself.

All I want to say for the moment is, I want to remind all members of this House, or maybe ask them the question: Who was instrumental when he was chief of his band in pushing for an inquiry, a full public judicial inquiry into the death of Helen Betty Osborne? Who sat through the trial that took place in The Pas, as difficult as it was? Who sat through 16 of 18 days of hearings that were held in The Pas, as difficult as that was? As a chief, as I said, I tried to be reasonable in my dealings with nonaboriginal people. In the same way, when the hearings were being held in The Pas, it was hard for everybody, not only for aboriginal people, but it was just as hard for the nonaboriginal community. Whenever I was being interviewed by the press, I made it my business to try to be fair in my remarks on the hearings and on the trial.

Mr. Speaker, the minister asked the question today: What will a separate aboriginal justice system—what would it have done if it were dealing with the Osborne case, for example? All I can say is, it was not my system which let three of four men walk away scot-free after committing such a heinous crime. It was not my system.

The commitment of Manitobans to ensuring that Manitoba is a domestic violence-free zone, where partner abuse is viewed as a criminal offence, and in adopting a tough stance against partner abuse is greater now than it has ever been.

Accordingly, the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) told me not too long ago when I was asking questions in the House that I would be pleasantly surprised once I got to know or read about what was

going to be in the response paper that his government was about to deliver.

Well, I was not pleasantly surprised today either to hear the words of the minister. I was disappointed, I was sad, and then I became bitter and, like I said, I had to go back and collect myself again and put myself together. In fact it made me wonder whether the minister or any of his colleagues have actually read through the entire Volume I of the AJI report.

Truly, it is unfortunate that this government failed to set up a nonpartisan legislative committee along with aboriginal leaders to implement the recommendations of the AJI report last August, as we consistently recommended.

Mr. Speaker, you know, all-party task forces have worked for this province twice before, and I am referring to the constitutional task forces. I was part of the last task force. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was just as important to the people of this province as were those two constitutional task forces which were set up by governments of this province.

The AJI report begins with a statement that the justice system has failed Manitoba's aboriginal people on a massive scale—not just on a small scale, but on a massive scale. The report said that the justice system in Manitoba has been insensitive and inaccessible and has arrested and imprisoned aboriginal people in grossly disproportionate numbers.

Aboriginal people who are arrested are more likely than nonaboriginal people to be denied bail, spend more time in pretrial detention and spend less time with their lawyers, counsel and, if convicted, aboriginal people are more likely to be incarcerated.

It is not merely that the justice system has failed aboriginal people; justice has been denied to them. For more than a century, the rights of aboriginal people have been ignored and eroded. The result of this denial has been injustice of the most profound kind. Poverty and powerlessness have been the Canadian legacy to a people who once governed their own affairs in full self-sufficiency. The report goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, that the problems are daunting and the commissioners' proposals are far reaching. They go on to say—but we believe that in the interest of justice the process must begin immediately.

* (2040)

The context of the resolution appearing before us tonight, Mr. Speaker, has much to offer to us as legislators in terms of action that the government should take to reduce domestic violence in this province. The AJI report details the victimization of aboriginal women and men that occurred with the introduction of the now notorious residential schools.

Generations of aboriginal people were denied a proper relationship with their parents because of these schools. Not only did residential schools not support the development of traditional parenting roles among the children but they also taught the children that they were pagan, that they were inferior and should never use their language or follow or honour their religious beliefs and traditions and their way of life.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, these schools actually taught violence. They did, because I remember when we would speak our own language in the school yard at recess time or even in the washroom, priests would be hiding in—standing on top of the toilet bowls in the boys washrooms. They would actually be waiting there, waiting for us to come in. As soon as one of us started speaking our mother tongue, the priest would jump out and grab whoever first he could grab, drag him to the principal's office and then proceed to beat him up with a strap.

To me, Mr. Speaker, I am not a social worker, but I know where dysfunctional families come from. I know where co-dependency comes from. Besides severing the family life, besides severing the community life, Mr. Speaker, it was not our system who taught violence early in the school in the lives of children.

These messages were imparted to aboriginal children in a sometimes brutal way, as I just tried to describe to you. The schools not only removed children from their families, but they also prevented any closeness, even contact, from occurring between siblings and relatives, even though they were at the same school. In addition to the physical and sexual abuse that Canadians are now hearing took place in residential schools, emotional abuse was the most prevalent and the most severe.

We should never minimize the damage that these schools inflicted on generations of aboriginal children. Most grandparents and many parents today are products of that twisted school system, and that is where the dysfunctionality originates

from, and that is what we are trying to deal with today. That is why I support the resolution, even though it does not contain any mention of aboriginal people or any mention of implementing at least part of the AJI report. I just want to say that.

The segregation of aboriginal women, both from a wider society, and from their traditional role as equals and strong members of tribal society, continues to the present day. This is due partly to the fact that the effects of the past discrimination have resulted in the poor socioeconomic situation applicable to most aboriginal women, but it is also attributable to the demeaning image of aboriginal women that has developed over the years.

North American society has adopted a destructive and a stereotypical view of aboriginal women. The demeaning image of aboriginal women has been, and continues to be, rampant in North American culture today. These images have been more than symbolic. They have helped to create much of the problems we are discussing today in terms of domestic violence. Racist and sexist stereotypes have not only hurt aboriginal women and their sense of self-esteem, but actually encouraged abuse, both by aboriginal men and by others.

Many have written that Helen Betty Osborne was beaten and brutally murdered. It was the dehumanization that is prevalent in society. Such grotesque dehumanization has rendered all aboriginal women, and young women, vulnerable to gross physical, psychological and sexual abuse from not only aboriginal men, but from others as well.

Domestic violence is not limited to any one segment of society. It is a problem throughout this country in both the richest areas and also in the poorest areas. I will now point out some of the very recommendations from the report, detailing the situation facing aboriginal women. The report notes, as we were told numerous times, women who wish to escape an abusive home must leave the reserve community and go to the town or city. We consider this tragic and unacceptable. In situations where it is unsafe to leave the victim in the home, there should be shelters and safe houses in aboriginal communities to which the victim can go.

So they recommend that shelter and safe homes for abused women and children be established in aboriginal communities and in urban centres. That is why I say, when I speak on the resolution, that it has no mention of aboriginal people and it does not

mention the recommendation that the AJI so very comprehensively set out for us back in August.

Counselling and support for the victims of abuse are essential. Another recommendation: "Community mediation programs such as the one operated by Hollow Water Resource Group be expanded to Aboriginal communities throughout the province. Such programs must be designed and operated by Aboriginal people."

It is in this context, Mr. Speaker, that the St. Theresa Youth Justice Committee seems to be operating very well, and that this government found it difficult to continue funding. It was only after some lobbying by the group from St. Theresa Point and recommendations from other groups that it finally decided to agree to fund a very worthwhile program. What I am trying to say to you and to this Chamber is that if this government is, in fact, serious in doing what it says it wants to do in the resolution, I would suggest to this government that the resolution needs more than just making a statement, because, to me, that is what the resolution does—it merely makes a statement.

What we want now are those resources that are essential to ensure that programs such as safe homes, shelters are operated not only in aboriginal communities but throughout the province as well.

Mr. Speaker, the report goes on to recommend that "culturally appropriate group homes be established in urban areas by Aboriginal women's organizations where urban Aboriginal women can serve any term of incarceration to which they may be sentenced, with access to programs of recovery from substance abuse, recovery from victimization and dependency, academic upgrading training, and parenting skills."

It also recommends that "Aboriginal women living in isolated or rural communities be held in open custody facilities in their home communities. Such women would be free to attend to their families, to work or to obtain education during the day, and to attend counselling sessions in the evenings and remain in the facility each night until their sentence is served."

* (2050)

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many worthwhile recommendations contained in the AJI report and I say to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), I challenge the Minister of Justice, I challenge this government, that if indeed they are serious in

resources, both human and financial, into the policy that they announced this afternoon, because the policy as it now stands is not going to work unless resources come with the policy. Anybody can make a policy statement and have good intentions in announcing such a policy. The real test comes whether that policy can actually be implemented.

I say to you with respect, Sir, that this policy does not have the resources and so therefore will be rendered almost ineffective if it is allowed to be implemented without any financial or human resources.

I want to also say, Mr. Speaker, that, in closing, I want to come back and say to the Minister of Justice—the Minister of Justice can do anything or say anything he wants. He can hurl any kind of accusations or innuendoes toward me, if that is what makes him feel good, or perhaps the better term is patriarchal.

The only message I want to give to the Minister of Justice and to this government this evening is that in spite of what he said about me, or in spite of what he thinks of me as an aboriginal person, as a former chief, as an aboriginal man, or as an aboriginal MLA, I repeat to you, Sir, I have a clear conscience, I can sleep well at nights, and I am also able to get up in the morning, look at myself in the mirror and still feel okay with myself.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that I was being respectful this evening. I hope that my speech here tonight carried a message. I hope that I contributed something positive to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and other members of this Legislature for listening to me.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): First may I start off by saying to the member from The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) that many of the comments that he has put on the record, Mr. Speaker, I respect him for being so frank and so blunt because I think at times it is in fact necessary.

I, too, like him, was very concerned with some of the remarks that were put on the record from the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae) and somewhat surprised in a sense that the Attorney General went out in the fashion in which he did, to say marked remarks or put remarks on the record that reflect negatively on so many Manitobans.

I am glad to see that the member from The Pas stood up and responded at least in some part to those remarks and was able to refrain from attacking

the Attorney General's own credibility on the whole issue in sticking to the resolution at hand.

Mr. Speaker, listening also to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Mitchelson) and some of the comments that she had put onto the record, I guess, at times, I wish I was able to restrain myself in the same fashion that the member from The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) was able to.

I am not too sure if I have that sort of a quality, in the sense that I take exception to a number of the remarks that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women had put on the record in regard to the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs), and some of things that, in fact, she said.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

I understand and I can appreciate that she is somewhat sensitive when she makes a ministerial statement, that in fact because she makes a ministerial statement, the critics get an opportunity to refute or to also make comments and those comments were very legitimate. I would encourage the minister to in fact read over what the Leader of the Liberal Party did say, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister responsible for the Status of Women has said that the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party do not in fact support the resolution. I think that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women is getting a bit too carried away here.

I cannot recall hearing any member of the New Democratic caucus or in fact from the Liberal caucus criticizing the content of the resolution. In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, we go through the resolution—and which I will go through the resolution—but we look at what the Leader of the Liberal Party did was move an amendment. I would argue that it is a legitimate amendment, because time after time whatever the issue might be the government takes an opportunity to say that we are doing this, we are doing that; this is what we are thinking of doing, and so forth.

The thing that is lacking is the resources, and I believe that the amendment to this particular resolution is a very legitimate one. I can understand, I guess, to a certain degree and will have to appreciate why the Conservatives en masse will likely vote against the amendment, but because they vote against the amendment does not necessarily mean that it is not what is actually occurring, because the minister herself would have

to admit that the new funding just is not there for many of the things that were being suggested in the Pedlar report.

I did want to go through the resolution, Madam Deputy Speaker, and starting off with some of the WHEREASes. I really appreciate the opportunity for us to be able to debate this whole issue during the government business. This way we can exceed the 15 minutes and it has allowed us to have a debate for more than just one hour on this very important issue.

So I wanted to, as I said, go through some of the WHEREASes, and starting off from the top. The reason why I do this is because the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Mitchelson) says that the two opposition parties do not support the resolution, and I want them to understand what it is that they are trying to say.

It starts off with:

"WHEREAS the government of Manitoba, based on the recommendations of the Women's Initiative Report, endorsed the philosophy that abuse is a crime and must be stopped."

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not believe that there is anyone inside this Chamber who would oppose that. We go on:

"WHEREAS a public awareness campaign was undertaken in February, 1990, to promote awareness that partner abuse is a crime."

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a well-known fact. In fact, a year later, I believe it was in October, I think it was October of '91, a year later or just over a year, we in fact received the report. So it is one of fact.

* (2100)

In terms of the third WHEREAS, the Pedlar Commission recommended the community must take an active role in reducing and eliminating domestic violence, well, again, this is something that I would be very disappointed if there was a member inside this Chamber who stood up in fact and said that they do not support that particular WHEREAS.

Then, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the position adopted by the government of Manitoba in declaring Manitoba as a domestic violence-free zone, where partner abuse is viewed as a criminal offence, and in adopting a tough stance against partner abuse.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the resolution that the Minister responsible for the

Status of Women (Mrs. Mitchelson) says that the two opposition parties do not support. In reference to the last THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, once again, I would argue that I do not believe that there is one member from all sides of this Chamber who would stand up and oppose that particular be it resolved.

So I think that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women was completely off base and was not being sensitive to the real, true feelings of members of this Chamber, that in fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, she did a disservice by saying that the resolution was not going to be supported by members of the opposition party.

Madam Deputy Speaker, even though the government might choose to not recognize that there is something lacking from the government when it comes to domestic violence, that being the resources, the new monies, to facilitate some of these recommendations that are coming out of things such as the Pedlar report, they might not at least openly admit to that and thereby vote against the amendment but, surely to goodness, they must realize that there is no one inside this Chamber who would oppose a resolution with content of this nature.

We look at the actual amendment that was moved, where it is just an add-on, unlike the government, Madam Deputy Speaker, where the government on a private member's resolution destroys the whole resolution right from the first WHEREAS, whether it is a good resolution or it is a bad resolution from their perspective, wherever we recognize and respect the WHEREASes and the THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED and chose not to delete, because we concurred with the WHEREASes. The Deputy Premier says, let us vote on it; we will vote on it in good time. I can assure the Deputy Premier of that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the amendment will no doubt come to a question some day, and then after that we will go on to the resolution. Even though I would like to see the amendment pass and only wish and desire I had the debating capabilities to convince a number of the members from the government side to in fact support the amendment, because it would not take too many members when you have such a slim majority government, Madam Deputy Speaker, but it would send a very strong message to the government of the day in terms of the real issues of domestic violence.

Yes, it is nice to be able to talk about how government is acting, and they are doing whatever they can, but unless you are able to come up with the resources which are necessary to implement, not just some of the recommendations from the Pedlar report, but a good majority. I think there were 75 recommendations. I personally have not read each and every recommendation, but am somewhat familiar with a good number of them. The ones that I am familiar with, I think the government should be acting upon.

I understand, and I appreciate the fact that they have operated on a good number, or that they are in the interim, or in a very short period of time, there will be a large number of those recommendations which will have been acted upon. I congratulate them for doing that.

I wanted to talk specifically about a case in terms of domestic violence, a case that came to me and somewhat disturbed me. That was a letter which was dropped off at my door here at the Legislature, just slid underneath my door, and it was from a lady who was at the other end. In her particular case, the police were in fact called out to her place of residence.

Unfortunately—and it is a very serious matter, and I have to be somewhat careful in terms of the way I put it—from what I understand with the discussions that I have had with both Osborne House, the City of Winnipeg Police and this particular constituent, Madam Deputy Speaker, we had a situation where a lady had called the police after being physically abused by her spouse. What really surprised me was that when the police got there, one would have thought they would have arrested the man, or the husband of the spouse, given the allegations which were being made by this lady, and the fact that she was the one who called 911. Unfortunately, the lady, as it turns out, was arrested and brought over to the Remand Centre.

I have gone over this particular constituent's file at length and tried to get an understanding as to why something of that nature would have happened. At the very least, where there are allegations coming from both sides, one would have anticipated that both would have been taken into custody, but I was very surprised in the sense that it was just the lady who was taken in, given the circumstances that I was told around it.

The reason why I bring it up, Madam Deputy Speaker, is because part of the Pedlar report

recommended that there needs to be an educational component to combating domestic violence. It made reference not only to our children and the people who are being abused or the abusers; it also made reference to our police forces.

I think that it is a very legitimate recommendation from the Pedlar report, that, in fact, if that recommendation was followed, I would like to think that this particular constituent of mine would have been treated in a very different fashion than she was. Hopefully, over time, this particular constituent of mine will be able to live with what has happened. She does feel very slighted, and justifiably so. Hopefully, reports such as this will go a long way to alleviate the concerns of this constituent and, I believe, constituents of all of the MLAs.

I wanted to go over a number of the recommendations that were brought forward in a very point-form fashion. Some of them included an expansion of the family violence courts outside of Winnipeg. Madam Deputy Speaker, we believe that it is important that a recommendation, this particular recommendation, does need to be acted upon. Some of the recommendations that I might go over, I understand, in some part, have been acted upon. For those that I do touch upon and the government has acted on, I commend them for doing that, but no doubt some of the recommendations that I will bring up have not acted upon.

One of the primary reasons why they would not have acted upon some of the recommendations that I might be bringing up is because they did not allocate any new resources to the recommendations that came out of the Pedlar report.

Another one was in terms of mandatory education programs for offenders at the corrections and the probation facilities. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is one in which my constituent, whom I cited earlier, would be able to give a large number of insights in terms of the treatment that she had received. She would concur 100 percent with that particular recommendation.

* (2110)

Education and training on domestic violence for the entire justice system. Once again, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a recommendation that points out that the question of education is very important at all levels, even in our legal system and

our justice system, that it touches all aspects of society.

Police investigation of all breaches of restraining orders—we have heard a lot about restraining orders and how restraining orders are in fact violated. We have had women who have been violently abused by individuals that should never even have been there. I can appreciate and understand how hard it is to ensure that someone that has a restraining order never be in the presence of the person that they are supposed to be away from. There are other ways in which we can at least ensure the best way that we can that people with restraining orders are not harassing in any fashion the victim. It is things such as stiffer fines, penalties, the whole question of coming down harder on the abuser.

Laying of charges and prosecuting all partner abuse where evidence exists—it is hard to be somewhat objective, given that we are not in the courts every day to determine how the victims are in fact being treated and the comments that the judges and lawyers and so forth are putting forward. The recommendation, I believe, has to be based on a lot of serious discussions and debates with those in regard to the laying of charges, those individuals that do the laying of the charges, and for them to point it out as a problem. I believe that the government has a responsibility to act on that particular recommendation in the fastest way possible.

Prohibiting the possession of firearms by offenders—on many occasions members, in particular the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), have brought up the issue of firearms. There are definitely things that the government can do, not only the provincial government, but also the national government, to ensure that firearms are not being abused in society. The government's role should not be belittled whatsoever in this area, because it is something that we have seen at different levels of violence, whether it is one or two individuals or in fact the massacre that we all are aware of in terms of what took place in Montreal.

Mandatory education on the domestic violence in the public schools, this is something that I think is probably one of the most important recommendations that came out of the Pedlar report, and I wanted to quote from the Pedlar report on this particular recommendation. It goes:

"It is recommended that educational institutions in Manitoba integrate a mandatory domestic violence educational component into the school curriculum for elementary, junior high and high schools."

Madam Deputy Speaker, the government cannot act quick enough on this particular recommendation. I often talk about the problems of racism, and the best way you combat racism is through education, and we need to start off with our young people. Well, I would say the same thing regarding domestic violence, that if we are sincere in combating domestic violence, and we want to achieve zero tolerance, we have to start at the educational institutions.

We cannot start early enough. We have an obligation for our future generations to educate, and this is one of the recommendations that we believe the current Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), the one who spoke during the Matter of Urgent Public Importance, the one who introduced this very same resolution that was to appear during private members' hour, in which I had looked forward to her comments during private members' hour on her resolution, because from what I understand, there is nothing that prevents a minister from talking on a resolution.

I would hope that the minister would, in fact, stand and put some of her concerns, to talk about a resolution that obviously she feels very close to. If in fact, the minister—

Point of Order

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to, on a point of order, ask that you clarify for us whether or not as a minister I can speak to that resolution, because it is my understanding that I cannot. The member is indicating that I will not, and my understanding is in the House I cannot.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) does not have a point of order. I understand there is some question as to the relevancy of the remarks of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), and I would remind all honourable members that they keep their remarks relevant to the resolution.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) had introduced

a resolution that is the exact same resolution that I am debating right now, if that is not—[interjection] Well, I do not want to reflect on the Chair, but I would encourage the Minister of Education to confirm with the Clerk. I do not believe that there is a rule that prevents her from speaking.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, one of our rules is that we should not anticipate any matter that has been set aside for future debate. To this point we have not dealt with Resolution 7, so in fact the member for Inkster should not make reference to it. Whether it is or is not in order or whether there is a change in sponsorship is not something that should be commented on.

* (2120)

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster, on the same point of order?

Mr. Lamoureux: No, to continue my speech, Madam Deputy Speaker. Am I recognized to speak now?

Madam Deputy Speaker: There was no point of order. The honourable member for Inkster, to resume debate.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Deputy Speaker, I would hope that the Minister of Education will in fact speak on this particular resolution, and I look forward to her debate hopefully. If the minister would like to introduce a resolution, I would be most definitely interested in hearing her comments on it. I somewhat digress.

I want to get back in terms of some of the other recommendations—increasing the maximum allowable stay in shelters to 30 days from 10 days. In that particular recommendation, there are a couple of things which come to mind. One is in the sense that if you put yourself in the situation of a woman who has been put in a situation in that they have been physically abused and then have to leave their home to go over to Osborne House, there are a lot of things which are put to them right up front, things such as: What is going to happen to me tomorrow? What am I going to be doing for housing after I have to leave Osborne House?

There is the whole question in some cases on economics. Osborne House and shelters like

Osborne House do not have the opportunity to provide the most essential and badly needed counselling services and are somewhat limited in terms of what they can do because of the regulations of the maximum of 10 days. There is no interim housing or housing which is available for individuals who cannot go back home that is made available.

I recall a couple of years back where we had raised the issue inside the Chamber. The government then responded by saying that Winnipeg Regional and Winnipeg Housing Authority now has a priority listing and anyone coming out of shelter abuses will be given priority, Madam Deputy Speaker. I commend them on taking that particular piece of action, but I think that they can extend the number of allowable days for an abused individual to remain in the shelter.

Offenders are required to make restitution or reparation to the victim; and finally, to enhance educational programs offered to the abusers. Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a responsibility for us to provide not only counselling for the victims but also for those who are the abusers, in hopes that they will not repeat what everyone in this Chamber agrees is a crime. I think that it is very important for all of us to be somewhat, at the very least, aware of the recommendations not only that the government is acting upon, but those recommendations that the government, for whatever reasons, is not acting upon.

One of the ministers who shoulders a major responsibility for these recommendations is the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), because I believe one of the most important recommendations is the one of education. That is why I am very interested, personally, in hearing what the Minister of Education has to say about it and what her government's agenda is on educating our younger people in the province of Manitoba with respect to domestic violence. I would hope that we will hear the Minister of Education talk about what it is that her department is doing, that she plays a very major role, as does the minister responsible for Justice (Mr. McCrae) in this province.

As the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) had pointed out, one would have thought that he would have been more relevant to the resolution that was before him and not choose to take the shots that he did take at the aboriginal community as a whole and the leaders of the aboriginal community. He, while

have been more relevant to the resolution that was before him and not choose to take the shots that he did take at the aboriginal community as a whole and the leaders of the aboriginal community. He, while he was standing and I was sitting in my chair, was trying to bait me in terms of saying that I am on the wrong side on this issue. Madam Deputy Speaker, I take issue with that because I do not believe that you are guilty until proven guilty—unlike the Attorney General of the Province of Manitoba. In fact, you cannot generalize by saying or making reference to the fact that because he is aware of one individual, all people are bad.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wanted to comment in terms of the impact of the vigils we see here that come by far too often. It was not that long ago—I believe it was on Bill 5—that we had commented in terms of the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) and the number of vigils that she attends.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know I have had opportunity to attend a vigil, and I would like to see the vigils come to an end in a positive sense, when we see that there are no women that are being violently—or their lives being violently taken away from them. Until that occurs, the vigils play a very major role in terms of what is going on in everyday reality. We need those reminders for ourselves so that the opposition in the government can look over, review their actions, and hopefully, to ensure that the government and particularly do what is ever within its means to prevent domestic violence.

I think the objectives of the resolution are good, Madam Deputy Speaker, declaring that Manitoba is a domestic violence-free zone. I think that the objective is admirable, because I would like to conclude by saying that all members of this Chamber, I believe, oppose domestic violence, and I would only hope that additional or more government members will in fact speak to this resolution and, as I pointed out, a couple of ministers in particular, one of which we have already heard from.

This is not the first day of this session where we have debated domestic violence. We had the domestic violence debated in the form of a Matter of Urgent Public Importance, which received the support of all three political parties inside the Chamber.

For some reason, I do not think that this will be the last time that we will be debating domestic violence, even though, if domestic violence were to

approach what this resolution is asking for it to do, then we might not, but somehow, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not see that occurring. Having said that, I support very much that Manitoba move towards a domestic violence-free zone, and that we recognize domestic violence as it is, and it is a crime.

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is usually customary when an honourable member stands up in the Chamber to say it is a pleasure to make some remarks on a topic. I have to say, it is not a pleasure for me to have to be talking on the subject of domestic violence. It would be far nicer not to have this topic happening in our society.

* (2130)

I was very fortunate when I was growing up that words such as "love", "understanding" and "compassion" were the key words that marked the way my family operated, the way my parents treated my three brothers and sisters, the way my parents treated each other. When I was at university, I took many, many courses in sociology and psychology. This was in the early '60s. Interestingly enough, Madam Deputy Speaker, there was never any reference at all to the term "domestic violence." It was almost as if such a thing did not exist.

I really did not run into that until my first job, which was with the Department of Welfare, Care Services. That office dealt mainly with seniors and those who were mentally and physically infirm. It was there that I first encountered what is now known as senior abuse or elder abuse, and this is the abuse of seniors in their home, seniors who are being looked after by family members who really could not cope with the problem of looking after an aged parent who is perhaps mentally or physically disabled.

My next job, Madam Deputy Speaker, was with Children's Aid of Eastern Manitoba, and there I ran full tilt into what is now known as domestic violence. I was known as a child protection worker, and I think it is interesting to note that even then the terms "abuse" or "violence" were not used. Again, I think it was a reflection of our attitudes at that time. It was almost as if we were trying to say: There is no violence here in Manitoba; if there is family violence, it happens somewhere else, probably down in the States, but not here in Manitoba.

With Children's Aid Society, I worked with families on Scantebury Reserve. To the honourable member across the way, I am familiar with violence

with that whole topic. As I say, the words "child abuse", "family abuse" or "family violence", whatever term you want to use, was not in the vocabulary. In fact, the term "child abuse" had not even been coined. I repeat again, it was almost as if society was denying that such a problem existed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was very frustrated through those years because, even though there were many, many, many hundreds of social workers, educators, people in government, people in society at large, who recognized that there was a problem, there did not seem to be an approach that was developed that was going to take a long-term look at it.

When I left work and was at home with my children, I did not drop the problem. I initiated and I implemented an audio-visual program, a slide presentation, on child abuse, and I presented that to the police force and to schools throughout the city. This was in the mid-70s. Interestingly enough, when I approached the schools and some of the other community organizations in the province, they really did not want to hear me, because they felt that in their community and in their area there was no such thing as child abuse.

So it is with great interest that I have to say that I watched the efforts of successive governments throughout the '70s and the '80s to come to terms, to deal with this problem. I think it is only fair to say that each government did try to deal with it, but of course they also had to cope with society's opinions at large.

I was pleased that in June 1989 this particular government began to really respond wholeheartedly, not only with dollars, but with a revision, and policies, and programs and services.

A couple of things that caught my eye at that particular moment in time was the fact that this government began the process of decentralization of the abuse crisis line making that very vital service more accessible particularly to women in the rural and more remote communities.

Of course, at that time too there was a decentralization of the Women's Directorate with offices established at Portage la Prairie and in The Pas.

A short time later I was very interested to notice that there was another news release that came out from this government. I am talking late June 1989. That news release told us that abused women were going to get additional support. Abused women and

their families would receive more support with a 47 percent increase in provincial government funding to shelters for abused women. That was another very positive step that this government took.

Not only was there more funding to the shelters, but there was an additional \$798,400 in this government's financial commitment to Manitoba's shelters and their support services. That funding, Madam Deputy Speaker, went toward developing a more stable shelter system to give abused women a place to go, as well as to provide others who chose not to seek shelter with support programs to assist them in making positive changes in their lives.

I think it is interesting to note, honourable members, that the 1989-1990 budget for women's shelters totalled \$2.5 million and that is not an insignificant sum. At that particular time we also raised the per diem rates for the 10 shelters that were then operating in Manitoba. It seems to me shortly after that time there was another shelter that opened in Dauphin.

About two years ago, in fact, almost two years ago to the day, there was another news release from this government and that was the news release that was released by the then Minister responsible for the Status of Women, Gerrie Hammond. She stated that the government was going to be unveiling a comprehensive policy and action plan that could affect the lives of virtually every woman in this province.

I think it is interesting to note the statistics there were at that time, and the figures have not changed all that much—approximately 410,000 women 18 years of age and older, and approximately 92,000 girls aged seven to 17. So that policy was affecting, not an insignificant number, but a large number of women in this province.

The statement of government policy announced very appropriately, I think, on International Women's Day by the Minister responsible for the Status of Women contained an eight-point policy and a 130-point action plan designed to guide government policies and programs throughout the 1990s.

I just want to quote from that news release, because I think it says something very important. Again, I am not trying to detract from anything that members opposite have done when they were in government or the second opposition party with their support for these programs. I think this is a nonpartisan issue, and I think we must try to keep our approach on that.

I do want to say that I think what happened throughout the '60s and the '70s and the early '80s, because of public opinion not being prepared to accept the fact that there was such a thing as domestic violence, that there was such a thing as abuse against women and abuse against children, but what happened was that for too long successive Manitoba governments reacted to women's demands for rights and freedoms and opportunities on an ad hoc basis. We created, all governments created short-term initiatives rather than long-term solutions.

I really think it is fair to say that it is this government that has been the first government to proactively seek change through long-range plans that emphasize action and responsiveness and partnership. Now, the eight points or the eight principles upon which this government's policy is founded, I just want to mention two of them because I think they are very appropriate to our discussion tonight on domestic violence. One is the recognition that abuse is a crime. Another is the fact that it is a shared responsibility between government and the community to provide protection and security for those denied the opportunity to become independent.

In late 1990, I think—I do not have a press release in front of me and my memory seems to have failed me, but it seems to me it was some time in 1990 that this government instituted or initiated and implemented a major media program aimed at preventing and the reporting of wife abuse, or I think it was called actually, Abuse is a Crime. That to me was one of the most important programs that this government introduced, because if it is one thing that I observed in my years of working in the field of social work, it was that too often families, women or children who were abused simply assumed that that was the way all families operated, that abuse was part and parcel of their life and their allotment in life and that nothing could be done.

I found it very interesting in my years in the field that when I said to women and to children that abuse is not the way a good family functions, they looked at me and said, but that is the way I was brought up. That is the way I see most of the families that I know functioning. They did not know that abuse is a crime. I think that that particular initiative by this government, instituted by our Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), was one of the most far-reaching and one of the strongest programs that any government in

this country has instituted, because it has made public the fact that abuse is a crime. [interjection]

* (2140)

The Minister of Justice reminds me that the previous minister for Child and Family Services, Charlotte Oleson, had laid the groundwork for that particular media program. Speaking about ministers of Child and Family Services, I think it would be timely to remind members that the present Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshamer) has also instituted a number of initiatives. I would just like to go over a few of them for the honourable members.

Marlene Bertrand, former director of Osborne House, is now the director of Family Dispute Services. This lady brings solid knowledge of the issues of family violence to her position and to this government in helping this government shape its policies. I think it is very important for all members to know that funding to crisis shelters has increased 193 percent. That is 2.5 million dollars, Madam Deputy Speaker, between 1987-88 and 1991-92. Currently, we have 11 crisis shelters in this province. This government also founded a crisis shelter for aboriginal women. We also have in place an extensive crisis telephone system providing services in English and French, and also to aboriginal women.

There is also increased funding to rural crisis committees, and Child and Family Services has also provided additional funding to what is known as the second-stage workers. This government is also actively developing a revised funding model for crisis shelters to ensure that there is funding stability and program delivery.

Of course, we were participants in the government-wide working group to develop responses to the Pedlar report on domestic violence. I think that brings me to the next point that I would like to bring out and remind honourable members in this House.

It was this government that recognized—well, maybe all of us, let me be fair here, all of us, I am sure, recognize that domestic violence has reached epidemic proportions across Canada. It was this government, Madam Deputy Speaker, who brought about, who instituted, who had written the Pedlar report. This report, the Domestic Violence Review, is the first of its kind in Canada. Until this report had been released, there had not been such a

comprehensive report that examined domestic violence from so many areas.

I think it would be interesting just to look at some of the eight principles that was the mandate of this report. I will just outline them for you:

1. Investigation and law enforcement procedures;
2. Processing of charges;
3. Interim procedures pending trial and sentence;
4. Restraining orders;
5. Training of persons involved in law enforcement;
6. Firearms acquisition certificates and control of weapons;
7. Probation and institutional treatment of offenders; and
8. Access to legal and paralegal assistance for victims.

These were all prime areas that Dorothy Pedlar looked into, and they were areas that needed looking into because these were areas that all adversely affected women who were in abusive situations.

The government, Madam Deputy Speaker, accepts in principle all of the report's recommendations. The reviews, 75 recommendations, present us with a good blueprint to tackle domestic violence head-on. In response to the report's recommendations, our government, through the Department of Justice has already taken or were in the process of taking actions in many areas.

Let me just tell you about a few of those areas. One, the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has directed police to lay charges in all cases of partner abuse where evidence exists; another area: mandatory prosecution of all partner abuse offences where evidence exists; pressing for bail conditions on all domestic violence offenders; mandatory education programs for domestic violence offenders at all corrections and probation facilities; prosecution of any domestic violence offender who fails to attend, participate in or complete the mandatory education program.

In her report, Dorothy Pedlar commended this government for its family violence court. This was another initiative of this government instituted by the Minister of Justice. I think all honourable members

should be reminded that the family violence court is the first of its kind in Canada. This court, as all of you know, I am sure, is a specialized, integrated unit within provincial court which is devoted exclusively to abuse cases. This court ensures that victims and their families are treated with sensitivity and compassion.

Something else that is very important about this court, and anybody who has been through an abusive situation or who has counselled a family who has been or is going through an abusive situation knows how traumatic, how stressful it can be to have things dragged out.

Well, with the new family violence court, things are speeded up. Where a case normally might have taken six or seven months to complete, under the new family violence court cases are usually completed within three months. Because of the success of this court, other provinces are looking at Manitoba as a leader in this area. In fact, we are now making plans to extend the family violence court to Brandon.

I just wanted to go to the Pedlar report for a moment. To prioritize and implement the report's recommendations, we have also established a working group comprised of key government officials from the affected departments. These departments include Justice, Family Services, Education, Status of Women, and Health.

These are a few of the actions that our government has taken in order to break the cycle of violence. I think it is interesting to note that just today our Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Mitchelson) gave a statement of government policy on the status of aboriginal women in Manitoba. Her comments are already recorded today, but I would just like to highlight a few of them.

The government of Manitoba acknowledges the aspirations and unique challenges of our province's aboriginal women. We recognize that the potential of the aboriginal women's community has yet to be fully tapped. We also recognize that special measures must be taken to ensure aboriginal women's contributions and abilities are acknowledged and affirmed. This government is committed to establishing a partnership with aboriginal women. This government acknowledges that aboriginal women face special challenges. To increase the participation of aboriginal women in the province's decision-making process, we will be

actively recruiting members for provincial boards and commissions.

* (2150)

Earlier today in the House, I raised a point with the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) with reference to an article on an Indian reserve. It is a hard point to raise, because it is no fun. Nobody wants to point fingers at somebody. I think that has been the problem with our society for too many generations. All of us are afraid to point a finger and say there is a problem because we are going to hurt somebody, we are going to stamp on somebody's pride, we are going to be tampering with somebody's way of dealing.

Madam Deputy Speaker, abuse is a crime whether it is abuse against women, whether it is abuse against children, whether it is abuse against seniors. Abuse against any family member is a crime. I think we have to raise these questions. We have to ask, has there been an abusive situation? Is there an abuse of power? I think it is fair to say that aboriginal family violence has been clearly identified as an area that must be addressed to ensure the future vitality of aboriginal women and their communities.

As I say, earlier in my career I worked very closely with women at Scantebury Reserve, and it was certainly a situation I found there, but it was the same with the situation I found in other rural areas of Manitoba and indeed in the city of Winnipeg itself. People were not prepared to deal with the problem. I think the only way we are going to solve this problem is for all members to recognize that there is a problem, for all members not to be afraid to speak out that there is a problem and for all members to do something about the problem. This is what this government is trying to do.

Our society will not tolerate violence toward any woman, toward any child, toward any senior. Our government is attempting to take a tough stand on it, and we will hold violent offenders fully accountable for their actions.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Finding solutions though is going to be difficult, because this is a complex problem. It is not a partisan issue, so I would hope that all members in this Chamber will join with me to support the efforts taken by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), taken by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshamer), taken by the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Mitchelson), the Minister

responsible for Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) and the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. Vodrey). I hope that we will all work together to try to stamp out abuse.

I think just before I close, I would just like to reiterate the last resolution: That it be resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the position adopted by the Minister of Justice in declaring Manitoba as a domestic violence-free zone, where partner abuse is viewed as a criminal offence, and in adopting a tough stance against partner abuse.

I would call upon all—[interjection] I did not hear the honourable member. The honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I did not hear you.

I just want to reiterate that I am calling upon all members of this House to work together in a nonpartisan fashion to accept the fact that abuse does exist, and the only way we are going to stamp it out is to work together. Thank you very much.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I too would welcome the chance to put some comments on the record with regard to domestic violence, violence against women. With respect to the resolution that we are debating here today, I find it interesting that we are debating this today. Yesterday was International Women's Day. I guess this says a lot about the status of women when we have to debate a resolution like this to celebrate, as we are supposed to be, International Women's Day. I am assuming that is why we are debating this resolution today, because yesterday was International Women's Day.

I attended yesterday the celebration at the University of Winnipeg. Again, there we were reminded that this theme ran through the event at the university, where it always seems when women get together that we have to take time to deal with these serious matters. I would suggest that there is not a woman in this Chamber tonight that has not been the victim of some kind of harassment, be it a bad joke or something far more serious. I would also think that there are a number of men in the Chamber tonight probably that would also fall into the category of having been abusive, just from the statistics we hear and knowing what we do even about the structure or the way that this House conducts itself.

Oftentimes I sit here and I feel that we are being victimized on this side of the House as members opposite shoot at us and tell us to stay in our place

about the structure or the way that this House conducts itself.

Oftentimes I sit here and I feel that we are being victimized on this side of the House as members opposite shoot at us and tell us to stay in our place or they are going to do things that will keep us in our place and all those kinds of comments, and I think that it is—

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Maybe your place is not in here.

Ms. Cerilli: Oh, there is exactly, the Minister of Justice, true to form—

Mr. McCrae: The voters are going to look after that.

Ms. Cerilli: —makes some comments telling me that perhaps my place is not in here.

I would suggest to the members opposite that they would go beyond this somewhat of a token resolution and start putting a little bit more of an analysis on some of the comments that they are making, so they can see the relationship between the status of women, the way that women are objectified, the way that women are oppressed both in their homes and in the workplace in all sectors of the community, be it in education, religion, the arts; and they start to equate the rhetoric that they put on the record today with some economic analysis and start to realize that the entire economy and culture that we have does contribute to the prevalence of violence against women and contributes to the unequal status that women still suffer.

It was interesting as well that yesterday, even though you would not know it by the comments put on the record by the members opposite today, that there were not any members yesterday at the celebration at the University of Winnipeg, and that is a celebration, I would say, suggests that—

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: I should indicate that, at least for this member and I know others, we were not here because we were attending other international days all across the province.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister does not have a point of order.

* * *

Ms. Cerilli: The reason I raised that is I would suggest the women that were at the celebration last night are the women leaders in our community in Winnipeg that are at the forefront of fighting the struggle for equality of women in society. Those are the women, I would suggest, that the member opposite, I think from Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh)—[interjection] I have to laugh at some of the comments that she is trying to—some of the insinuations that she is trying to make.

I also wanted to make some comments, because these are the women that are also organizing the vigils that go on that have been referred to a number of times from this House. Those vigils have had the purpose of trying to bring to the forefront in the media violence against women and the violence that women suffer at the hands of their lovers and partners and spouses.

It is fairly uncomfortable for all of us who attend those vigils to, oftentimes, come rushing out from the Legislature here and go out on to the front park area in front of the building.

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

The hour being 10 p.m., this House now adjourns and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Monday, March 9, 1992

CONTENTS

Proposed Resolution

Manitoba as a Domestic Violence-Free Zone

Mitchelson	1090
Lathlin	1093
Lamoureux	1097
Render	1102
Cerilli	1106