



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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

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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, Guizar	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, Ciif	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
NEUFELD, Harold	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	NDP
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	NDP
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 27, 1992

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of David Verwey, K. Galbraith, J. Jorgensen and others requesting the government show its strong commitment to dealing with child abuse by considering restoring the Fight Back Against Child Abuse campaign.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Florence Elkie Giroux, Barbara Diduch, Joyce Sutherland and others urging the government to consider establishing an Office of the Children's Advocate independent of cabinet and reporting directly to this Assembly.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Dorothy Sollosy, Tony Sass, Fred Neale and others requesting the government consider restoring the former full funding of \$700,000 to fight Dutch elm disease.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Helen Barbara Fredrickson, Margeurite J. Wareham, Onalea Dawn Wareham and others requesting the government consider reviewing the funding of the Brandon General Hospital to avoid layoffs and cutbacks to vital services.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), and it complies with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba, humbly sheweth that:

The Brandon General Hospital is the major health care institution for southwestern Manitoba; and

The citizens of Brandon and southwestern Manitoba are deeply concerned and disturbed

about the downsizing of the hospital and view it as a threat to the quality of health care in the region; and

The Manitoba government has chosen not to review the current budget to ensure that cutbacks to vital services do not occur; and

The administration of the hospital has been forced to take drastic measures including the elimination of the Palliative Care Unit and gynecological wards, along with the layoff of over 30 staff, mainly licensed practical nurses, to cope with a funding shortfall of over \$1.3 million; and

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba may be pleased to request that the government of Manitoba consider reviewing the funding of the Brandon General Hospital.

* * *

I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), and it complies with the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the Human Resources Opportunity Office has operated in Selkirk for over 21 years providing training for the unemployed and people re-entering the labour force; and

WHEREAS during the past 10 years alone over 1,000 trainees have gone through the program gaining valuable skills and training; and

WHEREAS upwards of 80 percent of the training centre's recent graduates have found employment; and

WHEREAS without consultation the program was cut in the 1992 provincial budget forcing the centre to close; and

WHEREAS there is a growing need for this program in Selkirk and the program has the support of the town of Selkirk, the Selkirk local of the Manitoba Metis Federation as well as many other local organizations and individuals.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to consider a one-year moratorium on the program.

* (1335)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Natural Lands and Special Places Workbook. This strategy is the fifth initiated under Land and Water, and joins the Soils, Minerals, Water and Forest Workbooks already prepared.

Our government has endorsed the World Wildlife Fund's Endangered Spaces Campaign. This program is aimed at protecting 12 percent of each natural region in Canada from commercial logging, mining and hydro development. As part of our commitment to this program, the province has indicated its intention to update our Provincial Park Lands Act. This workbook addresses these commitments and a variety of other issues related to our significant natural, cultural and heritage resources. The strategy will apply to all of Manitoba, including our urban environments where there are significant but limited areas which deserve our attention.

This is not simply a wilderness strategy. It is more comprehensive, involving the areas of historic and cultural sites and buildings, wildlife reserves, provincial forests, parks, ecological reserves and even undeveloped or abandoned road and railway lines. You will note that in addition to protection, the use and development of Natural Lands and Special Places is considered. Resource allocation in provincial parks, including the specific issues of logging and mining, will be looked at. This examination will be done within the context of the principles and guidelines of sustainable development to meet our environmental, social and economic objectives and goals.

Given the breadth of this strategy, both locally and provincially, every attempt has been made at resolving many of the present concerns facing us. A process of anticipating conflicts and providing processes for preventing them in the future are also

proposed. Issues of providing services to people in our parks, for example, are also considered, including how we may finance these services given our present fiscal constraints. The section on Park Lands Act Review suggests changes consistent with these policies.

The workbook will now be distributed to the public throughout Manitoba. Beginning in mid-June, informal consultations will take place with various key stakeholders respecting the finalization of the public consultation process. The public workshops themselves will be held early this fall in various communities throughout Manitoba.

I urge all of my colleagues in the Legislature, as well as all Manitobans, to become involved in the development of this exciting strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the ministerial statement that we have before us here today.

We all know sustainable development has been an issue in this province and throughout Canada for many years in the past, and for many years to come. I am rather pleased in somewhat of a way to see finally [applause] Well, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (1340)

Mr. Cliff Evans: However, I have not finished.

Mr. Speaker, we have, with great anticipation, been waiting for the government's report on sustainable development and this workbook.

The minister indicates programs and commitments that are within the policy here that we have before us. The minister and the government in place have, over the last couple of years, spent an enormous amount of finances to put such a book together, and yet there are certain things that we on this side are concerned with, Mr. Speaker, as to whether they are going to be followed.

The minister talks about the fact of providing services and parks for people, where in the last budget, in this budget, in previous budgets and the future budgets, we are going to see a cut. We have seen a cut in park services throughout, privatization of campgrounds, Mr. Speaker, and such.

Mr. Speaker, the government in place must if they are going to maintain or receive the 12 percent that this government has introduced in the campaign

that they have put forward in this province to maintain a 12 percent Endangered Spaces Program when at present right now we only have approximately 6 percent of the province protected. So on this side, we hope that this is not just again a smoke-and-mirrors type of a—[interjection]

When we have an important part of this province, this province and this government should in fact, as they have stated and indicated, proceed towards their 12 percent, and we will see whether there will actually be the consultation from the people in this province and whether there will be actual provincial and people input to this.

So until we do receive better and more, we will be very skeptical. Thank you.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier just took the water right out of my mouth. We have a situation in which we have had a policy in the past similar to the one that has been enunciated today with respect to the formulation of a water strategy in the province of Manitoba. We have been awaiting with great interest a provincial water policy, but we do not have as yet a provincial water policy.

So it is not the process that we have any difficulty in addressing today. We think the process that they are engaging in is one that is very worthwhile. Where we find fault, however, is because the strategy does not seem to result in positive action. It does not seem to result in provincial laws which will ensure that we have a policy for the province that cannot be infringed upon without certain rights and obligations on the part of the citizenry and a part of government, and that is what is failing here.

To just produce more brochures to engage the public in more debate and more discussion will, of its own, not result in the fundamental changes necessary to ensure that we do have a province-wide recognition, that we have a natural land and water which is to be protected, and that indeed Manitoba is a very special place to live in, and its special places, as a result, must be protected.

So we suggest to the government today that the process they have not put in place is valuable, but it will only be as valuable as the ultimate decisions they make as a government to introduce legislation to give effect to the strategy that they have announced today.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling the Annual Report for 1990/1991 of the Manitoba Intercultural Council.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table for members of the House the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation study on Maternal Demographic Risk Factors and the Incidence of Low Birthweight, Manitoba 1979-1989.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 93—The Mental Health Amendment Act

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger), that Bill 93, The Mental Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale, be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

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 afternoon Mr. Arnold Brown, the former member for Rhineland.

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

Also with us this afternoon, we have from the Rosenort School twenty-two Grade 9 students, and they are under the direction of Grant Plett. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

Also from the Robert Smith School, we have twenty-eight Grades 5 and 6 students, and they are under the direction of Paulette Symesko. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

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

* (1345)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Economic Growth Government Policy Performance

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): In the 1990 election, the Premier was promising Manitobans jobs and economic opportunity. When he was not bashing the Liberals in terms of their economic policies of spending, he was promising Manitobans that industry task forces and other means would be developed to develop new businesses and new job creation, promised task force economic opportunity.

Shortly thereafter, Mr. Speaker, in this House, he promised that Manitoba would have better than the national average in terms of economic performance, better employment rates, better growth rates, better private sector rates, and Manitoba was building a solid foundation under the Tory majority government that was elected in 1990.

Well, Mr. Speaker, today we have received the Conference Board report, and it speaks of the record of the Conservative Tory majority government since their optimistic promises that were made to the people of Manitoba in 1990. Manitoba's decline in growth was in last place of all provinces in Canada from 1990 to 1992, including the predictions for some positive growth in 1992. In fact, Manitoba's decline in growth was predicted by the Conference Board of Canada in actual terms from 1990 to 1992 to be a decline of 2.1 percent, a greater decline than New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Canada, P.E.I., Alberta, Newfoundland and British Columbia.

I would like to ask the Premier why we are in last place since he received a majority vote from the people of Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Opposition really relishes bad news for Manitoba. He is the master of doom and gloom, the prince of darkness, who goes throughout this province telling Manitobans that they are bad people and that this is a bad province. It is that kind of attitude, of course, that is so destructive to this province and its opportunities for future growth.

I have before me the Conference Board's revised forecast which says that for 1992, they are predicting that Manitoba's growth rate will be above the national average. They are suggesting that for next year, Manitoba's growth rate for 1993 will be 3

percent, which is higher than their original forecast was for 1993.

This is consistent with three banks that have forecast within the last month that Manitoba will be in the top four in terms of growth rate in Canada of all the provinces for 1992, 1993 and 1994. So all of the things—[interjection] Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you would ask the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) to control his enthusiasm, to please—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Each one of these banks that has reported within the last month has said that for 1992, 1993 and 1994, we will be in the top four provinces, nationally. Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of good news that I believe we should welcome.

The fact of the matter is, we have been through difficult times. I have said openly anywhere in this province that 1991 was a tough year, and we are glad that we have it behind us, but by the things that we have put in place, by keeping taxes down, by ensuring that we have a strong economic base for future growth, we will ensure that we do have the kind of investment and growth that we are looking for. That is what the banks are saying, and that is what the Conference Board is saying for '92, '93 and '94.

* (1350)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans will want to know why every time we get to a quarter in our economy, the Premier talks about the next quarter in the economy and the next quarter and the next quarter.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier wrongly says that 1991 is behind us. It is not behind us when you have the worst economic performance of any province in Canada. Your economy starts off at a lower base; it starts off with lower investment, lower jobs, lower opportunities, and that is why that even when we look at the positive predictions up until '93, Manitoba will be in second last place, even with these positive predictions the Premier just made.

The question is: Why are we in last place? Why are we performing so poorly? What destructive policies has this government implemented to give us these destructive bottom-line results? Can the Premier not accept any responsibility for being in last place last year, for being in last place since he got a majority government and implementing the

policies that he now chairs as head of the economic committee of cabinet?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, this government could well have followed the policies of the former government, which was to drive up taxes so that they were at the second highest level in all of Canada, and by driving up taxes, creating the public money to stimulate the economy. That spending of public money in the economy has a very large toll on our economic prospects.

Indeed when you drive up taxes, fine, if you are spending someone else's money, Mr. Speaker, and that is what New Democrats do. They raise taxes every time they are in government, and they use those taxes to create artificial growth, artificial growth that ultimately taxes and restricts the future growth opportunities and the attractiveness for investment.

We will not do that. This government has consistently, for five straight budgets, kept taxes down, has refused to go along with New Democratic demands to raise taxes in order to stimulate the economy. That is not the answer. That is a solution that ultimately drags down all of the people, all of the businesses and any opportunity for future investment, and we are not going to follow that plan, Mr. Speaker.

Employment Decline

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): The Premier, yesterday, tried to deal with this issue by stating Manitoba was fourth in terms of disposable income, and he is right. We have been fourth for the last 20 years. The disposable income in Manitoba has declined since 1990, and the Premier should know that as a percentage in Canada. He knows the facts.

More importantly, everywhere we go, we know people and families that are either losing their jobs or afraid to lose their jobs. We know every time you sit down with a cup of coffee, with people at a social event or last night at some other event with people in the province, there are people and stories that are very scary, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of Manitoba, the most important economic indicator is employment. Manitoba's employment growth declined, second last in Canada, 4.3 percent. Only Newfoundland declined more since this Premier received a majority government from the people of Manitoba, since this

Premier was paddling a canoe and promising us prosperity.

Why are we paddling backwards in the province of Manitoba? Why are we going back and down in terms of economic performance and job creation in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that this province still has the third best unemployment rate in the country. The member knows full well the answer that he is projecting is to spend more public taxpayers' dollars, spend more tax dollars, raise more taxes for short-term effect.

Mr. Speaker, we could spend that public money to create short-term jobs, to create the kind of temporary economic growth that he is talking about, and all we would do is do what the former government did, and that is saddle the people of this province with the second highest overall tax rate in the country.

That is not the way to economic growth. That is not the way to solid investment opportunity. That is only the way to make life worse for the people of this province, and we will not follow that route, Mr. Speaker.

* (1355)

Government Policy Performance

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, September of 1991, after one year of dismal economic performance, the Premier, in a communications strategy, had a press conference, shuffled some of his deputy ministers and said at that time he was creating this economic committee of cabinet: The most important thing our government is doing is to tackle, in the next 18 months, the economic renewal of this province, putting all of our emphasis, perhaps even my political future on the line by saying that we are now going to turn all our efforts to economic development.

I would ask the Premier: After two years, close to two years since his majority government, why are we expecting a decline in employment at 2 percent in 1992 under the Conference Board's predictions, and why are we performing in a last-place way with all other provinces of Canada under his economic stewardship?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, that same Conference Board's forecast suggests that in

1992, Manitoba's GDP will increase above the national average, that very same forecast. They are suggesting that this province will be performing at better than the national rate in terms of GDP growth. The fact of the matter is, this government has structured the Economic Development Board. The Economic Development Board has gone out and met with people and has encouraged investment, and some responses are already coming in.

He knows full well that Apotex, who has lauded this government for being proactive for going out and attracting investment, has made a commitment of \$50 million, creating many, many jobs, that Medox Corporation again last fall, from London, England, said that they were coming here and setting up headquarters for North American distribution leading up to a hundred jobs, a number of these companies that we have talked about—Versatile, has had the opportunity. We met with their parent firm in England to have two-wheel-drive tractor manufacturing moved from Ghent, Belgium to Manitoba, happening later this year. Those jobs will be created, those opportunities. Those are the kinds of things that are happening.

That is why the Conference Board is suggesting that our gross domestic product will grow greater than the national average in 1992 and that in fact three banks recently have forecasted that we will be growing at greater than the national average for '92, '93 and '94. Those are the things that we have been working on, and those are the results that are coming, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, if you sink 100 feet in the water and you go up 50 feet, you are going to have a high percentage increase, but you are still down. The Conference Board of Canada said what Statistics Canada said last week. It said we were in last place in gross domestic product of all provinces in Canada.

Now when will the Premier start accepting responsibility for that? He blames it on the national recession. He blames it on the international recession. He blames it on this person today, that person tomorrow. When is he going to accept responsibility? Will he take some measures to get Manitobans working again, or is he just going to surrender to a 2 percent decline in employment for 1992 as he did in 1991?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I repeat that we will not follow the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, which is to raise taxes on people so that you can stimulate short-term growth based on public spending. That will drive further into despair Manitobans who will not appreciate the added tax load. That is the answer of the New Democrats both here and in other provinces in this country, and that is their answer to growth, to simply tax more so they can spend more so that they can create short-term growth. That will not work in the long run.

We will ensure that we follow the kinds of economic development initiatives that we have been talking about, that are taking place with respect to companies like Medox Corporation, like Versatile, like Trimel, like Apotex, like companies who are investing in a major way in this economy and creating long-term job opportunities. That is the way for the future, and that is why the Conference Board is suggesting that our growth rate will be above the national average this year, and that is why three banks in the past month have suggested that such will be the case for '92, '93 and '94, Mr. Speaker.

* (1400)

Employment Creation Strategy

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that the economic policies put in place by this Tory majority government are 10 out of 10 in Canada, last place. In every one of the areas, examples the Premier mentions, we could mention five or six other places that have closed, unfortunately. The question has to be asked about the bottom line.

Disposable income in Manitoba has gone down since he won a majority government. It was fourth when he took office. It is still four, but it has gone down. Well, the Premier shakes his head. It has gone down from 1990 of 91 percent of Canadian income down to 89.9 percent.

My question to the Premier is: What corrective action is he going to take, because we have now surrendered a 2 percent decline in employment in 1991? The same people are predicting another further 2 percent decline in employment in 1992. Surely, that is not the result the Premier wants. That is not the result anybody in this House wants. Will he take some corrective action on behalf of the 2 percent decline in employment on behalf of the thousands of people who want jobs and

opportunities and want to stay in Manitoba to keep their families in Manitoba with

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, of course, does not want to listen. The statistics that he is quoting are based on last year. The results that we are seeing are based on the action that has been taken. The fact that taxes have been kept down, the fact that the deficit has been kept down has led to the fact that for '92, '93, '94, three banks within the past month have said we are going to have growth rates that are amongst the top four in the country.

The Conference Board is suggesting for '92 we are going to be third best in the country in growth rate. That is the result of the actions that have been taken by this government. That is the information that the Leader of the Opposition refuses to accept and refuses to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker.

Education System Vocational Programs Funding

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): During the election campaign in 1990, the Premier said and I quote: The educational system does not respond quickly enough to the needs of business; we have to become more responsive to the need for new skills in the business community.

I agree with that statement.

Mr. Speaker, on February 10, 1992, the Premier said at a First Ministers' Conference: We must strive to ensure that our work force is well trained and well educated.

I also agree with that statement.

Therefore, I would like to ask the Premier why, between the 1990-91 school year and the '91-92 school year, there has been a decrease in 13 school divisions in real dollars of 19.4 percent in vocational education and in 14 school divisions there is no budget for vocational education at all.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I would like to explain to the member that we do have now a new Education finance model. Within that Education finance model, students may now take a single vocational education credit, and under the old model, the difficulty was that students had to register in a complete vocational program. So this is in fact a very strong improvement which allows students

who are studying at the secondary level to experience vocational education and also perhaps take part then in co-operative education programs and have an opportunity to see first-hand what that kind of training and work experience is like.

Exceptional Student Programs Funding

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the reality is, there is less money being spent on vocational education than there was being spent on vocational education just one year ago.

The other area where we see noticeable changes is in the area of exceptional students, which includes the whole range from those with special needs up to the gifted youngsters within our society. In that area, we see a decline in expenditures of some 9 percent on average for 23 school divisions.

Can the Minister of Education explain why there are fewer initiatives out there to ensure quality education for those with special needs and the gifted in our community at a time when her Premier says this has to be a No. 1 priority?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, well, this government has increased its funding and the funds available for special needs students within this province. In addition, we also have a task force looking at programs and education necessary for young people in the gifted and talented area. There has been a recognition by this government that young people may be gifted. They also may be talented. We have to look at the full range of students' needs across this province, and we are doing so.

Student Achievement Levels

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Well, Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Education says she is looking at the full range of needs in every single objective criteria of evaluating programming, there are cuts being made. There are fewer dollars going into vocational education. There are fewer dollars going into exceptional children, and there are fewer dollars going per pupil for support for all students in real dollars being spent in our educational system.

Can the Minister of Education explain to this House how she is going to ensure an improvement in the quality of our test results and, therefore, our student achievement levels which are among the

worst in the country when school divisions are proportionately spending more money on instructional resources for youngsters?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): We certainly are very concerned about the educational needs of students in Manitoba. We are concerned about their educational needs, that they become engaged in a school process, that we are also able to support those students who are potentially at risk so that those young people can remain within the school system. We are looking at curriculum evaluation. The math curriculum, which was part of a recent set of test results, is actively being evaluated by math teachers and by people working in the field so that we are currently looking at trying to develop the most excellent school system within this province.

Business Relocations Government Discussions

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Last night a news report indicated that a major company had located its service section in Moncton, New Brunswick, after looking at the province of Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, hundreds of jobs are at stake. My question is to the First Minister. Did the Economic Development Board of Cabinet or any of its representatives meet with this company when it was reviewing the possibility of locating hundreds of jobs in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, when we got word of the particular announcement, which I believe is more than a year old, I phoned the president, Mr. Steve Snyder, personally to see if we could be involved in this, and he said that they had not looked at Manitoba. I do not know whether the story is accurate, that their decision had been made based on a proposal and a direct intervention by the Premier of New Brunswick, and it was too late because the decision had been made and Manitoba had not been considered prior to the decision. I spoke to Mr. Snyder more than a year ago.

Mr. Storie: Perhaps that answer from the Premier is indicative why there is no development in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, Piper Aircraft is the same kind of situation, where the minister's own members have criticized the department for a lack of activity.

Economic Growth Employment Creation Strategy

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, my question to the First Minister is: Given the fact that we have lost 25,000 full-time jobs since this government got its majority, can the minister indicate why his strategy of standing aside is not working, why companies like Camco and Piper and hundreds of others are not flocking to Manitoba to create jobs here?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, it was because of that experience more than a year ago that we made the decision to set up the Economic Development Board of Cabinet with myself as chair. As a matter of fact, it has been effective because since that time we have been able to attract the investment of Apotex, we have been able to attract the investment of Medox, we have been able to attract the movement of two-wheel-drive tractors from Ghent, Belgium, to Winnipeg, Manitoba, by Versatile. We have been able to move the distribution headquarters for The Northwest Company here that was going to be going to North Bay. We have been able to intervene on a personal basis and on a direct basis.

In addition to that, there are a number of other companies that I might say had been looking at New Brunswick, that we have been able to get involved with so that now decisions are pending that we believe will be favourable towards us. It was as a result of that kind of experience that we decided to have the Economic Development Board of Cabinet put together so that there could be an involvement of everybody right up to the Premier in promoting economic development for this province.

* (1410)

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, we will certainly accept the Premier's word that he is promoting economic development. The people of Manitoba want to know how this minister is going to be held accountable. My question to the First Minister is—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Mr. Filmon: We will be held accountable when we run for re-election next time around, and people will compare the record of this government that has not raised major taxes in this province versus the record of the New Democrats who raised personal taxes 138 percent in just six years when they were in

government versus the record of every other New Democratic government in this country, which is raising taxes and raising taxes and raising taxes.

They will make their judgment based on who is interested in protecting the people, who is interested in providing for the people a high quality of life without raising taxes the way New Democrats do.

Regional Development Corporations Funding

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, this government is very good at making promises. Since 1988, they have been promising businesses were going to get started in rural Manitoba. We were going to see business growth, we were going to see tourism and we were going to see jobs. What we see is fewer people living in rural Manitoba, no jobs and, for the first time, food banks in rural Manitoba.

I want to ask this Premier why this government has not kept its commitment to start business development offices in the regional development corporations, something that will help businesses get started in rural Manitoba instead of cutting back on funding for regional development.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I think the member for Swan River should be embarrassed to ask that question.

Every place I go in rural Manitoba, people tell us that they are very pleased with the kind of economic development initiatives that they are getting—\$55 million being committed in Flin Flon for the redevelopment of the smelter and zinc reduction facility in Flin Flon.

We have over 500 jobs that have been decentralized out of Winnipeg to various rural centres throughout Manitoba, places like Brandon, places like Portage la Prairie, places like Winkler, Altona, places like Morden, all throughout rural Manitoba—Dauphin, I was in Dauphin for an opening of the Native Education branch, Mr. Speaker, on and on and on.

We have the Rural Economic Development Initiative that is helping people throughout this province. We have the rural Grow Bonds program that is helping throughout this province. We have \$90 million being spent in the Southern Development Initiative to improve the infrastructure of so many rural communities in this province.

Everywhere I go, people say, these are the kinds of programs that we have been waiting for, that we never got under the New Democrats.

Decentralization Relocation Statistics

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Can the minister explain, then, if he is so proud of the decentralization program, why there are fewer civil servants working in rural Manitoba than there were when this government came into power?

How can you say that there—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Decentralization): Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with the preamble of the member for Swan River.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that this government and its decentralization of some 500-and-some jobs to rural Manitoba—and I gave to the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) the other day who gave up, who said he did not want to hear any more of the good things that we are doing in rural Manitoba.

I can go through the list again, if the member wants me to: the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation to Brandon, with 20-some jobs; the rural library services to Brandon; the Crown Lands branch to Neepawa and Minnedosa with probably some 20 to 30 jobs; Dauphin with some several jobs.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, our rules are very clear, and that is that answers should relate to the matter raised.

The minister was asked very clearly why there are fewer jobs in rural Manitoba overall under this government, despite their decentralization. I would ask him to answer that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): On that point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order. I have already ruled on that. The honourable minister, to finish his response.

* * *

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I do not accept the numbers that have been provided. I do not know why the critic for Rural Development did not raise the issue in one whole evening of Estimates. The question was not even raised by the critic when we were going through Estimates and now uses the optics of Question Period to raise it.

Regional Development Corporations Funding Formula

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a chart so that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) will have true facts about how many people really are working in rural Manitoba, and the fact is we have not done decentralization in Estimates yet.

I want to ask the minister responsible for Rural Development or the deputy minister why this government has changed the formula for funding RDCs so that they now not get as much money as they used to, and the RDCs are saying that they cannot operate under this formula.

Is this your commitment to development in rural Manitoba?

Hon. James Downey (Acting Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that there were improvements made to the funding of the RDCs under this government. In fact, there has been one new RDC added to the whole program this year for rural Manitoba. I do not know where the member is getting her facts, but I think she should review them. There have been meetings taking place with the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) and an expression of satisfaction from those organizations.

Health Care System Reform Nursing Education

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

One of the ways to improve the health reform process is to have co-ordination between the Department of Education and Department of Health, but that is not happening yet. In this reform report, page 59, it says that the long-term decision for the nurses cannot be made yet. At the same time, the Department of Education has put a moratorium on the LPN education at Red River College. We also

know there is a doubt about the LPN education at St. Boniface Hospital.

Can the Minister of Health tell us, on page 60 of his report, it says clearly that the new provincial nursing adviser will be implemented. Can the minister accept this idea, another one, that that adviser should also report to the Minister of Education to have proper co-ordination so that at least the decision which will help the reform process can be taken in a more co-ordinated fashion?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, a couple of points of clarification for my honourable friend, which I have pointed out to him before.

In terms of nursing education, a number of issues surfaced approximately around year-end. Subsequent to that, the ministry, through my deputy minister, is in the process of surveying all employers of nursing personnel in the province to determine current staffing patterns and to have those same employers in the system give us a projection of where they anticipate their staffing patterns, hence their staffing needs to be five years from now. With that kind of background information, we expect to be able to provide very accurate and very good advice to the ministry of Education as well as, certainly, to our personnel people within the ministry of Health.

St. Boniface Hospital School of Licensed Practical Nurses

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health tell us if his Department of Health has replied to the letter of April 30 from the St. Boniface Hospital president? The president of the hospital is simply requesting the minister to have a meeting and discuss the closure of the LPN school at St. Boniface Hospital. The minister is saying, at the same time, that they are going to study the problem. Why do they have to close this place before studying the problem?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend might recall that there was a flurry of rumour and concern expressed in December of last year wherein it was almost a given fact of accepted belief that the St. Boniface school for nursing for LPNs was closed in December of 1991. That was not accurate. They are accepting students now, and they intend to accept students into the fall class.

When those rumours came up, we asked for verification from the St. Boniface Hospital, their board and senior management. We received the information essentially that I have shared with you in the last minute, Sir. We have not established the meeting as requested April 30, but those meetings will be scheduled and will be most productive.

* (1420)

Community-Based Health Care Licensed Practical Nurse Role

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this House if he is in agreement with the conclusion of the task force on LPNs, which clearly states that the move to the community-based hospital model or the community-based hospital care will require more LPNs rather than fewer LPNs? If that is the case, why is the minister putting a moratorium on the education of LPNs?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as we see the health care system evolve from an institutional-based service delivery model to community-based service delivery patterns, I would expect the nursing professions—in plural, not narrowed only to the LPN, as my honourable friend has just questioned—would see their services required in greater numbers in community care delivery settings, be that in community-clinic type delivery systems, as attachments in outpatient services to acute care hospitals, or directly in the Continuing Care Program and support services procedures.

PR 340 Grading Project Completion

Mr. Bob Rose (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Highways.

Manitobans are pleased with the performance of the Minister of Highways and Transportation, particularly with the ongoing commitment to capital projects that bring direct economic benefits, employment and economic activity in the short run as well as long-range benefits in infrastructure, much needed in rural Manitoba. Part of the program that was announced for this year's construction was eight kilometres of grading and gravelling on PR 340, north of Wawanesa.

Can the minister assure the people of Wawanesa that this project will be completed this year?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, when I tabled the '92-93 Construction Program here just a little while ago in this House, I want to indicate that our tendering process is such that we are usually almost two years in advance when we do our projections or approvals. I want to indicate to the member that the approvals we have on the '92-93 Construction Program do not necessarily mean that construction will take place this year. We are trying to get as many of those programs down, but we have carryover from last year, plus the advanced program. But those programs are approved, and they will be tendered as soon as we can bring them forward.

Mr. Rose: I thank the minister for that answer.

Faith Community Baptist Church Building Relocation

Mr. Bob Rose (Turtle Mountain): On a different topic, can the minister assure the congregation of the Faith Community Baptist Church in Souris that their application to move a building from Gladstone to Souris will be dealt with expeditiously, with due consideration given to costs involved with the alternative routes?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): The issue that the member raises with me is a rather complex one. We have a substantially large church building that has been requested to be moved. I have instructed staff to try and work together with the community as well as the mover to see whether we can accommodate that. To move that building along the Trans-Canada Highway creates some concerns in terms of just the size of the building in terms of safety, and we are going to try and accommodate the people so they will be able to do it at the least cost.

Retail Trade Sunday Shopping

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, for many years, this province has had regulations related to Sunday openings. The most recent regulations were agreed to by all parties in the Manitoba Legislature in the mid-1980s and maintained Sunday as a day of rest for many Manitobans. This government has now moved to open casinos on a Sunday, and I have a very straightforward question to the Premier, very simple.

What is the policy of this government on Sunday openings?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson), I believe, some time ago in this House, indicated that he was reviewing the effects of cross-border shopping and a number of other issues on Tourism and on opening on Sundays, and that he was going into a thorough and complete review of that matter to see what the economic effects were, potentially, of Sunday openings. I do not believe that there has been any conclusion arrived at or that the studies are complete at this point.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson has time for one very short question.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, will the government be consulting with a broad range of Manitobans, including Manitoba workers, including many rural communities who have concerns about this? Will he ensure that any changes that take place are in response to what Manitobans are saying, not any particular lobbying that is taking place on behalf of various groups at the current time?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, this government always consults with people. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) talked about the fact that people talk to him over a cup of coffee. The fact of the matter is that all of our members on this side of the House are very active in their communities, are out there talking with people throughout the course of every given week, throughout the course of every year. We make it a practice. I meet with dozens and dozens and dozens of groups who ask for opportunities to meet with me as Premier and so do each and every one of our ministers and our members so that we can keep consultation on a full range of public issues.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to, first of all, announce that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Thursday, May 28, 1992, at 10 a.m. to continue to consider the 1991 Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board.

I would also like to call in terms of order of bills, Bills 20, 12, 15, 80, 81 and 70.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like you to call, in advance of that, Bills 75 and 91 for second readings.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 75—The Health Services Insurance Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): M. le président, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger), that Bill 75, The Health Services Insurance Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (1430)

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, The Health Services Insurance Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act is a major component of the reorganization of health care delivery in Manitoba. With this bill we are implementing a strategic management plan to integrate the Manitoba Health Services Commission and Manitoba Health into one organization. This will bring together community-oriented and institutionally oriented services to produce a better balance between the two systems.

This bill is the legal framework for implementing this change and the additional changes required as a result. Most of the amendments in this bill, major and minor, can be described as housekeeping. However, two very important changes are included.

First, the Minister of Health will assume direct responsibility for all powers exercised up to now by the commission, including control over the Manitoba Health Services Insurance Fund, except for certain appeals and advisory functions.

Second, a new quasi-judicial body, the Manitoba Health Board, will be established to handle appeals as well as some advisory and administrative functions. This board will have a minimum of five members, including a chairman and vice-chairman appointed by cabinet. The appeals to be considered will concern registration of insured persons and entitlement to health benefits. The board will also approve applications to operate

laboratories and personal care homes. The board will have appeal responsibilities related to hospital budgets. However, in this field the board makes only recommendations to the minister, not decisions that are binding. In order to provide some flexibility, the legislation allows the board to sit and act in panels as long as a quorum, set at three, is present.

Mr. Speaker, without dwelling on particular sections, I would like to go through the bill with respect to specific areas it concerns.

Sections 3 to 27 rewrite the present legislation to give the Minister of Health direct powers now exercised by the Manitoba Health Services Commission and establish the Manitoba Health Board.

Sections 28 to 75 dealing with the management of the Health Services Insurance Fund, registration of residents for health insurance and benefits, insured hospital and personal care home services and the health facility budget process, in that order, will have references to the minister instead of the commission.

Section 85(3) provides for the minister or the Medical Review Committee to disclose information respecting an order made by the Medical Review Committee under Section 80, including the name of the medical practitioner affected by the order, the amount the medical practitioner has been required to repay by the order and the reasons for the order.

Mr. Speaker, this will carry with it the provision that no information which could in any way identify a patient who has received medical services from the medical practitioner shall be made public. Finally, more than a dozen other acts require amendments because of this bill. In all cases, the consequential changes are housekeeping amendments which remove references to the Manitoba Health Services Commission, change references from the commission to the minister or transfer authority from the commission to the minister. We have already implemented a number of organizational changes arising from the decision to amalgamate the Health Services Commission with Manitoba Health.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members of the Manitoba Health Services Commission board for their dedicated services to the people of Manitoba in overseeing the operation of our province's health and hospital insurance services. I look forward to their continuing participation in health care on the Manitoba Health Board. I would

like to pay similar tribute to the more than 600 employees of the commission whose functions and responsibilities are now directly a part of my department. They and the other members of the department, as well as the rest of the health care community, will help take Manitoba and Manitobans into a new era in health care. I look forward to working with them in the months and years to come.

Sir, I recommend this bill and its provisions to all members of the House for speedy passage.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 91—The Liquor Control Amendment Act (2)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), that Bill 91, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des alcools, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, this amendment to The Liquor Control Act is sparked, as you may recall, by the recent problem that was identified with regard to the consumption of Chinese cooking wines. These wines—and beverages like them, liquors and so on—used in cooking, are not meant to be consumed as beverages because of their high salt content. They were being sold on the shelves with a very high alcohol content, sometimes up to and approaching 40 percent, and being consumed, resulting, in some cases, tragically, a fatality.

The amendment that is being proposed will enable beverages such as this to come under the control of the Liquor Control Commission. Prior to the drafting of this amendment or currently in our society here in Manitoba, these beverages are considered to be nonpotable beverages, and as such, do not come under our control because The Liquor Control Act to date governs beverages which are potable or drinkable.

Bringing these beverages under the control of the Liquor Control Commission enables us to set regulations which will restrict the sale of these

beverages in ways that are more acceptable and more safe for the consumer. As well, Mr. Speaker, in bringing forward this amendment, we are increasing substantially the penalties that will be able to be applied to those who commit infractions of the law.

The situation that currently exists in Manitoba under Section 113 of The Liquor Control Act makes it illegal to sell these substances for consumption, but it has been difficult for the police to lay charges because they have had difficulty in proving that the beverages were being sold for consumptive purposes. As well, the penalties that exist at the current time have no minimum, and the proposal that we are putting in place will see a minimum penalty established of \$500 when the maximum will be substantially increased from \$2,000 to \$10,000. This penalty, it is felt, Mr. Speaker, will discourage in a fairly strong and substantive fashion, those who previously felt that they could pay a minimal fine and still continue selling such beverages for consumption, making their profit from the sales and the fine being seen simply as a cost of business.

The regulations that are proposed have been drafted by the Liquor Control Commission. They do not form part of the act, of course, because they are a regulation, but it is the intention of the regulation to put conditions of sale on these substances, to allow them to continue to be sold in grocery stores where those legitimate buyers and sellers wish to see them, but restrictions on sale will be imposed such that it will be easier for the police to lay charges if the conditions are not met and, of course, as indicated earlier, the penalties will be much stiffer. As well, Mr. Speaker, those cooking wines and nonpotable intoxicating substances that will now come under our control, containing alcohol between 1 per cent and 20 per cent, will be able to be available with restrictions to those who feel that they are buying them for legitimate purposes. No beverage more than 20 per cent alcohol by volume of this nature will be sold in the province with the passage of this amendment.

* (1440)

Many people were consulted in the drafting of the amendment and in the drafting of the proposed regulation, and those people deserve a great deal of credit and thanks because there was a great deal of discussion as to the most effective way that this matter could be dealt with.

We had two goals in coming forward with this: one was to restrict the sale and impose penalties; the other was to still allow it to be available for that community which uses it for legitimate purposes and for restaurants and so on. It was a tricky balance, Mr. Speaker, to arrive at, and I do believe the regulation and the conditions of sale that are imposed, once passed, will be effective. The regulation, of course, will be able to be monitored and revised if needed. We do believe that it will be effective on its own but are prepared to add further conditions of sale, if necessary, if these prove to be in any way inadequate.

We express our thanks to the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association, to those members of the nonpotable substance committee, the coalition that had come up with a lot of prethinking on this, to John Rodgers of the Main Street Project, to the members and staff at the Liquor Control Commission, and Mr. Speaker, I wish to express very sincere thanks to the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) who expressed great interest in this topic from the very beginning, who put forward constructive ideas, who was a very positive and helpful influence towards the final proposal that we placed before the House, and I feel that it was the epitome of good constructive opposition that I saw in the development of this amendment. The member for Point Douglas has also offered ideas and suggestions for the regulation which are very much appreciated. I wish to place that on the record, because I feel that it was important to acknowledge his help throughout this process.

Mr. Speaker, I recommend this particular bill, Bill 91, to the House, and I ask for the support of members in ensuring its speedy passage so that the people of Manitoba, the consumers of Manitoba, will be better protected and better served by an updating of the act in this fashion.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I am very pleased to be able to speak on this particular bill today. I want to thank the minister for her last comments, because I think it is very clear that this bill was an example, I believe, of how government and opposition, members of the Legislature of differing political views, can work together towards a common goal and hopefully with the passage of this bill achieve positive results in terms of dealing with a very significant problem that has developed.

I would like to indicate, of course, as the minister pointed out, there were many community groups

that offered suggestions and ideas. Certainly on our side we are very pleased to see this particular bill, and, in fact, I know the member for Point Douglas had hoped to be able to ask a question in Question Period as to whether another area, such as antisniff legislation, which was passed a couple of years ago. Some of the more veteran members of the Treasury benches might not wish to look to the minister who has introduced this bill, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, in terms of an example of reaching an all-party consensus, which was the case in the antisniff, though, and implementing it, not simply passing the bill, because I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that this minister has no intention of passing this bill and simply leaving it to collect dust. I know that the bill is intended to be proclaimed and proclaimed as soon as possible.

I know there are times when the minister and I have gotten into debate on issues in this House, sometimes officially from our feet and sometimes less officially from our seat, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure that will continue. I get the sense in the period of time I have gotten to know the minister that we will be having many more debates in the future, but not on this bill and not on the process and not on the generous way, I think, in which the minister has publicly indicated the role of all members—and certainly her own role should be noted—whether it be the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), members of the community as well, in terms of seeing this particular bill come to fruition.

Let us not forget what the bill is dealing with, Mr. Speaker, because it is a very serious problem that has developed. It is a question, I know, that has been raised in this House on many occasions in terms of nonpotable intoxicants and in terms of this particular intoxicant and the serious health risks attached. As the minister is quite aware, and has made known in this particular bill, there is a serious problem.

People looking for high alcohol content, looking for ready accessibility, have found these types of products to be available and accessible, but they carry a particular risk, because while they are intoxicants they also contain a high degree of salt. The concern has been expressed that people have quite literally died of dehydration, because, of course, alcohol itself tends to dehydrate, and when you combine alcohol and salt, which also dehydrates, it becomes a medical problem that only grows worse. The more someone drinks of this

particular type of intoxicant, the more they become dehydrated and the more they drink again.

In many ways it is similar to the whole dilemma of seawater. I know if one looks at situations, people have been in lifeboats having to deal with drinking water and have turned to seawater. It has the same impact—ironically, when water itself can dehydrate. That is the kind of concern that was brought forward by the member for Point Douglas.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is it was a concern brought forward by members of the community, and I think what should be noted—and we talked before about some of the individuals involved in this—is the relative speed as governments are considered in terms of bringing this bill before the Legislature. I say relative speed, Mr. Speaker, because the bottom line is this has really been of significant public attention the last several months and has come to light in this Legislature I know through the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) who has brought in a private members' bill to deal with this.

If the government was not going to proceed and, once again, I am pleased to see that in this case the government has chosen to proceed with its own bill. Of course, a government bill, while it perhaps is equal to a private members' bill in terms of ability to deal with issues, et cetera, does have the advantage of the fact that the government can call the bill as it has today and with the co-operation of the Legislature, there is a far greater chance of a government bill being passed than a private members' bill. I think that is significant. I think the fact the government has brought in its own bill indicates the fact that it is quite willing and anxious to see this matter expedited.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that the whole area of nonpotable intoxicants is something I think we need further work on, and I say this to the minister in her capacity not only as responsible for this particular area, but in terms of other areas. I know it has been a major concern in my own community of Thompson for many years. I am not just talking about the particular products indicated here, but Lysol, for example, which is a major problem.

* (1450)

There are many consumer products that are intoxicants, and I realize it is in a different area we are dealing with in the sense of jurisdiction. We do have a problem with merchants continuing to sell—and I know in my own community—intoxicants

to individuals despite the fact they realize that it is creating serious health risks. I have seen that in my own community.

I can indicate that the MKO in Thompson, Mr. Speaker, which represents northern bands, has been working very strongly on this issue on behalf of aboriginal people. They have been looking, as I said, to action in regard to the antisniff bill which was passed by this Legislature unanimously, I might add, and still has not been proclaimed.

I am hoping, again, and I mentioned this earlier—and I do not mean to say this facetiously or in a political sense—I am hoping perhaps the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) can work with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) on these other issues, because I think in a short period of time she has consulted fairly widely with community groups. She has consulted with the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes). I think she has shown that through that consultation we can end up in a situation where action can take place that is going to have a significant, meaningful impact on this issue.

It is the same thing in terms of antisniff, and I hope the minister will work with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) to get the issue out of the realm of legalities, legal opinions and bureaucratic concerns that have been expressed about the bill. I say that because there must be a solution. If we can move as quickly as we have on this particular matter, surely, we can move on the other areas as well. Perhaps the minister can persuade the Minister of Health to consult with community groups, because we have indicated we are not hung up on any particular bill.

This other matter, which is very related to this, in terms of the antisniff legislation, if that bill is not enforceable, let us bring in another bill. Let the government bring in the bill. There is no question here to my mind of getting credit. It does not matter if the Minister of Health brings it in or whoever, it is the question of getting it brought in. Surely there must be the same sort of sense and good advice to resolve that problem in the same way that this matter has been dealt with, because I believe it is a very creative solution.

What this bill proposes, what this minister proposes is a very creative solution. It is the result, as the minister said, of many ideas. Sometimes I think that is one problem in the Legislature itself, and

that is that we often have a very limited forum to be able to put forward those ideas. Fortunately, private members' hour is available to the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), to raise his concerns in Question Period, but I would suggest that perhaps one thing we might want to look at is using our standing committees to deal with this matter.

Surely, this is as nonpartisan as you can get. I want to throw this out as a suggestion to the minister. I would hope if there was such a committee, given the consultation that she has been involved with and the action she has taken on this bill, that she would be part of that committee. Perhaps the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) as well could be part of it, perhaps government backbenchers could be part of it, perhaps opposition members could be part of it, using a standing committee that could travel the province—because this is a province-wide issue—could hold public hearings on dealing with nonpotable intoxicants, not just in terms of the cooking wine dimension but other nonpotable intoxicants, dealing with the whole tragedy of sniffing, of travelling into northern communities perhaps, into different areas of Winnipeg, because it is not unique to any one area. There is very much a myth in that sense, that certain areas of the city are more subject to this problem, or certain areas of the province.

I would suggest that the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) might also be involved, because I could see a significant role for the school system to play, and perhaps dealing with the problem of young people, who are using nonpotable intoxicants and seriously damaging their health, making them aware of the risks to their health of doing it.

We could involve the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) perhaps, because obviously there will be legal and enforcement questions that will be involved in any particular bill. I think that would be positive. I know our critics and members on our side would be interested. I am sure the Liberals would be interested.

I think it would have the advantage of creating the same kind of legitimacy that this bill has. This is indeed a government bill, but it is not a bill that is strictly the result of the government itself sitting down and making a decision. The government deserves recognition for recognizing the problem and acting on it.

I mentioned in particular the role of the minister, but it was a result of a broader consultation. I would suggest, and I put this forward as a positive suggestion, that we might want to look at the same approach, as I said, for the broader issue, of having a committee, perhaps when this Legislature recesses, that could travel the province and could undertake consultation

I really would encourage those ministers to be involved and perhaps a chair could be appointed specifically on that committee to start the process. I would like to indicate that I am sure, from our side, the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), given his concern about this particular area, would be quite willing to further discuss this matter with the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), the minister responsible for the Liquor Commission, and other ministers on the government side.

Mr. Speaker, I could talk at much greater length, but I did want to, as I said, do two things. I will say in conclusion the points I wanted to make. One, was to commend all who have been involved in this process: the minister, the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), the community groups; and the second, to take the opportunity to once again stress the fact that perhaps we could learn from this experience, in an area that is clearly nonpartisan, clearly a serious public problem in terms of public health, the area of nonpotable intoxicants, perhaps we can take this experience and not let it stop with this one bill, but perhaps, when we are out of session, hold hearings across the province. Perhaps in the next session we may be in a position of standing in this House debating bills that are the direct result of that kind of process.

I know we are talking about reforming this institution, and I know there are discussions ongoing in that regard, and without getting into any details, I think there is a clear sense around us in this House amongst many people, veteran members, newer members, that we can function better, particularly when we have nonpartisan issues.

Surely there will be partisan issues. We have our traditional debates, traditional processes, but in many ways there are so many issues out there that are not partisan, that are far better dealt with than the way this minister has dealt with this in conjunction with the opposition critic, than the normal adversarial approach that we end up in Question Period on more partisan issues. Perhaps

our committee structure is a way of dealing with that, and perhaps we can do some significant work on that after the end of the session, whenever that may be.

With those few words I would like to indicate that I know the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), I am sure, would like to put some comments on the record, and I once again congratulate all people, the minister, the member for Point Douglas, members of the committee group for some very excellent work on a very major public concern.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to rise to speak to this bill today, because it is a bill that has been waiting to be brought into the House by the citizens of Manitoba. I am really amazed the positive progress that this minister was able to accomplish in such a short period of time, because I have also been meeting with various interest groups and various organizations and they have nothing but positive things to say about this bill. A lot of those organizations have indicated that they have been in contact by the minister and her office, so she has done a lot of consulting with the community people and with various organizations and has listened, has listened to the people, and has taken the recommendations from the people and has put them into action.

The reason I say that is because with this bill you have one side of the ledger that deals with unpotable substance, substance that you drink, and with this bill that will eliminate a lot of the problems and should reduce a lot of the health costs in Manitoba in the future, just by this one bill. The reason I state that is because there is another on the other side of the ledger that the citizens of Manitoba have been looking for from this government, the passage of the antisniff bill, which deals with the other side of the ledger; that is the glue sniffing and whatever substance that you inhale, and that should be a direct responsibility of the Health department, the Health minister (Mr. Orchard).

If the minister, who has only been in the House since we were elected in September 11, 1990 and has been a minister a much shorter period of time than other senior ministers, can go out there and consult with the people and listen to the people and get this kind of action, I cannot see and I do not understand why Bill 91, the antisniff bill, has not been proclaimed.

Even if you have to make the amendments or whatever it takes in order to approve your study—apparently there is a study going on—approve your government's study—because it is this kind of action that saves lives, that protects people. People do not organize and speak out just for the sake of organizing and speaking out. It is because individuals are very, very concerned about what harmful effects these substances and the sniffing substances are doing to individuals of Manitoba.

* (1500)

When you look at this bill that I am speaking to today, it is taking a very serious direction. It is not saying, I better watch that little corner grocery store or I better watch this unscrupulous salesperson because they might not like what I am doing. This bill says, I have listened to the people, and I am acting on behalf of the people. It says right here, if a salesperson sells a substance the fine is \$500 to \$10,000. The second time there is no question. You do not stop on go, you go directly to jail. It does not matter who you are. So that is why the people are very satisfied with this bill, and that is why I will be our last speaker today on our side, because we are ready to move it into committee because there are organizations and people out there that want to have a chance to address this bill and see it passed as soon as possible.

For every hour, for every day we delay the passage of this bill it is affecting someone out there. So the sooner we, the House as a collective unit, get this bill passed and proclaimed the more lives this bill is saving, and the more dollars we are saving for health care that will be needed in the future if we continue to let people abuse these sort of substances; and it will increase the overall cost to all taxpayers of Manitoba.

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

I just have to say that since this bill was introduced I have had briefings and have been consulted by the minister in a very co-operative manner. There was not one confrontation. There was total consulting with our side of the House, and total consulting with the law enforcement people, with the citizens. I was at a meeting over the weekend and I spoke to some of the members of the Point Douglas Residents' Association, who are very concerned about the substance abuse that is taking place. A member of that association has even been contacted by the

minister's office and consulted with, and that is the kind of consulting that individuals in the province of Manitoba expect from government ministers, because ministers and individuals in this House, no one has all the answers. We need to get out there to listen to the people, to listen to the concerned citizens of Manitoba so positive measures such as this bill can take place. These issues that pertain to citizens of Manitoba, and if we can attain those goals through a nonpartisan working agreement, that is the best possible way of doing it.

So I just wanted to commend the minister and her government for introducing this bill and for responding very quickly to the people of Manitoba. I know that by this bill you are saving people's lives, and I hope the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) can find time in his very busy schedule to consult with the minister who is responsible for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission (Mrs. McIntosh) to seek some advice.

We are never too old or never too late to learn. Seek some advice how she and her department were able to accomplish such positive measures in such a short period of time and how to go to listen to the people and take from their recommendations and solve the problems that people in Manitoba are facing. Consult with the individuals. If he can just find a little bit of time in his very busy schedule, maybe in the near future we will see where Bill 91, that deals with the other side of the ledger, with problems we have with sniffing products.

Once that is dealt with, then you can say that this government has dealt with the problem right across the board. But without proclaiming Bill 91, the minister has done half the government's job, the minister responsible for the Liquor Control Commission (Mrs. McIntosh) has done half the government's job, now it is the Minister of Health's turn to stand up and do the other half to help the citizens of Manitoba.

With that, I am pleased to say that we, on this side, are ready to pass this bill into committee. So thank you, and I would like to thank the minister again, and her staff, for an excellent job.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): On behalf of the Liberal Party, I want to put just a few remarks on the record so that we can move this bill very speedily on to committee, hopefully at the conclusion of my remarks, and that we can get passage and Royal Assent as soon as

possible to improve the health conditions of many Manitobans who have succumbed to the attraction of buying this particular product when it was not in their best health interests to so do.

Mr. Acting Speaker, before I begin my own remarks, I want to commend the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) for raising this matter in the Legislature and even going so far as to quickly draft his own private member's bill in order to stimulate the minister to respond accordingly. She has so done, and we now have a piece of legislation which, I think, is guaranteed unanimous support in this Legislature and will get the kind of speedy passage that we want.

Why do we need this kind of legislation? Well, we need it because we know that there are unscrupulous people who will take advantage of those who have either genetically, or through a life experience, developed a serious alcohol problem. We know that they do not frequently understand the risks involved of their imbibing a product which they see only as an alcohol-driven product and do not recognize that this has within its capacity very dangerous substance.

The amount of salt in this product, one would think, would almost discourage them from drinking it because of the poor taste, but the price remained attractive, and that was one of the reasons why some could prey on these people and sell a product which was in their health's bad interest to purchase and to consume.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have a situation where the minister has increased the fines dramatically, and she has ensured, I think, that those who would deal with their fellow citizen in an unscrupulous manner will now have to think twice. It will not guarantee that there will be not those that will still try to take advantage of human beings. Unfortunately, they will always be with us. But now they are going to have to seriously consider the impact on them if they try to abuse another human being in this manner.

It is very clear that when somebody goes in once a month and buys a bottle of Chinese cooking wine that they may in fact be using it to cook with. When someone goes in and buys it once a day or perhaps several times a day or buys several bottles at a time, unless they are producing Chinese banquets with gay aplomb, they are using it for one purpose, and that is to drink.

It does not take, quite frankly, a genius at the till to recognize that is the case. We are now bringing it very much to their mind that they must take that into consideration.

But I want to deal just a moment with a much broader issue, and that is the issue of how we can work effectively through legislation to make sure that the Minister of Health's (Mr. Orchard) reform package, which will move us to a community-based health care delivery system, is going to require input from other government departments, and this one is a perfect example.

If we are going to curtail the abuse of a product which is consumed, thereby causing massive dehydration problems, potentially causing massive high blood pressure problems, then we have to have close co-operation between the Minister responsible for the Liquor Control Commission (Mrs. McIntosh) and the Minister of Health.

Well, I would suggest to the minister that the same thing is very much at her potential ability to control fetal alcohol syndrome. We know that pregnant women should not drink. If they drink even as little as one two-ounce drink a day during a pregnancy, it can lead to this very complex syndrome which can lead to a health care cost of millions and millions of dollars.

We have asked in the past for the minister to do some very simple things, and I want to put those on the record again today. Just signs at liquor outlets indicating the dangers of drinking during pregnancy would go a long way to alleviating this problem.

* (1510)

I also suggest to her that she might consider—and obviously there is a cost factor involved in this one, and that is why she has to consider it—the printing on liquor bottles themselves. We know that each bottle is price marked. If at the same time it was price marked also a label could go on that bottle which would indicate that consumption during pregnancy can lead to fetal alcohol syndrome, that is something that I would also like her to evaluate for purposes of cost, because I think if we did something of that nature that it would be very cost-effective.

The national Minister of Health has indicated he will do nothing about the enforcement of labelling on all alcohol bottles unless that request comes from provincial ministers.

So I would recommend to the minister that she herself draft a letter to the national Minister of Health indicating that we want that labelling universal. This would eliminate any cost from the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, because it would be on the bottles by the time they were received by the Liquor Control Commission. If the national government would so act in the manner that they have acted, for example, with regard to cigarette packaging, the dangers of smoke in the causing of cancer and other health ailments—so if she can also take a leadership in that area and dictate the appropriate letter to the national Minister of Health, I think that would be a welcome initiative.

We would also like, as the members of the official opposition have indicated, to see some movement on the antisniff legislation which we have all passed in this House, and would hope that if the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is still looking at the regulations that he too would get very speedy passage of a new bill, if a new bill is necessary.

If the bill that we passed in the past is inadequate, because it might lead to some constitutional challenge—he has never proven that to us, but he has indicated that might be the case—then, please, give us a new bill that we also can join in in some harmony to ensure that there is some protection for young people, in particular, with regard to the sniffing legislation, because it seems to impact more severely upon them.

We also need to get the Education minister involved here, because I am amazed at the amount of substances that young people will ingest with the idea that they will have no side effects whatsoever.

I want to just recount a very simple incident. I have a yearly skating party in my constituency. I always give out balloons, particularly to the younger children, and we always have helium in them. Last February, I noticed teenagers coming up for the balloons, and they were not coming for one, they were coming back for two or three or more. Well, being an old schoolteacher, I had to, of course, find out what was happening, went down into the locker rooms, and guess what? They were swallowing the helium in order for their voices to change and for them to speak in a funny kind of voice. I asked them if they knew of any potential danger of their doing this—no, it was fun; it was not going to hurt them. But, indeed, it can hurt them.

That will lead me to a decision next year. We will use air in the balloons, and we will not use helium, because I do not want to encourage young people to ingest any substance which is not in their best interests to do.

I think that the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) has got to look at the curriculum that she has developed and will be continuing to develop in the health care area to make sure that our young people do know what they are eating, what they are sniffing, what they are imbibing, and the effect that those kinds of things can have, not just now, but in their long-term best health interests.

So with those few remarks, Mr. Acting Speaker, I am delighted to indicate that the Liberal Party wants speedy passage of this bill. We look forward to hearing a number of presentations from community activists in this area in the committee stage, and we hope Royal Assent can be achieved very quickly.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House, second reading of Bill 91, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des alcools. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [Agreed]

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 20—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), Bill 20, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale, standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Second Opposition Party (Mrs. Carstairs).

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I began my remarks on Bill 20 last week, and want to complete them today, and to indicate to the government that I will be the last speaker in my party to be speaking on Bill 20.

Mr. Speaker, it is a bill which does a, politically, we think, bad thing. It pushes forward an assessment date which we were guaranteed, in the passage of Bill 79, would be achieved by 1993. There is no reason for it to be now postponed and that assessment not in 1994. The tables are going to be ready. The assessments are going to ready.

As I explained when last I spoke, we can see only a political motivation to this particular change and we think that is not in the best interests of the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba.

But in addition, Mr. Speaker, I want to address what is not in Bill 20. There is no question that the purpose of Bill 20 is to amend what the government perceived as some flaws in Bill 79, which we passed several years ago. Well, there is a very serious flaw in Bill 79 which has not been addressed by this Legislature. We hope that the government between now and the day that this bill comes to committee, that they will propose an amendment. If they do not, then we are prepared to propose that amendment. We would ask particularly those members from rural Manitoba to consider it in great detail.

Certainly, the Keystone Agricultural Producers have let the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) know in no uncertain terms that they are very concerned about the impact of Bill 79, in its present form, on the evaluation of their properties, and their inability to appeal those values on current market prices.

If you live in a city and you have a home, you can not just appeal on assessed value, you can appeal on current market value. Yet, if you have a farm property, despite the fact that that farm property may have deteriorated—for any number of reasons—in value, you can only ask for an appeal based on its assessed value, not on its current market value. We think that is wrong, as do the Keystone Agricultural Producers. We see no reason, since this bill is going to be opened up anyway, why it cannot be opened further and correct this flaw.

In addition, we see a serious problem developing in some commercial properties located in rural Manitoba. I began the other day, and unfortunately got cut off because of five o'clock, with regard to the Campbell Soup property. What has happened in that particular situation is that we have a plant whose assessed value is based on the fact that it is an up and working plant. Based on that assessment, quite frankly, it is not particularly attractive to potential purchasers at this moment in time, because they are paying far too much tax if they buy this property, based on its assessment. If they were able to appeal it on the basis of its current market value, that property would take on far more interest and far more appeal to a potential purchaser who might go in and essentially perform a function similar to what Campbell Soup did in a secondary

processing of our agricultural product, something we not only want but need in the province of Manitoba.

So our concern about Bill 20 is less what it contains and is far more on what it does not contain, and we believe that the movement from assessment rates to 1993 to 1994 will only make this even worse, because if the commercial properties, if the farmers of the province of Manitoba could be at least guaranteed that they were going to get an appropriate value for '93, they would at least have that window of opportunity as soon as possible within the next year. By putting it off for yet another year, we are asking them to pay more tax than they should be paying for yet another year, and we think that is not a good encouragement for them as they look to their increasing costs in all areas, but increasing costs for taxes as well.

* (1520)

I am also particularly concerned about the fact that if one reads recent correspondence that I have received from Keystone Agricultural Producers, it would appear that the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) does not read his mail, at least not his mail that he receives from the Keystone Agricultural Producers. I have, for example, a letter which I am prepared to table, although I think any member could get it from the minister responsible if they so chose, but let me just read this paragraph: In light of the remarks contained in your letter of May 1, 1992, I would wonder if my letter of April 24, 1992, which was both faxed and mailed, was ever brought to your attention.

Mr. Speaker, if it is the case that the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) is not reading his mail from the Keystone Agricultural Producers I would like to suggest that he do so and that he do so at his very first opportunity, because I think they have some very valuable things to say about Bill 20, ways in which they can make Bill 20 even better and more in the interests of the farm population of the province of Manitoba. I would also encourage the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) to encourage his Minister of Rural Development to look into this matter on behalf of the farmers of the province of Manitoba, and again would suggest that we would welcome such an amendment at committee stage.

We know that if it comes in as a government amendment it will have much greater opportunity of

passage, but we will introduce such an amendment if the government is not forthcoming with a similar amendment. With that, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to see it go on to committee stage on behalf of our party.

Mr. Speaker: This bill is also standing in the name of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave. [Agreed]

Bill 12—The Animal Husbandry Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), Bill 12, The Animal Husbandry Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'élevage, standing in the name of the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), who has 10 minutes remaining. Stand?

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, just on information, if I could ask, the member for Dauphin was wanting to speak on this bill and then pass it to committee. He will be here very shortly. Can we go to the next bill and then come back to this?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I think we are prepared to have this matter brought back to accommodate the member for Dauphin so it can be passed into committee.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to recall Bill 12 at a later time this afternoon? [Agreed]

* * *

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I thank, again, the House for their indulgence as we try to accommodate a variety of interests in moving bills through here today. I understand if you may call Bill 70 out of order that we may be able to deal with that one.

Mr. Speaker: Do you want me to call Bill 70 now?

Mr. Praznik: Bill 70, yes, please, and then 15, 80 and 81.

Bill 70—The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr.

Gilleshammer), Bill 70, The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide sociale et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois, standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [Agreed]

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill 70, to indicate to the minister in no uncertain terms that it is not the principles of Bill 70 of which we have any disagreement.

Bill 70 provides for a one-tier payment of social assistance payments in the province of Manitoba. It is a concept and a policy that we have endorsed for a long time. What we have serious difficulties with in this bill is the regulatory powers which have been given to the minister, regulatory powers which, if all indications of his recent meetings with municipalities are to be believed, he intends to use in a way which is not in the best interests of social assistance recipients in the province of Manitoba, nor is it in their best health care interests, which I have raised on a number of occasions should be of vital concern to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Mr. Speaker, 89.5 percent of all social assistance recipients live in the city of Winnipeg. Less than 11 percent of them live outside the city of Winnipeg. What the minister is suggesting is that he will go to a rate which is less than is presently paid by the City of Winnipeg. The result will be twofold. Either the City of Winnipeg will have to pick up the additional costs, because the Department of Family Services will only meet 50 percent of what they decide is an appropriate fee, or they will have to reduce the amount of social assistance which is given to 89.5 percent of the social assistance recipients in the province of Manitoba. It is intolerable, Mr. Speaker.

One of the areas which is particularly to be highlighted is the food portion of the social assistance budget. At the present time, the province of Manitoba recognizes a very small amount of money for infants, an amount which is less than 50 percent of what the City of Winnipeg recommends for infants. It does not go anywhere to pay for the cost, for example, of formula such as Enfalac. It will not be adequate to meet the needs of an infant child if we go to the rate which is recommended by the Department of Family

Services as opposed to the rate presently set by the City of Winnipeg.

I have had discussions with a number of city councillors as to why the money for the food budget for an infant is substantially higher in the City of Winnipeg. The reasons are very simple. They have made the very conscious decision that if infants get a good healthy start, if it is assured that they receive adequate nutrition between birth and age one, then they can be guaranteed to have far fewer health problems later on in life. I do not think the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) would have any disagreement with that at all.

Yes, we have to spend the money up front, but as his own study which he put on the table today indicated so very clearly, it is urban young women who are unmarried who seem to have disproportionately low birth weight pregnancies. Those low birth weight children do not get the kind of adequate start they need. The recommendation that is made by this task force group which proposed this report is that we have to ensure that there is better prenatal care, that there is better control over the nutritional ingredients that go into a pregnant woman's diet in order to ensure that she has a child which has a higher birth weight at the average of about eight pounds and not substantially lower than that particular weight.

There are a number of other factors that create a low birth weight child. One of those factors, Mr. Speaker, can be high blood pressure. Another one of those factors can be genetic, but a disproportionate number of low birth weight babies are born to women who have inadequate nutrition levels. So we must recognize that those children already start with a poor start. If those babies after having been born with a low birth weight also receive inadequate amounts of nutrition, in other words, inadequate amounts of food between birth and year one, then they are going to be even more disadvantaged.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we tend to think that that will just mean that these children will not weigh as much and that they will be prone to more infections and therefore will cause a greater drain upon the health care system.

* (1530)

Unfortunately, it is not just their physical growth that is affected. It is also their mental growth. We know that there is a high correlation between their

ability to think and reason and inadequate levels of nutrition. Not only can these children end up being a drain on the health care budget, they can also end up being a serious drain on the Education budget as we need to provide more and more special needs funding for those youngsters in the school system. We are far better off to recognize these vulnerable women, and these vulnerable children, early in the process and make sure that they get the nutritional requirements that they require for good health.

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about what the City of Winnipeg will choose to do when they are faced with the possibility of having to spend an additional \$5.6 million on social assistance. I am afraid that some of them in a time of fiscal restraint will say, we do not have the luxury of topping-up the amounts of money unless we are going to be guaranteed that we are going to get 50 percent of that topped-up money from the provincial government.

But the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) is not looking towards that as a viable solution. He is looking at the lowest common denominator; he is looking at the municipal rates that have been set province-wide for less than 11 percent as the guideline by which he will set social assistance rates for the province of Manitoba. He will be very wrong and misguided if he moves in that direction because it will lead to increased costs for the Minister of Health. It will lead to increased costs for the Minister of Education, and in the long run will lead to increased costs for his own department as these people become drains on the social assistance budget of the decades to come.

Mr. Speaker, it is so shortsighted on his part to not recognize that there is nothing luxurious about the social assistance rates presently being set by the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba. They are not even adequate to living at the poverty level. They are way below the poverty level. To suggest that they should go even further below the poverty level is untenable.

Bill 70 in its philosophical impact is a valid piece of legislation. Bill 70 in terms of the impact that will occur through regulations which can be set by this Minister of Family Services could end up as a disaster for the province of Manitoba. So it is not the intention of the bill, it is the action of the minister on that bill, that concerns us very much. I ask the members of the government caucus to raise this matter with the minister. If he insists on going to a

lower level of standard than is presently paid to social recipients in the province of Manitoba, he will have created a very serious health and education problem and family service problem into the future.

I do not think that is what he wants to do, and so he must be prevented now from, quite frankly, divesting himself of responsibility which is his and his alone, and look to the higher standards to ensure that there is adequate nutrition for those who live at social assistance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): It is a pleasure for me to rise and speak on this bill, something we have been alerting the community to, especially advocacy organizations like Manitoba Anti-Poverty Organization and churches that are involved in the distribution of food on behalf of Winnipeg Harvest Food Bank. We know that there is a great deal of interest in this bill and that there will be a number of presentations at the committee stage. There are good reasons for that. There are good reasons for the concern out in the community on the part of advocacy organizations and by the City of Winnipeg as we saw at the meeting to which we were invited recently.

What is the purpose of The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act? The purpose is to harmonize social assistance rates throughout the province. The reason for that is there is a great disparity of rates and great disparities in the administration of social assistance amongst the various municipalities.

This disparity has been the subject of study, several studies over the past decade, beginning with the report of the Manitoba task force on social assistance, which I believe issued its report in September 1983, and they recommended a one-tier system. They gave reasons for it. They said that the system at that time was based on distinctions about the duration of assistance and variations which were inequitable. They said there were advantages to the standardization of rates.

At that time there were 202 municipalities, of which 126 had lower rates than the province. In many cases, municipal rates excluded personal allowances. The public presentations to that task force urged that, if the province cannot move to a one-tier system, then at least they should standardize the rates to the provincial level.

A full single-tier system would result in economies of scale and do so at very little additional cost. The previous government, the NDP government, intended to move in stages towards standardizing the rates, and they calculated at that time that it would cost about \$8 million if they standardized the rates for every municipality except the City of Winnipeg.

The task force report said there would be many benefits, that there would no longer be imputed distinctions which are often unsupportable or unsupported by the empirical facts. They said there would be no need to transfer cases from one administration to another. There would be no need for recipients to change residency to get higher benefits. In fact, one of the problems in rural Manitoba and even in cities is that quite often social assistance consists of a one-way bus ticket to Winnipeg, which is really causing depopulation, causing people to go to Winnipeg, and not accepting responsibility for people who live in those municipalities, but dumping them off and dumping the expense off on another municipality, frequently the City of Winnipeg.

Municipalities would no longer have to fulfill functions beyond their resources and beyond the ability of their staff who are not trained to deal with people on social assistance. They talked about the transition to a one-tier system, and they said that it could be voluntary and evolve over a period of time. In summary, there were many good, positive reasons for a one-tier system. Well, what happened next? Well, after the change of government the Conservative government appointed the Social Assistance Review Committee. Did they hear from the public? No. Did they hear from poor people? No. Did they hear from advocacy organizations? No.

In spite of that, they recommended the harmonization of rates throughout Manitoba, and the result is Bill 70, The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act. What were the findings of the SARC committee report? Well, they said that since each municipality established its own by-laws regarding social assistance there were a number of problems. There were different sets of rules depending on which municipality people were in; there were different eligibility requirements; there were different administrative processes. The result was inequities.

I have heard some interesting stories about this. In fact, I heard a story from the constituency of the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik). I was talking to a lawyer in his constituency. He mentioned that in the town of Beausejour, when someone applied for social assistance it was a very public process, because the decision had to be taken to council. I understand that is very common in rural Manitoba. I think that there is a problem here with confidentiality.

When people are applying for any government program, whether it is social assistance or anything else, it should be confidential. The need should not be discussed by a town council. In fact, I think members of the cabinet would be appalled if they had to apply for a government agricultural program and have their income and their assets made public information. They would be totally opposed to that. I think the same principles should apply when people are applying for social assistance. Their personal information about their income and their assets should be confidential and their need should be confidential.

The other example that I heard of was, someone in a rural municipality in western Manitoba applied for social assistance and wrote a letter. The letter was read at the R.M. council meeting, and one of the councillors was an immediate relative of the person applying for social assistance. No one should have to apply in such a public way for social assistance and have all the councillors find out what their need is and why they are applying.

So there are good reasons for moving to a one-tier system administered by provincial staff. What we have is a half-baked measure here, a half step towards that. They are going to standardize the rates, but they are not going to standardize administration.

The SARC committee recommended extensive regulation of the benefits, rates and financial eligibility criteria with flexibility for municipalities to exceed the regulated rates. What would the cost be? The cost would be only an incremental cost estimated at \$3.4 million, according to the SARC committee.

* (1540)

Similarly, the report of the Women's Initiative said that in some municipalities the administration of assistance is often inaccessible, demeaning and punitive, something to which I have already referred.

Anyone who has to apply and has their application made public by way of discussion at an R.M. or town council is certainly demeaned and punished in the application process.

Well, what did the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) say in introducing this bill at second reading? Well, he covered much of the same ground that I have and referred to the Social Assistance Review Committee report. He said, at page 1980 of Hansard: "... municipalities will retain the flexibility to exceed the minimum standard levels"

Well, that is true on the surface of it. They will be allowed to exceed minimum or standardized provincial rates. The problem is that the province will not reimburse them, at least we do not believe they will. We have not seen the regulations, and I think the municipalities, especially Winnipeg, Thompson and Brandon, are still lobbying the provincial government and the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) hoping that some changes will be made. We do not think that those changes will be made.

In fact, we think that the purpose of this is to offload expenditure from the province to the municipality, in the case of the City of Winnipeg, \$5.6 million a year. The City of Winnipeg has a very tough choice to make. They can either absorb that cost and pass it on to city ratepayers or they can cut benefits by \$5.6 million. If they do, there will be extreme hardship for people on social assistance because the city benefits are considerably better than provincial benefits.

For example, at the meeting that the City of Winnipeg had to which myself and other members attended, they published a schedule of basic allowances. Except for people who are single with no dependents, the other three examples were all of higher levels of benefits. For example, in a family of two adults and one child, the city benefits are almost \$2,000 higher than provincial. In the case of two adults with two children, \$3,000 higher. In the case of two adults with three children, \$3,000 higher. These are people who are living way below the poverty line.

The social assistance income in most places in Canada is somewhere between 40 and 60 percent of the poverty line. So we are not talking about people who have any room to maneuver here or any flexibility. We are talking about people who live on

a bare minimum of income, and those people have serious financial problems. For example, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg did a survey of food bank users and social assistance recipients. What they discovered was that the most serious deficit in the social allowance that people were receiving was in the area of rent, that frequently people were taking money from groceries and personal needs and household needs, the only three discretionary items, and spending it on rent in order to purchase better accommodation and much of that going to slum landlords.

In fact, in the city of Winnipeg, the amount of provincial money going to landlords in the inner city was estimated at \$60 million, and much of that is not money that is going to purchase adequate accommodation, but substandard accommodation. I would say that taxpayers are not getting a good return on their money, not getting good value for their money, because—the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) asked me what the solution is. The solution is to give people on social assistance more money in their rent allowance, but with provisions to make sure that it goes to purchase more adequate housing rather than continuing to go to slum landlords, because we know that—[interjection] Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) feigns surprise, in spite of the fact that his government has continued the department of rent regulation. He knows that we already have rent regulation in this province—

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): We do not have housing police.

Mr. Martindale: The member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) says we do not have housing police. We regulate the housing industry, not just for people on social assistance, but for all renters except people living in new apartment blocks, who are exempt.

Mr. Orchard: The Soviet Union has gotten rid of all that. You are in old-think. Come on.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, the member for Pembina forgets the 1981 election, and the fact that renters in significant numbers voted for the NDP because we were in favour of rent control and his government had abolished rent control, and he was part of that government. That was a decisive factor in the election of 1981 and the change in government.

Mr. Orchard: Is Manitoba better off for it? No. With Howard Pawley and a half billion a year deficit—

The Minister of Health asks rhetorically: Is Manitoba better off for it? Well, I would say that renters are better off for it, and renters understand that under rent regulation, they pay fair rents instead of being gouged by greedy landlords. That is a fundamental difference between his government and our government.

But I would have to say, and the Minister of Health would agree with me, that they have learned their lesson because they kept rent regulation, they did not get rid of it when they were in office—unlike the Lyon government. Philosophically he is against it, but in government he does not do anything to change it because he knows that the majority of renters in Manitoba are in favour of rent regulation.

But, Mr. Speaker, I digress from Bill 70, The Social Allowances Amendment Act. We know that in this new legislation, Bill 70 adds to the provincial act all those individuals who previously were the responsibility of either municipalities or local government districts. This ostensibly makes the bill fairer in that location does not count anymore; whether you live in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson or Grand Rapids, you will have access to the same basic social assistance rates.

The province will determine through regulations, the amount and type of assistance they will cost-share with cities, municipalities and LGDs. Cities, municipalities, and LGDs cannot give any less to a recipient, but they can give more, although the province will only cost-share the minimum as determined by regulations. I think we should give credit where credit is due. There are many people who are going to benefit from this, in rural municipalities and LGDs and perhaps in smaller cities.

On the other hand, not very many people are going to benefit because the vast majority of people on social assistance are in the city of Winnipeg. I think the previous speaker said something like 89 percent of all the caseloads of people on social assistance live in the city of Winnipeg. As I have said before, the main objection we have is that they are not going to allow the municipalities to exceed the rates, so in effect what this bill does is offloads an expense from the provincial government to the municipalities, or if the municipalities do not pick it up, it is going to offload this to the recipients. It is going to cut back on their income, people who cannot afford to have their income reduced at all.

Mr. Speaker, since the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) talked about the problems that people on social assistance have, or rather he talked about all the good things that he thinks his government has done for people on social assistance, I would like to talk briefly about some of the problems that people experience and the suggestions and recommendations that we have, and that people are suggesting to us for remedying these problems.

For example, right now the Manitoba Anti-Poverty Organization has a campaign going, and they are getting organizations to endorse their campaign to request that people on social assistance be given a free telephone as part of their benefits. This is something that I was lobbying for as part of a coalition of inner city workers a number of years ago. In fact, I remember well that we went to City Council, to a standing committee of City Council, and we had a list of what we thought were reasonable recommendations for changes to benefit people on city social assistance. Having a free telephone was one of them. Another was that city recipients be allowed to keep the CRISP and SAFFR benefits.

That committee agreed with us, and it went to the Executive Policy Committee, and it went to City Council and it was approved. That has been of great benefit to people on city assistance. In fact, that is probably one of the reasons why city recipients are better off than people on provincial rates. Unfortunately, it has caused a problem ever since, and that is that organizations like MAPO and others have been continually lobbying the provincial government to extend that same benefit to provincial recipients.

The province says, well, we started this program because it was targeted to low-income but working people. It is two different concepts. It is not people on social assistance. It is people who are working, and we are trying to help families with children who are poor but working. The province consistently said, no, we will not extend that benefit to those people.

* (1550)

Of course, there would be a considerable cost to that. In fact, the Social Planning Council in their report recommended that working poor families, that more of them receive the CRISP benefit and that people on social assistance do as well. When they put a price tag on it, it was rather expensive. I

believe they had recommended three phases and that if all three phases were implemented, it would cost something like \$81 million. So there are reasons why nothing has been done to this point.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would just like to wrap up and say that we are going to continue being opposed to Bill 70. We believe that it is offloading expenses to cities and municipalities, in spite of the fact that a small number of people are going to have a small measure of increase in benefits. We are looking forward to hearing from representatives from the community.

We expect that, unlike the SARC committee, when this bill goes to committee in the Legislature, there will be poor people who will come and make presentations, that there will be representatives from the Manitoba Anti-Poverty Organization and from inner city organizations and individuals who are going to come and say, we believe this is unfair to people on city assistance.

We expect that there will be a delegation from the City of Winnipeg, either the chairman of Finance or one of the standing committees or the mayor. I would anticipate that there will be a delegation coming and saying, we are opposed in principle to the main thrust of this bill, which is to offload expense onto the City of Winnipeg. They are going to be faced with a very serious choice. Are they going to increase taxes, property taxes which I know they are loath to do, or are they going to cut back on benefits? How can they cut back on benefits when, for example, the City of Winnipeg pays more to families with infants than the province does? How can they possibly cut back on benefits to families with infants without appearing to be callous and hardhearted? Well, I think it is too bad that the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) is not confronted with that kind of choice, and perhaps he will be when delegations appear on this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

Bill 12—The Animal Husbandry Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), Bill 12, The Animal Husbandry Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'élevage, standing in the name

of the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) who has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): On April 22, I had an opportunity to speak to this bill and, at that time, had indicated to the minister that we would not be passing this bill through to committee until such time as we had an opportunity to question the minister in Estimates. Now a month and almost a week later, we finally have had that opportunity, at least on a portion of the privatization aspects that the minister undertook last year. We did discuss the Semen Distribution Centre in terms of the follow-up there and the Veterinary Drug Centre as to what had transpired since last year when the minister was involved in the privatization of these two branches of government, which were, in effect, noncosting centres insofar as the Province of Manitoba breaking even on a net basis.

At that point, we could only determine that the minister had privatized and taken that initiative to privatize on the basis of philosophical considerations as opposed to a genuine desire to reduce costs for the taxpayers, because, in fact, there was no real cost to the taxpayers and did not have to be, in these two operations at least.

We will still be discussing what has happened with the soils test lab and the feed analysis lab at subsequent sittings of the committee, Mr. Speaker. But I want to indicate that from what we learned with regard to the Semen Distribution Centre, that in fact the minister's prophesies of economic activities in the province have not materialized in the first year. He claims that Western Breeders that took over the centre had two positions in Manitoba prior to the takeover. They now have four, so there was a gain of two positions there. But three jobs were cut in the Civil Service as a result of the privatization, so there was a net loss of one. However, the minister indicates that Transfer Genetics hired one of those people—

An Honourable Member: Okay.

Mr. Plohman: What is the minister okaying about? I am just carrying on in my discussion here.

At that point in time, it would seem that we ended up breaking even on that in terms of jobs. So the minister did not create one job as a result of that privatization. Is that not interesting, Mr. Speaker? After he touted all of these great jobs and economic activity, he did not create one new job as a result of that privatization.

Insofar as the vet lab, there was seemingly a greater opportunity. As a matter of fact, the minister indicated in his speech that what we would have with the Veterinary Drug Distribution Centre was new markets being developed. The minister has indicated to me that there has not been a great deal that has transpired there in the first year insofar as Saskatchewan and Ontario, but there is some potential.

In the meantime, he indicated to me in the Estimates that perhaps there were two jobs, new, in that particular case, because we moved from eight jobs in the public sector to 10. However, again there would have to be the question answered, Mr. Speaker, as to whether these jobs are indeed the same quality jobs that were present in the public sector in the minister's department or whether, in fact, the jobs that are added are rather low paying jobs. I am really not sure, because we did not question the minister that far as to the kind of job that we are talking about with regard to the two that were added. In any event, we do not see a great deal of development of jobs and economic activity there as a result of this minister's privatization efforts. However, we do see an increase in drug prices.

The minister acknowledged yesterday that the markup was pretty well doubled at the upper end of the range that he mentioned from 6 percent to 10 to 12 percent or 12 percent at the high end, so conceivably a doubling of the commission that is being charged by the new distribution centre, the Mid West vet co-op that has been formed, a markup from 6 percent to 12 percent. So that is undoubtedly being passed on to the farmers who are requiring these drugs. In addition to that, he said the commission is reviewing the markup that vets will be charging individual clients or farmers when they come in, in the various districts, as they had done in the past. Now there may be some additional markup there. We do not know that yet.

In any event, drug prices are up. One of the reasons they are up is because of the takeover—doubling of the markup. The minister waves his hand as if that is trivial or maybe that is not right. I think that is a rather significant point in all of this, that the markup immediately doubled when it was privatized.

* (1600)

The minister said last year, our fears were unwarranted when he talked about prices. One of the concerns I have, Mr. Speaker, right now, in terms of the question that we made to the minister yesterday in the Estimates process, was that he does not seem to be undertaking a monitoring process of any extensive nature at all. There is no firm monitoring process in place to determine whether, in fact, the prices are rising and how much they are rising and on what basis and in all areas of the province. So I have suggested to the minister that he undertake that, to monitor how prices change over the next year, as well as this first year that has taken place, so we do get a true picture of what this privatization is costing the farmers throughout Manitoba.

So if you look at it on balance, I would say the minister's prophecies of economic opportunities have really not materialized in any substantive way in Manitoba, and at the same time we see drug prices up. So we have to say that there really is not a great deal of benefit for Manitoba and in some instances a negative impact of these two operations being privatized. On that basis, I do not think the minister was all that accurate in his prophecies last year.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be following up with the other two labs that were privatized in terms of their operations and how they have developed over this year, the first year. In the meantime, this bill will go to committee with the other Agriculture bills. Of course, there are a couple of other ones left yet. I do not know what the minister's intention is with Bill 43 which deals with GRIP in setting up that account. We have a couple more speakers on that, I believe, before it goes to committee and then The Farm Practices Protection Act, which was just recently introduced, we will be speaking to within a week or so where we will be putting forward our position on that bill.

So with those words, I will indicate that we were against what this government did last year when they did the privatization. They should have brought this act in at that time to be consistent with what they were doing in terms of the budget. They did not bring it in. They are bringing it a year late. We do not support the actions they took. We think the evidence suggests that it was not a necessary effort by the government, and certainly did not accomplish savings for the taxpayer and may result in costs for farmers.

On that basis, we cannot support what the minister has done, nor can we support this particular bill. However, it seems appropriate to move it on to the committee, in any event, so that it can be dealt with, since the government has to be responsible for their own actions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Agriculture will be closing debate.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a few comments on the record in the process of closing debate. I thank the member for moving it on to committee because it is really fait accompli. The Drug Centre has been sold, and we need to correct the legislation to recognize that.

The member made mention that the Semen Centre was not costing the government anything. When we get into committee, I will give him the exact figures of what it was costing. He knows that when you take all costs into account, it was costing the taxpayers money, and it was an intermediary that was not necessary. The member full well knows that we were not doing any more than 50 percent of the business and actually semen costs have gone down since then. So he did not even make mention of that in his comments. [interjection] Yes, a little oversight.

Mr. Speaker, I notice with great interest that the member was talking about us privatizing the vet lab. I would like to very clearly tell the member for Dauphin, we have not privatized the vet lab. We have privatized the Vet Drug Centre, but not the vet lab. I would like them to be very careful. I would ask that he be very careful in distinguishing between the two when he makes comments. Otherwise—

Point of Order

Mr. Plohman: On a point of order, it was the Minister of Agriculture who mixed those two up last year and actually brought incorrect information to the House.

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

* * *

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member put that on the record. He just proved that he is not flawless. I look forward to further discussion of this bill when we get to committee. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 12, The Animal Husbandry Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'élevage. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): I would like to ask for leave to bring a motion with respect to the committee for Bill 11; and I, with the leave of the House—and I have had the opportunity to speak to both opposition House Leaders—would ask and move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture, that Bill 11, The Bee-Keepers Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur les Apiculteurs, be withdrawn from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments and transferred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to change the committee time. There has been some discussion between House leaders, and I would like to change the announcement that we made earlier in the day, that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet, not on Thursday, May 28, 1992, but rather on Tuesday. I believe that is June 2, 1992, at 10 a.m. to continue to consider the 1991 Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board.

I would also like to add after the calling of Bills 15, 80, and 81, if the Speaker could also call Bill 64.

Bill 15—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger), Bill 15, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code de la route, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I just have a few brief remarks. I know our Transportation critic also will be speaking on this. Indeed, if the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) will just bear with us, it may indeed pass, Mr. Speaker.

This bill has a number of provisions in it. I know we have referred to a number of the items that are

enclosed in this bill. There are various provisions in here related to adopting national safety provisions, Mr. Speaker, and indeed our critic will be referring to that in terms of national vehicle inspection safety provisions, and we have no difficulty with that particular aspect of the bill. There is also another section in here in which our critic will be referring to enforcement of some of the existing concerns and, in fact, he will be making some detailed presentations.

We have also talked about seat belts, Mr. Speaker. In fact, under Bill 14, I reminded the minister of his historic words that the seat-belt issue would come back to haunt the NDP in the 1986 provincial election. Of course, now we have newspapers in the constituency of the member for Morris (Mr. Manness), the member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard), and indeed the minister himself asking the government what they think of seat belts now, Mr. Speaker. Lo and behold, the tune has changed. The Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger), with the fervor of a convert, is now as minister, in general, enforcing the seat-belt regulations.

I note, Mr. Speaker—and I will not get into detail on that. I put it on the record that MPIC is encouraging the use of seat belts to increase the percentage of people who are using it. The concern has been mentioned that indeed we do not want the minister to be backtracking, and I know our critic will be referring to provisions in this with regard to police vehicles, in this bill, Bill 14, which allow for the police not to require the use of seat belts.

I see Mr. Dave Blake, the former member for Minnedosa, here in the loge, and I am sure we wish him all the best. It is good to see him back in the Chamber. I am sure he will be listening intently to this very significant debate. We are talking about seat belts. Perhaps he will remind the Minister of Highways and Transportation of some of his comments at that time, because I know the former member for Minnedosa sat in the House—I was sitting in the House at the time and, of course, sat in the same caucus of the Minister of Highways and Transportation. He may be surprised to know that the minister now has converted with a fervor, as I said, of a convert, selling seat-belt use across the province.

* (1610)

I just wanted to put a couple of comments on the record, too. This bill does deal with safety, Mr. Speaker. It deals with a number of issues. One of the primary considerations in terms of safety has to be the conditions of our roads. I know the minister has announced his capital budget, but I hope he will not ignore some of the concerns that have been expressed, particularly in northern Manitoba, about the conditions of particular roads.

I note, and I know the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey)—well, in fact, he may not be aware of this—but if he has travelled on Highway 391 into Nelson House, he will have noted that there is significant concern about condition of roads such as this. It is no use simply having safety standards in terms of vehicles if we do not have safety standards in terms of roads.

I have written to the minister. I hope he will consider very strongly dealing with the situation with Highway 391 and the access road into Nelson House as an example of the kind of difficulties we face. It is not Highway 75. We are not asking for double tracking of the highway. We are not asking for two lanes. We are also not asking even for the government to be expending a significant amount of money. But there are problems with that particular road, and I know ongoing concerns in many communities about getting road access, Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei and Ilford, which have the last couple of years had to fight just to keep their winter road access. There is a need for a safe highways network that goes beyond Highway 75, that deals with the rest of the province's highways.

With those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I know our critic has some suggestions for the minister, some concerns, and at that point we will be passing this through to committee.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable member for Transcona, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my right where we have with us this afternoon Mr. Dave Blake, the former member for Minnedosa. On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here.

* * *

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to add my comments to Bill 15, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

There are some important areas in this particular piece of legislation, and I will attempt to go through them section by section. I know we are not permitted to speak about the specific amendments under the headings themselves, Mr. Speaker, but I will speak in general about the policy of the bill, or the concept of the bill.

I would like to thank the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) first, Mr. Speaker. In consultation with many of my colleagues, I find that this minister is one of the few ministers in the government who continually provides explanations of the legislation that he brings forward. I thank him for the explanatory notes that he has provided to myself and the critic for the Liberal Party.

These notes are very helpful, and they allow us the opportunity to understand the intent of the legislation itself from the government's perspective as well as the interpretations that we may place on the bill from our own reading.

In the initial stages of this Bill 15, there is a section in there that we had the opportunity to draw to the minister's attention at one of his bills in the last session of the Legislature, Mr. Speaker. That particular amendment that we had tried to bring in at that time was dealing with the registration of vehicles for use by veterans that reside in the province of Manitoba. The current legislation allows the veterans to have a waiver of the registration fee for the use, registration of passenger vehicles that are used by the veterans in our province.

At that time we had attempted to bring in an amendment to The Highway Traffic Act that would allow these individual veterans the opportunity to have other vehicles that were in their possession for their private use, where no financial profit would be derived, solely for pleasure use, the waiver of trucks that could be included for waiver of registration fee. At that time, of course, the amendment needed some further study, and the minister had agreed that it would go and receive that necessary study. I am happy to see that the minister has brought forward the amendment in this particular bill.

I know I have talked with veterans in the community, Mr. Speaker, and many of them are encouraged that the minister has taken to include that in this particular piece of legislation. I also thank the minister for making note in the explanatory

notes that he has provided that that amendment was brought forward by us in the last session.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

I think it is a positive step forward and will allow the veterans in our community the opportunity—because there are some of them who do not have passenger cars and some of them use light-duty trucks, they will have the opportunity to have the registration waived for them. They will have the same opportunities as the other members of our society that are veterans.

Another section of the bill that caused me some concern, and I did take the opportunity to talk to the police force members in our community here, Mr. Acting Speaker, and that is the section of this proposed bill dealing with the exemption of the law enforcement agencies in the province of Manitoba, the exemption of these agencies to buckle up passengers in their vehicles, in the back seat of their vehicles.

It is my understanding, and I can appreciate from the notes that the minister has provided and having talked with many members of the police force in my own community that reside nearby and are friends and neighbours of mine, that happen to work in traffic and have the duty to occasionally arrest and charge individuals who are intoxicated or appear to be violent, and it is quite often difficult for members of the police forces of this province to attempt to apply the seat belts for these individuals, especially when these individuals are resisting arrest.

I can understand the position where they may not wish to be involved in any further altercation with these individuals, especially when it could take place in the back seat of a police cruiser or a police vehicle. It is noted here though that it is not only intoxicated or violent persons who are transported in the back seat of police vehicles. That causes me some concern, when this particular proposal that the minister has brought forward in his Bill 15 will exempt these law enforcement agencies from buckling up or using seat belts in the back seat of police vehicles in all cases.

I have some difficulty with that, because I think while the police forces in this province are very, very responsible, and in talking to them they have indicated that they do not anticipate changing their policies themselves to use the seat belts where and whenever possible, this will give them the opportunity to waive the use of seat belts should one

of their vehicles become in an accident. I think that there has to be some caution given that—and I hope the minister's department has done this—the police forces will continue to use the seat belts where able to and whenever they are able to and only in extenuating circumstances are they given a waiver not to use the seat belts in those situations.

I know looking at the explanatory notes that the minister has provided that the reasons that were given for this waiver of seat-belt use by the police forces has to do with the insurance claims or the possibility of insurance claims that may be brought against police forces in the province with the nonuse of seat belts. This will provide an extra degree of protection for those police forces and give them an adequate assurance that of course the insurance would be provided should their vehicles become involved in accidents and that the passengers in the back seat of the police vehicles will be protected and adequate insurance coverage would be involved in all cases.

Now I can understand that this is essential and that there has to be that protection that is provided, but I hope that the minister's department will attempt to communicate with the different and various police forces of the province, that they should continue their policy of utilizing the seat belts where and whenever possible.

* (1620)

Also, Mr. Acting Speaker, on the issue of seat belts, there have been studies that have been undertaken, and I would like to put these comments on the record, because I think it is important in dealing with the seat belt issue.

I know that the minister, when he was in opposition—looking at some of the comments that have been made in the past, and I have raised them in the House here—the minister, at that time, was opposed to the then Howard Pawley government's introduction of seat belts and that there are members of the minister's own community even to this day that are opposed to seat belt use. I look at some of the newspapers that come out of the southern portions of our province still calling on this government to retract the seat belt legislation.

There have been studies that have been undertaken, and I refer to one particular study that was reported in one of the local newspapers in Winnipeg, and there was an analysis done of 2,000 crashes. This study was done in Sweden. Of

course, we hear many things about the conditions of the roads in Sweden and their type of traffic. There was an analysis done of 2,000 crashes in that particular country, and one of the conclusions that came about as a result of the study of those 2,000 crashes was that rear seat passengers not wearing seat belts are far more likely to be hurt in a crash than belted passengers.

That is why, Mr. Acting Speaker, that I draw to the minister's attention that we should continue looking at the facts and the studies that have been done, realize the significance and the importance of seat belt use. We have to continue to gain knowledge and learn by these particular studies, but we also have to recognize that it is important that our job is to protect the public and to ensure that the legislation that is in place is there for the protection of the public.

I have also noted on the different media outlets in the city of Winnipeg here that the MPIC has undertaken to increase public awareness of the use of seat belts in our province and that they want to increase the public's participation in seat belt use. I note also in a recent Winnipeg Free Press article of May 23 that talked about how the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation and the Manitoba police forces are hoping to convince even more Manitobans to buckle up this year. A recent Transport Canada study indicated that approximately 80 percent of Manitoba drivers use their seat belts currently, and that is up from approximately 65 percent just two years ago.

It also indicates in that article that MPIC is hoping to increase the use of seat belts by drivers and passengers in motor vehicles in this province up to the rate of 95 percent within three years. I think that is a good goal. Personally, I myself support the use of seat belts. I know I have had the occasion and experience in my life to have been saved from serious bodily injury by utilizing seat belts in my own vehicle and that, I suppose, is one of the reasons why I strongly support the use of seat belts in vehicles.

Another section of this Bill 15, in reviewing the notes and in reading the bill that have come to mind, it deals with the National Safety Code for motor carriers in this province and in this country.

I know I have asked questions of the minister in the past in Question Period on trucking. I will continue to ask questions of the minister, because I

think it important that the safest vehicles are travelling our highways, that is important that we conduct the proper safety inspections of these different vehicles.

I note in the explanations that the minister has given for this section of his bill that they want to make a change to the maintenance of motor carrier vehicles. They want to make the motor carrier responsible to maintain the vehicles that are in public service and a change that they specify the weight and the type of vehicle inspections that are going to be undertaken, and who is going to do those inspections.

One section that is in there, it says that the motor carrier shall maintain the vehicles, but it also says that the motor carrier shall ensure that no driver operates a public service vehicle or commercial truck having a registered gross vehicle weight of 4,500 kg.

This, Mr. Acting Speaker, contrary to the lack of knowledge by the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) who, I am sure, is not quite familiar with this particular piece of legislation and continues to harp from his seat. That had he taken the opportunity he might understand some of the serious ramifications of this particular legislation.

I hope that he takes the opportunity that is presented to him in a few moments and add his comments to the record as well on this important bill.

Where the motor carrier has to maintain the vehicles, and ensure that no driver operates these vehicles, was one of the issues that I had drawn to the minister's attention in the last session of the Legislature. I consciously did not use the name of the firm that was involved in the material that was brought to my attention.

I hope that the minister's department has undertaken to correct what appeared to be very serious defects in some of the vehicles that were plying our roads in this province.

But one of the concerns that I have, by this particular section of the bill that the minister brings before us here, is, that while the motor carrier has to ensure that no driver operates, there is no provision in there that will give the driver adequate protection or insurance or assurance that if that driver brings to the minister's attention, or to his department's attention, defects in equipment that are on the roads that this driver or these operators

of these vehicles will not be disciplined by these particular companies.

I know I have had discussions with many members of different companies operating these transport trucks in our province, and this is a serious concern amongst these members that are employed in this particular area of the work force. So I ask the minister to look at some way that these drivers, these operators of these vehicles can draw this information to the department's attention without placing themselves in any jeopardy of losing their jobs or the livelihood for themselves and their families.

In another section of the bill, the minister has, in his explanation that has been forwarded to us, indicated that the bill is going to be repealing different sections of the existing regulations and act to bring it into line with the National Safety Code that was brought about several years ago.

When we move to the Estimates for the Department of Highways and Transportation, I will have the opportunity to ask further questions of the minister on the National Safety Code and how it applies, and how the minister's department is going to be complying with the requirements that are there.

I am happy to see that the federal government has undertaken to strike a committee to study the effects of the changes to the code in the deregulated environment, that are in this province and in this country. I look forward to the results of that particular study.

There are other experiences: what I drew to the minister's attention a few moments ago, about drivers sometimes being forced to operate unsafe vehicles because of the deadlines that have been put in place upon the operators of these vehicles by the different companies. Because they are on, sometimes, guaranteed shipment times, and if the vehicles are loaded, they have to roll. That is the instruction that these drivers have received from time to time.

Also, there are other areas of protection for drivers too, because quite often these vehicles are supposed to go and receive the necessary repairs—whether they be for brakes, or air lines, or suspension problems, or just the carriage itself, they need to have this particular work done on them.

Quite often—it has been drawn to my attention, at least—there are some firms that will employ the minimum number of licensed mechanics to perform

the necessary repairs on these different vehicles. At the same time they will have trainees or apprentices, who are undertaking to work with these different mechanics.

* (1630)

Yet, when these mechanics are off-duty for various reasons—whether it be the shift change or they are sick or they are unable to report for work—quite often there are no replacements for these licensed mechanics. It is the apprentices or the mechanical trainees who are supposed to be signing off this work and undertaking to ensure that these vehicles are safe before going out on the roads—which places the drivers of these vehicles, the operators, in an awkward position where they are obliged to operate, because of their employment in this company, but they are maybe not sure of the degree with which these repairs have been undertaken.

Another section of the bill, Bill 15, indicates that there was a national commitment made by every Canadian province to undertake periodic vehicle inspections. I think that is the proper move and the proper step to take. But I have some concerns about the inspections that have been undertaken. I am talking about spot inspections and the number of staff that are employed to do these spot inspections and to do inspections at the weigh scales at different points of entry into our province. It has been my experience, recently, in passing by the now-demolished Headingley weigh scale on the west side of the city of Winnipeg, that in passing by that particular weigh scale, I found that in passing by that after the hour of midnight, that that particular weigh scale appeared to be closed.

Yet, it has been my experience that a lot, or a good portion, of the truck traffic that plies our highways in our province of Manitoba travels in the off hours. I am talking nondaylight hours. In other words, they are going on the highways and leaving our cities late in the evening into the early hours of the morning.

If these particular weigh scales that are supposed to do the checks and the inspections for the safety of the travelling public are closed, I do not understand how they can undertake to do the necessary inspections and checks. I will be raising this matter with the minister during the departmental Estimates for his Highways and Transportation department. I hope that he will have some information to provide to us at that time, because I

would be interested to see the hours of operation and staffing for those particular facilities.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

There will also be some questions that will be coming forward dealing with the National Safety Code and the effects that it is having on this province. I will be asking the minister some questions on the deregulated environment, as well, to find out the impacts on trucking, because we do agree, I am sure, that trucking plays a significant role in the employment opportunities and the business opportunities for our province. Without an adequate transportation system in this province, Manitoba will not be able to grow and move forward. We have historically played a significant role in transportation of product in this province, in this country, and I wish for us, as I am sure the minister does, that we continue to play that role.

We look forward to the opportunity to gain more details on this particular piece of legislation when it moves through to committee stage. I believe I will be the last speaker for our party in discussing or making comments on this particular piece of legislation and look forward to the opportunity to have more details from the minister when this bill moves through to committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) will be closing debate.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate that I have taken note of the comments made by the speakers to this bill and look forward to providing more detailed information when we get into committee. If they have any specific concerns, I will try to take the information out of the comments that have been made. Further to that, I am open to further response or to just letting me know just exactly what the specific concerns are, and we will try to address them as we go clause by clause in the committee. I thank them for their comments.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 15, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code de la route. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [Agreed]

Bill 80—The Dental Association Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), Bill 80, The Dental Association Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Association dentaire, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale. Stand?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No, leave is denied.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, Bill 80 deals with amendments that allow the Manitoba Dental Association to perform better as a licensing authority by allowing it to order upgrading and remedial retention of its members and thereby further protecting the public's interest.

In general, we agree with the intention of the bill and would like to see it go to committee, to see if there are any concerns from the professional association itself or from any other health care associations and from health care consumers or from patient rights activists.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this point we are prepared to pass the bill and allow it to go to committee and hear what the public's concerns are of the bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Osborne, that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 81—The Optometry Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), Bill 81, The Optometry Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'optométrie, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? No, leave is denied.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, yes, as with Bill 80, we are prepared to pass Bill 81 through to committee, again because this bill appears to improve the mechanism for the self-regulation of optometrists. We are interested in furthering the ideals of self-regulation for professional groups and applaud the government for these two initiatives, and hope that the government will be able to bring in legislation that will deal with other groups that are also asking for

self-regulation or some clarification as to the regulation mechanisms.

We are also interested in getting it into committee so that we can hear, as with Bill 80, if there are concerns with this legislation from the professional association, from any other health care associations, consumers or other groups such as patient rights activists, but we feel that it is inappropriate at this time to delay the passage of this bill through to committee, and that it is important that the members of the public have the opportunity to speak to the provisions of this bill and make any suggestions or recommendations to the government. So we are prepared to pass this bill through to committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 64—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), Bill 64, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille, standing in the name of the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

* (1640)

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable deputy government House leader, what are your intentions, sir?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I take it we have gone through the roster of bills. Then we could call it five o'clock, if that is the will of the House, unless there are members who would like to address any other bills on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Okay, I will not call it five o'clock.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of the House, I take it there is a willingness on the part of one member to address the government resolution of Mr. McCrae, then I would so call it.

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed resolution of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), standing in the name of the honorable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), who has 15 minutes remaining.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, this is a resolution that I have had plenty of time to stand up in this Chamber and talk about because it was initially introduced actually a number of weeks ago from the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae). Because of what we believe is a mistake in the resolution—it failed to recognize the importance of having some resources going along with the resolution—the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs) moved an amendment to it.

But, Mr. Speaker, what we are very discouraged with is that the government at the time talked a lot about how important this resolution was. In fact, during private members' hour there was to be a debate on the Minister of Education's (Mrs. Vodrey) resolution that is virtually the same as the government resolution, but the government saw fit to try to raise the importance of the resolution by bringing it under government business.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I was given the distinct impression at that time that it was a serious enough issue that the government was wanting to have the resolution voted upon. We have been somewhat discouraged with the manner in which the resolution has dropped in terms of a priority of this particular government, for whatever reasons.

Because of the nature of the resolution and the importance of the issue that it deals with, we felt that it was essential that this particular resolution, in fact, be voted upon. We have been waiting, and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) says to call the question, and if I could sit down right now and know that there would be a question called on it, I would sit down. But, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the government will treat the issue more seriously by standing up and speaking to the resolution or

allowing the resolution to come to a vote.
[interjection]

The government has indicated that they are ready for the vote and now it is just standing in the NDP's name. Well, I would hope that the NDP will take the opportunity then to speak to the resolution and allow it to come to a vote because, as I say, it is something that crosses all party lines, and I know that they have not intentionally tried to stand the resolution indefinitely because, in fairness, it has not been called at the top of the Order Paper for a long time with the exception of the initial day that it was brought in.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do wish for the resolution, after I am done speaking on it, either to come to a vote or the government give it the priority that it deserves, and that is to be called during government business.
[interjection]

At the prodding of the minister I will sit down because I do want it to come to a vote and encourage the NDP to, in fact, stand up and speak on the resolution. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed resolution of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), also standing in the name of the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) who has 34 minutes remaining.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take the opportunity to speak again on the proposed resolution that would deal with domestic violence and declare Manitoba a violence-free zone.

I remember that, when this was brought to the Legislature before, we were concerned that merely designating this a violence-free zone was somewhat of a token effort or token motion, and that we would support going much further than this. This issue needs more than just a token effort. There are all sorts of services that need to be expanded on. There are studies that have been done that this government has not followed through on.

As I was saying, we support the intent of the resolution but think that this is somewhat of a token motion. I think that there needs to be steps taken that would go beyond this. We support that the Liberals have made an amendment, and the amendment was to acknowledge that the government has not made the appropriate resources to ensure that it is possible that Manitoba would become a domestic violence-free zone.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and encourage the House to support the amendment and take seriously this issue and ensure that the proper resources go along with any motion that is going to deal with domestic violence and address the problem of the increase in domestic violence.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, as the Status of Women critic for the official opposition I am rising in support of the Liberal amendment to the proposed motion by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae).

I am speaking in favour of the amendment for one reason and one reason only, and it is that without this amendment the proposed resolution—while it would be very difficult for anyone to vote against it—has very little substance. Because you can say as much as you want that Manitoba should be a domestic violence-free zone, unless you put the resources behind that statement, that statement is only a very modest, first step.

So while, of course, no one is going to vote against the concept of making Manitoba a domestic violence-free zone, we also feel that without the additional amendment as proposed by the Leader of the Second Opposition Party (Mrs. Carstairs), that the main motion is far weaker than it should be.

So I would like to put on record our solid support for the amendment and hope that the government, Leaders, in a spirit of nonpartisanship, will seriously consider supporting this amendment, which only strengthens the resolution as it was presented by the government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (1650)

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the proposed resolution of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) and have an opportunity to talk about some of the initiatives that this government has taken in recent years to show our support, particularly for the shelter system, and to put in place adequate funding and a new funding formula which allows the system that has been, really, most highly developed over the last four years.

When we came into government the shelter system in Manitoba was a system that the government of the day, the NDP government, spoke considerably about but did not put in sufficient resources to enable that system to work.

I think that one has to look at the complete picture in looking at this resolution and the amendment, because the amendment does not reflect the reality of what has happened in Manitoba in recent times. As I indicated, we came to government in 1988 to find a shelter system and a system to assist women in Manitoba that was badly underfunded in 1988.

In fact, I am given to understand that the government of the day was prepared to let Osborne House close and not have an adequate replacement for it. I think it is important—I am pleased the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) acknowledges that was the case at that time.

Since then, of course, we have put substantial new funding in there to not only support a new Osborne House, but to create a shelter system throughout the province which is a model that other provinces are seriously looking at. I had the opportunity to attend the opening of a new shelter in Brandon about a year ago, and we have a shelter opening in Portage coming up soon and also in Dauphin.

I think that the amendment to this resolution does not recognize the tremendous efforts of the previous Minister of Family Services and the government of the day. I would contrast this to news coming out of Ontario. I do not have my House book with me, but I would indicate that in Ontario in the recent budget critics are condemning the government there for the lack of funding. I tell you that the increased funding in Ontario for vulnerable children, the Ontario Children's Aid, and for the initiatives to stem the violence against women, is one-half of 1 percent. That was the budget increase by the New Democrats, one-half of 1 percent, half a percent.

Again, we see across this country what members of the New Democratic Party say in opposition and what they do once they are in government. In fact, today, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) was talking about a number of issues. I think that we have seen in Ontario, where they have a \$10-billion deficit, how they are now unable to fund with their second budget the critical services for the Ontario Children's Aid and the programs for women and children in that province.

Where are their priorities? They are spending a tremendous amount of money. They are going into unprecedented debt, and yet their priority when they speak as for the vulnerable people in society, but what have they done in their budget—a half of a

percent increase. The minister there has indicated that she would hope that agencies they fund would first of all look at administration before they would cut service, but half a percent to the vulnerable women and children in Ontario simply is going to mean cuts across the board.

I say, when members opposite and the mover of this particular amendment bring forward this and talk about a lack of appropriate resources, this department has seen a tremendous growth in expenditures right across all of its divisions. Certainly, in the area of family violence and the shelter system, this government has put the funding in place and a funding model that was sadly lacking before.

Not only have we increased the funding this year to this area of the department by some \$800,000, but we have also created a new funding model that has been brought forward by a new staff in our family dispute area, a funding model that has been widely accepted by all of the shelters across the system. Some of the members maybe are not as familiar with the system as others, but we have a system now where we have small, medium and large shelters, and in fact an extra-large shelter. Even though we had put in considerable funding three years ago, there were concerns that the funding model was not working well for all of them.

I can tell you the changes that we have made in this budget have been well received by all of the shelters in the system. It recognizes the volume sensitivity that some of those shelters have. It also recognizes that shelters need a basic core funding to pay for their minimum expenses.

What we have seen throughout the province—I recall the shelter director in Brandon saying, this is the change that we have been waiting for—and appreciated the new money—

Ms. Barrett: Four years you have been saying that—

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) wants to talk about four years. It has certainly been four years of steady increases in budget, of steady improvements in the shelter system. She sits as part of a party that formed government at that time, that was starving that system, where there was a—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable government House leader.

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): I apologize to my colleague the minister, but I am wondering if I might have leave of the House to make some House announcements.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave? [Agreed]

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I would like to give members some official notice of some committees I will be calling for next week.

I would propose, Mr. Speaker, to call the Standing Committee on Agriculture next Thursday morning at 10:00 a.m., Room 255, to consider Bill 11, The Bee-Keepers Repeal Act; Bill 12, The Animal Husbandry Amendment Act; and Bill 44, The Milk Prices Review Amendment Act. Also, at that same time, in Room 254, Thursday morning, Standing Committee on Law Amendments to deal with Bill 14, The Highways and Transportation Department Amendment Act; Bill 15, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; and Bill 91, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (2).

Mr. Speaker, I may be making a further announcement dealing with private bills after conclusion of another private member bill. Hopefully, that will be dealt with today.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable government House leader for that information.

* * *

Mr. Gilleshammer: In the few minutes that I have left, Mr. Speaker, I think we have established that tremendous resources have been added to the budget in my department, in particular in the area of family dispute, to show this government's commitment to the programs that this area of the department offers. It shows a government that has worked with the community to iron out some of the funding difficulties. We have seen a tremendous increase in the number of shelters and services that government is providing across this province. So the commitment is very clear.

As a result, I take some exception that, in the view of the Liberal party, additional money is always the answer. I say that we have demonstrated a tremendous commitment to that system that we have in place in Manitoba. Even in these very, very difficult times, the budget of this department has increased substantially. Rather than have the members of the Liberal Party speak on the topic

about a zero tolerance for the abuse and the crime that is committed and to work with government on implementing the recommendations of the Pedlar commission and not showing their support for what I think has been a well-received initiative by the people of Manitoba, they want to make changes in the resolution which highlight the whole question of—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have 31 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

* (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): I wonder if there would be leave of the House, before we go to the agenda items as is called for under the rules, to revert to Bill 90, Mr. Speaker, a private members' bill in the name of the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema).

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to bring forward Bill 90 at this time? [Agreed]

SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 90—The Seven Oaks General Hospital Incorporation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 90, The Seven Oaks General Hospital Incorporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la loi constituant en corporation le "Seven Oaks General Hospital."

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 90, The Seven Oaks General Hospital Incorporation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le "Seven Oaks General Hospital"), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, I would like to just take a few minutes and first of all express my sincere thanks to all the parties in this House, because initially the bill was in the name of the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), but since this bill is of a very minor amendment and it falls in my riding, and that has been the case in the past—I think there was something that went wrong. It was not on purpose, I learned later on, but I think it is very important to

mention those things because they allowed me to bring this bill forward. I must say my sincere thanks to the NDP also to allow this bill in my name.

Mr. Speaker, the bill would simply change the title of the executive director and would allow the same thing as the other hospitals have and in that way allow the hospital bylaws to create their own title.

Mr. Speaker, I will end my remarks and again express my sincere thanks about such a good attitude in this House.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that debate be adjourned.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Barrett: Whatever the process is that I have to do to withdraw my earlier motion to adjourn, I would do.

Mr. Speaker: That question has not been put to the House. Now, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 90, The Seven Oaks General Hospital Incorporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le "Seven Oaks General Hospital." Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [Agreed]

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Seeing this bill has passed, I would like to inform members of the Assembly that I will call the Standing Committee on Private Bills to deal with both Bill 52, The Pas Health Complex Incorporation Amendment Act, and also Bill 90, the bill that we just passed, and I understand by the rules that we have to give 48 hours notice, so therefore I will call that committee, Mr. Speaker, for 3 p.m., Monday coming, Room 254.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable government House leader for that information.

ORDERS FOR RETURN, ADDRESSES FOR PAPERS REFERRED FOR DEBATE

Mr. Speaker: Orders for return, addresses for papers referred for debate, on the motion of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik).

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [Agreed]

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Speaker: Resolution 29. Resolution of the honourable member for Swan River, Rural Daycare.

* * *

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, on the orders for return—

Mr. Speaker: On that one I had already asked for leave for the matter to remain standing, at which time there was nobody standing.

An Honourable Member: She was standing.

Mr. Speaker: Oh, I did not see the honourable member standing. That is why I went to Proposed Resolutions. Is it the will of the House to revert to the Orders for Return, Addresses for Papers, and allow the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) leave. [Agreed]

ORDERS FOR RETURN, ADDRESSES FOR PAPERS REFERRED FOR DEBATE

Mr. Speaker: We are reverting to Orders for Return, Addresses for Papers, on the motion of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis). Leave has already been granted that this matter remain standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik).

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious bill that we are debating and wanting to get more information on, and I would like to, first of all, begin by commending members of the government and all members of the House for the co-operation we saw this afternoon to pass another bill that is very important, and that is Bill 91, The Liquor Control Amendment Act. On this bill, we saw all members of the House work very hard.

In particular I would like to commend the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) for recognizing a serious concern, not only in his constituency, but in many parts of the province. He worked along with the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), and Liquor Control Commission to get an amendment in place that would address the concerns of consumption of cooking wines which are having a very serious effect on many parts of the community.

This bill that we are dealing with, the antisniff bill as it is called, also, we assumed, had support from

all members of government. All parties involved gave their support to it and it went to first reading in December of 1989. Well over two years have passed and we are not getting any movement on the part of this government to bring in the antisniff bill. The minister tells us that there are things that are standing in the way, there are legalities that do not allow him to bring in this bill, but that seems very strange when members of the government did support the bill.

Mr. Speaker, the sniffing of drugs, the abuse of substances, is a very serious problem. This bill, if it were enacted, would cover such products as glue, lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, and certain gas products and nail polish remover, all substances that are at the present time used as sniff products and are having a very serious effect on many young people, although it is not only restricted to young people—age is not a factor when it is being used—but it is having a very detrimental effect.

This bill, if implemented, would restrict the sale of these products to persons under 18 years of age and it will limit retail marketing of sniff products from self-service display cases. The legislation has broad-based community support and has been strongly endorsed by the Winnipeg Police Department and, as I say, many support groups. It is the only legislation of its kind in Canada and would give the police the mechanism that they need to implement—to charge pushers of large quantities of solvents.

Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, solvent abuse is a very serious problem and a growing problem, and it occurs in all parts of the province, not only in the city. It affects rural Manitoba and it affects northern Manitoba and we have seen many serious incidents, particularly people who are hurt, facing economical hardships in many of the outlying communities. We have seen some serious cases of gas sniffing that has caused lifelong scars to the young people in those communities.

The sniffing of mind-altering products is often the only escape that these young people have from the harsh realities that they face, perhaps hunger, abuse, poverty—young people who come from broken homes. It is very addictive and very harmful to health, and in some cases it causes death.

* (1710)

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we all know that this crosses all lines. In fact it is not restricted,

although it is more visible in the people in the lower scale of the economy. It affects all children. In fact, I believe that there was a case here in Winnipeg where some young people, a couple of teenagers were fooling around testing some substances, and in fact I believe one of the young men died—someone who came from an upper class. So we could see that it does not only affect those that are suffering from economic strife, but, as I say, in most cases those are the ones who use the substances most to escape from many of the difficulties that they face.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Efforts to curb solvent abuse have been going on for almost two decades. The antisniff coalition succeeded in having the City of Winnipeg enact the antisniff by-law in 1979 only to have the by-law struck down as outside of the city's jurisdiction. Public education, picketing of those places that push solvent onto young people, make it available, have made people more aware of the problem.

As I say, Mr. Acting Speaker, we thought that this government took very seriously this matter when it was passed by all parties. We had assumed that it would move along very quickly. We know that it can happen.

When we saw the issue of the cooking wines causing a problem, a member of our caucus raised it and was able to work along with the Minister responsible for the Liquor Commission (Mrs. McIntosh), and the bill will be now going to committee because they are seriously concerned. Yes, it is a good move, and all members have co-operated with us, and we will look forward—we will hope that bill will not get the same delays that we are seeing with this one.

We just cannot understand, Mr. Acting Speaker, why this government is failing to bring this forward. It is a failure on the government's part to proclaim, a failure on the Minister of Health's (Mr. Orchard) part to proclaim this legislation when we know that, until it is enacted, there are many people who are going to continue to be hurt by solvent abuse.

There are no regulations to prevent the sale, to restrict the sale, to young children, and unfortunately we will always have in society those people who will think that making money is more important than children's lives or children's health and who will choose to sell these kinds of products and abuse our young people. It would appear that the Minister

of Health is not prepared to stand up to these people. He is not prepared to stand up to those dealers, to those people who operate businesses that allow the sale of substances when the people in business are well aware of what the effects of these drugs are.

Yesterday we had a lecture from the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) on family values, and he criticized us for not understanding family values. I have to wonder what this government feels about family values when it will not implement legislation that will protect our families and give the opportunity for our young people to be protected.

Every day that this bill gathers dust, more and more children and more young people are becoming victims of solvent abuse. Health is being ruined, lives are being destroyed. I am pleased to see that the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) agrees with us. I hope that he will encourage his cabinet and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) to shake the dust off this bill and implement it. [interjection]

An Honourable Member: As long as you appear with him on cormorants.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Acting Speaker, this is very important legislation as are others that we have raised in this House. Some people may find the issue of cormorants as very funny, but it does affect people who are on a very low income. Perhaps those members who find that a funny issue might visit some of those communities and have a look at the desperate situation those people live in. Maybe they might even consider looking at the substance abuse that goes on in those communities.

This bill does not only relate to Winnipeg. It relates to many communities that are in desperate straits because of this government. It is fully recognized that this legislation will restrict the sale of solvents. It will not eliminate all the problems, but it will be one step to dealing with a problem that is killing our young people and many young people are suffering because of it.

It is a very important part of the solution, and one that this government should deal with, rather than taking it so lightly that they choose to let it sit for a lengthy time. It could have been dealt with. We could have seen results. We could see our young people—this government could show one example. By putting in restrictions on the sale of substances, they would show a sign that they do care about our young people.

It may be that it will have a greater effect here in the city of Winnipeg, but it will also send a message out to the rural communities, to the remote communities where there is just as serious a problem. It will put the teeth in place and open the doors for other things that can happen to help those communities.

Just as we were able to see co-operation on the legislation that we saw today, on Liquor Control amendments, I think that we would very much appreciate if the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) would deal with this bill, proclaim it, and let us see progress in this province, rather than just paying lip service to our young people and pretending that we care about them.

If this government really cares about our young people and wants to give them the opportunity to have a better life in this province, even though there are not very many jobs out there, if they could keep their minds sound, that they could go to school and have some pride in themselves, then that would be one thing the government could do. I would encourage the members on the government side of the House to look very seriously at looking at getting this bill proclaimed.

It does not make any sense to send a committee out to all the communities listening to what the problems are—a committee called War on Drugs—and pretend that you care about—

An Honourable Member: Legislation does not solve anything.

Ms. Wowchuk: The member says, legislation does not solve anything. I do not know why the members across the way then supported it. Legislation does not solve all the problems. We have to work together, but at least the government could give an indication that they do care.

Is the member saying that he does not support this legislation then? The government could not have listened then to what people were saying when they had this task force. What was the point then of holding the hearings? What was the point?

As I say, this is an important bill. It is one that has had all-party support. We had the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) indicating that he would do there everything he could to get this forward. Other members supported it. I encourage this government to move forward and make it possible that we can address solvent abuse and take those

products off the counter and give our young people a chance to a fair life in Manitoba.

Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (1720)

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik).

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 29—Rural Daycare

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), that

WHEREAS recent changes to the daycare system have eroded what has been considered a model child care system in North America; and

WHEREAS 50 percent of rural residents must travel more than 15 kilometres to reach suitable child care services; and

WHEREAS the distance factor is highly significant because the additional traveling time extends the length of the working day; and

WHEREAS 39 percent of rural residents depend on annual family incomes of less than \$25,000 and find the costs associated with child care beyond their means; and

WHEREAS many rural occupations are of a seasonal nature, meaning that the need for child care services fluctuates throughout the year; and

WHEREAS there is a serious lack of less formal, more flexible, more accessible and cheaper arrangements for child care services in rural areas; and

WHEREAS this creates extra hardship for both parents and children; and

WHEREAS the Women's Institute has recommended the immediate development of a special policy for rural child care, including a close examination of the ways in which subsidies and allowances are allocated to child care services, the ways to address the isolation of many rural families, and the ways to address the shortage of child care spaces in rural areas; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba government has not taken action on the recommendations in this report to date.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Family Services to immediately examine the possibility of creating special, more flexible policies and programs for the provision of rural child care services.

Motion presented.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the lack of daycare in rural Manitoba and the ability for many farm families to be able to access daycare, particularly on a seasonal basis, is a problem. There are many families and statistics show us that there are many children who are left in circumstances, left alone because they cannot get daycare.

This is a very serious issue, and the issue has been looked at by the federal Women's Institute. They have done a survey that tells us many of the facts that were outlined in the resolution, that the income of many farm families in particular, of many rural people, is below what it is in other areas of the province and they cannot afford the cost.

But more importantly, the hours daycare is required are very, very different than what is required in other walks of life. The hours in the rural community, as the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gillshammer) is well aware, are very unpredictable, depending on the weather. Most rural people do not work a 9 to 5 job, and we have to have more flexibility. We have to look at ways to deal with this problem because our children are our most precious resource, and we have to look at ways that we are able to give them the protection that they need.

In times gone by, many children had to stay alone in the house or end up being on a tractor with their parents because there was no place else to leave them. What used to happen some time ago, or years ago, was the extended family. The lifestyle a couple of decades ago was usually that the grandparents lived with the family or there were neighbours close by, but with the serious depopulation that we have had in rural Manitoba, that network is not there. We are seeing serious, serious cutbacks in the population, and the supports are not there for families.

The government of Alberta has taken very seriously this survey that was done by the federal Women's Institute. They have looked at the numbers very closely. I guess they are very committed to their rural people and to the safety of

children and have decided to address the problem, the problem being no flexibility.

But I think what we really have to be sure of, as we are looking at the different possible ways of having daycare in rural areas, is that we always keep in mind that we have the proper standards there. We have standards in place at the present time that have to be met in the daycare system, and I think that whatever program, whatever style of daycare we can come up with, we always look at the safety of the children first. That should be the highest priority in anything that we look at. But I do believe that we do have to look at how we are going to protect these children.

What Alberta has done, Mr. Speaker, is that they have made a commitment and they have put \$75,000 towards experimental projects to look at ways to test out different programs that are workable in child care arrangements for farm families. I commend the Alberta government for considering this type of thing, because there are cases, as I say, where there are no family supports there.

Children end up being on a tractor; children end up playing with some very dangerous equipment. A miner would not let his children go out and play with the equipment that he works with. You do not see a City of Winnipeg worker taking his children out on the construction equipment with him when he is doing his 9 to 12 job cleaning streets or working on those kinds of things. I do not think that farm people should be doing that either. It is a very serious matter.

So I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that this minister would look very carefully at the Alberta model, that he would look at the recommendations from the federal Women's Institute and look at ways that we might be able to protect our young children in Manitoba too. We need more flexible hours than the daycares can provide right now. Many daycares that have spaces require, whether or not you are going to use the space, that you pay for the whole time slot, that you book your space and you pay for it.

Well, that just does not make any sense in the rural community, particularly where the economy is right now. Members opposite who have a strong rural base, a strong representation from the rural community, should surely understand the needs of the farmers, the needs of farm women.

At this time, because of the difficulties, many farm men, farmers, are not hiring that hired hand. In many cases, the wife, who usually had the role of raising the family and staying closer to the home if there were young children, now is ending up working on the tractor, going out in the field, because they cannot afford to hire anyone else. The members across the way who are in the farm community, I am sure, understand that. They must understand that the finances, with the price of grain where it is—and some of the other commodities—that farm families can just not afford to hire anybody, and both partners in the operation end up working either on the fields or whatever is required to do, and it is the children who are left, in many cases, in difficult situations, in unsafe situations.

* (1730)

I believe the survey said that up to 20 percent of the children in rural Manitoba are often left unsupervised. Mr. Speaker, that causes a lot of concern to those of us who have an interest in young people and want to see them protected safely. So I would hope that the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gillehammer) would address these concerns.

We raised these concerns last year and we are getting into a busy season in the farming community. All seasons are busy, depending on the kind of farm operation that you have. For those of us who are grain farmers, this is a very busy time and will continue to be busy. I know many of our neighbours are in a situation where they do not have the supports that they need for their children at the present time.

The government also did a report on child care, the Child Care Task Force report, and in that report there were also some recommendations made about implementing more flexible services. I have to say to the minister that some things have been done and there have been some pilot projects that have been successful, but that does not meet the needs of all Manitobans.

So there are situations out there that have to be addressed and there is a project in a few areas of the province that, as I say, was successful. There are recommendations coming out of the task force that we should have better daycare in rural Manitoba. We have to have, Mr. Speaker, more flexibility than what fits the model here in the city centres.

There are many remote communities. This does not only deal with the farming community. There are communities in the North where a regular daycare setting will just not work. So I encourage the minister to take this matter very seriously and look at the recommendations that came out from the Women's Institute. If this government would look at the minutes of the Women's Institute annual meeting that was just held about a month ago here in Winnipeg, a resolution was again passed asking the government to look at ways of addressing the child care problem in rural Manitoba, so I urge this Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to examine the possibilities of creating special, more flexible policies and programs to deal with them. Consult with his colleagues. As I say, there are many of them from rural Manitoba who have—if their children are grown up they must by now have grandchildren who are in a situation where they could be also left alone.

The problem might not be as serious in southern Manitoba where there is a denser population, but as you move further north and the population is more sparse, and more people have left the rural community, those are the areas that have to be addressed. Maybe those are the areas where we can have some pilot projects, some test projects of some different ideas, and in particular, perhaps some of the ideas—there were four projects that were tried in Alberta and perhaps the minister might have a look at those projects and we could get the results of them, and maybe some of the ideas that came out of Alberta might fit into Manitoba.

I hope that we can have support of government on this resolution, because it is one that we consider to be—it is not a political move, it is something we believe is in the best interests of our young children. I know the Minister of Family Services is concerned about our young children and would want to have the safest possible setting for all of them. So with that, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I rise in complete and total support of my colleague the member for Swan River's private members' resolution dealing with rural daycare. The whole concept of flexibility and choice and accessibility is one that we have been speaking about in this House for a long time, not only in regard to rural daycare and child care throughout the province, but in many other social issues that face us in the province today.

I find it very interesting that a government, which has a larger proportion of its members representing nonurban centres as this government does, finds it so difficult to respond in a positive way to issues and concerns raised by people who live in those rural, less populated parts of the province. It is very interesting that the issues that face Manitobans who live outside the city of Winnipeg are really only addressed in a positive way and brought out in this House by the members of the official opposition, and not only by the members of the official opposition who represent constituencies outside the city of Winnipeg. Many of the urban MLAs in the official opposition have spoken very eloquently on the issues and concerns facing all Manitobans and appear, from my objective perspective, to have a much better—members of the opposition and rural members of the opposition appear to have a much better grasp of the needs facing all Manitobans than do the members on the government benches.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate some of the points that were made by my honourable friend and colleague from Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) in her resolution, particularly the whole issue of depopulation. This is an issue, as we have been raising in the House time and time again, in Question Period and in Estimates, that is an issue of major concern to all Manitobans.

The whole concept of depopulation goes to the heart of our rural communities, our rural lifestyle, the rural and agricultural backbone of Manitoba. Due to a number of reasons, the population of rural Manitoba is declining. Many of the implications of that rural decline are felt in the families that still live in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak not only to the families who live in agricultural Manitoba, but also the families who live in the small towns of rural Manitoba. We must remember that there is a range of community size and a range of community structures in the province of Manitoba, outside the city of Winnipeg, that speak very highly and very well to the diversity of our province.

The needs and the requirements of those families and those communities, both rural urban communities and the agricultural community that surrounds those rural towns, need to be addressed. I believe that the resolution on rural child care that has been proposed by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) very admirably addresses those issues and asks the government to consider

programs and to consider looking at means and methods that will strengthen our rural community.

* (1740)

This government is on record, verbally, time and time again, talking about the need to strengthen the rural economy, the need to diversify, the need to decentralize, the need to provide support for rural and nonurban economies, communities and families.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution would allow for that to take place. This resolution would allow for the minister to consult with residents in rural Manitoba and also to consult with experts in Manitoba and in other provinces who have begun to take a look at and implement projects that will provide flexibility in daycare in areas outside the Perimeter Highway.

I would just like to end my remarks by recommending to the government, and in particular to the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) that he pay attention to one of the first suggestions that he gave to me in our first Estimates, and that is—I would give him the same recommendation—that he stop his perimeter mentality and start paying attention to the needs and the desires and the requirements of families who live in rural Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): I am pleased to be able to rise and speak on this resolution today.

I see here a rather major departure from the policies of the NDP in the past, and I am heartened by the shift and the changes that I see. I was afraid that it was just the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) who felt that way, but when the member for Wellington says that she gives us her complete and total support—and I see she is now reading the resolution. But I am rather heartened by this major shift from, I think, a very dogmatic approach to child care in the past. Where the resolution calls for choice and flexibility, that has been something that we have been striving to put before the Legislature and before the people, that there is choice and flexibility.

Now my honourable friend from Wellington is adding a caveat. She says there should only be choice and flexibility in rural Manitoba. So I maybe misread some of her comments before, because I felt maybe she was looking at the complete daycare

system and is looking for that choice and flexibility. So I applaud the two members from the NDP who have spoken on this resolution, because I do see a major departure from their party's policy in the past and policy that I hear enunciated in other provinces at this time. So I am pleased that there is choice and flexibility in their minds as far as daycare is concerned.

I think perhaps with some amendments—and we will leave this perhaps to another day because I know there are a number of people who want to speak on this resolution—that we would be close to agreement on this.

The member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) says there is a serious lack of formal, flexible, accessible and cheaper arrangements for child care services in Manitoba. Again, I do see a major departure there, where the member for Swan River is prepared to look at daycare and realize that there are different needs and different types of care that Manitobans are looking for. I think what I hear from her is that she has been very supportive of the fact that there are, in Manitoba, private centres and daycare homes, as well as daycare centres to allow that choice and that flexibility. I am pleased to hear her comments on that.

Near the end of the resolution she has indicated that the government has not taken action on the recommendations from this W.I. report. I do have to correct her on that. We have very actively listened to the members of the Women's Institute and looked at their report and, in fact, have had a working group working with the Women's Institute, the Department of Agriculture, the Women's Directorate and the Department of Family Services to bring forward some ideas in terms of flexibility and choice, particularly in rural areas.

I am pleased to say that we are very close to being able to bring those forward and have us contemplate some pilot projects in that area. In fact, the Women's Institute in their report, and in meetings that I have had with them, talk about the use of child minders, that neighbours and friends and relatives who historically and traditionally have provided that service in rural areas—[interjection] Well, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) chooses to shout rather than to listen, and I would say that I do believe that the Women's Institute—she may not think so—has a good idea here with the child minders.

They are asking that we in the department have something as simple as a registry where people in a community, and people in an area can register and, by doing so, indicate their interest in minding their neighbour's children at odd hours of the day and for virtually being available on demand. I do believe the Women's Institute have a good idea in looking at the Child Minder Program, that other provinces are also looking at this. I think that is definitely an area that we can move in. They are saying that there may be neighbours and friends and relatives who would be very enthusiastic about looking after children while families are seeding or harvesting. We are working with the Women's Institute—[interjection] Well, the member for Wellington again chooses not to listen, saying that there is nobody in rural Manitoba that would be interested in helping their neighbours and their friends and their relatives. I say to her that she is wrong.

This is not southern California we are living in. This is Manitoba where people want to help their friends and neighbours and want to help their relatives. We are going to work with the Women's Institute and the departments that I have indicated to flush out a program that I think is going to be well received by rural Manitobans and the Women's Institute.

There are pilot projects that have been tried and are being contemplated. I would mention the daycare centre at Langruth, and while the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) forgot about it, she has some knowledge of it. This has been a pilot project funded by the federal government largely where a centre has been created to look at care for children in off hours and lengthened hours. While it is difficult, as the member has indicated, to keep centres open on a full-time basis in sparsely populated areas, I think there is much that has been learned from the Langruth experience.

We are also going to enter into a bit of a pilot project in Souris for having some unfunded spaces added to a daycare centre there to be able to respond to a demand that has been put forward by the community. It is an attempt to look at some mixing of spaces, again to be flexible and to give people some added opportunities in terms of having children looked after at a centre in that particular community.

There is a lot that has taken place in this area. There has been good co-operation with the

Women's Institute and their report, and I am again pleased to see that there is a shifting of thinking in the NDP caucus, to be a little more open-minded about daycare in Manitoba, where we can be a little more flexible. I am pleased to hear them talk about flexibility and choice and allow for some innovation.

* (1750)

I think you are going to see that innovation in rural Manitoba in terms of child care so that solutions can be found at the local level without government interference. When friends, neighbours and relatives can find those solutions through the Child Minder Program and through other ways of dealing with child care—to look at extended hours in sparsely populated areas—and we do not have government saying that you cannot do this and you cannot do that because of certain things that were put in place by the previous government or ideas firmly held in urban areas. We simply cannot do that in rural areas.

I am pleased to see that there is some flexibility there on the part of the NDP to look at different ways of providing service to families who have every bit as much care and concern for their children, and who probably are being inhibited from finding those solutions by regulations of government. I think if we can work with the Women's Institute and other departments of government to find those solutions—and we have the support of the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and the begrudging support or conditional support of the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett)—I see some ability for us to work together on this to find solutions that are going to make Manitoba families and rural families in particular pleased with those solutions.

I am going to end my remarks because I believe there are other members who would like to make a contribution.

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Before the minister begins, I wonder if I might have leave of the House to make one further announcement dealing with committees.

The Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Tuesday, June 9, 1992, at 10 a.m. to consider Bills, 10, 22, and 53.

I should also indicate, Mr. Speaker, I neglected to seek leave to call the Standing Committee on

Private Bills, as I understand leave is required at the same time the House is sitting.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave? [Agreed]

I would like to thank the honourable government House leader.

* * *

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I was not expecting to speak to this resolution. You know, my Prime Minister, our Prime Minister Brian Mulroney does not—[interjection] Is there anybody in this Chamber whose Prime Minister he is not?

I rise because members will recall the pressures that governments and ministries are often under—it was not that long ago that our federal government succumbed to the pressures of a very substantial universal daycare program that certainly caught the imagination of some Canadians, particularly those living in Montreal or in Toronto and perhaps Vancouver and Winnipeg even, but then on sober reflection and second thought and no doubt, from the kind of input on the part of many members of the federal government representing rural areas, came to the same conclusion that the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) puts in this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, it will give me great joy to send to Brian a copy of this Hansard and say that in the Manitoba Legislature, none other than the member for Swan River, NDP member, the member for Wellington supports that decision that the federal government has arrived at in withdrawing from their ill-advised onrush to universality in daycare and now recognizes that there is a more sensible approach—

Point of Order

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, at no time in this House did either I or the member—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Enns: The resolution before us, put forward by the member for Swan River, as already referred to by my colleague the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), refers to the serious lack of less formal, more flexible, more accessible and cheaper

arrangements for child care services in rural areas. I heard the member for Wellington distinctly—and the Hansard will bear me out—stand up and say that she gave unqualified support to the resolution being put forward by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

I do not present myself as an expert in these matters, but it is my very understanding it is that very inflexibility that certain conditions or rules that may be applicable to a metropolitan centre, may be applicable to Montreal but are not applicable universally in Canada and universally across the country, that has caused the government to give second thought to the universality of that program and indeed has withdrawn from it, Mr. Speaker.

So I do not think I am stretching the truth at all if I tell Brian, my Prime Minister, that he has support right here in this Chamber from none other than the member for Wellington, he has support from the member for Swan River, and I know he has the support from the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) and other members. I notice that my good friend the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), if I may just give him an opportunity to just add his voice of support to this, because I understand he has an appreciation of family values; he has an appreciation of the flexibility that is required for big government to administer to the needs of all peoples; that he will, when he has an opportunity to address this resolution next, will support it.

So, Mr. Speaker, look what we are developing here on an issue such as family services, on an issue, important as it is, daycare, and how we can best mind the children, our most precious resource. We come, not only with a degree of unanimity as I kind of detected between the minister and the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), to move this resolution, but even far, far beyond that, to Ottawa, to Mr. Mulroney and the federal government, on the question of the importance of daycare centres. That is an encouraging development.

Mr. Speaker, if we can proceed to move in this kind of thinking way—because the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) now regrets it. She had not really read the resolution properly. She felt compelled, as a colleague of the member for Swan River, to support the resolution. She was not wrong in her intuitive thinking, because the member for Swan River does come from rural Manitoba, does come from a big and beautiful part of our province

of Manitoba, comes from an exemplary family whose members have distinguished themselves in public service. She understands. When she spoke to the resolution, she understands that it is not the kind of situation that you face, where we can drop our little children off from 8:30 to 4:30 and be picked up at precisely the same time. That is not how rural Manitoba works.

That is why she worded the resolution in the manner in which she did. That is why she understood that a universally applied and a universally taxed daycare centre that takes from those very people who would never access it was patently unfair. That is why she, certainly, by the very virtue of this resolution, understands and supports the reason why the federal government had to withdraw from their initial proposals of universal daycare centres. I think that argues well for a more caring approach to the overall problem of

child care, not just those who are in our urban settings where the services are more easily provided in a regimented way.

But it shows that there is a willingness on the part of an urban member from—well, I was going to say from southern California, and that is wrong—but an urban member from Winnipeg, who understands the concerns of rural Manitoba as expressed, I must say, with some eloquence in this resolution, and one that certainly my minister welcomed and my colleague—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have nine minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House now adjourns and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Wednesday, May 27, 1992

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