



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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

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Speaker*



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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, Clif	Interlake	NDP
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	NDP
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Liberal
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	NDP
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNES, 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

Tuesday, June 16, 1992

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Magnus Thompson, Margaret Thompson, Cindy Klassen and others requesting the government consider restoring the former full funding of \$700,000 to fight Dutch elm disease.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairperson of Committees): The Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery), that the report of the committee be received.

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, from the River Heights School, fifty Grade 9 students. They are under the direction of Mrs. Hallett and Mr. Clark. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Constitutional Proposal National Programs Protection

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important time in our province and in our country, dealing with our national unity proposals and the various proposals that are now presently before the Canadian public and before governments.

Today, Joe Clark is quoted as saying he is phoning the Premier of Manitoba to discuss the issue of Senate reform in the ongoing debate that is on our Constitution.

It is useful to read back on the all-party report in terms of the priorities of Manitobans and the priorities of Manitobans for a strong central government. I would quote again, on page 41: A strong central government is required for such programs as equalization and established program financing.

Later on we have a vision of Manitobans as contained on page 48: When a federal government seeks to reduce or offload responsibilities to the provinces, it is, in effect, offloading national unity to the provinces.

The report goes on to further recommend, Mr. Speaker, as one of the strongest recommendations of the report: that the all-party committee recommends the constitutional entrenchment of federal government obligations to fund EPF financing programs which, of course, deal with medicare and post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, every time we get a response from the government or a statement from the government, it is 90 percent Senate reform and 10 percent the rest of the proposals that Manitobans are making.

I would ask the Premier today: Has he discussed the issue of EPF and medicare and post-secondary funding with Minister Clark, and will he make this the No. 1 priority, as Manitobans made it during the all-party task force reports and public hearings?

* (1335)

Hon. Gary Fillmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I caution the Leader of the Opposition not to believe everything he reads in the newspapers.

Secondly, I say that every day, when he responds in this House to a statement of the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs (Mr. McCrae), he changes what his perception is of the No. 1 priority.

He started yesterday by saying that the No. 1 priority was aboriginal self-government. On other

occasions, he has acknowledged that there were more presentations on Senate reform than there were on other issues—[interjection] compared to other issues.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, this government has—and he can find press reports; he can go back to interviews on television and radio in which I have said that a very, very high priority for this government is to achieve protection for the equalization payments in the Constitution, constitutionally entrenched protection, strengthening of those provisions. In fact, it was this administration that cried out when Ontario indicated that they were not necessarily supportive, that they saw their contributions to Confederation as dictating that they ought to be compensated in other ways and that they were, in effect, putting equalization in jeopardy and in question. We called out on that, saying that they could not use that as a bargaining chip in Confederation, that equalization was an important building block and cornerstone to the fabric of this nation.

As a result, there has been that kind of protection offered in terms of language that we have not seen before to strengthen the constitutional protection for equalization. In addition to that, consistently, at meeting after meeting, the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs (Mr. McCrae) had said similarly that we want some greater assurance of protection for EPF and CAP and those other programs that we depend upon as provincial administrations to fund our health, social services and post-secondary education in this country.

Mr. Doer: I refer back to the statement of the Minister of Constitutional Affairs yesterday, all of the other statements we have received in the House and all the other public statements we have received in this province. It has been 95 percent Senate and 5 percent those other priorities that he has stated. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want a strong united national government. They want the medicare erosion that is taking place from the federal government stopped, and they want it entrenched in the Constitution. That is why it was recommended.

The Ministers of Finance and the Ministers of Health are attending a national joint meeting of Finance ministers and Health ministers tomorrow and the next day in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier be instructing his ministers, as part of a co-ordinated approach to achieve constitutional entrenchment of EPF in our Constitution, to place that on the agenda and try to get Finance ministers and Health ministers to agree to the entrenchment of EPF in our Constitution as a national priority for a national union?

* (1340)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, this administration has consistently put forward that position that equalization and support for greater constitutional certainty and support for EPF and CAP must be part of this constitutional round. I might say that we have had, I think, the unwavering support in that endeavour from Premier Cameron of Nova Scotia and other Conservative administrations. Alberta, who had not necessarily in the past always spoken out in favour of equalization, has agreed to the wording and has become an advocate and a proponent of the stronger protection for that and, of course, for CAP and EPF.

I would suggest that rather than coming here and attempting to divide the efforts of this Legislature, he go out and speak to his colleagues the New Democratic Premiers of this country—his colleague Bob Rae in Ontario, his colleague Mike Harcourt in Vancouver, his colleague Roy Romanow in Saskatchewan—and make sure that they are onside with these efforts, make sure that they place as high a priority on this as he does as a New Democrat, because certainly this administration has always spoken out and said those are our priorities. They are absolutely essential and important to this provincial government.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Premier did not answer the question. I asked the Premier whether, in light of the all-party task force report that strongly recommends EPF be entrenched in the Constitution, strongly articulates the visions that Manitobans have on a strong national government that we do not see contained within the rolling draft or the rolling draft we received previously, he would instruct his other ministers who are attending meetings so that we can have a co-ordinated approach from the all-party task force from Manitobans.

Would he instruct his ministers to go to that meeting tomorrow and keep the torch high for EPF to be entrenched in the Constitution, keep the torch high from having the federal Tories eroding our

national medicare program as they have been doing year after year, keep our torch high for our strongest national program, that is, medicare from coast to coast to coast?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, this administration, this Minister of Constitutional Affairs and this Premier have led the fight for that constitutional protection for all of those issues. After 21 meetings on the Constitution, it is nice to have the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) wake up to what the real priorities are in this constitutional round.

Now that he is awake, I would recommend that he go and place a couple of phone calls to some of the New Democratic Premiers in this country and make sure that they are aware of how important a priority that is for Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Policing Services Agreement Fee-For-Service Costs

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, it is not just in the Constitution negotiations that the federal government is taking advantage of this province's administration in terms of negotiations. The ministers returned from Ottawa with a 20-year RCMP agreement, yet significantly, the federal government is through the back door trying to charge for services on a fee-for-service basis for police services.

My question to the Minister of Justice is: When did he find out that the federal government was making this proposal? What is he going to do about it?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I assume the honourable member, Mr. Speaker, refers to questions he has raised previously in this House respecting fees for services for lab tests and computer checks.

The honourable member, in his previous assertions in his preambles to questions in this House, was wrong about the contract. These matters were not the subject of the contract—[interjection] Well, we share with him disappointment about the way the federal government is approaching these issues. We do not believe the federal government has taken the wrong approach in its agreement to sign a contract with us for 20 years.

We had to do a lot of work to get the federal government to understand that we were serious in what we were saying about the RCMP, that we were

serious in our contention that the RCMP is a strong unifying force in this country and the best police force in the world. The federal government finally believed us, and we have a very good agreement.

The federal government, outside the agreement, imposes fees for services on lab tests and computer checks. We have let the federal government know our displeasure about that, just like we let the federal government know of our displeasure with respect to its withdrawing from funding or its proposal to withdraw from funding for the DOTC probation services. Through good strong lobbying, it appears—I caution, it appears, Mr. Speaker—that we are making progress in getting the federal government to change its mind about funding in that area. Maybe we will be successful when it comes to lab tests and computer checks, too. I hope so, but we will work hard on that.

* (1345)

Mr. Chomiak: Fine, Mr. Speaker. The barn door is now wide open; the horse is let out. Now the minister is saying, oh, we missed these points in the negotiations. Now the federal government is charging for them. Oh, that is fine.

Can the minister give us any indication of what effect this federal government fee-for-service user fee will have on the province? I will table a letter from his own department indicating it will have a dramatic effect, and from the Canadian police chiefs' association. What effect will it have? Will it mean police services will now charge other police departments for services? What effect will it have on policing and crime prevention in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member has his nerve referring to barn doors. When we think back to the days of the New Democrats when they were in office here, they removed the barn doors so that everything could escape. Their approach to contractual arrangements with the federal government was, show me the dotted line where I can sign on it, never mind what the contract says.

So I do not need to get too many lectures from the honourable member for Kildonan about our contracting negotiations, because I will compare the record of this government with the record of the previous government when it comes to contractual negotiations any day of the week. [interjection]

But the honourable member refers to a cost that is involved for police agencies and others in Manitoba. There is a cost, and we are mindful of that. We are letting the federal government know of our concern in that regard.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, has the minister and the province any idea of the financial impact that this will have on policing services and what effect it will have, because we have been advised that police departments in one area may charge police departments in the other area, who may charge police departments in the other area for services? This has never been done before in Canada.

Is the minister not aware of the ramifications? What effect will it have?

Mr. McCrae: It is really quite strange that after the expense the honourable members opposite put on the taxpayers of this province with regard to the last contract that they so willingly signed—[interjection] Yes, the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) says that Gerry Mercier negotiated that. Gerry Mercier never signed it. Gerry Mercier did not like that agreement, but Roland Penner came along, within days of taking office, and he said, where do I sign, Mr. Speaker; where do I sign so that I can put this unpleasantness behind me and get on with things, and we will just pay the bills.

Well, we do not operate that way. When we do not think it is fair and appropriate, we say so. We seem to have found some success in letting our concerns be known to the federal government. I hope to be able to announce within a very short period of time that the federal government will be there for the DOTC probation service. That is the kind of relationship we need to have with the federal government, where lobbying makes some sense, but the NDP gave up on the idea of lobbying federal governments, because they had no success rate.

Constitutional Proposal Government Position

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): My questions are for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, the rolling drafts and the texts of the constitutional documents are now being debated across this nation.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) representing our province has said he has agreed to nothing, but we have Mr. Clark saying that in fact there are

agreements in many areas, and they are agreements line by line and word by word.

We have Bob Rae, the Premier of Ontario, saying the package has come a long way. It is 90 percent there. It is time, Mr. Speaker, for the government of the province of Manitoba to tell us very clearly just where they stand on a great number of the issues contained within those rolling drafts.

So I ask the Premier: Does the government of Manitoba favour or oppose the transfer of powers from Ottawa to the provinces in culture, labour market training, immigration, forestry, mining, tourism, housing, recreation, and municipal and urban affairs? Do they have any idea whatsoever as to what kind of federal funds will be available in those areas under this constitutional package?

* (1350)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs): I will begin today answering this question the way I have been answering it, sometimes without it being asked, Mr. Speaker: There is no agreement until there is agreement on a package.

Mr. Rae, the Premier of Ontario, heralds the fact or the assertion that we are 90 percent there. Well, you know, to get us there, we have done this without any compromise whatsoever from the province of Ontario. We need to see compromise from the province of Ontario in order for us to achieve the rest of that 10 percent.

But the honourable member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) needs to be told again and again that there is no agreement on any part of the package until there is agreement on all of the package. The honourable member chooses not to listen to that, but you see, as she said herself, she referred to the Rubik's Cube, and I have referred to that too.

The Rubik's Cube is a very complex puzzle, as is the constitutional arrangement. Until all the pieces are in place, you cannot really speak to all the other pieces or make comments about all the other pieces. The honourable member also conveniently forgets each time she rises to ask questions about this that the people of Manitoba are going to have something to say about this, and that this process is by no means the end of the road.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, the minister says there is, quote: no agreement without a package.

We have a package. We have Premiers and constitutional ministers across this nation saying over and over again there are agreements. Now, if this minister has not accepted anything, we can take him at his word, but surely they have had positions when they have been at the negotiating table, and these clause-by-clauses have worked themselves into this text. That is what we are asking for.

We are asking: What has been the Manitoba position on the offloading onto the provinces of powers after powers, and what monies are on the table to go with those powers?

Mr. McCrae: Our position has been that we do not go to these talks shopping for jurisdictions. We have not identified any area that we want to see the federal government devolve to the province of Manitoba. However, when other provinces put forward such requests, we look at those and we look at it in the context of whether the equalization formula will help protect provinces like Manitoba from any impacts that might be caused by devolution of powers, for example, to the province of Quebec. We look at whether meaningful Senate reform will help protect and make sure that all provinces are treated equally in this Confederation.

It is one thing to say we are all equal in the Canada clause; it is another thing to deny it when we are talking about Senate reform. The honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) would prefer that we give. This man is a labour negotiator, and I am surprised that he should be suggesting that we give up on legitimate demands that will protect provinces like Manitoba and see provinces like Manitoba viewed equally on a map of Canada.

Constitutional Proposal Public Hearings

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, if this text that we saw yesterday and one that we saw earlier became the constitutional document for Canada, the changes to this nation would be fundamental. They would be vastly different in scope from a country that we presently have. It is important that the people of Manitoba be given the opportunity to debate before this becomes a final package, yet we get from the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) the statement over and over again that there will be no agreement until there is a final package.

Well, can we get this agreement from the Premier this afternoon? Will the Premier agree that he will sign no agreement, not even on a contingent basis, until the people of Manitoba have had the opportunity to debate this whole package they keep talking about?

* (1355)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I just want the Leader of the Second Opposition to be aware that this party, when it was in opposition, fought very hard to change the rules of this House to ensure that any proposal for a constitutional amendment would, by the rules of our House, need to be taken to full public consultation, that there would be a debate of 10 days minimum in this House and, in addition to that, that there would be full public hearings so that all Manitobans would be able to participate and have their views known so that we would never be put in a situation where a Premier could sign away the rights of the people of this province to debate, discuss any issues that might have the lasting effect of being put into a Constitution.

Since that point and even prior to that point—because I recall in 1981, Gerry Mercier, when he affixed his signature to a document, he said it was subject to the process that would be put in place by the people of Manitoba in consultation of that, and that carried on.

Howard Pawley did the same thing, and whenever I was asked to sign any kind of document, it was always subject to the will of the people of Manitoba and this Legislature. Our rules call for that, and I would never ignore those rules or circumvent those rules. I think we have demonstrated in the past that that is exactly how we conduct ourselves with our responsibilities to the people of this province.

Aboriginal Child and Family Services Internal Review

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, on May 12, I called for an independent review of Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services. I am glad to see that finally over a month later, the minister has at least partially heard our concerns and has partially heeded our call for an independent review and has established an internal review of Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services.

I am wondering if the minister can tell us today: What are the terms of reference for this internal review going to be, and who has established those terms of reference?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I would caution the member not to take too much credit for the initiative. Some two months ago, the board president of DOTC, Chief Bone, approached the department to do a program review of DOTC, a program review that is similar to a number of program reviews that we have done with agencies over the last three or four years. We had a similar program review for intertribal Child and Family Services, for Anishaabe, West side, and we are moving on one in the Norman region.

The program review is established in policy by the department to look at a number of standards and practices of service, including case planning, supervision, case management, permanency planning, decision-making process, resource utilization, type of service and type of intervention, the role of the worker or the role of supervisors. It is a program that the department first established in 1987-88 and has used with a number of agencies over the last few years. At the request of the board of DOTC, we are working with them to begin a program review, hopefully, as early as July.

Independent Review

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister why he has not heeded the calls, not only of the official opposition but from many other sources, and not done—if not instead of, in addition to this program review, this internal review—an independent external review of this whole Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services agency.

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of establishing the review team which consists of members of the agency, a Mr. Isaac Beaulieu and Peggy McLaughlin, also a new staff member with the Family Services, Josie Hill and Kathy Kristjanson, and we will also be using a representative from an external child and service agency. As well, we have a steering committee which will be working with the groups doing the review, consisting of Ron Fenwick from the department, Kathy Whitecloud from the agency, and also a staff member from the University of Manitoba

and a staff member from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. This steering committee will work with the review committee and use the program that has been established for these external program reviews.

* (1400)

Internal Review

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the majority of the people in the program review and the steering committee that the minister talked about in his last question are involved with the government and responsible to the minister, will the minister guarantee that in particular, the recommendations that come out of the steering committee will be made public so that the people of Manitoba will have some sense of comfort and accountability for the government to implement those steering committee recommendations, since it is not a truly independent review?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, we are following a process that has been used with the program reviews in the other agency, whereby we are able to measure the service that the agency gives with the provincial standards.

I think, generally, there is a recognition that we have work to do in improving the standards of a number of our agencies in the service delivery, and we cannot do that without involving people from the agency. As a result, some of the individuals whom I have identified do not work for the department. They do not work for government but are part of the agency. I think it is very important, and I know the member would agree, that culturally appropriate services and the delivery of those services is an important aspect to child welfare.

I would say, too, that we are not going to solve all of our child welfare issues in isolation, that the services that are provided by the agency on reserve are also tied in to the living conditions and the other issues which exist on the reserve, and we are going to work with that board and with that agency to work on their program review.

Diagnostic Services Privatization

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My question is to the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker.

It comes on the eve of the national meeting of health care ministers. The minister is off to the national meeting without the participation of many members of the health care community, Mr. Speaker, and he goes, leaving many unanswered questions about the real agenda of this government on health care.

One of the many issues of concern is in regard to diagnostic laboratory services and the degree, Mr. Speaker, to which this government, under the guise of health care reform, is looking at privatizing and contracting out of those services.

I would like to ask the minister, in regard to this matter, whether he will be following the findings of his own report, which indicates that the publicly operated diagnostic services not only provide the best protection in terms of quality of services, but also have been the most cost effective and have had the least increases in price in comparison to privately funded diagnostic services.

Will he follow his own report and not contract out?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Yes, I will follow my own report. Yes, I will also investigate tendering diagnostic laboratory services for personal care homes in Winnipeg, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to my honourable friend that the real agenda of this government is protection of medicare for servicing medical needs to the people of Manitoba today and into the future. That is why this, the most progressive document in Canada, is the blueprint for a reform envied by all jurisdictions in Canada, Sir.

Health Care System Reform Consultations

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to be developing a personality cult in this province, and it is a cult of one, the Minister of Health.

When will he recognize, Mr. Speaker, that he cannot implement health care reform without the consultation of many in the health care community, health care professionals, who are saying that they have been ignored totally? Front-line health care professionals have been ignored.

When will the minister start listening to health care workers in this province and health care professionals in the community, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, with all of the calmness and respect I can muster for my honourable friend the member for Thompson, who has a personality cult of zero, I reject absolutely and totally the allegation by my honourable friend that this document has been developed in isolation of individuals who wish to make input into the way the health care system of this province, and indeed this nation, can emerge for the betterment of provision of needed patient care.

Mr. Speaker, we listened very, very diligently to suggestions from professionals on the front lines. Most recently, I had to send a letter of congratulations to Mr. Delaat, Safety Chairperson of the Manitoba Society of Medical Laboratory Technologists in Manitoba, who provided to myself, as minister, some very sound advice in terms of appropriate regulation and policy development around the issue of biomedical waste.

We listen to people who are front-line care deliverers. I have to tell my honourable friend that individuals like Mr. Delaat have very good advice to provide to this government, and we take it very, very seriously.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, why then do health care workers have to come to the steps of the Legislature? Why do they have to write to the minister saying, the debate has gone on without the voices of the front-line workers being heard; we want in?

When will the minister listen to the front-line health care workers instead of ramming through this kind of agenda, this Conservative agenda, on health care without any input from front-line workers?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I am now completely puzzled with my honourable friend the member for Thompson, because in this letter from the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals, which my honourable friend has in his possession—delivered to myself this morning—it says nothing to do about a Conservative agenda on health care reform. It says, in fact: We have reviewed the action plan with interest and have found the principles of your government's proposed health care reforms to be sound.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I should have done this earlier. I am prepared to

table a copy of the letter so that members of the Legislature can read the rest of the letter—

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

Mental Health Care System Bed Closures

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

Mental health reform must mean the best quality of care for the people of Manitoba. When the minister released his package, that was three weeks ago, and it was not very clear on how they are going to deal with the mental health services. Now we know that at least 71 of the 234 beds in the city of Winnipeg could be lost without any proper planning.

Can the Minister of Health tell this House why such a decision is being made when that was not a part of this health care reform package?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend takes quantum leaps in decision making or conclusions.

My honourable friend, and I believe all members of this House, endorsed the second phase of mental health reform, which was tabled formally in January of this year, in which we identified, Sir, the very deliberate and progressive approach to reform of the mental health system, in that it was the stated intention of this government to significantly shift the funding and program emphasis in mental health service delivery away from the predominantly institutional-based system that we now have, that has grown over the last two decades, and to shift that to the community, with appropriate supports, bridge funding, processes of consultation in place, and working with government to make that fundamental shift and reform in the mental health system.

Mr. Speaker, nothing in the Quality Health for Manitobans, The Action Plan for acute health care reform compromises that process of reform in the mental health service delivery system.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, the confidence of reform-minded people can be only maintained by a rational approach.

Community-Based Services

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, according to this document, any cut in the psych

beds would have to be that first there must be community-based care. Can the minister tell this House: Where is the package for the community-based care?

* (1410)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly why, for instance, my honourable friend's conclusion, which was attempted to be made last week by the official critic of the official opposition in that there are proposals from the two teaching hospitals, Sir, which—and my honourable friend, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has reminded the House—a proposal from the Urban Hospital Council regarding the acute psychiatric beds at Misericordia Hospital.

That issue, Sir, is exactly the kind of progressive change that the mental health system and the advocates of change in that mental health system say is capable of being achieved, i.e., removal from service of the acute psychiatric bed capacity at Misericordia but development in advance of community-based services to handle the nature of service delivery required by people formally admitted to those acute care beds.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, it is not only the one hospital. Misericordia, St. Boniface, Victoria, Health Sciences, Grace Hospital, Seven Oaks, all the hospitals are involved in this proposal.

Can the minister tell this House, and probably reassure this House, that he will ask the hospitals to stop any plans for psych beds until we see a community-based care package in this House?

Mr. Orchard: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the process that is ongoing right now. As discussed some six weeks ago in Estimates of the Department of Health, wherein we talked about the process of discussion, consultation and submission of plans from regional mental health councils throughout the length and breadth of Manitoba, around the January reform document, some of those plans, Sir, from the Westman, Parkland, west central region will arrive to the ministry this summer. That is exactly the kind of process of change, in an informed and progressive fashion, that is underway.

Red Sucker Lake, Manitoba School Closure

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupert Island): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education.

She may be aware the children of Red Sucker Lake have been locked out of school for some time, since May 11. The Department of Indian Affairs, our trustee, has locked the students out, and the federal department Labour Canada has closed the school down. If this was to happen in southern Canada or anywhere in southern Manitoba, there would have been a public outcry about that situation, but because they are aboriginal children and because we are far removed from mainstream society, there does not seem to be any concern for the children there.

My question to the Minister of Education is: Will she assist the children of Red Sucker Lake and the people of Red Sucker Lake in trying to get the federal government to resolve this situation, to get the children back to school?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): This is an issue that is between the federal government and the people of Red Sucker Lake, and I do understand that there has been discussion between those two parties and that there is, I gather, some work toward the school being reopened.

Unfortunately, that is a federal matter, and I understand that it is being worked at. However, I would like to express the concern of this government on behalf of any children in any families who are not able to attend school.

Mr. Harper: Yes, education is a basic right.

Red Sucker Lake, Manitoba School Closure

Mr. Elijah Harper (Rupert's Land): I ask the Minister responsible for Native Affairs to intervene. As a matter of fact, under Section 259 of The Public Schools Act, the provincial government has the moral and legal authority to ensure that all students six years and over, in the province of Manitoba, have the right to attend a school.

Can the Minister responsible for Native Affairs assure that he can assist us and get the federal Minister of Indian Affairs to meet and resolve this issue?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Mr. Speaker, following on the answer from the Minister of Education, who is very concerned, as all government members are, as to making sure that all young people have the opportunity for an education, I understand, in

looking at some of the history of this, that there have been difficulties at Red Sucker Lake, a report going back to when he was minister, I believe, in 1986.

This problem has just not risen in the last few weeks, but we will do everything we can to help resolve the issue.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I propose calling bills today. Would you call firstly Bill 96 for second reading, to be followed at this time by Bill 62?

SECOND READINGS

Bill 96—The Special Operating Agencies Financing Authority Act

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), that Bill 96, The Special Operating Agencies Financing Authority Act (Loi sur l'Office de financement des organismes de service spécial) be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce Bill 96, The Special Operating Agencies Financing Authority Act for second reading. The bill has two primary purposes. The first is to enable the designation of certain areas of government as special operating agencies. SOAs are service operations within departments, granted more direct responsibility for results and increased management flexibility needed to reach new levels of performance.

They will improve the delivery of services by, one, ensuring that operations are clearly defined and well understood; two, setting demanding performance goals and developing strategies for attaining them; three, applying and adapting the best private and public-sector management practices; and fourth, monitoring performance to ensure continuous progress toward goals. The aim of SOAs or special operating agencies is to give greater authority and scope to managers and employees to encourage initiative and improve service delivery performance.

Manitobans want an efficient more service-oriented public sector. The Civil Service must respond by fostering a client service culture. This means emphasizing leadership, concern for

people and effective communications. It means monitoring service quality and client satisfaction. It also means adapting structure systems and technologies and support of a renewed mission of continuous improvement.

SOAs work off the idea that current approaches for managing people, systems, technology, communications as strategy should be streamlined and tailored as far as possible to the mandate of the organization. At the same time, the fundamental values of a unified Civil Service are retained. The ultimate success of SOAs depends on people and the enthusiasm they bring to the job. SOAs are an expression of quality management in the public sector which are proven successful internationally. Their development is a matter of government policy consistent with continuing internal reform efforts by this government.

The second purpose of this bill is to establish the SOA financing authority as a mechanism for funding the operation of SOAs under the direction of the Minister of Finance and with the support of Finance staff to manage overall financial arrangements. The financing authority will fund the activities of SOAs as approved by Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. An operating charter, business plan and management agreement with the minister responsible will be developed for each SOA.

The financing authority will provide repayable loans and working capital advances to fund SOA operations consistent with government requirements. Financial arrangements will be individualized to each SOA and will allow them to operate in a more businesslike way without loss of government policy direction. In return for more flexible management authorities, SOAs will be expected to achieve improved results in terms of cost savings, deficiencies and service quality for government. They will also be held more strictly accountable for bottom-line results and will be subject to enhanced disclosure provisions through their operating charters, annual audits and annual reports.

The financing authority will also be required to report on its overall financial operations to the Legislature. The financing mechanism is not a replacement for the present way of accounting for government operations within the consolidated fund. It is intended as an alternative for consideration by those areas of government which would benefit from more efficient commercial

operations as business enterprises within government.

In the 1992 Budget Address, I advised of the government's intention to establish the Fleet Vehicles branch of Government Services as the first SOA. The government intends to extend the use of SOAs and refine the concept over time. Information sharing and dialogue with employees and their union representatives have been emphasized throughout SOA preparations.

For example, Fleet Vehicles management has involved staff in planning and implementation and have sought their suggestion for improvements. An employee representative has been appointed to the Fleet Vehicles Agency Advisory Board. Staff were enthusiastic about the prospects for increased job satisfaction, access to current technologies and training and career development opportunities.

MGEA officials and shop stewards have participated in departmental briefing sessions. In addition, a meeting was held with senior MGEA officials last October to address concerns about job security, privatization and equity within the Civil Service. The MGEA is satisfied to see the SOA initiative proceed on a pilot basis, given the intent to work within the parameters of a unified Civil Service and the existing collective agreement and bargaining process. The government will continue to ensure the employees and their representatives are fully informed as SOAs develop.

* (1420)

Meanwhile, I am informed that other jurisdictions have been showing an increasing interest in our continuing efforts toward management reform within the Manitoba government. Our special operating agency initiative is seen by many as a unique and progressive response to the very difficult fiscal and service delivery challenges faced by government. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohma), that debate on the bill now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 62—The Business Practices Amendment Act (2)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate

Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), Bill 62, The Business Practices Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, we have put our concerns on the record in terms of this bill. We are prepared to see it go to committee.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 62, The Business Practices Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed. That is agreed and so ordered.

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Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you call Bill 71, please.

Bill 71—The Retirement Plan Beneficiaries Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), Bill 71, The Retirement Plan Beneficiaries Act; Loi sur les bénéficiaires des régimes de retraite, standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, we would like to see this particular bill go into committee at this stage.

I understand that the intent of this legislation is to expand on the previous Retirement Plan Beneficiaries Act to include a clear definition of what constitutes a designation, as well as more precise clauses of what revokes a designation. It also allows people to designate beneficiaries for RRSPs and RRIAs by signing a specific form, separate and independent of the will. What this allows for is the execution of some of these designations in the absence of a formal will.

Having said those very few words, Mr. Speaker, we would be pleased to see this bill go to committee for further comment.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 71, The Retirement Plan Beneficiaries Act; Loi

sur les bénéficiaires des régimes de retraite. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: That is agreed. Agreed and so ordered.

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Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you call Bill 42, please.

Bill 42—The Amusements Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), Bill 42, The Amusements Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les divertissements, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Some Honourable Members: Stand.

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

* * *

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you call Bill 86, please.

Bill 86—The Provincial Police Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), Bill 86, The Provincial Police Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Sûreté du Manitoba et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand. Is there leave?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No, leave is denied.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I rise to deal with the amendments brought in by the minister dealing with The Provincial Police Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act, which frankly, to our side of the House, ties in also with Bill 87, which is also on the Order Paper dealing with The Law Enforcement Review Amendment Act.

I can indicate to the House that I will be the spokesperson for our party with respect to this bill, and I will be the only person speaking from our side on this particular Bill 86, The Provincial Police Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House will not support this amendment. The particular bill itself is not of a major consequence, but our concerns with respect to this bill is the public notification and the public discussion that took place prior to the introduction of this bill of which it was nonexistent. Looking through this act—and although we are not as concerned with the ramifications of this act as we are with Bill 87, and I look at them as a package, we certainly are opposed to Bill 87. We look at both of these bills as a package, and we are not going to support them.

One of our grave concerns, Mr. Speaker, is the whole question of crime prevention. We have seen in the Estimates this year how the budget for crime prevention has been slashed by this government while other services, most notably administrative-related services, have increased. This is of some concern for us. What this bill does is move the authority and the authorization and the genesis of matters of crime prevention to the minister's desk and away from the body, a formerly independent body, the Police Commission and matters of crime prevention to go onto the desk of the minister.

There has been much debate in this House on the issue as to whether or not the government is committed to crime prevention or whether they are not committed to crime prevention. I fall in the school of, we all fundamentally believe in crime prevention. It is quite clear. There is no question. The question is the difference in approach and the difference as to how we approach these particular issues. I think that the government has not done as much in terms of crime prevention as it likes to speak. It is certainly evident in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, and a movement of crime prevention matters right into the auspices of the minister's office in the context of the environment we are in now is not necessarily a positive action.

The other main concern, Mr. Speaker, is largely an administrative matter, but it is very important in matters of this kind. There were matters that were handled by the Police Commission that were appealed to the Police Commission that were dealt with under this act. Without consultation, without

notice to those affected by the act, the minister brought in an amendment that says that they will no longer have the right to appeal those matters to this particular body and the appeals will now be to the Court of Queen's Bench, this done without consultation, this done without any kind of information. We are quite concerned about that. We are quite concerned about process.

Again, I reiterate. Our concerns are even greater when one proceeds to Bill 87, which is of a similar and a tangent nature as we see both these bills administratively as one, but nonetheless the principle remains the same, that there is no prior notification, no consultation prior to the introduction of this particular bill, and that is a concern of ours.

The bill itself, Mr. Speaker, is quite limited. It is not an extensive bill. It also provides—it tosses another action, another court action, another matter of appeal back into the courts. It is an interesting evolution of our judicial system and of the entire administration of the justice system that we find more and more matters being decided by court and fewer and fewer matters decided by legislators and by independent bodies.

I do not want to comment on the merits or the difficulties of it in this particular instance. I certainly feel strongly when we get to LERA, the Law Enforcement Review Agency, that the principle of moving from a civilian force is one that we should not lose, and that is one of the reasons we will oppose that bill, Mr. Speaker.

But, more importantly, the question is we are seeing more and more of these matters decided by judges. I raise that issue because it is something that I think has to be discussed both philosophically and in principle as to where we are going in this regard. We had a formally appointed independent body that dealt with it, and now these decisions will be made by judges, Mr. Speaker.

We are not intending to hold up this bill unduly. We simply—I wanted to register our concerns with respect to this bill. We will not be supporting this bill. We in the New Democratic Party are not, in principle, in favour of this amendment. Of course it will pass, Mr. Speaker, and we will of course look forward to the public consultations which are a fundamental factor. We will look forward to the fundamental consultations that will occur in the committee stages when the public will have an

opportunity to comment on it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That concludes my remarks.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

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* (1430)

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you call Bill 76, please.

Bill 76—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), Bill 76, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les prestations de pension, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Can we stand this, please, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Stand. Is there leave?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No, leave is denied. The honourable member has lost his opportunity to speak.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): I am pleased to rise to speak to this bill, and I will be the only member from the Liberal Party who will speak on Bill 76, so I will let the government know that ahead of time.

The Pension Benefits Amendment Act is a bill which changes the way in which pensions are dealt with in a number of ways. There are those changes which deal with the life income fund, those which deal with the multiunits pension plans. Certainly, there are new powers for the pensions superintendent and pension surpluses, all of which we think are excellent changes to the way that pensions are structured in Manitoba, and will make for more flexibility where flexibility is required and more controls in terms of the powers of the pensions superintendent, where indeed those powers and controls are necessary.

There is only one section of the bill that we have some problems with, and that is the mandatory credit splitting section of this particular piece of legislation. I think it is important to delve briefly into

why credit splitting became part and parcel of pension legislation in Manitoba.

We are the only province in the nation to have mandatory credit splitting. It came about because of a recognition that women, particularly women who did not work outside the home, were not adequately protected in pension legislation when a divorce or separation took place. What this ensured was that if a pension was a Manitoba pension, then the pension would have to be split at the time of the separation or divorce, and credits would have to be given to both parties equivalent to the length of the marriage or the relationship if it was indeed a common-law relationship.

Unfortunately, the rest of the country did not see the wisdom of this particular piece of legislation, and that has led to some awkward circumstances. One of those awkward circumstances has dealt with federal government pensions. So an individual who was an employee, for example, of a Manitoba company, their pension, let us say it was the wife, was subject to credit splitting. The husband, on the other hand, who was an employee of the federal government, his pension plan was not subject to credit splitting, and that brought about a very unfair attitude towards the pension-splitting concept and the very fairness that the original legislation was supposed to arrive at, certainly was not there.

The minister has said, and clearly this is true, that many of the complaints that came from the concept of mandatory credit splitting came from women who said that they had not had the opportunity to get fair and equal treatment.

The reasons we have some concerns, and the minister has addressed some of them, and I want to really make some suggestions about ways which we think they could be better addressed rather than to be negative at this particular point. The bill has called for independent legal advice. Our concern is what form will that independent legal advice take. We would like some commitment from the minister that when the regulations come down with respect to this particular piece of legislation, there will be a form similar to the dower form, in which not only does a lawyer have to indicate that, yes, his client has agreed to give up the right, but there is a signed certificate which clearly indicates that they were informed of all of their rights and they chose with full information their right to give up this particular pension.

We also want to make it as clear as possible to the legal profession, that we do not believe that pensions should be negotiated in the same way as real estate. The law of this country and the province recognizes that pensions are a particular asset, very unique and different from all other assets. The legal profession must accept some responsibility so that women and/or men do not find themselves giving away pension benefits because they are concerned about getting custody of a child, that these two things should not be equated, that they bear no relationship to one another. We believe that making sure that there is an appropriate legal form will eliminate some of that because the form could in fact state that no pressure in other negotiating areas had been used to persuade this individual to give up their right to pension credits.

We also hope that the minister would take under advisement—and we are not insisting in form of amendment at this point in time—whether it would not be also worth considering independent financial advice, that the legal advice is one thing but my knowledge and expertise of lawyers is that they are not accountants for the most part and that their knowledge necessarily of good accounting and financial practices are not as good as their knowledge of the law. Perhaps we could put into place an independent pensioner advice system that an individual could go with a very limited charge where they could get independent financial advice on what the implications of giving up this pension would be if they were indeed going to agree to giving up their rights to their husband's pension, or in the case of a man, giving up his rights to his wife's pension.

So we do not disagree that the act as it presently exists was acting in an unfair way for many people, but we do not want the solution to result in unfair treatment. So if the minister will look seriously at some kind of form and regulation, and if he will take under advisement the importance of putting into place some independent financial adviser that individuals could also seek to get advice of a financial nature and not a legal nature about their pensions and the value of those pensions, then we are pleased to see this bill go to committee. We hope that the minister will be able to provide us with some of the answers to our questions at that stage.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, will you call Bill 87.

Bill 87—The Law Enforcement Review Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), Bill 87, The Law Enforcement Review Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes relatives à l'application de la loi, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, we do have an additional speaker on this particular bill. Our critic will be speaking on this. In fact, I have a feeling he may begin his comments fairly quickly. As much as I would like to expand for 40 minutes on this bill, I am sure our critic will do it.

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, here I rise again dealing with the second tandem of the bills that I referred to previously in my comments this afternoon, and that is Bill 87, The Law Enforcement Review Amendment Act.

As I indicated earlier, this act is, in our opinion, in conjunction and in tandem with Bill 86 brought in by the government. As I indicated previously with respect to our position on Bill 86, we are opposed to this particular bill as brought forward by the government for a variety of reasons, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): You are making a mistake, Dave.

Mr. Chomlak: The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) has indicated that we are making a mistake in opposition to this bill.

I would very much like to hear the comments as to why, and what the difficulty is. If the minister will just listen for some time, I will point out what I think are the difficulties, and I think he will be convinced that there are concerns with respect to this bill.

* (1440)

I have had experience, Mr. Speaker, personally with the functioning of the Law Enforcement Review Agency. All members of this House, I am sure, are familiar because of the rather high profile the agency

has taken on in light of some of the more serious policing matters and policing concerns that have been raised in the city of Winnipeg specifically over the past several years.

Our concerns with respect to LERA, Mr. Speaker, I think are largely in principle. There is no question, and we certainly are prepared to admit that there are problems with the functioning of LERA. Any prudent, objective observer looking at the way LERA functions will indicate there are concerns.

I will not go into a defence of those concerns, and I will not go into an argument that we brought it in and you are opposing it because you are the government now, and that kind of discussion, Mr. Speaker. LERA was a unique and a new agency. There were bound to be difficulties, and there are difficulties.

In principle, the first difficulty we have with the dismantling of LERA is the fact that we will be going from a largely civilian-oriented body who adjudicates on matters of police misconduct, if I can put it in those terms, to going to the matters being determined by Provincial Court judges.

I am a great supporter of Provincial Court judges. I think they do an outstanding job. But some of the very same individuals who will be appearing in front of the Provincial Court judges who will be adjudicating on LERA matters are the very same judges who the individuals appeared in front of on their criminal matter for which they were before the justice system in the first instance. That is a problem.

Mr. Speaker, when other jurisdictions are looking at and talking of moving to civilian agencies to look at police misconduct for more civilian, more public input, the province is going exactly 360 degrees—or probably 180 degrees—the opposite direction.

To our mind, Mr. Speaker, this is a backward step in terms of the perception of the public regarding justice, and a backward step from the move towards integrating the activities of the public into the justice system. We are taking the judicial system, again, one step removed. We are taking it from the level of civilian input to that of Justice's. We think that is a backward step in this day and age. That is our first objection to this piece of legislation.

The second objection, Mr. Speaker, is the lack of consultation. As I indicated earlier, we knew there were problems, and every objective observer would

certainly be willing to admit that there are problems in the functioning of LERA. I will admit that.

There were no public discussions. There was no consultation with, for example, the Law Reform Commission. There was no discussion with bodies involved and directly affected. There were no discussions of any kind. The minister simply removed the appropriation item in the Estimates and brought in a bill, and it was laid before this Assembly with all of the significant changes. In fact, it was so lacking in public discussion that the affected agencies, those agencies that appeal, those agencies that deal with LERA on a daily basis, were not even aware these changes were being brought about, nor did they know how they would deal with matters once LERA was abolished.

So the lack of public consultation, the lack of discussion on a justice issue, particularly an issue that has been relatively significant in the province and in Winnipeg for the past year, given some of the concerns and some of the issues that have arisen regarding police responsibility or nonresponsibility and police actions in particular areas, this is a very sensitive issue in the city and in the province.

When the government changed the body, the very vehicle that deals with matters of this kind of misconduct or this kind of difficulty, there is no discussion with any of the agencies and with any of the bodies involved. So on that basis alone, we could justify our nonsupport of this government's measure, Mr. Speaker.

There is also an interesting point, and I will look to the minister to provide and, by way of notice, I am providing this comment in our debate on second reading, because I will be querying the minister of this at the committee stage, and that is that there is an interesting wrinkle with respect to this act. It appears that a respondent, that is, if I understand it correctly, a police officer who an action is brought forward will now be compelled to attend the hearing.

I am not an expert on the Charter, but that strikes me, Mr. Speaker, as perhaps contrary to Section 11 of the Charter that says that an individual who is charged with an offence, and there is no definition of an offence, so an offence could presumably be a Criminal Code as well as a provincial offence, is not a compellable witness, but this act is saying the respondent, and that is I suppose the person who has alleged to have committed the offence, will be compellable as a witness. I am not sure, Mr.

Speaker, if that will withstand a Charter challenge, frankly.

So I raise that as notice to the government and as notice to the minister that we will be looking for an explanation at the committee stage and be requesting perhaps a legal opinion. That is a concern that we have with respect to this bill, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I think a better approach to LERA would have been to have perhaps a referral to the Law Reform Commission or a public discussion or some form of white paper that would allow affected agencies and the public in general, given the significance of this issue in the province recently and given the effect it has on the day-to-day workings of people's lives, that a broader public discussion would occur. That has not taken place.

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

The other matter that I raise is the question of the change, the decision that what I call the civilian board, although it is not exclusively so, is abolished and that matters will now be referred to provincial justices.

Again, in principle, there is nothing lacking in the ability and the sensitivity and the intelligence of provincial judges, Madam Deputy Speaker, but again it is another example of moving another item from the public forum into the judicial forum. We are having more and more and more of this scrutiny at the judicial level. I am not entirely certain whether it is the appropriate vehicle.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me pose an example. One of the advantages of a civilian body, and one of the advantages of appearing in front of a civilian body is that it does not have all of the trappings; it does not have all of the formality; it does not have all of the—and some people would say—intimidation of appearing in a court. We will lose that if the individual now appears, and certainly under this amendment that will be the case, the individual will have to appear in front of a judge. It will become more judicial. It will lose some of its sense of informality.

Again, that only serves to illustrate and serves to strengthen our argument that the whole question of a civilian input must be looked at and not the judicial input, not to mention the workload that will be increased on Provincial Court judges.

I am certain that the workload is not all that extensive, Madam Deputy Speaker. I cannot recall

at the moment what the specific figures are, but I can indicate that not only Bill 87 will see matters now going to Provincial Court judges, but Bill 86 will also have matters that were formerly reviewed and appealed to by the Police Commission, as well, going before Provincial Court judges. The workload for Provincial Court judges will increase as a result of the government's initiatives in this regard.

* (1450)

I will be concluding my remarks, Madam Deputy Speaker, by reiterating that our concerns on LERA are that the matter could have been addressed through more public consultation and more public input. Our concerns are that a largely civilian body will now be replaced by a judicial forum again, and the fact that there is the possibility of Charter challenges with respect to this new act.

For all of those reasons, I can indicate that we are not in favour of this particular amendment, however, we are interested insofar as I have already indicated that one of the failings of the bill is lack of public consultation. We are not going to sit in this Legislature and stall the act by having every member, many of whom showed a great deal of interest in caucus, speak on this bill. Rather we will let it go to committee and at the committee level we will let the public provide their input and their concerns about LERA, and at that point we will hopefully have an opportunity to amend this legislation in the interests of the public and in the interests of the enhancement of the judicial system.

Not a move that we think this bill is taking us in. Rather, we think this is a retroactive step, a backward step. We think the move away from a civilian body, a move away from a body that has the kind of broad powers that LERA had is a backward step and for those reasons we are opposed to it in principle. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

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Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would ask if you could please call Bill 84.

Bill 84—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2)

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 84, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation, standing in the name of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema).

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Madam Deputy Speaker, I will just take a few minutes and review the main intention of this bill, as the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) both have spoken last Friday. I just wanted to go through the basic content of this bill.

Basically, this bill is simply for clarification purposes. It will allow more flexibility and security for the tenant, and also it will help the tenants to be protected from dishonest landlords. I think that is a very positive step.

I can continue to go on and on but, taking into consideration the time and the last week of the session and the way the negotiations are going on, I will just say that we will look forward to this bill at the committee stage. If there are more improvements that can be made, then we will do so at that time. If individuals are going to come and make presentations, then that will be a positive step forward.

I must say that the government has done at least something very positive which will help the tenants. Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 84 (The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation). Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

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Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would ask if you could please call Bill 85.

Bill 85—The Labour Relations Amendment Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), (Bill 85) The Labour Relations Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail, standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

Some Honourable Members: Stand.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Stand. Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [Agreed]

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak on this bill. We look forward to putting up a couple of speakers and to having this go to committee eventually, because we know that representations from labour will be at the committee. In fact, who knows, there may even be representatives from the Chamber of Commerce at committee. That would be rather appropriate. Since the Chamber of Commerce has been driving this legislation, it would be appropriate if they were there.

We know that this minister listens to his friends in the Chamber of Commerce—[interjection] Well, this minister says he has no friends, but in fact we know that this minister wants to be liked.

He is going to have a rough time in committee on this bill, because labour is going to come out and tell him what they really think of this antilabour legislation. [interjection]

The Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) says, at least the office staff. Well, we know that they represent their workers, they speak on behalf of their workers, they speak for their workers and they know where their workers stand on this legislation.

When the legislation was announced, there was an article in the Free Press on May 13. This is what was said about it by the president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour. She described the proposed amendments as, quote, a nightmare. She said: Whatever happened to the principle of a simple majority? I think this government was first elected with 38 percent of the popular vote. If we used the same rules in provincial elections, they would not have got into power, she said.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Labour): Forty-two percent.

Mr. Martindale: Well, the Minister of Labour adds a correction. He says 42 percent, but the point is

that most governments are not elected with a majority. Most governments are elected with something between 35 and 45 percent in Manitoba, especially when there are three parties running. In fact, there are probably very few members here that had more than 45 percent.

An Honourable Member: Oh, yeah?

Mr. Martindale: My colleague from Transcona had more than 45 percent.

In our caucus there are, I believe, five people who had more than 50 percent. I know that there are many ridings in southern Manitoba that probably had more than 50 percent, but my point still stands that very few governments are elected with more than 35 or 40 percent of the popular vote.

However, this legislation is being amended. The requirements are being increased to 65 percent. [interjection] Well, the minister says it is still secret ballot, 50 percent plus one. That is true, but the minister, nonetheless, is making it harder for unions to get certified by increasing to 65 percent.

I think there is actually a connection between the way governments co-operate with labour and their economies and their unemployment rate. For example, if the minister will read the excellent article in today's Free Press by Frances Russell, where she talks about the level of unemployment which is considerably less in western European countries, and the fact that those countries have proportional representation in many of those countries for electing their members of their parliaments and legislatures, and the fact that they believe in full employment. In some of those countries, they have 2, 3, 4, 5 percent unemployment because they work in a much more co-operative way. They believe in a social contract with labour.

Does this government believe in a social contract with labour? No, they have a social contract with the Chamber of Commerce, and they do what the Chamber of Commerce wants instead of listening to labour and working co-operatively as governments should do with labour and with business. We have no objections to this government working co-operatively with business, but we think they should extend the same kind of co-operation to labour.

Instead, what this minister has is a big chisel, and every session of the Legislature he is chipping away at labour legislation, like final offer selection. Every session he has amendments to labour bills and

labour legislation, and he is chipping away in an antilabour, antidemocratic, unco-operative manner to reduce the protection for organized labour and for individual voters.

This minister and this government believe in confrontation, not co-operation. If they believed in co-operation, they would have an economic summit with labour and business. If they believed in co-operation they would have a meeting with the other parties on the economy, but no, this government wants to do it on their own and do it their way.

The minister asks us about the Crocus Fund. We will wait and see how the performance of the Crocus Fund is. I see that the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) has an Order for Return on the Order Paper as to how much money was invested in what projects, so it will be interesting. We look forward to seeing the results of that, and seeing if it is successful.

I think what the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) is doing, is he is quoting the exception, not the rule. He is pointing to the one positive thing that he can think of, rather than the general attitude and the general approach of his government.

I would like to go on and examine this article again from the Free Press on May 13. Our critic said that the Filmon government has brought in antilabour legislation each year since first coming to power in 1988. Of course, the minister will well remember the debate on final offer selection and the number of people who came out, not on one occasion but on two occasions to argue against final offer selection.

I was here for the second section. Fortunately, I avoided sitting until two, three and four o'clock in the morning, because I was not on the committee when that happened, but other members who were here until four o'clock in the morning will remember it well.

They will remember the presentations by labour people. In fact, I think the Liberal Party changed their mind the first time on final offer selection due to the public presentations. They listened to the public. I commend them for listening to the public. It is always a good thing when political parties listen to the public.

In fact, the good thing about final offer selection is that the number of days lost to strikes was very, very low during that time. Now that we do not have

final offer selection, the number of days lost due to strikes has gone way up.

* (1500)

Look at the nurses' strike, for example. Everyone here will remember that the nurses were on strike for a month, in the month of January last year, during a very bitterly cold month of January. I was out there walking the picket line with the nurses, in solidarity with the nurses' union.

What would have happened if there was final offer selection? Would we have had a nurses' strike if there was final offer selection? Probably not. [interjection] I will not deny that, I walked on the picket line with the union from the casino. I have put that on the record several times, and that is something I am not ashamed at all of the fact that I walked the picket line. I would walk on the picket line with almost any union in Manitoba. In fact, I was on the picket line with the CKND workers.

It would be interesting, Madam Deputy Speaker, to know what would have happened if the nurses' union had the opportunity of final offer selection, whether they would have taken it or not, because we will now be able to compare year-over-year statistics on the number of days lost to strikes. It is going to be considerably higher since we got rid of final offer selection.

Point of Order

Mr. Praznik: Madam Deputy Speaker, would the member accept a very small question?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Would the honourable member for Burrows accept a short question from the honourable Minister of Labour.

No? Request has been denied. [interjection] Would the honourable member for Burrows accept a question posed by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources?

Mr. Martindale: Madam Deputy Speaker, I respectfully decline his offer.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The request has been denied.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: I will go on to continue quoting this article from May 13 in the Free Press. Our Labour critic said there is a whole history of certification where employees have been threatened that they would lose their jobs or the company would go bankrupt if they joined a union.

He said, quote: These changes will open up the process to indirect and direct pressures directed at employees.

So that is one of the major changes of this bill. Now employers will be able to say almost anything they want during the certification process, and they might intimidate the workers from signing up and joining the union. They might say, if you join the union, if we have a union here, we might have to lay off staff or we might have to close up the plant or we might have to move to Alabama to get cheaper labour. [interjection]

Well, the Minister of Labour says it is fair. The minister says it would be an unfair labour practice, but we do not know that until it goes to the Labour Board, so it is opening up this as a possibility, I would suggest to the minister.

In fact, there are a number of ways in which this bill gives greater power to employers, not only by requiring 65 percent sign-up, but gives the employers opportunities to intimidate their workers through what is called statements of fact freely held, but we do not know what that is and how that might be interpreted by the Labour Board or by the courts.

I see here an analogy between free trade and this legislation. For example, the United States might say to Canada, we want to be able to advertise or intervene in a Canadian election because free trade affects the United States.

Well, in the same way in this legislation, the employers are saying, we want to be able to make comments on the certification process. We want to be able to talk to our workers with no limitations, but what does this have to do with employers? Absolutely nothing. A certification process is a right that union members have. It is their certification, it is their union membership drive.

So we think that just as the United States has no business in commenting on an election campaign in Canada on a topic such as free trade, nor should employers have the opportunity to comment on a certification process which really involves a right of employees and should not be interfered with. Employers have no right to interfere in a certification process.

As I said before, this piece of legislation is probably being driven by the government's friends in the Chamber of Commerce, but I would compliment the government on one thing. At least they are being consistent with their Tory ideology.

They do not support labour. In fact, they are actively opposed to labour. We see that in their legislation. We see that in their removal of final offer selection. So at least they are being consistent with what they believe in.

Overall what this bill would do is make it more difficult for unions to organize the unorganized and easier for companies to avoid a unionized workplace by intimidating their workers.

The amendments in this bill change the parameters of a mandatory, supervised worker vote on an application to certify from between 45 and 55 to between 40 and 65 percent. That is one of the principles, I would say, that we are opposed to.

This bill has an amendment which removes the clause that permits the inclusion in a collective agreement of a declaration that the employer must act reasonably fairly and in good faith in matters affecting the bargaining unit but not covered by the collective agreement. We think that this was probably requested by employers who feel that the implication is that they will not treat their workers fairly unless directed to.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will be looking forward to committee stage as to what the union representatives have to say on all of these specific clauses. We believe the existing provisions are there for a very good reason. Employers control hiring, firing, procedures in the plant, discipline, et cetera. The compulsion to be fair is surely linked to these powers whether employers like it or not. One additional comment is that perhaps the government is opposed to reasonableness, fairness and good faith.

Mr. Praznik: No.

Mr. Martindale: The Minister of Labour says no. Well, we will see what the speakers at committee stage have to say about that—[interjection] I cannot imagine why this government would want to be opposed to fairness but we will see when it gets to committee.

With those few remarks, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to conclude. We will definitely hear more speakers from this side and many speakers at committee.

Mr. Jerry Storle (Flin Flon): Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say at the beginning that it is unfortunate, I think, that we are faced with this piece of legislation at a time in our province where certainly there is widespread unemployment,

certainly widespread unemployment amongst unionized employees, where it is a time for working together, not drawing apart. This legislation has one clear intention and that is to weaken a movement that has brought significant benefit to working people across this province, whether you are a union member or not.

* (1510)

Corporate entities, boards of directors and sometimes Conservative governments have used the arguments often that progressive legislation is going to be the death of business and the death of opportunity of one sort or another.

At one time the implementation of the eight-hour work day was seen as a plot against progress and the rights of free enterprise. At one time the elimination of child labour was deemed to be the death knell for whole industries.

When we introduced in the mid-1980s, legislation that allowed working people the right to refuse dangerous work, the Chamber of Commerce put an ad in papers across Manitoba saying a black cloud was hanging over the province. A black cloud was hanging over the province because workers—perhaps the workers who died in the mine in Nova Scotia—had the right to say, this work is dangerous and we are not going to do it, and they could not be fired for saying this is dangerous work.

This Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) has chosen to introduce another piece of legislation designed to facilitate that agenda. Never mind what the facts are. Never mind what the facts are because, what are the facts?

We have dealt with this government on pieces of legislation designed to undermine the rights of working people before. We had the infamous debate on the repeal of final offer selection. Final offer selection worked in Manitoba. Objective evidence showed that it worked. It was not biased, it was fair. Where an arbitrator finally made a decision in choosing one position versus the other, union versus management, they almost chose equally. Sometimes the union won, sometimes management won.

What other objective evidence did we have, Madam Deputy Speaker? Well, we had the fact that Manitoba had the lowest number of days lost to strikes of any province in the country except for Prince Edward Island.

Madam Deputy Speaker, those were the facts. Despite the initial concern that was expressed by the Chamber of Commerce and a number of other business groups, after final offer selection was being implemented, there was very little, if any, expression of concern to the government of the day. The fact of the matter is that one of the groups that originally opposed the legislation—and that was the municipal association, the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities and the Union of Manitoba Municipalities—their experience with final offer selection was quite positive.

For the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), who is saying that unions did not like it, he could not be further from the truth. When the final offer selection repeal bill was before this Legislature, member after member, union after union unanimously said, leave it alone, it is working. It is working, and it did work on behalf of working people, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It worked particularly in the kinds of circumstances that this minister is going to undermine, where the union is just beginning its work, where it is a difficult industry to organize, where a lot of the workers may be part time, where a lot of the workers may be women, subject much more to influence by employers than in other circumstances. That is the kind of situation that this minister seems intent on attacking.

I went back when I read this bill and I looked at first of all the minister's press release dated May 12 when he talks about the purposes behind this bill. In the second paragraph, he says that the purpose of this bill is to improve the operation of the current act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is simply dishonest—simply dishonest. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) may want to have this House believe that this was designed to improve the functioning of the act. Nothing this government has done from the day it was elected—from the day it was elected—has been designed to improve the efficiency of The Labour Relations Act. Everything they have done has been designed to undermine the power and the authority given to the collective bargaining agents of working people in this province—everything they have done.

So I ask the question, I ask myself and I ask members the question: How does this legislation improve the operation of the act? How does it do

that? Well, there is a very simple answer. If you believe undermining the existing rights of working people improves the act, then I guess that is what this bill does. If you ask working people, who operate under The Labour Relations Act whether this improves the act, they are going to tell you unequivocally, no; that this is another part of the Conservative agenda, another sop to the Chamber of Commerce who have been wrong about the impact of labour legislation since there first was a Chamber of Commerce, or since there first was a Labour Relations Act.

Every time that there is an attempt made to improve the circumstances surrounding the ability of workers to organize, to protect their interests through collective bargaining, Chambers of Commerce and right-wing governments have said no, we cannot go that direction.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to expand the argument. Second reading on this bill is supposed to be about the principle, so I would like to expand the argument. I would like to talk about the impact of organized labour on the economies of other countries.

Canada is not the most heavily unionized country. It does not have the most heavily unionized work force of many countries in the world. We do have a more heavily unionized work force than the United States, but certainly if you want to compare us to many European countries, our percentage of unionized work force is much lower and if you want to compare us now, even to countries like Japan, who have a higher proportion of organized work forces than Canada.

I want to just undermine right at the beginning, any belief on the part of members opposite, or the part of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), that somehow attacking the benefits that working people have gained through their organization, through the participation in the union movement, is related to economic circumstances, or the circumstances of our economy, they should dispense with those notions.

There is no relationship between the number or the percentage of work force that is unionized and economic progress. Nor is there any relationship, Madam Deputy Speaker, between the percentage of organized work force and productivity, no relationship whatsoever.

You have to continue to ask the question, what motivates the government to move in this direction, because that is the fundamental question. The details of this bill we can argue at any point. What we need to establish before we begin the review of the details of the legislation is why the government is doing it. What is the purpose of it?

Madam Deputy Speaker, certainly in the last couple of years since this government took office, there has been an increasing tension between the unionized work force, the unions in the province and the government. There have been some notable strikes. In fact, there have been an increasing number of days lost due to strikes in the province of Manitoba since this government took office. There can be no doubt about that.

Any suggestion that this is somehow going to eliminate that problem, or reduce the problem, is misguided because there is nothing in this legislation that is going to prevent strikes now or in the future. All the government is doing by this legislation is trying to prevent people from organizing to begin with.

Now if there is any good news in the legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is that the government has decided to only tinker with first contract legislation; that they have not deemed it necessary at this point, and I put that caution note there because I would not be surprised if that is on the government's agenda, but at this point they have decided that first contract legislation may in fact be appropriate.

Now this is an interesting point, because when that group was in opposition and the New Democratic Party government introduced first contract legislation, of course, they categorized it as another example of legislation that was going to drive business out of the province or prevent businesses from coming to the province, and of course none of that came true.

I am not sure about the fact the current government, and certainly the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), could find no evidence to support the elimination of first contract legislation. I have no doubt that the minister has contemplated it, and certainly members of his front bench have expressed an interest in eliminating first contract legislation. Certainly some of the groups that the Minister of Labour consults with, some of his friends,

may have recommended the elimination of first contract legislation.

* (1520)

Madam Deputy Speaker, so it is not clear that this is the end of this government's antiworker, antiunion agenda, that in fact this may be just another salvo in a continuing misguided battle against the rights and the interests of working people to organize and protect their affairs.

Well, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) from her seat comments on that agenda. The point is that members opposite have to look at the facts. If our work force and the percentage of unionized workers in our country is smaller than many of the countries around us that are doing better than we are, is it logical to conclude that that is a significant problem?

We have some significant problems in Canada. One of them is a government that seems intent on having an economic agenda that is driven by a few large corporate interests, rather than the interests of our regions or our provinces. We have a government that has no vision of Canada that includes economic development in the regions. We have a government that believes in a hands-off approach, including a provincial government, to the detriment of our industries, and we have seen it.

We have talked about it in this Chamber, the decline of one of our most important sectors, the manufacturing sector. Therein lies the problem. The government has little or no interest in research and development despite the rhetoric, both from the federal government and the provincial government about the importance of research and development.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have a government that seems prepared to commit themselves to the devolution of powers that would make us a strong country. We want to, I think, identify the real problems that confront us in terms of economic development and economic growth, attracting industry, attracting business. I say that because I think it is instructive to look at the experience of other countries, before we start to amend our labour legislation or to do things that from some ideological perspectives seem to be the panacea.

The unfortunate part of it is, if you look at this government's economic agenda, the only thing that is apparent is that they believe that somehow the unions are the bad guys in this scenario, that they are the root of all the troubles in our economy.

An Honourable Member: I never said that.

Mr. Storie: Well, if the minister did not say that, I want to know why there is not some balance in this legislation. I want to know why this legislation is deemed to be necessary. I want to know why, despite all of the facts to the contrary, this attack is on the ability of unions to organize and to get a first contract. Why is that necessary? There are no facts to support the contention that that is part of the underlying problem in creating jobs and creating opportunity in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Ed Connery (Portage la Prairie): What does your colleague Sid Green say about their labour legislation? He was a great New Democrat.

Mr. Storie: Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Connery) wants to talk about what Mr. Green has to say about labour legislation. We all have our own agendas. We all have our own prejudices, and Mr. Green has his own prejudices, but I am asking this Chamber and I am asking the member for Portage la Prairie, a former Minister of Environment, and Consumer and Corporate Affairs, I am asking him to set aside his ideological position and assess what you are doing on the basis of what it is supposed to accomplish.

The Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), when he introduced this legislation on May 12, said that this legislation was going to, and I quote, improve the operation of the current act.

According to whom, by what standard, and what objective evidence? There is no objective evidence, and the people who are impacted by it are saying it is not going to improve it at all, so what is the purpose of this? What is the motivation? Who is he trying to appease by this legislation? Because clearly he cannot say with any degree of integrity that this is going to improve the operation of the act.

To show you even further that this press release is nothing more than a cynical public relations effort, the minister goes on to talk about what the amendments are. Does he talk about the substantive issue in this amendment to the Labour Relations Act? No. He says these amendments uphold the rights of employees to join a union and bargain collectively.

It does not say, of course, that they are undermining the ability of unions to organize collectively to begin with, that that is part of the intention. He says their purpose is to provide greater certainty in the certification process—greater

certainty—and of course he goes about in the legislation making certain that the greater certainty is that there will not be any unionized work force, that a certification process will not take place. That is what the minister means when he talks about greater certainty—not greater certainty that there is fairness, because clearly that is not going to take place.

He goes on to say: the elimination of misuse of first contract provisions and provide for some general housekeeping of the act.

What does the minister mean by general housekeeping? Well, of course, what he means is taking power away from those who are trying to organize and giving power to those who are trying to oppose it. I go back and reiterate that this legislation stems from the belief that somehow there is something inherently wrong, something inherently dangerous about organized work forces, there is something inherently dangerous about unions. I point out, Madam Deputy Speaker, that country after country in western Europe and Japan have economies that are working, are functioning at a much more acceptable level than ours is currently, that those countries also enjoy a higher standard of quality of work, wage levels and employment safety. It is not putting them in a less competitive position. Organized labour is not the bugaboo that members opposite seem to think it is.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, what does the minister talk about when he says that we are going to provide greater certainty, we are going to improve this legislation? It is a thinly disguised attack, a thinly disguised attack.

I want to talk about some of the ways I see this legislation undermining what has been a reasonably if not modestly successful piece of legislation.

What does the minister intend to do? Well, first of all, he is now going to require unions to have at least 65 percent of a work force signed up before there is a compulsory vote. Well, why the change from 55 percent, which is a majority; a majority of the people in the work force, in that workplace have already said, yes, I want to belong to the union. What is the objective of moving to 65 percent? Well, there is only one conclusion, to make it more difficult—to make it more difficult.

Madam Deputy Speaker, then the minister says, well, we are expanding the range within which a certification vote is mandatory. The range goes

now, instead of 45 to 55, it goes from 40 to 65. Well, of course the minister knows and the unions have demonstrated throughout the course of the effect of The Labour Relations Act that they are going to have at least 50 percent, 50 plus one, before they apply for certification.

So saying that the range is greater is really smoke and mirrors. Nobody believes that this is actually any attempt to bring modest improvements to The Labour Relations Act. The minister says from his seat that in fact, he said, most certifications occur, about 70 percent of them, he said, occur with more than, I think it is 80 percent almost, occur with more than 70 percent of members signed up in a workplace.

That of course leads to the question, why this legislation then? Why this legislation? What is the point of it? If he has already acknowledged that in most cases, No. 1, the unions do not apply for certification until they have at least 50 percent and, No. 2, that 80 percent of the certifications occur with 80 percent of the work force signed up, or 70 percent, he said, what is the point of this? The point is to make it more difficult.

* (1530)

Madam Deputy Speaker, if those amendments were the only ones contemplated by the bill, then one would say, well, you know maybe he really is trying to expand that area of uncertainty and deal with that uncertainty by calling for a compulsory vote but, of course, if you read on in the bill you find out that there is another, even more sinister purpose behind this legislation.

It comes with respect to obligations that are now imposed on unions and rights that are conferred on management, the proverbial double whammy which no one, of course, would have contemplated from this government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what this minister is now proposing is that unions, in their certification drive, basically have to be lawyers. They have to be able to deal with a law that is becoming increasingly complex and bureaucratic and will give, I think, and perhaps the minister will confirm, an open opportunity for people to challenge certification votes.

I would like the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) to answer this question honestly when he finishes debate on second reading. Does the minister believe that the amendments that provide these new

obligations, require unions to ensure for example that membership dues are fully explained? Madam Deputy Speaker, the point is that these certification votes could be overturned based on someone's perceived objection to something that was said with respect to or information that was given with respect to the signing up of an individual member.

Well, of course, one person can affect the numbers, one person. Of course, the smaller the bargaining unit, the more important one person becomes. That leads me to my point exactly.

In this province and across this country, the people who are in the most need of protection, the people who are in most need of improvements to their working conditions and their benefits are now more and more isolated in small workplaces.

The Minister of Labour knows, for example, that of all the jobs that have been created—and goodness knows, there have not been very many jobs created in the province of Manitoba in the last couple of years—but probably over the last decade of all the jobs created, the majority of the jobs are in small businesses, in small workplaces, where the number of employees may be anywhere from five to 25.

This legislation, Madam Deputy Speaker, is going to make it increasingly difficult for those kinds of workplaces to organize. The former Minister of Energy and Mines may not like that, but the fact of the matter is that even in small workplaces there have been significant improvements in benefits to workers when you compare the unionized businesses to the nonunionized businesses. I know, the minister will say that is not always the case, and I would agree with him, not always the case.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if you look across the country, if you look around the world, workers who enjoy the highest standard of living, workers who enjoy the safest working conditions, workers who enjoy in many cases the most security, are unionized work forces. Whether you are talking about Germany or Sweden or France or the United States or Japan, that is the case.

There is nothing inherently negative with respect to union involvement and the work ethic. I know a lot of union members across my constituency whose work ethic is as solid as anybody in this Chamber, many. Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not want the former Minister of Energy and Mines to confuse belonging to a union with the work ethic, because

those two things are not to be confused and that union members have the same kind of work ethic, in virtually every case, as any other worker.

There is another element to this. I have already talked about the obligations which have been imposed on unions when it comes to the certification process. I want now to talk about the other obligation, the other right that is conferred by this legislation. This is a right that has been excluded from labour relations bills in this province for decades. That is, I guess, in the words of the minister, the right of management to express reasonable opinions with respect to the certification process.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there can be no doubt that this is an amendment that has significant potential to cause disruption, to cause animosity, hostility in the workplace. We believe that—certainly I believe that the minister's intention here was to balance the scale, to allow management to provide some sort of insight into the process.

The danger is—and I hope the minister understands this, because I am predicting here and I am certainly prepared to be held accountable to my words, I am predicting that this very small amendment which gives management the right to—I am trying to find the exact words here—offer a reasonable opinion, to present what he calls statements of facts or reasonably held opinions—is going to be the sleeper in this legislation.

As we have found in this Chamber many times, and as you have ruled, in fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, on many occasions, a dispute over the facts is not a point of order. That is what we are going to have now, because opinion is not fact and prejudice is not fact; a belief system is not fact; an ideological foundation is not fact; a philosophy of life is not fact.

Now we are saying that management has the right to attempt to impose—although we are using less harsh language—their view of the world on workers who are about to organize. That is what we are doing.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister should know that those—in many cases, not all, but in many cases—a certification drive creates its own frustration, its own anxieties and it affects both the employers and the employees. The employees are uncertain. They do not know how, for example,

management is going to take their desire to unionize.

Management are sitting there wondering whether dealing with the union and collective bargaining and the health and safety committees and all of the other things that are going to be requested by the union that be done are going to be manageable. So you begin this process understanding that a certification drive has built in potential for disruption, for hostility, for conflict, and I think we all agree on that.

What the minister has now introduced is a legal means by which management can stir this confrontation either intentionally or unintentionally. It is no longer simply a question which was the question, I guess, asked and answered when The Labour Relations Act was introduced those many years ago in the province of Manitoba, does this work force want to unionize? Do they want to be part of a collective agreement? The answer, depending on the circumstance, depending on whether at least 50 percent of the members said yes, we had a yes or no. The union members got to decide.

I own a small business. Yes, I can understand business people wanting to say, well, I am not sure that I should not have a say in this, but one of the reasons that there was a decision made not to allow, not to interfere in that certification process was that we get very quickly into the issue of what is fact and what is opinion, what is real and what is unreal, what are the consequences going to be or what are they not going to be.

* (1540)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not think there is a business person in this province who would not rather have control rather than give up some control, who would not rather set the agenda rather than have others participate in the setting of the agenda. I understand that dilemma.

I am concerned that this minister, in giving in to that desire, is going to create a situation where hostility is the likely outcome because, when a work force is being unionized and we are dealing with people who are insecure, people who are uncertain about their tenure, people who are uncertain about unions perhaps, the opportunity now for management to involve themselves by producing material, by speaking candidly in terms of their own philosophical view, not necessarily based on fact, is going to spur argument, debate, dissension and

possibly increase the likelihood of violence, because it is certainly going to make these certification processes much more heated affairs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister may honestly believe that he is introducing this in the interest of promoting harmony, but that is not going to be the consequence. Quite frankly, I do not believe that is the minister's intention at all. I think it is the minister's intention to reduce the number of certifications in the province, make it more difficult for certifications to take place and allow for the intimidation in one way or another of work forces who may be contemplating getting involved in the certification process.

Madam Deputy Speaker, how much time do I have?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member has seven minutes remaining.

Mr. Storle: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am only on page 2 of what is going to be a rather lengthy review of this legislation, but I may be able to get leave to speak for another several minutes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is another interesting contradiction, and I have pointed out I hope for the minister what we see, what I see, as the fundamental flaw in this legislation.

The minister talks in his press release about introducing fairness. On the one hand, he is creating an obligation for the group trying to organize and, on the other hand, he is creating a new right for management.

We always believed that The Labour Relations Act as it existed in Manitoba was relatively fair, that there was a balance, and we in Manitoba also introduced legislation to try and create some new opportunities to resolve disputes.

What the government is doing, on the one hand creating an obligation, on the other a right, Madam Deputy Speaker, is also symbolized in the language that they have chosen to use. I want to just refer to the language in two specific examples. In the section in this bill that deals with the obligation of the unions when a certification drive is in process, the legislation uses the words that the union shall not, or no member shall use threats, intimidation or coercion, implying that somehow the unions are more likely to use threats or coercion than management.

In the section of the bill that refers to the new rights of the management, it talks about an unfair labour practice. Even the language in this bill is not balanced. Unions threaten and coerce and antagonize and coerce, but management only has an unfair labour practice.

Both of these, if the minister wanted to be straightforward and use the proper language, would be unfair labour practices even using the definitions of the bill. It is just indicative of the underlying sentiment that led to the presentation of this legislation in the Chamber. That is what it speaks to, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I urge the Minister of Labour, if this legislation proceeds, to amend the wording to make it balanced and fair, at a minimum. I do not expect that we are going to be able to change the government's mind or this minister's mind with respect to this legislation, and unless there are members on the benches on that side that come to their senses and say, no, we want fair legislation, not one-sided, it may be the only kind of amendment that we can logically expect.

There are a number of other sections that are of concern, but one of the principle ones, I guess, is one of the amendments allows the Labour Board to disallow applications on a broader basis because of the obligations that are put on the unions doing the organizing drive.

Again, I do not know whether the intention of the government was to up the notch of suspicion that exists between the Manitoba Federation of Labour and labour unions generally and this minister and this government, but again that appears to be the intention. It is like, quite frankly, waving a red flag, implying somehow that the unions have been or are coercing members into signing union cards.

I do not believe that is the case. Certainly there are many organizers who, when they are involved in organization drives are quite emphatic about why someone should or should not belong to the union, but there is no reason to believe that this kind of language or that kind of amendment is necessary in The Labour Relations Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know I only have a couple of minutes left but I want to just reiterate a number of points. This legislation is not necessary.

We had labour relations legislation in place in this province that had led us, over a number of years to labour peace. I reiterate that when this government

took office, Manitoba had the fewest days lost due to strikes of any province except Prince Edward Island. In fact, I believe that we were almost equal with Prince Edward Island.

This government successively has eliminated progressive labour legislation in the province. This is another example, because of an ideological bias, not because of any demonstrable need in terms of the economic well-being of the province or the economic well-being of an individual business in this province.

I point out that our labour force is less organized, less unionized than many of the countries against which we compete directly, including France and Sweden and Germany and Japan. Any attempt on the part of the government to limit the certification of new unions, to limit the right of members to belong, to take advantage of the benefits of collective bargaining and the rights of union membership I think is a step backward.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate that given the nature of this legislation, which is only going to affect those people in the province who are seeking to certify at this point, he is affecting probably the weakest and some of the lowest-paid workers in our province and particularly women, who have for a long time lacked the benefits that many other people in unionized work forces—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that debate be adjourned.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member—[interjection] As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

* * *

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would ask that you now call Bill 70.

Bill 70—The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Deputy 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). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Leave? [Agreed]

* (1550)

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Deputy Speaker, the purpose of Bill 70, The Social Allowance Amendment Act, according to the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), is to standardize the social allowance rates across all parts of the province, including the city of Winnipeg, and to make equal access by vulnerable Manitobans to those standardized social allowance rates.

If we look generally in our modern society, people are funny. They spend money they do not have, they buy things they do not need, and they impress people they do not like. I think one of the causes of poverty in Canada is the institution of the credit card. The best way to abolish poverty in Canada and elsewhere is to abolish the credit card. If you can only spend what you have then you do not go into debt. Canada is reputed to have one of the world's highest standard of living. The paradox is that we also want and we are seeking the highest standard of poverty. This is now being achieved by Bill 70.

If our government will only spend the money that it pays to consultants to study the poor, if they will only spend that money to help the poor themselves, the poor will greatly benefit rather than the consultant who studied—

An Honourable Member: Then the consultants would be the poor too, and the studiers would be poor.

Mr. Santos: Then they will have a taste of poverty and they know how it is to be in poverty.

In principle, the rule of one standard policy for all recipients of social allowance is good, because everybody falls under the same rule provided that the rules are based on objective standard criteria. If they are based on the unbridled discretion of one person, with due respect, even with the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), then there could be some problem in administration.

In principle, if any kind of rule is based on unbridled uncontrolled judgment it is liable to be misapplied and it may result in inequities and injustice in our society. Indeed there might be instances where such discretion may be used to the detriment of the legitimate needs of the recipient of social assistance.

What is the situation right now? The situation right now is that almost 90 percent of social recipients live in the city of Winnipeg, and the city has such a generous social assistance program that it gives higher rates, higher allowances than any rural municipality.

The rural municipality therefore is to be expected that it will be acting in its own interest if it will give the least it could give to anyone who is asking for social assistance, because that will give the motivation to the recipient to leave the municipality and go to the city of Winnipeg where the level of assistance is higher. That is probably the reason why we are depopulating our rural areas. From the point of view of the municipality that is good for the municipality because they get rid of these problem people in their own mind, in their own perspective. They get rid of the vulnerable people in our society, but that is working against the cause of the poor.

It is the duty of all governments to defend the cause of the poor, the unfortunate in society, not to continually vex them or at times even oppress them. If anyone would do things that would oppress the poor and exercise their judgment in a perverse manner, they themselves will soon pay for what they do to those who are needy and helpless in our society.

Indeed, the unfortunate segment of our society has been overly studied. We spend too much money studying poverty rather than solving it by trying to give them opportunities, in order that they can exercise their talent, they can find work, and they can make their own contribution to society.

What this bill will tend to do will be to set the minimal level that even the City of Winnipeg, unless it is willing to seek additional sources to sustain and fund its own social allowance program, will not be able to do so, because the province will only reimburse 50 percent of what the province itself considers as desirable rates. If the City of Winnipeg is therefore placed in such an undesirable horns of a dilemma of either to lower the level of social assistance or to maintain it, but at their own initiative

to seek additional funding from other sources, other than grants from the province.

At the present situation, people sometimes need to seek other jurisdictions in order to find a higher level of social assistance that will meet their basic needs. Because of the miserably low rates of social assistance in rural areas, they are effectively driving the rural people to go and leave the rural areas and go to the city where they can find a more or less higher level of assistance that they need in order to live their lives.

It is in the self-interest of the rural municipality to give the lowest possible social assistance they could give and, therefore, it will be ridding itself of some problem people, in their own perspective, because these people will be forced to leave the municipality.

* (1600)

Of course, the application of different rules, the application of different rates, the application of different procedures, will result in different situations productive of inequities. If inequities abound, people get dissatisfied. There is a reasonable need for a single policy, a single-tier social allowance system based on a single and uniform rule. These uniform rules must be rules that will be geared to the basic needs of people, not geared to the level of financial funds that can be given by the province. Unless the standards of uniform rules and procedures, rules for eligibility are based on objectively determined standards, there will be no certainty in the application of the rules.

Under the present proposal, under Bill 70, there is a built-in flexibility for any municipality to be able to exceed the provincially regulated rates, the provincially approved rates. The only question is whether or not the province will be willing to reimburse those municipalities which, in their own sound discretion, would like to exceed the provincially regulated rates.

Of course, the corresponding decision of any municipality will depend on the possibility or nonpossibility of their being reimbursed for any additional benefits that they would like to give the recipients beyond and above the provincially approved rates. Right now, some of the assistance budget is so small that some people are forced to cut on their discretionary items. They even cut on their budget for their food or their personal needs or their basic need for food in order to pay the rent.

It is not dishonourable to be poor. Sometimes you become a victim of circumstances, especially in these days of economic downturn, in these times of recession in our country, in our province. A person with a job may be the victim of a layoff. The factory or the company that he is working for may find it necessary to lay off some employees. Of course, it is not the fault of anybody. The person lost his job. He applies for unemployment insurance benefits. While waiting, he may want to apply for some emergency social allowance.

So poverty is not caused by your own doing. It is not a matter of choice. There is nothing dishonourable in being poor. You only lose your honour in being poor when it is caused by your own idleness or your own intemperance or your own extravagance and foolishness. When we hear someone say that poverty builds character, and if you look at that person making the remark, you are probably looking at a person who is relatively rich and wealthy.

Another reason why people become poor in our country and in this province is because of excessive rates and high levels of taxation. Therefore it is logical to say that if we want to help abolish poverty, maybe the first thing that we should abolish are some of the excessive taxes that are causing people to get poor, and driving them to poverty.

Maybe it is not too speculative to say that the Goods and Services Tax is an instant formula for instant poverty for some people. That is the reason why they are withholding on spending the little they have saved because every time they make a major purchase they have to pay this Goods and Services Tax whether they like it or not.

The funny thing about our policy and our practice in our society is that we try to improve on many aspects of our lives. We try to improve many things, improve our home, improve our house, improve our parking lot instead of improving our own people. There is a scramble to improve on everything else except to improve the condition of our own people, the conditions of the poor who are victims of circumstance.

If we are to solve the problem of the poor, we have to show some kind of rational policy that would not encourage idleness, but would encourage them to develop their initiative and ability and help them retrain in some of the skills that they need, in order that they may find themselves and contribute their

efforts and their talents to the improvement of our social and economic life, by training them in socially useful skills that will help them find a job that they need so that they may find the dignity and the self-confidence of a citizen contributing to the welfare of the entire society.

Although we may be rich in natural resources, we should stop pretending that we are rich in everything. Scarcity is a rule of life, but we should not scrimp on the needs of the needy because it will be oppressing the poor and the afflicted in our society.

If we oppress the poor by cutting down on their basic needs, we are in effect reproaching the Maker who makes it all but, if we have shown compassion and understanding to the plight of the needy, if we have shown mercy and help and assistance to those who need the help that we need, then we are doing righteousness, because it is the duty of all governments to help the needy and the poor, to do justice to the afflicted, for the needy shall not always be forgotten.

When the poor need some needs and seek water because their tongue is dry and they could find nothing to quench their thirst, the Lord will hear them and will not forsake them. A man is not truly poor because he has no money or no property, he is truly poor when he does nothing for himself and for others.

If you only adhere to certain basic values and wisdom that we inherited from our elders, like the advice that we should spend only what we earn, then there will be enough that is left that is saved, and we will not find ourselves in a position of being needy and poor, but we were foolish enough to indulge in things that we cannot afford and spend more than what we can earn. Of course, we can never get out of debt. That is the beginning of problems for the individual and for society as well.

* (1610)

This Bill 70 talks about the province reimbursing the municipalities, but they only reimburse 50 percent of salary and wages of those staff in the poverty program of the municipalities and also 50 percent of the administrative costs, provided that the minister approves the cost of social assistance being given by such municipality. In other words, the municipalities are to provide social allowance, but they should do so within the framework of The Social Allowances Act.

If the by-law of any municipality should be in conflict with the provision of The Social Allowances Act of Manitoba, or with the provision of any agreement with the federal government in accordance with The Social Allowances Act of Manitoba, then the agreement with the federal government, within the framework of The Social Allowances Act, the provincial legislation will prevail over the municipal by-law relating to the system of social assistance.

As a principle the single-tier social allowance policy, the single rule, the uniformity rule is desirable in itself, but in effect, because of the existing situation right now, it may actually result in the reduction of that now being provided by the City of Winnipeg, which constitutes 90 percent of all the social allowance recipients in the entire province of Manitoba. It will be pulling down the rates in order to help the 10 percent who are being underfunded in the sense that they receive social allowance rates.

If the city would try to maintain its own level of funding for its own social welfare recipients, the city has no assurance that it will get refunded for the extra cost of running this social allowance program. The government will probably in effect try to implement the lowest possible rate it could possibly get away with, impervious to the crying needs of the social welfare recipients. There will be uniformity—true—but this will be uniformity at the gutter level, at the lowest level, even below the poverty rates. This uniformity to my mind is the uniformity of the graveyard. To reach such common lowest possible rate would be impacting upon the most vulnerable social welfare recipients in our city.

True, the eligibility for social allowance has been extended to recently separated and recently deserted single-parent families, but at the present time, even this rate has been so insufficient and inadequate to provide for the basic necessities and needs of people in poverty, particularly the needs of the children, as evidenced by the line-ups in the food banks in many churches and other charitable outlets in the city.

If the department of social services will reimburse only 50 percent of what the province decides as desirable, as reasonable, then the City of Winnipeg either has to raise taxes to bolster its social welfare budget or cut down the services. Most probably, it will have to cut down its services because of the

economic conditions prevailing in this province and in the entire nation of Canada.

We should remember that the budget that a family has access to has a direct correlation with the physical and mental development and growth of the members of that family, particularly the young children. If these children are deprived of their basic nutritional requirements, they cannot be expected to develop into normal physical and mentally mature individuals. They would be deficient, both physically and mentally, and they will be a continuing social problem for the province, for the city, for the country.

The only advantage that we can see about the uniformity of eligibility requirements and uniformity of rates and uniformity of benefits across the province is that there will be no need for people to transfer their residence in order to achieve higher rates of social welfare benefits. Wherever they are, the rate will be the same.

That itself is questionable, because maybe the price level is not as uniform as it seems in all parts of the province. There might be places in the province where the cost of basic necessities is relatively higher than other places. If the rates are the same, but the costs are different, then it will be more expensive for some social welfare recipients to live in one place than in another because the price does not correspond with the level of benefits that they receive.

So this will have to be complemented by an enlightened provincial policy to, in case of doubt, reimburse those municipalities that find it necessary to offer social assistance rates higher than the provincially regulated rate if it is justified by the social and economic circumstances of the particular locality. Then there will be an exception to the uniformity and one-tier policy and, when the general rule is riddled with so many exceptions, the exceptions become the general rule rather than the general rule itself.

We become truly poor when we are poor in ideas and poor in purpose and objectives. Even if financial and revenue sources are limited as they always are, if we are innovative in our ideas and our policy, we shall be able to achieve justice, fairness and equity in our society.

Sometimes even our social assistance program is subject to abuses by some people who take advantage of the system. This cannot be denied,

and this is just evidence of human weakness and human frailty. It happens everywhere, so that we have to separate situations of the needy, the true needy, from the situation of those who are simply greedy and senseless to the needs of others by taking advantage of any social benefit when we are more than capable of making our own living simply because we want to be idle or lazy.

* (1620)

It is not good for the individual or for society itself, but you cannot legislate against human frailties like idleness or laziness. It is a person's right to make a choice whether he will be industrious or he will be lazy, if he is willing to suffer the consequences of his choice.

It is a good thing that in Manitoba, there is at present, an effective law created judicially that there is no compulsory retirement in this province. Otherwise, in this province, at the rate that you will be getting on your meagre pension, compulsory retirement means compulsory poverty.

Indeed, this is the situation of many of our senior citizens on limited income. They complain about the high cost of rent and accommodation, the high cost of basic necessities like food and clothing, and in addition, the excessive high rates of taxation that apply to all of these items of basic necessities.

Sometimes, we think that it is good to be wealthy and rich. [interjection] Yes, it is in a limited sense, because with money, perhaps you can buy some things, but not everything. Money is the only thing—funny again—because you can only enjoy it if you are willing to part with it, I mean if you are willing to spend it. If you love money so much that you want to live with it and put it under your pillow, it cannot help you at all. It is only when you are willing to part with it, to spend it, and get the equivalent value, that you are able to enjoy it.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

The true wealth of a person in this world is not the amount of money that he has or the number of assets that he possesses—[interjection] It is true. Well, it is the number of good things that he has done in his life. Those people who have wealth, they should be able to know when they already have enough. The trouble with having so much is that you think you possess power because you have property. Not so, sometimes, your property possesses you. You become the slave of your own property because it ties you down. You cannot do

what you want to do. You cannot even travel because you will be leaving it to your accountant and you are afraid that he may cheat you.

Edmund Burke said, and I quote: If we command our wealth we shall be rich and free, but if our wealth commands us, then we are poor indeed. We are bought by the enemy with the treasures in our own coffers.

Of course, the more wealth a person has, the more economic independence he can achieve, but economic independence does not mean that the man is truly free in matters of choice. The higher he goes up in the social scale, the more respect he gets, the more responsibilities are attached to him, and the more responsibilities he gets, the less free he is than before.

The acquisition of wealth sometimes becomes the preoccupation of some individuals in life. That preoccupation to be wealthy drives them sometimes to sacrifice their own health. Later on, when they have so much wealth, and they lose their health, they are willing to give everything they have in order to regain their health, which they can no longer regain.

An Honourable Member: It is too late.

Mr. Santos: Too late. Moreover, the possession of so much wealth is the cause of continuing fear of losing it. When you have actually lost the wealth that you acquired, then that is the beginning of your excessive grief because you spend all your life working for it, which in the end accounts for nothing because of certain mistakes that you commit. If a person spends as much as he earns all the time, he will never be richer than what he is now but, if he saves a little every time that he makes or earns, therefore it is that saving that will make him a little bit better.

If he makes a whole lot and spends a whole lot as well, he ends up with nothing as well. Money does not always increase a man's stature, as we sometimes mistakenly believe. It is only on the surface, because the more you adorn your life with many of these artificialities of life, the more they notice how small a stature you have.

So we should always take time to think how we spend our life. It is sometimes good to philosophize about many things in life. So let us take time that we work because we know that work is the price that we pay if we want to achieve success. We take time to think because thought is the source of

contentment. We take time to love, because love is the privilege of the divine. We take time to have compassion and help the poor, because helping the poor is doing righteousness as individuals and as members of society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (1630)

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak to this bill, Bill 70, because I am very concerned about the implications it might have on people that live in the constituency of Point Douglas.

Some of the members are saying, are we for it or against it? If we knew what was in this bill, maybe we could say if we are for it or against it. When you have a bill like this in front of you and you read through it, it does not tell you very much. One of the things that we are very concerned about is, when you look at a one-tier system of social assistance and compare it to what the people get through the City of Winnipeg, which is a much higher rate, will the government raise the rate? Will the government raise it to that rate or will they lower everybody's rate to the lower rate?

An Honourable Member: What would you like, George?

Mr. Hickes: I would like to see everything raised to one top level.

An Honourable Member: You want more taxes, eh?

Mr. Hickes: He says, more taxes. If you created more employment opportunities, you would have more taxes coming in. You have a government that spends \$19 million more on social assistance and not invest any of those dollars to create employment opportunities, where when you create employment opportunities, you are changing an individual's whole life and their whole family's life.

When you have people that have been on social assistance for years, it is almost impossible to get off unless you have education programs to educate the person that is on that social assistance. If you educate that one individual and put that individual through a training program and get off social assistance and get into meaningful opportunities, then you are saving taxes from people because the whole family will get that education, will have a role model to follow, and then you do not have the same family members that are applying to social

assistance programs generation after generation. That seems to be lost.

As soon as you hear about the whole emphasis about increasing social assistance rates to give people the opportunity to live with a little bit of dignity and a little bit of pride in their lives and hopefully get into training and employment opportunities and get off that social assistance, they say, you want to collect more taxes to pay for those programs.

If you look at the long-range implication it has on people, you are saving taxes. You are saving a lot more money by giving people the adequate resources to live a reasonably comfortable life. Even if you look at the cost of individuals that are undernourished and the children of those families that do not have the access to daily milk and other vitamins that are essential to our health, that escalates our health costs.

So, is that collecting more taxes? I do not think so. I think what it is, it is saving taxes, it is not spending more. When you look at a two-tiered system and make it into one where you have the City of Winnipeg rates higher than the province, at least they are trying to give people a little bit better decent life than what they have in other parts of this province.

When you have a two-tiered system, is this government going to use the lowest rate and save approximately \$5 million on the backs of the poorest, the weakest, the least influential people? Is that what this government is trying to do?

An Honourable Member: We are using the provincial rate.

Mr. Hickes: Provincial rate, he says, we are using the provincial rate. What happens to the people that are on city rates? Do they have to be cut down to meet the province's rate?

An Honourable Member: No, they do not.

Mr. Hickes: Well, that is the kind of information that is lacking in this bill. Nobody has told us. Nobody has explained this to us, and if that is the case, to save \$5 million on the poorest, the poorest of the poor.

We even have the working poor, the people who are working for \$5, \$6 an hour, who are just barely making ends meet, who have no hope ever in their life to own a home, to have their own shelter for their own families.

Then you have people who are on social assistance who are even poorer than the working poor. [interjection] The Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst) says, some are better off. Yes, some are probably better off, but overall the welfare program is a safety net program. You have abusers of whatever program that is in place. I do not care if it is a health program, if it is the unemployment insurance program, or the social assistance program, you have individuals who will abuse some systems. Yes, some individuals are better off, but most are not better off.

You tell me, a single mother who has four or five children and working at \$5, \$6 an hour, that person would have a heck of a time making ends meet. If you take a family of a single mother with three or four or five children on social assistance, what kind of a life do they have? Can that mother ever hope to have their own home for their family?

If you look at that single person who is on social assistance, most of those individuals have very low education levels. If you look at that individual, a lot of them have come from a family who has been on social assistance in the past.

That is a trend that I hope governments, no matter who they are, whether Progressive Conservatives, Liberals, New Democratic Party, will work to try and overcome. [interjection] Progressive Conservatives, like the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) says. But that is a problem that we should all look at seriously and address very, very seriously.

Today if you look at the food banks that have escalated right across Canada, not only in Manitoba, but right across Canada, and the children who have to use those food banks, that should be a strong message to us to try and do something positive for the people.

We do not have to always just think about these things that we can do for companies or corporations or people who are already working and have homes and cars, we can start to try to help the children to get away from the food banks, and the families to get education opportunities, upgrade themselves, and get into meaningful careers. That should be a goal of all members sitting here, all 57 members, not only on that side of the House, this side of the House, or Liberals on that side of the House, it should be a goal for all of us.

Like the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) said, improve the human conditions, improve the opportunities and life for the 60,000 to 70,000 people in Winnipeg alone who have to rely on social assistance today to make ends meet. We have also, on top of that, close to 60,000 people who have no jobs—no jobs, and no hope for jobs unless we do something to create employment opportunities.

We have spent an additional \$90 million on social assistance programs. How many of those individuals, 60,000 to 70,000, who are on social assistance would not grasp the opportunity for an education and an opportunity to get into meaningful careers? There would be a very, very low number.

* (1640)

These people have not had the opportunity for one reason or whatever. These individuals are the ones who need the opportunity to get educated, upgrade their education and get assistance to get into a meaningful career or a job, not a \$5- or \$6-an-hour job where you are just moving from one existence to another existence, where you can create some opportunities to get some nice things for your families.

You know, we talk about this whole bill and I really have fears, because the whole social assistance program, if it is attacking the poor people and the people who really cannot stand up, or will not stand up and fight on their own, if it is attacking them, you are not only attacking them, you are attacking their children. A lot of those children are very young and they have not had an opportunity yet.

This bill is very unclear to say whether I support it or not. It is very, very unclear. We have to get more information on this bill to say whether we support it or not. It is not a cut-and-dried bill; that is the whole problem. We do not know what this bill is saying.

Is it going to take the social assistance rate to the higher city level? Is it going to lower the rate, to tell the individuals who are drawing at least a little more reasonable rate from the city than the province, or I would recommend very highly that we increase the rate to have the opportunity—

An Honourable Member: Where would you take that money from?

Mr. Hickes: Well, if you look at your budget, how about trying to tax the corporations a little bit? What is wrong with that? [interjection] I am not in Ontario, I am speaking in Manitoba and I cannot speak for Ontario.

This whole bill, if it was a bill to seriously address the people on social assistance, the children, the adults and the increased use of food banks, if the members would go into discussions with some of their colleagues, talk to the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) and ask him if there is a food bank in the community of Beausejour.

An Honourable Member: There is.

Mr. Hickes: There is. When was that opened up? Did they ever have one in the past in the community of Beausejour? That is a farming community. That is a community that supplies the food for citizens right across Canada.

An Honourable Member: They have a food bank now.

Mr. Hickes: They have a food bank now. Did they ever have that in the past? I do not remember. There is something drastically, drastically wrong when we have more individuals and more children—the poor are getting poorer and poorer.

They say, well, you want to raise the taxes. If that is your comment, I say, tax the corporations a little bit. They are making millions and millions of dollars—if they share the wealth a little, just a little bit. [interjection] Well, no, but I am just referring to food banks that have just sprouted up all over Manitoba, even in your University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, Red River Community College, students have opened food banks. Students have opened food banks in 1991, 1992. This is not a Third World country. [interjection] Kelvin High School, too? So it is spreading into the whole education area.

We never saw that four or five years ago the way it is escalating now.

An Honourable Member: What is happening in Point Douglas, George?

Mr. Hickes: Point Douglas, I have been door-knocking, and I have been talking to people and there is such a high number of people who are on social assistance. During the mornings when I go and some of the individuals who I spoke to on the weekends, it is increasing almost on a daily basis. The people I talk to are not saying, we are lazy and we want to be on social assistance, that this is the way of life we want. What I hear being said is, we want training opportunities, we want job opportunities, we want a chance for a job. If you look at most of those people who I have spoken to, a lot of them are single parents who are on social assistance.

I was just talking to a mother, in fact, yesterday and then again today, and I was really pleased to hear when the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) got up and said, even if the federal government is going to offload onto aboriginal students, we will pick up that cost. I was very pleased to hear that because the call I got was from a single mother who depends on that ACCESS funding to finish her career, her education career. She has one year to go and she was worried that she would have to drop out. What would have happened to that person? That person, more than likely, would have had to go to either a low-paying job or maybe go onto a social assistance program.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Acting Speaker, the initiative that the minister took, I applaud her for that, that is a good initiative. I hope that she will press very strongly—very, very strongly—to her cousins in Ottawa to reinstate that ACCESS funding. The whole key to overturn poverty has to be education. It has to be education. Through education, we should have job opportunities for people. Without education, we will have the same cycle year after year after year, generation after generation, and I think, this is 1992, and times have to change.

When you talk about people on social assistance and people living in poverty, it has to have a tremendous, tremendous drain on our whole health care program. It has to have a tremendous impact. How much is that costing us? It has to cost millions and millions of dollars.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) said many times, prevention is the best cure. I agree with him. Prevention is the best cure.

An Honourable Member: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Mr. Hickes: That is right and I fully, fully support that. An ounce of prevention is a pound of cure. I fully believe that.

In order to do that, you do not try to save \$5 million this year. Eventually it is going to cost you maybe \$125 million in a couple of years down the road. That does not make any common sense at all. You save for today, but you pay tomorrow. I do not know, I have a hard time with that.

If you look at the sort of the norm of a person who is on social assistance, it is usually a single parent, one child, and low education. Also, what happens to people with disabilities? The single mother with

low education, and the disabled people who are on social assistance, what happens to those individuals if the rate is lowered? They have a tough enough time right now to make ends meet, a very tough time.

You can go into Point Douglas, the constituency that I represent, and go into some of those homes. You will see some of the nicest, cleanest homes you will ever see, but you look on the outside, and it needs painting, or the stairs have been broken, and the landlords have not fixed it up, but those individuals have tried their utmost to make it the nicest, cleanest home that they have.

If you look at the furniture in those homes, a lot of them are hand-me-downs, second-hand furniture, and you look at the kids—second-hand clothing, very little toys. Those are the kinds of things that we take for granted in our lives. We take for granted that we are going to have nice clothes, we are going to have a home, and our children will have adequate toys. If they want to go to hockey, we will register them in hockey. We will send them to hockey school if need be. We take that kind of life for granted.

Some days, and many, many of those days, we forget. We forget about how other people live, and also how some of us were brought up. Some days I forget that. Some days I do that, but there are always things that come up that pull you back to reality. Without an education, without job opportunity, you will be stuck in that same rut over and over and over.

If you go into the northern communities, the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) has been in a lot of those northern communities. He knows what I am talking about. You go to some of those communities where—[interjection] No, no, he has been in some of those, he knows exactly what I am talking about. He knows there are a lot of those communities with 80 or 90 percent unemployment year after year after year.

You go to some of those homes and the windows are broken, some of them have polyethylene over it and the doors are sort of hung this way, but those communities and those individuals have not had the opportunity. They have not had the opportunity; they were caught in the whole system.

That is why, hopefully, with aboriginal self-government, some of those people who live in poverty will be overturned and their opportunities will be increased, because the whole emphasis has to

be on educating those individuals. Education will mean employment opportunities. [interjection]

* (1650)

If the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) has read Bill 70, I do not even think he could tell me if he is for or against it. I do not know.

There is nothing in here that says—[interjection] You have not even read it. Why are you for it? Justify it. Is it going to be the higher rate? Is it going to be the lower rate? Tell me that. Is it going to be higher rate or lower rate? [interjection] Well, tell me if it is the higher rate or lower rate. [interjection] Equality—that is what the people on social assistance have been asking for years. We want equality. We want a little decency in our lives. We want some decency in our homes. We want some decency for our children. We want some opportunities. We do not want 60,000, 70,000 people on social assistance, almost 60,000 people out of work with no hope for employment opportunities.

Never mind saving \$5 million on the backs of the poorest. Give the people some opportunities to get educated, some opportunities for some jobs. Use some of that \$90 million that has been added to social assistance. Create some jobs for the people.

We have some of the members of the other side standing up and saying, we are creating jobs; we have created jobs. If you look at where those jobs are, most of them are in the service sector, most of them are at minimum wage, most of them are part time. Is that employment opportunities for individuals to raise a family, to plan a career? [interjection] Like the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohma) said, it is hardly even a start. I have to agree with him.

Getting back to northern Manitoba where if you have individuals that live in northern Manitoba—and I have to refer back to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) who is responsible for those northern communities. Individuals in those communities who are unfortunately on social assistance are probably getting 15 percent more, the provincial rate.

Under this bill, what will happen to those northerners? Will that 15 percent be taken away? [interjection] It does not explain that in this bill. [interjection] It does not say that in this bill. That is the whole problem. If it was more clear, if there was an explanation, maybe we would support it, maybe

we would not support it, but there is nothing here that explains it. I am very, very concerned.

The minister knows that when you go into northern remote communities—food is very essential for everyone, and in the northern communities with the cost of transportation, the food that you pay for, even if you look at a can of soup in the city of Winnipeg and buy that same can of food at Tadoule Lake or any of those remote communities, you are paying at least, minimum, 50 percent higher cost. So what happens if the government in its wisdom cuts off that 15 percent that the northern people are collecting?

What will happen? They will have hardly any money at all to buy decent food for their families, which a lot of the northern communities have to depend on their hunting and fishing because they have a very, very tough time to buy adequate meat products, adequate food for their families because the rates are much, much higher. Everyone says it is because of transportation costs. Well, I imagine that transportation costs are high in the North, but I cannot see how they are that much higher.

If you took that away, and if you looked at addressing the lack of job opportunities for individuals and lack of education opportunities, then you are addressing the problem. But how do we make sure that people are going to do that?

In the city of Winnipeg alone, the people on social assistance, the percentage of individuals on social assistance compared to the province, is 80 percent. Eighty percent of the individuals on social assistance live in the city of Winnipeg. That is a high, high number, 80 percent. Why is that? Why is that number so high?

Have you ever had to go to a municipality to apply for social assistance because you do not have adequate education, or you cannot get a decent employment opportunity? What happens to a lot of those individuals? It is so degrading for a lot of the individuals. You have to in front of a council or board and explain why you are applying for social assistance. Everyone in the community knows that these individuals are applying for welfare. People in those communities talk. People have pride. They feel very ashamed to have to go and apply for social assistance for their families.

Then a lot of the communities, because the percentage is cost-shared by the province, will give them a one-way ticket. They will say, go to

Winnipeg, here is a bus ticket, go to Winnipeg, collect social assistance. So that is what happens to a lot of the people. So they end up here. That is how we end up with 80 percent of the people on social assistance on welfare.

If you look at the constituency of Point Douglas, if you look at the individuals who are on social assistance, or the people who have to go to social assistance because of the lack of job opportunities that are facing us today, a lot of those individuals, for the first time in their lives, the first time in their whole life, have had to apply for social assistance—the first time in their life.

To those individuals, they feel humiliated. They feel degraded. What happens when you have individuals who are used to going out to work, working a full day, coming home to a family, their mortgage is paid, their bills are paid, they have decent food on the table—the productive worker. All of a sudden, that is stripped from that individual. What happens? That is where you have escalating social problems.

A lot of those individuals will turn to a little more free time to do a little more drinking, or start abusing drugs, and some individuals will start abusing their spouses. Is that the society we want for the '90s? I do not think so, but that is what happens when people, their dignity and pride is taken away. They go into a shell and they have no opportunity, or they feel that they have no opportunity of ever getting out of that.

That is what has happened to thousands of individuals across Manitoba. There are individuals who have lost all their life savings, have lost their homes, have lost their cars, because of the lack of job opportunities. If you want to overcome poverty, create employment opportunities for people.

When you have individuals who have had to resort to applying to welfare, then you look at those individuals now, where they are at, a lot of them feel trapped. They feel helpless. I have talked to a lot of those individuals when I have been out door-knocking and talking to people. They said, all we want is an opportunity for employment. They said, we want a job; how come the government will not create jobs?

So the answer, I say, is yes, the government says that it will create jobs; the businesses will create jobs for the government. They will stand aside and let the businesses create jobs.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Where are those jobs that the businesses are creating. Even the teenagers are competing against their own parents. Teenagers are competing against their own parents for employment opportunities.

* (1700)

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): I ask, Mr. Speaker, whether or not there is a willingness of the House to waive private members' hour—

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to waive private members' hour?

Mr. Manness: —to continue debate on this bill, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, there is leave.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some announcements of House Business at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I will move the motion to move into Supply roughly at five to six, if there is an agreement amongst the members of the House that we will sit in the Committee of Supply this evening, starting at seven o'clock until eleven o'clock, has been the determined time.

If, indeed, the opposition House leaders want to give an extension upon that time, it is their call. The government is not going to push beyond the agreement. But, indeed, if there is a willingness of the opposition House leaders to extend beyond eleven o'clock, certainly the government would be prepared to listen to them—or into tomorrow morning, if that is the will of the opposition House leaders.

So, Mr. Speaker, if there is unanimous agreement—I know this is outside of the rules—but if there is unanimous consent by the committees at eleven o'clock tonight, the predetermined time at which to rise, if there is unanimous agreement within the committees, to go beyond eleven o'clock, either tonight, or to sit tomorrow morning, that the committees be allowed to make that decision outside of the rules.

An Honourable Member: Agreed, but it has to be unanimous.

Mr. Manness: Unanimous.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is there unanimous consent of the House to reconvene this evening at 7 p.m. in Committee of Supply, from seven to eleven, at which time the committee would be empowered to sit later if there was unanimous consent to carry that on, indeed, to the wee hours of the morning?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Does everybody understand? There is agreement?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, that is done.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, further along, it is my understanding that there has been an agreement reached that in the committee that is now considering Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, that the minister dealing with Decentralization will have his Estimates reviewed starting at seven o'clock. After which time, the Estimates of Culture will resume in that particular committee. I would ask for unanimous consent of the House to waive Rule 65 to allow for that.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): In terms of the intent of getting Decentralization up at seven o'clock, we would have no difficulty in rearranging the order. I would, however, ask that there be some flexibility so that we may go back into Culture after Decentralization at a set period of time, possibly eight o'clock, but it may depend.

An Honourable Member: We have lots of time.

Mr. Ashton: Yes. Perhaps if that could be dealt with at the committee, we would agree to unanimously change the order, subject to the understanding that we could also go into Culture and still leave Decentralization standing if it has not been completed.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to alter the sequence of departments coming forward in Committee of Supply? I believe we want to bring forward Decentralization at 7 p.m. until approximately 8 p.m., at which time we will revert back into Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, that is done. There is agreement.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I have one further request, seeking unanimous support from the House, and that is that the ten o'clock rule with respect to not introducing a new department be waived. But, again, contingent upon the unanimous agreement by all members of the committee at that time.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to waive Rule 65—

Mr. Ashton: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in terms of dealing with what is sitting by leave, I would suggest that we apply the normal rules after ten o'clock with the exception of the rule prohibiting the introduction of a new matter past ten o'clock, because we also have to deal with the contingency of votes if they would apply. I would suggest we deal with them the same way we do after ten o'clock on Mondays, which is that the vote would be taking place at the next sitting of the committee during normal hours.

Mr. Speaker: I believe we just want to waive Rule 65.9(c) which says "the estimates of a department shall not be introduced after 10:00 o'clock." Is it the will of the House to waive that rule?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, that is done. Now, also, we have to waive Rule 69.9(d): "unless the Committee of Supply, or a section of the Committee of Supply, has risen earlier, it shall rise on the completion of the departmental estimates that were under consideration at 10:00 o'clock." Waive?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we will waive that one. That is agreed.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): These agreements are conditional upon the unanimous consent of the committees?

Mr. Speaker: We are giving unanimous consent at this time to waive certain rules to allow the committee to empower them with that power.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs will meet on Monday, June 22, at 10 a.m. to consider the following bills: 20, 34 and 49.

The Standing Committee on Law Amendments which is, at this point, scheduled to meet Thursday morning of this week will also meet on Friday, June

19, at 1 p.m. to consider the following bills: Bills 71, 73 and 75.

Furthermore, the Standing Committee on Economic Development will meet on Monday, June 22, at 10 a.m. to consider the following bills: Bills 9, 61, 62 and 84.

Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections which met earlier this morning will meet on Tuesday, June 23, at 10 a.m. to continue to consider the report and recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Committee.

I am trying to give sufficient notice to all members of the House as to when committees will sit, although I fully understand that there may be other changes.

I should indicate that I am also contemplating calling the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations for Friday afternoon of this week.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable government House leader for that information. For clarification purposes, I would like to advise members that leave has been granted for waiving of several rules and sitting later this evening, but that does apply to both of the committees. Is that understood? Okay, that is understood.

Mr. Speaker: Now, to resume debate on 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), the honourable member for Point Douglas.

Mr. Hickes: Mr. Speaker, maybe I will start where I started off, just in case they did not quite get it, because when I was referring to Bill 70 and explaining why we are speaking to the bill, I kept hearing comments of, are you for it or against it?

How can you be for something or against something if you do not know what it is all about? This bill does not explain if it is a higher rate, a lower rate, if it is an in-between rate, or if it is no rate. It does not even explain any of that. So how can we be for or against something that no one has even explained, and it does not explain itself here? How can you say, are you for it or against it?

* (1710)

I think that is a silly question because when I talk about people on social assistance, all I have to do

is—I will mention again—walk into the constituency of Point Douglas, and there is such evidence there that people have to have the opportunity for a job. That is what people want, they want a job.

I will pick up where I left off, where individuals who have all of a sudden found themselves unemployed because of the recession or whatever, or because of lack of job opportunities, for whatever reason, and without government trying to stimulate the economy and trying to stimulate job opportunities, now find themselves on social assistance for the first time.

What I was saying was that you have so many additional new social programs that these individuals have never experienced in the past, but with a lack of job opportunities and with losing your home and possibly marital breakdowns, what you have is people who are either having to go into treatment or abusing drugs and alcohol and having to go into treatment, which costs us money, and then also you have individuals, for whatever reason, because they are either inebriated or on drugs or whatever, breaking the law, or just to survive to get additional money to supplement maybe their social assistance because they need additional dollars for food to feed their families, they turn to crime.

When these individuals are incarcerated, we pay \$47,000 for each person who is incarcerated a year. That is in one year, \$47,000 for one individual who is sitting in either Headingley or Brandon Correctional Institution or The Pas or Bannock Point or Egg Lake—take your pick—they cost us \$47,000.

So when we say try and give these people adequate income or adequate money to live at least a reasonable decent life, so that where they do not have to lose their dignity and their pride and turn to abusive measures or to crime just to feed their families, we are saving money. It is not costing money, you are saving money. Then if you extend it a little further down the line where people are now addicted to drugs or alcohol and these people end up on skid row and lose everything that they have ever had, how many people who are so-called skid row alcoholics or skid row drunks have you ever talked to?

You talk to some of these individuals. A lot of these individuals at one time had families. A lot of these individuals at one time had good jobs. A lot of these individuals at one time had their dignity, their pride. For some reason, it was taken away, they lost it. It is not because they want to be on skid

row and live that kind of life, they were veered that way for one reason or another.

That is why these people, a lot of them, when given the opportunity and given a chance, they do not revert back to that kind of a lifestyle. They have now grasped something that is meaningful to them, and they have gone through the treatment centres that cost whatever X number of dollars. It costs a lot of money. If you save one individual, and if they go back to being a productive worker and a taxpayer, then a lot of times these individuals will probably get remarried and will work themselves into a career and will become taxpayers.

If that individual was left without some kind of a safety net or some form of help, those individuals would have probably been on social assistance for, how long?—probably all their lives. But somewhere along the road, they got the opportunity and they got the break they were looking for.

Also, when you have individuals who are abusing drugs or alcohol and probably abusing their spouses or their family, what kind of teaching is that to their children who will become the next generation?

A lot of the abusive behaviour that you see—I would not say all of it, but a lot of it—was learned in their homes. A lot of those kinds of behaviour that you see are because people have given up. They have given up. If you look at the individuals who are abusive to their spouses or partners or relatives or families, I would venture to guess that 90 percent of those, or even higher than 90 percent of those incidents, occurred when the individual or individuals were intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.

So when you talk about poverty and overcoming poverty, you are talking about overcoming a whole lifestyle, and you are talking about helping individuals to get off that cycle of poverty and to get off that cycle of getting used to living on welfare and social assistance programs.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of education. When you talk about adult education programs—[interjection] Well, I hate to disappoint the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), who continually asks, are you for it or against it. Maybe if we had the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) stand up and explain exactly if it is going to be raising social assistance and welfare rates to the city rates, or if it is going to be lowering the city rates to provincial rates, and if it means

taking away that 15 percent that the individuals in remote northern communities need just to buy some decent food—and you know that even with the welfare rates in those northern remote communities, if you had to go to your store to buy your pork, your beef, your chicken, your meat products, your fish, your vegetables and whatever vitamins you need, you know that the provincial welfare rate would not even pay that grocery bill. You know that; you have been in northern Manitoba many times.

The only way those individuals can make ends meet for themselves and their families is by hunting and fishing in their own home communities. That is the only way. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that, if a person is able to do it. But what happens when you take a single women who has never hunted in her life and has three or four children? How do they make ends meet? Do they go hunting and fishing? [interjection] Well, I hope nothing will change, but we do not know that. We do not know that nothing will change because that is not in this bill. It is not in this bill. If it was in this bill and we had a better understanding, then we could say, yes, we are for it, we are against it. We could come out and say that. You have to be concerned about the individuals whom I just mentioned.

When you talk about the single parent in the northern communities who is having a hard time making ends meet, if it was not for the generosity and help and assistance of family members, that individual would have a difficult time—or even our elders. Look at how many of our elders today who used to be very successful trappers and hunters who have never, ever had to rely on going to social assistance to get welfare. Those aboriginal northerners today have been drastically affected by the antifur movement, and for the first time in many of their lives have had to start collecting welfare.

I talked to an individual in Island Lake who takes a walk in the morning to The Bay store, in the afternoon takes a walk to the post office, because they are bored, nothing to do. This individual I spoke to was a very, very active member in the community, was one of the best hunters and trappers in that community. He said: How can I even afford to pay for my gas for my skidoo or outboard motor, and then when I get a couple of dollars for my fur, well, what incentive is that? 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).

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might put a few words on the record on this particular bill.

I enjoyed listening to the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) because I think he made a number of points that I hope the minister will take seriously, I hope the minister will think about.

What this bill comes down to is a matter of trust. What the government is asking us to do is take on faith that they will do the right thing when it comes to providing a single one-tier social allowance system in this province. That is really the question that should be debated when we are debating this bill, because what I hear the member for Point Douglas and others talking about is that they support in principle the idea of building a one-tier system, and I think our party has said much the same thing, but they have a serious concern. It is based on either the unwillingness of this government to be forthcoming with the people of this province or the sheer incompetence of this government not to have studied the impact of a bill before they brought it into the House.

Mr. Speaker, unless something rather radical has happened in the procedure that the Department of Finance has used in the past, before a minister brought a bill forward to cabinet for discussion that had a financial impact on the province, that impact would be analyzed, and those figures would be available to cabinet before they made the decision to pass the bill, to accept the bill.

* (1720)

So when the Leader of the Opposition stood up the other day and asked the Premier (Mr. Filmon) very simple questions—what does that analysis show? How much is it going to cost? What is the impact of this going to be?—the lack of a response from the Premier and the similar lack of response from the minister can only lead one to one conclusion. Well, actually, no, I am sorry; that is not true—two conclusions. One is that they are incompetent. The other is that they are withholding the information that they have.

Now I suspect, given the concern of this government over the bottom line and the very careful analysis that they have subjected their budgeting to, that they have done the analysis, that they know exactly the impact of this bill, predicated

on a couple of decisions. The member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) has quite clearly outlined the choice involved. Do we put everybody on the higher rate? Do we put everybody on the lower rate?

That brings us to the age-old discussion about social allowances. I want to spend just a minute on that. We have seen something recently that unfortunately cast kind of a shadow over this debate. We saw an example of someone who, I think, made quite gratuitous use of their children to beg for food because they appeared to be incapable of budgeting for themselves despite some significant evidence that they were doing quite well. I think that this debate that took place in the press over these last two weeks has been unfortunate because it clouds the issue relative to people on social allowances.

I remind this government that when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) conducted his study of social allowances back when this government first came into office, he was only able to identify an abuse rate of less than 1 percent. Three out of 800 cases that were studied were found to be questionable. That is not a bad record. If we could achieve a success record of less than 1 percent in some other areas of activity in government, we would be doing very well indeed.

The real question is, why do we offer assistance in the first place? I think that this is something that we need to keep in mind when we consider making changes in a program that offers basic support for food, shelter and clothing to people who have, by definition, no other option.

There is this image, I think, out there that we have this large number of able-bodied people who are accessing support and who are somehow living a life of idle luxury at the expense of the hardworking taxpayer, when in fact, Mr. Speaker, we know that what we have out there are a large number of disabled people who are unable to work, and we have a large number of single parents who are attempting to raise children.

We know that we made a policy decision many, many, many years ago that we would attempt to provide support to single parents, so that they could do a good job of raising kids free of the stresses of trying to put food on the table each day, so that they would raise better, more able-bodied, healthier citizens for this province.

One of the problems that we do face in this province—and it is interesting, there was a discussion in Estimates about—this is in Education Estimates actually—the use of total quality management procedures at Red River. I made the comment then, it would be interesting if the Department of Family Services and the Department of Justice could begin to apply some of those procedures in their own operations, because those procedures are based upon some statistical process control and some ability to gather and analyze real information.

One of the things that you will find when you do that, if you apply those kinds of processes to the Department of Family Services and the Department of Justice, is that there is a relatively small number of people who are responsible for the vast majority of juvenile crime in this province, for the vast majority of the high-cost multiproblem cases that the Family Services department deals with, that it is a relatively small number of situations that eat up the bulk of the resources that we put into these particular services.

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

When we look at children and at families and at others who get into situations where their children are at risk, one of the things that we do in child welfare when we try to determine what makes one family situation a risky family situation, what makes another one not risky, what other things we need to look for—I mean, the minister is talking about establishing a, the name escapes me right now, but it is a system for determining indicators of risk.

The prime indicator of risk is poverty. The prime indicator, the one thing that is attached more directly to social problems, be they child abuse, alcoholism, violence, criminal behaviour—the one thing that comes through more than any other indicator is the person is living in poverty, that they cannot access a quality of life that allows them to live free of the kind of stress that is produced living below the poverty line, that stress leads to all sorts of other things: child abuse, drug abuse, alcoholism and a whole variety of other things.

There have been cries for a long time to make the system that we use to deliver supports to people fairer, more equitable, easier to administer across all regions of the province. We should not have distortions in the support level that force people out of certain communities that make people to make

choices about where they live dependent upon the kind of support that they get.

We have said for a long time that people should be able to live within their community where they have some family, some reason for being attached to that community, and they should not be forced to move into other regions simply because there is an unequal level of support.

We have also recognized that costs in the North are greater and we provide greater support there knowing that that does not produce a migration North because the costs are so much greater there. In the case of the city, it has produced an offloading of cases because of the simple necessity of accessing basic support. So the direction the minister has undertaken is a good one. Let us provide some equity across all of the regions and towns and municipalities in this province.

The problem—and the reason that this legislation is stalling and the reason that there is no movement on it—is the minister is playing games with the House as to the impact of this. I think if the minister were to answer that one simple question, we could see this legislation dealt with very expeditiously. Failing that, I think we are simply going to have great difficulty in bringing this particular part of the debate to some kind of conclusion because the fact is that there are a very large number of people who require support out there, and there is an increasing number.

The member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey) made, I thought, an interesting point when he talked about the incidence of food banks. I came back from a meeting with Lloyd Axworthy the other day. He was at Kelvin High School.

Some Honourable Members: Lloyd who?

Mr. Alcock: Lloyd Axworthy, the finest federal cabinet minister that this province has ever had. In fact, you know the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) says, Lloyd who. Well, he knows only too well, and in fact I would just like to help him understand this. Lloyd Axworthy is the single federal cabinet minister who in one four-year term did more for this province than the four federal cabinet ministers that the current Conservative government has had for the last eight.

An Honourable Member: Name them. What did he do?

Mr. Alcock: What did he do? Well, let us start. The first Core. See, there is an interesting thing,

you know. We talked the other day about the Core Area Agreement, right, and the only economic strategy that this government can think of for the city of Winnipeg is the renewal of Lloyd Axworthy's idea of some 12 years ago. He invented it; he designed it. He conceived of it and he created it. It was such a good idea that it has been replicated throughout North America, and this government has yet to find a better solution to bringing together the three levels of government and business to address the problems in the core area of this city. That is one thing he did.

The South Winnipeg Technical Centre, not a bad achievement—Lloyd Axworthy did that. The transportation centre at the University of Manitoba—Lloyd Axworthy did that. The national science and research centre—Lloyd Axworthy did that. The Conservatives emptied it and really hurt the economic future of this city as a result, but Lloyd Axworthy did that.

I would ask the minister, sometime when he has a moment to pause and reflect upon what Lloyd Axworthy had done in four years, what Mr. Epp has done in eight? You will find that the list is not very long and not very healthy.

* (1730)

Lloyd Axworthy did not allow the CNR to be moved to Edmonton. [interjection] What was that? [interjection] He was going to build a new shop in Transcona, and the list goes on. Well, that it is really unfortunate. It is unfortunate that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) has such a silly, kind of narrow parochial view of what goes on, because it was Lloyd Axworthy who signed the ERDA agreements. It was Lloyd Axworthy that signed the Interlake agreements, the Northern agreements. It was Lloyd Axworthy—[interjection] That is in fact true, and it was this government that has allowed those agreements to lapse.

Cultural industries, there was more creative energy that went into this province in that period of time than has gone in since, and that is a fact. But, Mr. Acting Speaker, I digress, and I certainly would not wish to do that.

I started off mentioning Lloyd Axworthy simply because he came back for a meeting with students at Kelvin High School. Kelvin High School, located in the heart of one of the wealthier communities in this city, to report that they have a food bank, that they have started a food bank.

I note one thing about that that astounds me. If you think back to the 1981-82 recession, the deepest, not the longest now—in fact, I noted with some interest the Manufacturers Association indicated the current recession is the longest recession we have had in 60 years. But the 1981-82 recession still remains the deepest—short, but very, very severe.

I ask members to reflect back on that period of time 1981-82. [interjection] Well, it is not quite true, but it is close. We had the Lighthouse Mission. We have always had a soup kitchen in Winnipeg, and we had some feeding programs in the core area for lunch programs for school-age kids, but that was it. We did not have the community, through its various structures, and the level of support proffered to people was sufficient that we did not have to be recycling food to people.

Now I do not want to decry the volunteer effort that goes into Winnipeg Harvest, or the efforts of the kids at Red River who have started a food bank, or the students at the University of Manitoba, or the students at Kelvin High School who have started food banks. The motivation that underlies that is very positive, but I think it is a terrible indictment on this province, this country and this economy, that we cannot provide more adequately for our most vulnerable residents. I think it is tragic.

I think this government owes it to the people of this province to be more forthcoming when it makes an attempt to change the major piece of support for people in this province. I think it is absolutely irresponsible for them to bring forward a bill without at least saying to the House, this is our intention. It is a very, very simple question.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, I noticed another thing just the other day. I had an opportunity to speak to a disabled student who has been on student aid and is going to university and had a car accident. This is a person who was congenitally disabled, has been in a wheelchair, had a car accident, and is about to receive, or may well receive a settlement from Autopac, a settlement that is being paid for a number of things. There was a loss of some part-time work time, there was a loss of a car, or a need to repair a car, and there was a replacement vehicle because she is disabled in the intervening time. There was some compensation for pain and suffering.

All of that money that she is receiving is being applied against income. So she is losing all of her support that she has had to go to school until that income is eaten up, despite the fact that this government made a commitment to allowing disabled persons to retain up to \$4,000 of assets prior to attaching that because they recognize that disabled people have a much more difficult time in accessing education and a much more difficult time in accessing work. Despite the fact they make these statements, they make these promises, these commitments to the community, they do not act on them.

That is the problem here. When the government comes forward and says, on faith, pass this bill, and we will do the right thing, I think this House is doing the correct thing to be very skeptical about that.

I would simply ask the government to make a commitment to bring forward that information at the time that this bill goes into committee, and I think we can deal with this bill very expeditiously. I think the failure to bring forward that information is an indictment upon the government and just furthers the kind of mistrust that this House and this community has for this particular government.

I also want to raise something else, and I do not think that this is well enough appreciated by the community and certainly not by members of this House. There is a terrible, terrible cyclical nature to poverty. It is not just that children raised in severe poverty do not access proper nutrition so they are not able to compete as effectively in school and in trades and in later work, it is not just that they experience such stress and terrible conditions in their early lives that they grow up with lower self-esteem and less ability to be competitive in the economy, but it is also that they experience serious forms of abuse and neglect that do lead to quite serious actions on their own later on.

The connections, and one of probably the only healthy offshoots of our greater awareness of the cyclical nature of child abuse is that we now have direct connections in our social theory between acts of violence in early life and later acts of violence by the victims of that violence as children. There have been a series of studies done. One of them was done by Dr. Elliott Barket who started off his life in the belief that he could build therapeutic communities in jails and he could deal with very violent adults and somehow allow them to become more normal productive people.

What Dr. Barket found, after a good many years of working extremely hard trying to do that, was that he was at best able to render highly dangerous, highly violent people neutral, and that if he was going to apply his skills and his talents to the problem, they were better put to the problem of addressing the child abuse. Dr. Barket went out and started the Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. He has spoken and advocated all across this country on that score because he noticed in the prisons that he was working in with extremely violent offenders that there was one common thread, that they had all been physically or sexually abused as children.

His is not the only study. There was a study done in New Brunswick about a decade ago looking at kids who had been convicted, teenagers who had been convicted of violent crimes. What they discovered was that every one of them had experienced one of four things. They had been physically or sexually abused as children, or they had witnessed their siblings being physically or sexually abused as children repeatedly. Those four things were common to every violent offender in the province of New Brunswick.

Right now we have a very competent researcher at the St. Boniface Hospital looking at emotional and mental disorders in women. What he is finding is a very direct connection between early childhood sexual abuse and mental illness. Now the only reason I say that this is a positive thing, is that it is the first time we have established a direct connection and, therefore, the ability to have a cause-and-effect relationship. Hopefully, the ability to intervene in the causal side of this will produce some reduction over time in the incidence. We will indeed have a kinder and gentler community.

* (1740)

That is what, hopefully, we are trying to create when we make these investments. When we invest in supporting a young mother and children or a single parent, be it male or female, supporting them so that they can have a life that is somewhat free of the stresses of extreme poverty; so that they can provide some support to their kids when they go to school; so they are not going to school hungry; so they are receiving proper nutrition, so they are not going to school without the proper clothing in wintertime; so they are able to compete within their community and to gain an education so that they can

hopefully lead a life free of abuse and can go on to be productive, contributing members of society.

That is what we are attempting to do. That is what we are trying to bring about when we invest this kind of money in these services. If this minister is continuing the action that he has taken to date, to step back from these programs and to reduce and to place more people at risk, and to place greater stress on more people rather than reducing the stress, I think he is taking a very serious, very negative, very destructive action, and I think he should be prevented from doing that. Again, that is what we want to know.

I notice an interesting difference between the minister who has proposed this bill, and the activities we saw just recently by the Minister of Education (Mr. Orchard)—two almost identical situations. The federal government withdrew from its traditional, and some would say its constitutional, responsibilities to support native people who are living on social assistance in this province.

This minister, when he stood up and he decried that action on the part of the federal government, at the same time took no responsibility. It was only after he had been beaten up rather severely by the mayors and municipalities, and I presume by members of his own caucus, that he finally lived up to the responsibilities and his responsibilities as a minister responsible for social support in this province, to see that people's lives were not unduly disrupted because these are the most vulnerable people in the province.

Now, that period of time put an enormous amount of stress on a lot of people. The Minister of Education was faced with the same problem, only in this case, the same answer was arrived at, the same ultimate solution was arrived at, and that was for this province to contest the federal government and to do everything it could to hold the federal government accountable for providing this support, but the difference is, the Minister of Education did not transfer the problem to those very vulnerable people. The Minister of Education stepped in, saw that basic services were provided and then continued the attack on the federal government. I think that is a position that we can support and we did support in this House, and I heard the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey) offer to continue that support.

I will bring this to a close, Mr. Acting Speaker, on this thought. I would simply ask that this government—because I know the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) is not particularly forthcoming with information—put before this House its intentions on this bill before it expects this bill to get passed.

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

* * *

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am wondering if you could call Bill 98. I understand there will probably be leave to allow me to interrupt a few minutes before six o'clock to move the Supply motion for tonight.

Bill 98—The Manitoba Multiculturalism Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reimer): On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson), Bill 98, The Manitoba Multiculturalism Act (Loi sur le multiculturalisme au Manitoba), standing in the name of the member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Acting Speaker, over the weekend, I had the opportunity to go over a report that was actually requested from this minister. It was a report that was done from the office of the Provincial Auditor, and it was most interesting in what some of the recommendations were. It went over MIC and what MIC has been doing, found a number of concerns that it had, and in fact, came forward with a recommendation.

Before I go into that report, Mr. Acting Speaker, I wanted to make it fairly clear as to why it is that we feel it is necessary for us to see the MGAC being taken out of Bill 98, because the reason why MGAC has the funding authority is because the minister decided that MIC, the Manitoba Intercultural Council, was not the body that should be distributing multicultural grants.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I wanted to make reference to, as I say, a number of quotes that were put forward from the Provincial Auditor and reported on September 8, 1988, from the Provincial Auditor's office and have the minister think about what it is that she has done, because she has tried to leave

the impression that what she has done to the Manitoba Intercultural Council with respect to taking away its granting authorities was the right thing to do.

I wanted to go over a couple of the remarks. The first one was, in respect, from the report, and I quote from it: The grant accountability expectations of MIC have generally been reasonable; however, increasing applications for funding and other recent pressures have resulted in accountability monitoring procedures falling behind. Improvements are required to bring the accountability monitoring into its current position.

Then the report, Mr. Acting Speaker, goes on, where it talks about the grant allocations and grant accountability process. Again, I quote from the report, where it says: We recommend that MIC strengthen its grant allocation process. We also recommend that the information provided to CRAC be improved. It is most important that the level of documentation be improved. We recommend that the council review its grant accountability policy and guidelines with the view of strengthening the process. We recommend that the council consider implementing a process so organizations can appeal the decisions of CRAC.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this is something which the Provincial Auditor has recommended to the minister. In reading the report, nowhere do I see a recommendation from the Provincial Auditor to establish the Manitoba Multicultural Grants Advisory Council. This is a report that was done in a very apolitical—as I am sure all of us would agree that the Provincial Auditor is in fact apolitical. I read the recommendations that have been put forward, and I do not come to the same conclusion that the minister has come to. That conclusion was to take away the funding authority from the Manitoba Intercultural Council.

Now, I have listened to the minister explain why it is that she feels it necessary to take away that funding from MIC. The primary reason was that there was no appeal process, that the current Manitoba Grants Advisory Council has an appeal process.

If that was the primary reason for doing it, the minister could have accomplished what it is that she did by installing, through an amendment to The Manitoba Intercultural Council Act, an appeal process. She could have virtually used the same

sort of an appeal process that she is proposing to put into legislation. She could have put in that very same process, or something similar to it, into The Manitoba Intercultural Council Act. That would have taken care of that particular concern.

* (1750)

She also alluded to the fact that there were, as the auditor had pointed out, some concerns in how the grants were being handed out and the follow-up and so forth. Well, had the minister followed the recommendations put forward from the Provincial Auditor, she could have again instituted changes that would have seen the same outcome.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, the minister has said that what happened to MIC was because she heard a number of complaints from people, from organizations. We have not heard those complaints that the minister has talked about or alluded to. We have not heard the support that she claims to have for having it brought over to the Manitoba Grants Advisory Council. It has actually been quite the opposite.

There is no real support for the establishment of the Manitoba Grants Advisory Council. The only support that is out there is from the minister's appointments or individuals who would possibly have a conflict. I have yet to talk to an individual—well, actually, I can say I have talked to one individual, and that was just the other day, who told me that MGAC is in fact the right place to have multicultural grants. I will not say who that person was.

I sincerely believe when it comes to the question of multicultural grants that there are two issues. The first issue is one in which the former member for Rossmere tried to address, and that was the whole question of the need for multicultural grants. Maybe a bit later in my comments, Mr. Acting Speaker, I will talk about the need for multicultural grants. That is one issue that could be debated, should be debated. The member for Rossmere tried to get that debate here, but with silence to a certain degree on the issue.

The other issue is, if you agree that multicultural grants are in fact necessary as we believe and I would like to think as the government believes, then it is a question of the method. How do you deliver those grants? Well, the government has chosen a way which we disagree with.

Time after time, Mr. Acting Speaker, because I know the minister would agree with myself because she says it quite often, and that is that on this particular issue, we are going to agree to disagree, but that does not make the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson) right, even though she agrees to disagree. I will suggest to you that when it comes to dealing—or if we say we all agree that multicultural grants are necessary, I am convinced that a mass majority, in and around—if you were to ask me to take a percentage, I would hazard a guess, no fewer than 90 percent of those who feel that it is necessary to have multicultural grants will say to you, if they had their choice, that the body that should be handing out those grants should be an apolitical board, as opposed to a politically appointed board.

Now, I am not going to say that MIC was the ideal board to hand out multicultural grants. In fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, if the minister solicited, I would be more than happy to tell her how we could even improve the Manitoba Intercultural Council to address some of the concerns that no doubt she might have in regard to how political the then opposition, the Conservatives while in opposition, felt that MIC was. But what the government has done is they have established a 100 percent politically appointed board as compared to a board that is in legislation, where the minister only gets to appoint one out of every two board members.

So if you were to ask me—and hopefully some day in a government situation, they will be able to ask that question—I could assure you that the Manitoba Grants Advisory Council has absolutely no place and will have no place under a Liberal administration. That is why I am interested in what Mr. Don Blair will bring forward—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reimer): Order.

* * *

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, if I could—[interjection] No, it is on house business.

If I could ask the member, if I may interrupt him to move the supply motion so that we could proceed and the member may continue. We are not asking him to relinquish the floor.

With the leave of the House, Mr. Acting Speaker, to interrupt the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I would move, seconded by—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reimer): Does the Minister of Labour have leave of the House?
[Agreed]

House Business

* (1800)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Acting Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

With leave of the House, I understand we will be continuing at 7 p.m. tonight as the government House leader had outlined with the consent of the House earlier, and that this bill as well, Mr. Acting Speaker, will remain standing under the name of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reimer): It is agreed.

It has been agreed that the bill will stand in the name of the member for Inkster (Lamoureux).
[Agreed]

* * *

Motion agreed to, and at 7 p.m. the House to resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) in the Chair for Decentralization, and the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship; and the honourable member for Seine River in the Chair for the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reimer): The hour being six o'clock, as previously agreed, I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 7 p.m. in Committee of Supply.

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Tuesday, June 16, 1992

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