



Third Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

42 Elizabeth II

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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, Gulzar	The Maples	Liberal
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
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
GRAY, Avis	Crescentwood	Liberal
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
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	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
<i>Vacant</i>	Rupertsland	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 5, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of J.L. Meyer, Dale Julius and Darryl Julius and others urging the government of Manitoba to consider keeping the Misericordia Hospital open as an acute care facility.

* * *

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Nadine Claeys, Shannon Francey, Claudette Gagnon and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) to consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Plohman). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in the country; and

WHEREAS over 55,000 children depend upon the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS several studies have pointed out the cost savings of preventative and treatment health care programs such as the Children's Dental Program; and

WHEREAS the Children's Dental Program has been in effect for 17 years and has been recognized as extremely cost-effective and critical for many families in isolated communities; and

WHEREAS the provincial government did not consult the users of the program or the providers before announcing plans to eliminate 44 of the 49

dentists, nurses and assistants providing this service; and

WHEREAS preventative health care is an essential component of health care reform.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review, 1993-1994 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Department of Environment.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us this afternoon the Honourable Bob Mitchell, the Saskatchewan Minister of Justice, and the Honourable Eldon Laudermilk, the Saskatchewan Minister of Gaming.

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

Also present with us this afternoon, we have from the Westwood Collegiate, fifty Grade 11 students, under the direction of Mr. Richard Ford. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson).

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

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Net Family Income Provincial Comparisons

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the First Minister.

Yesterday, Stats Canada confirmed what many Canadians were feeling, that their real family income

had declined, and it declined in fact in 1991 by some 2.6 per cent. We noted that in the 1990 budget, the Premier and his ministers had said that Manitoba will feel the consequences of their economic policy, and in fact, we will lead the nation in terms of economic performance in 1991.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we see that the family income declines in Manitoba are double that of the national average.

I would like to ask the Premier why his economic policies have led to a decline in family income in 1991 based on the stats that were released yesterday, more than double that of the national average of Canada under Conservative policies here in Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I know the member may not recall this so I will refresh him, that 1991 was the year the government froze public sector wages for some 45,000 public servants which, obviously, is a very high percentage of the workforce. Along the way, as well, because of our strong intent to get inflation down and to keep the burden off the taxpayers of Manitoba, other private sector employers followed suit. Indeed, during that year, we had one of the lowest increases in salary and wage levels in a long, long time. That is the single greatest factor vis-à-vis Manitoba versus other provinces.

I might say, of course, the news that flows from that, which is positive news, is the news we had from Statistics Canada that indicated that in 1992 and '93, the net after-tax income of Manitobans would be increasing by \$600 million in their pockets to spend as a result of this government not raising taxes, not raising the tax rates on personal taxes and in fact lowering personal taxes by 2 percent in its 1989 budget—\$600 million more for Manitoba taxpayers to spend, massively increasing their disposable income over that of all of the other provinces in Canada as a result of those efforts that we had to, regrettably, put in place in 1991.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has obviously not been briefed on the statistics, as many other provinces also had wage freezes in the public sector in the same year, in 1991. The family income decline in Manitoba was 6.2 percent. That was last place, just like the economic performance was last place in 1991.

Why were we in eighth place in 1989? Why were we in ninth place in terms of family income in 1990?

Why are we now going down to last place, dead last, in 1991, under the Filmon economic policies that are killing this province, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Filmon: The member does not understand that you can do what New Democrats do and that is to increase the incomes—I do not mean Saskatchewan New Democrats, who are doing a good job. They are doing an excellent job; they understand economic reality. They are responsible, Mr. Speaker—totally different from the irresponsibilities of the Leader of the Opposition and his people, who would raise public sector wages and then tax more from all the taxpayers and leave the net disposable income at the lowest levels in Canada.

That is why, as I say, Stats Canada, a month or so ago, put out the figures that said because we have frozen tax rates and in fact reduced personal income tax rates in this province, that \$600 million more of disposal after-tax income will be in the hands of taxpayers in this province in 1993, the largest per capita increase of any province in Canada.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, if we took all the forecasts from this Premier, his selective forecasts—next year we will be first in the country; the year after we will first in the country; we will be, we might be, perhaps we will be.

I am talking about bottom-line results, last-place results, dead last in terms of the private sector investment in 1991, dead last in manufacturing investment in 1991, dead last in construction starts in 1991. Now we see the results—dead last in family income, last place.

My question to the Premier is: Why are we going from eighth place to ninth place to 10th place? Why are we behind every other province? Why are we way behind any other western Canadian province? Why are we below the national average? Why are you performing in last place in all these major economic indicators?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, again, I repeat, we took the difficult choices in 1991 to freeze public sector wages, despite the fact—[interjection] No, they did not. You do not even understand that. The member opposite does not understand.

The fact of the matter is, we took the difficult choices so that we would protect all of the taxpayers of Manitoba, not just the people whom the member opposite speaks for when he was president of the

MGEU. He brings those arguments into the House; he fights against public-sector wage reductions—but in doing it, we have done what is best for all Manitobans.

The proof of the pudding is what Stats Canada put out a month ago, which says there will be \$600 million more after-tax net income in the hands of all Manitobans to spend, the highest increase of any province in the country. That is what Manitobans want, Mr. Speaker, and that is what they are getting under this administration.

Child and Family Services Agencies Impact Funding Reduction

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, last year this government cut funding to the Fight Back Against Child Abuse Campaign. The government did this even though the organization had dedicated volunteers who raised thousands of dollars fighting child abuse. Despite petitions signed by thousands of Manitobans, including workers in the field, the Minister of Family Services repeatedly refused to budge on this issue. Now, over 180 Child and Family Services staff have written to the minister telling him that the cuts in service are going to put more children at risk.

Does the minister now acknowledge that these cuts are counterproductive and do indeed put more children at risk?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated to the member before and in Estimates in the last few days, I had the opportunity to meet with the presidents of the agencies and the executive directors of the agencies.

They recognized that in society at this time there was less money available and that the government would be making a slightly smaller contribution to the agencies. They accepted that challenge, and the basic services provided by the agencies will be continued.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, it is true, I did ask questions of this minister in Family Services Estimates, and his responses were totally inadequate. Today's newspaper story verifies—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Burrows, with your question, please.

Mr. Martindale: Does this minister agree, since once again, the director of the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency has said that his staff will

not be able to provide the services to children they are mandated to provide and he shares the concern of the staff—does the minister now agree with that statement?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, I am puzzled by the contradiction the member is putting forward. The other day he was complimenting the minister and the department on being able to provide those services for Manitobans.

The board and the staff of the agency obviously have decisions to make. The primary function of the agency is the protection of children, and there are no children at risk due to these funding cuts.

Mr. Martindale: Will the minister agree that with 3,000 fewer hours of staff to provide service and with cuts to preventative programs, the elimination of a grant for volunteer co-ordinators, that fewer staff resources are being provided, particularly for prevention, and this is going to mean more costly costs at the other end of the system when more children are apprehended and taken into care?

Will the minister agree that this is the long-term outcome and that more children are at risk?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, in our meetings with the board members and the staff of the agencies, they recognize that there are changing times out there. They are aware that some of the funding will be reduced, but the basic services of the agency will be proceeded with.

* (1345)

Chemical Warehouse—Fisher Branch Public Hearings

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

Yesterday, I raised concerns about the government's desire to fast-track the Assiniboine River diversion project, and today, Mr. Speaker, regrettably, I have to raise yet another project with this minister in which the minister is attempting to fast-track approval through the department.

The proposal for a chemical warehouse and fertilizer storage facility in Fisher Branch was spoken about by an expert in the Water Resources branch of this government, and the quote is as follows: Manitoba Pool could not have chosen a worse site in Manitoba if they had tried.

That is the statement from the Water Resources expert in this government's Natural Resources branch.

My question for the minister: Why would that type of opinion be expressed by the government's own experts? Is this government fast-tracking this process and refusing to hold any public hearings on this issue?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, it is very seldom that the environmental process is accused of being very fast, but I want to assure you and assure the member that is certainly not the case.

The fact is, we are still waiting for some information from Manitoba Pool Elevators. The department has recommended that hearings not be held based on the information that has been brought forward, but we have a number of appeals that have brought information forward subsequent to that, and no final decision has been made.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, the process is fast when you ignore most of it with the complicity of the government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister, again, supplementary question: What evidence is he relying on that supports the siting of this facility when no environmental assessment has been done by the proponent, and the proponent, Mr. Arason, admitted on February 4, 1993, that the company had made some mistakes in getting approvals from provincial and municipal governments and that they probably in the final analysis did not go as far as they should have?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I hope the member is not implying that the Department of Environment should also take over the responsibility for planning, because one of the first mistakes that was made in this project was that the planning process was not fully completed in terms of their desire to get on the site and do some work.

I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that this is, as I recall, an elevator building, and with it potentially would be associated fertilizer storage and potentially chemical storage. The company can well not proceed with all aspects of that and there may well be some separation of that, and that may in the end be the deciding factor in what process this project goes through.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, this government has approved without any public hearings the chemical

warehouse and the fertilizer storage, so let not this minister try to distinguish those aspects of the point.

My final question for the minister, Mr. Speaker: Why, when this has been such a divisive issue in that community, will the minister not do what is sensible and prudent and hold public hearings, clear the air, hear all of the facts and hear the people who have a direct interest in this project and in living in that community?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, obviously, the potential Leader of the Liberal Party has been out ferreting out whatever environmental issues he can on his rural tours.

I have been dealing with the member from the official opposition who represents that area in terms of exchange of information, and, frankly, the assumption that conclusions have been reached on this project seems to me to be overstating his position.

I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that there are requests for additional information that have not yet been answered that will drive the decision.

Emergency Room Physicians Mediation

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the government on reversing its position of yesterday and appointing a mediator to deal with the doctors' emergency room situation.

Because this is such an important issue dealing with public safety, I would like to ask the minister today to advise us when the mediation process is going to commence and whether or not the government as well will be at the bargaining table or only the hospitals negotiating at arm's length of the government.

* (1350)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I realize my honourable friend wants to attempt to take some credit. My honourable friend made the suggestion but I think clearly the engagement of Wally Fox-Decent yesterday when negotiations were ongoing would have been improper, but given that statements made indicate an indefinite period of time for resolution, government decided that we would attempt to facilitate the process and have Mr. Fox-Decent help.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that we can commence the process today. That depends on agreement by

the MMA to accept the services of Mr. Fox-Decent, and I believe if he is available, certainly we are. In the event that later today that does not occur, then certainly tomorrow is a very, very definite possibility.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for answering the first part of my question.

The second part is: Who is at the negotiating table on behalf of the government? Is it the hospitals or is it the government together with the hospitals that will be at the negotiating table with respect to this mediation process?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, let us not advance one issue before another. First of all, now, maybe a decision or maybe acceptance of Mr. Wally Fox-Decent has been made by the MMA, but as of approximately 1:30 that was not the case.

Should agreement be made, then we will have to make the decision as to whether we wish to be actively at the table or whether we would simply have the parties resume with the advantage of having Mr. Fox-Decent, who has, I think, a fairly substantial track record, was instrumental in resolving the last strike by doctors in the province and achieved a resolution at that time with the MMA.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, given that evasive answer, there is no wonder that there is a strike going on.

My final supplementary to the minister is: Can the government outline what their position is specifically concerning the agreement the doctors thought they had reached with the government last December, what the government position is with respect to that agreement?

The Premier said they were close; the minister has not taken a position; the doctors were convinced there was an agreement. Where are they at with respect to that agreement? What is outstanding?

Mr. Orchard: Again, I want to caution my honourable friend that neither he, as an MLA of a union-supported party should, nor should I, engage in negotiations, which my honourable friend is trying to do. But I will reiterate for my honourable friend the three points that I made earlier today.

Firstly, contrary to some stated allegations, the financial commitment by government has not changed, despite the fact that in many areas over the last number of months we have reduced financial commitments in a number of areas reflective of the serious financial situation this

province, this nation, finds itself in. We have not reduced our financial commitment. It remains the same.

Secondly, Sir, I hope that there is agreement to Wally Fox-Decent to act in the capacity he did in 1990 to end the strike, and, thirdly, I would hope that the MMA asks the striking emergency room doctors to return to work in anticipation of a resolution with Mr. Wally Fox-Decent's able assistance.

Post-Secondary Education Student Financial Assistance

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at three o'clock, in what is becoming known as the Tory bad news hour, the Minister of Education announced that she is cutting funding to students by a further \$2.3 million and eliminating student bursaries.

Would the minister tell us whom she consulted with before making such a significant change and would she tell us where it fits with Duff Roblin's university review and, frankly, is there any point in having a review if she is making these weekly ad hoc cuts to post-secondary education?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, the question shows how very little my colleague the critic knows about the announcement yesterday.

She seems to feel that the only post-secondary students are those students who are university students, and I would like to tell her, for her information, that post-secondary students include university students, college students, students in training programs and vocational programs.

Ms. Friesen: I am flabbergasted by the reply when my question was—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (1355)

Ms. Friesen: Will the minister tell us the impact of these changes on rural Manitoba, particularly on Brandon University, where many of those students, a very high proportion of those students, are on some kind of social assistance?

Could she table the report that I presume her department has done?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, we have maintained access for the supplementary assistance through Manitoba Student Financial Assistance but we have now made that into a guaranteed loans program.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have also maintained for those most needy students a Study Assistance portion, which would be the third supplementary level for students. Students would first apply for the first supplementary level, being the Canada Student Loan; the second supplementary being Manitoba Student Financial Assistance; and the third supplementary level being the issue of Study Assistance.

Ms. Friesen: Well, now we have heard the parroting of the news release again.

I would like to ask the minister: Has she made any effort to discuss the impact of these changes in northern Manitoba, and did she in particular discuss this with the economic commission of northern Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, I maintain, to the honourable member, that this allows access to supplementary assistance for post-secondary students. Perhaps the other choices the member would have preferred would have maintained the same amount of money, had students apply for bursaries on a first-come, first-serve basis and have a large number of students unable to have any supplementary access, or perhaps, the other alternative the member would have liked would have been to reduce the amount of money available.

Instead, in terms of fairness, we have introduced a program which still allows access to that supplementary funding for post-secondary students.

Emergency Room Physicians Strike Justification

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

The minister has said in reply to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) that the government has not changed the financial position. Can the minister then tell us what is the major cause of the strike today?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, if I knew that answer, there would not be a strike, and I am not trying to be facetious. The financial commitment made by government has not changed. There is one issue which I am not going to divulge because it is a bargaining issue that we are definitely opposed to that is being proposed by the MMA.

We think that proposal will sound very reasonable to Manitobans in the resolution of this dispute. Mr. Speaker, we have maintained our commitment, and I say that was not the easiest task before government, given significant reductions in transfer payments, EPF, adjustments to the per capita formulas, et cetera.

So we maintained that commitment because we recognized that this group of physicians on salary was not adequately compensated in comparison to other opportunities in the nation.

Negotiations

Mr. Guizar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, the patients are saying, well, the minister has a commitment, the MMA has a commitment, so what is the problem then.

Mr. Speaker, they want to know whether they are going to get into another seven or eight days of strike, and we want to know from the minister, what are the main issues which are impending so that at least patients can know where to go.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, with the hoped-for agreement of Mr. Fox-Decent to undertake the role that he did to achieve a resolution in 1990 of a strike, I would hope that with that process in check, Manitobans, Winnipeggers would know where to go, and that is to the emergency rooms with emergency physicians returned to their jobs in the confidence that Wally Fox-Decent, in his very skillful role, can achieve a resolution which has seemed to have eluded the two parties to date, even though the financial mandate and commitment by government has remained consistent.

Patient Safety

Mr. Guizar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us if, for the last nine days, there has been any major disaster, any impending disaster? If not, then if there is no resolution of the problem, the weekend is coming, can the minister assure the patients that the proper quality care will be provided? Then the Department of Health has to take some responsibility, because it is already two weeks into the strike.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier in the week, the circumstance in terms of the two teaching hospitals, St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre, they were able to cope. Certainly there were circumstances

where there was delayed provision of medical attention. Compared to the normal circumstance, certainly that is not a satisfactory circumstance.

That, of course, is always the difficulty you have when there is a strike by any care professional. You certainly are not going to provide care in the optimum way that you would expect. However, the system has been able to cope to date. I reiterate, with the hope for utilization of Wally Fox-Decent, there is really no reason why emergency room physicians would not return to work for the weekend.

* (1400)

Chemical Warehouse—Fisher Branch Public Hearings

Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radlsson): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the proposed fertilizer chemical storage facility near Fisher Branch, I have letters from Manitoba Cattle Producers' Association, Environment Canada weather station, the government's own policy co-ordination branch of the Department of Natural Resources. There are also aboriginal communities and farmers who are asking for a public hearing on this development.

I would ask the Minister of Environment, why is he and the department insistent on not having a public hearing on this project?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the answer that I gave a few minutes ago is precisely the answer. If you are talking about the Fisher Branch project, I still have information on my desk that has been brought in some cases subsequent to the original advertising of the proposal. We also have not received all of the final information from the company. Decisions will be based on that when that information arrives.

Ms. Cerlill: Is the minister then indicating that they are still open to the possibility of having a public hearing on this project?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, there are certainly possibilities of that, because, as a matter of fact, the Peguis band, among others, has asked for reconsideration of the information that went into—and added additional information into the decision that was made regarding the licensing process. The licence has not been finalized. Certainly the information we have asked for from the proponent is not all there. We will make a decision subsequent to that.

Environmental Assessment

Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radlsson): Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us, other than having a public hearing, how will an assessment deal with the issues raised by the Department of Natural Resources for an alternative site because it is a sensitive ground water area, or as raised by Environment Canada that the building construction would inhibit a weather station from obtaining wind information? How is another assessment possibly—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, those concerns are all part of any determination on this project. I have to tell you that there are a number of answers to the very questions that the member raises. I am not in a position to recount all of those answers by memory, but I can tell you that, in the review of the project, while there were obviously concerns that were raised, there were also a number of answers to those concerns that were presented as well to the regulators who were involved.

Children's Dental Health Program Funding Reinstatement

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

On a number of occasions over the past month, we on this side of the House have been trying to get the government to reconsider the cuts to the Children's Dental Program, a program which assists over 60,000 rural children in this province. In Selkirk, in the Lord Selkirk School Division, a minimum of 250 children will no longer be able to get any dental care as their parents will not be able to pick up the associated costs.

Does the Minister of Health have any studies justifying these particular cuts, or does he expect school divisions in this province to pick up the cost?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, in answer to my honourable friend's last question, no, that is not an expectation that government has. I do not know whether that is an expectation my honourable friend is expressing on behalf of the official opposition, however. He may want to clarify that.

Mr. Speaker, I have indicated that the decision to reduce the treatment program was not one easily taken. It was a \$3-million reduction in budgetary requirements. I think it is fair to say that the decision

as made in Manitoba was not arrived at any easier than a similar decision in our sister province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, earlier the Premier was praising Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan reduced the program. They did not cut it like this particular government.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: Why would he cut this program when dentists were charging less than the fee guide price, and many have already stated that the program has resulted in overall dental improvement in children and will eventually lead to the prevention of many of these costly procedures?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly why we have retained intact the education prevention part of the program. That is why, as I have indicated to my honourable friend, this government has flowed substantial dollars into communities in rural and northern Manitoba for the fluoridation of their water supplies in smaller communities.

Mr. Speaker, I am led to believe that in that area, Manitoba is probably the leading province in Canada in terms of that preventative effort which helps to maintain all individuals' teeth in a healthy condition. We have maintained the prevention and education component of the program.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, my final question to the minister: Rather than spend \$4 million on an American health consultant, could this minister keep this program since it benefits over 60,000 children in rural Manitoba?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I recognize my honourable friend is attempting to be a knowledgeable individual, but he is doomed to failure if he does not recognize that the opportunities presented by the contract that St. Boniface, Health Sciences Centre and this government have engaged in represent a very significant opportunity to maintain level of service in our hospitals, to maintain and enhance—in fact, enhance—the amount of time caregivers spend with patients and present a significant opportunity for budgetary savings in a very difficult time.

Alternatives such as other provinces have expressed would be the mode of the day, were we not to engage—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Rural Gasification Line Expansion

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, when this government presented their throne speech, we were pleased that with one section, they were following our advice, and that was to look at gasification of rural Manitoba. However, that appears to be only an empty promise or a throne speech statement.

In light of the fact that there is a desperate need for jobs in rural Manitoba, particularly with the many cuts that we have been seeing by this government, can the minister responsible for gasification let us know when we will see an expansion of lines in rural Manitoba?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, yes, I am pleased that in the throne speech there was mention made about the importance of at least doing a survey and a review of whether or not it would be possible for us to expand natural gas services to many of the rural communities that have expressed interest in receiving that service.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that between the Department of Energy and Mines and my department, we have indeed launched on that kind of a review. There have been some contacts made with communities, with suppliers of natural gas, to see whether or not it is in fact feasible and whether there is enough interest in many of our rural communities to move ahead with natural gas services to those communities.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, it looks like we are just going to have a review, because the minister knows there is a tremendous amount of interest in the Interlake and in the Swan River area.

I want to ask the minister, since the Swan River people are interested in building an ethanol plant, but it is essential that they have an alternate source of energy, what answers has he got for those people? Can they go ahead with their feasibility on ethanol, or is there no hope from this government on natural gas?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the member for Swan River was at the very meeting that I was at with regard to the possibility of the location of an ethanol plant in Swan River. Indeed, at that time, she heard me indicate to the community that this government was moving ahead with the necessary work that is

required to do before we could say yes or no to natural gas in any community.

Mr. Speaker, that work is ongoing at the present time, and as we reach decision points, we will certainly be informing communities and getting their participation in the projects.

* (1410)

Ms. Wowchuk: Will the minister admit that they are prepared to drain money out of rural Manitoba, they will take all the money through VLTs, but they are not prepared to invest in rural Manitoba to have some economic development? When are we going to have some investment in rural Manitoba?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, about a week and a half ago we hosted a forum on economic development in rural Manitoba. I was a little saddened when there was not any representation from the New Democratic Party at that forum.

Although from time to time we have questions about rural Manitoba in the House, Mr. Speaker, certainly, there does not seem to be that interest when we have communities come forward with initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to natural gas in this province as the new lines . . . and as we can afford it.

Point of Order

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I would like the minister to correct the record when he says we did not attend the meeting. I would like to inform the House that we did not know about the meeting until two days before. We were not invited.

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

It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

Bill 29 Enforcement

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, for three years this government refused to proclaim antisniff legislation that we all agreed to in this Chamber, and felt was good and would make a difference. The excuse by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) was that the legislation was not enforceable, even though he never provided any evidence of that.

Now he has introduced a new bill and we hear from law enforcement agencies, particularly Inspector Lou Spado of the Winnipeg police force,

that it looks like there might be some loopholes in it, and I quote: It looks like we are going to have to prove it was purchased for the purpose of sniffing and if the seller says that he thought it was not going to be purchased for that purpose, then he has got an out.

I want to ask the Minister of Justice if he will now review his proposals to curb the sale of solvents to minors and put some teeth back into antisniff legislation.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, we have put teeth into this legislation that was not there before. I think that when people like the one referred to by the honourable member have a chance to read their briefing materials before making their public statements, we might find that there will be support from law enforcement agencies, because our consultations with the City of Winnipeg Police prior to the reaction yesterday by Inspector Spado was far different. So we hope that Inspector Spado will read his briefing materials, and we might hear more from him in the future.

Review

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): I want to ask the Minister of Justice if he is prepared to review his proposals to consult widely, as was the case with Bill 91 during the process for which the Minister of Justice himself was involved—will he review that to ensure that this legislation has enough teeth in it to be able to convict those who wrongfully sell solvents to minors?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): That is the whole idea, Mr. Speaker. That is why we have tried to improve on the bill brought forward by the honourable member. The honourable member has to remember, I supported her bill. I hope she supports this one, because it is not a question of credit. There is all-party agreement that we need to do something about this. So I do not care about the credit.

I want to help protect children. So does the honourable member. So let us put aside all of the politics about who gets all the credit and who gets all the blame and work together to try to help children in this province.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, I am operating on the basis of good faith. We do want to ensure legislation.

Legal Opinion Tabling Request

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): I would ask the Minister of Justice if he would agree to table the legal opinion that this government says it had with respect to Bill 91 and the legislation that we passed three years ago.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, it is my hope to speak in a few moments at second reading and introduce this bill. I will deal with the differences that exist between the present bill and the one previously, and with all the good faith I can muster. I am trying to tell the honourable member that we have the genuine view that the bill that she had brought forward, on looking at it subsequent to its passage, we found these problems.

We agreed with the honourable member's assurances beforehand. We believed her assurances. That was a mistake we made, and we have acknowledged that.

The honourable member wants tabled written legal opinions. What we have in the form of a legal opinion is Bill 29 which is the result of three years of work in putting together a bill that will adequately protect children.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Nonpolitical Statements

Mr. Speaker: Prior to getting to Orders of the Day, I believe the honourable member for St. Johns would like to make a nonpolitical statement. Is there leave? [agreed]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that today is International Midwifery Day and, on behalf of, I hope, everyone in this House, to extend our congratulations to those in Manitoba who have been working on this issue and seeking advances in the area of midwifery for many years. In particular, I would like to pay tribute to the Manitoba Homebirth Network, to the numerous women's organizations who have been fighting for changes in this regard and to people concerned everywhere about choice with respect to birth.

Mr. Speaker, the profession of midwifery is about the oldest profession in our society today. I quote from an individual by the name of Violet McNaughton, who said in 1912: The practice of midwifery dates back to the beginning of human life

in the world. At the supreme moment of motherhood it is probable that some assistance has always been required and given. Its history runs parallel to the history of the people and its functions antedate any record we have of medicine as an applied science. To deny its right to exist as a calling is to take issue with the external verities of life.

Mr. Speaker, today is a time to acknowledge the work done in this area and to indicate our support for those seeking to provide choice and to pledge our commitment today to ensure recognition and respect for midwives in Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I believe the honourable Minister of Health would like leave to make a nonpolitical statement. Is there leave? [agreed]

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it is always my pleasure to join with my honourable friend in a statement where we offer similar sentiments. This day is an important day.

Sir, this government and my ministry is attempting, through the discussions—oh, say, Mr. Speaker, I must apologize. I was almost going on the verge of politics and introducing an element of politics. I shall not do that.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is fair to say that all members of this Legislature would like to see the profession of midwifery formally recognized in this province and formally part of our health care decision. Certainly, I believe efforts are well underway to lead us to that end goal, which would make this day one of indeed celebration in the future.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Crescentwood have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, I certainly am pleased, on behalf of my caucus, to join with other colleagues in the Legislature to recognize International Midwifery Day. I noticed at lunch hour today that there was certainly a lot of interest generated. They were speaking to a number of individuals who were obviously there to support this worthy cause.

I think it is important to recognize that midwives certainly are a profession. It is important that all of us in this House and society certainly treat the midwifery profession as such. They certainly provide a very valuable service to society.

Midwifery is somewhat newer here in Canada and in North America than it is in other countries across the world. I would certainly hope, and I hope my colleagues would join with me, that in fact the profession of midwifery continues to receive what it deserves in our society, that is, respect for their profession and that we will continue to work with this profession as we do with other health care professionals to ensure that there is a worthy and a quality service that is being provided to Manitobans.

I do join with my other colleagues in wishing midwives across this province very well on the International Midwifery Day and also wishing well all of the individuals who have received the service of midwives. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (1420)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): I would ask on Orders of the Day if you could please call for second reading Bill 29, The Minors Intoxicating Substances Control Act, and then I would ask if you could please call for continuation of debate on second reading, Bill 16, and then the other bills in second reading as they appear on the Order Paper.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 29—The Minors Intoxicating Substances Control Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), that Bill 29, The Minors Intoxicating Substances Control Act; Loi sur le contrôle des substances intoxicantes et les mineurs, be now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, the proposed Minors Intoxicating Substances Control Act is aimed at protecting children and young people by restricting their access to dangerous intoxicants which are harmful to their health and social development. The act prohibits the sale or other giving of intoxicating substances to people who are under 18 years of age where there is a reasonable basis to believe that the product will be used as an intoxicant.

These intoxicants include products like glue, adhesives, fingernail polish remover, Lysol and hairspray. People actually ingest or sniff these substances, Mr. Speaker. It does a lot of damage to them. The bill also permits adding other products to the list by regulation because as we know, when some products are banned, people move to other products.

The goal of this legislation is to develop better control over the sale of these substances in certain circumstances. In this way, we hope to protect young people without unduly penalizing legitimate retailers and customers by enabling the law to punish severely people who knowingly or recklessly sell sniff products to children who may use them as intoxicants. This new legislation replaces The Public Health Amendment Act passed in 1990 which was well intended, Mr. Speaker, but was too general, making it difficult to enforce.

I am not going to be very long in my comments, Mr. Speaker, but I hope the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) will listen as I get to that part of my comments which deal with the differences between this bill and the bill that she brought forward in 1990, because I have nothing but words of praise for the honourable member. I have no fault to extend to the honourable member except to say that good intentions are not enough and working together we can build a good regime in this province to provide a better level of safety for our young people. I will be asking the honourable member for St. Johns to move very expeditiously to support this legislation so that we can get on to help protect people from their own bad habits.

Instead, always, Mr. Speaker, of taking a partisan approach on an issue like this, why do we not pull together? That is what we have tried to do in the past. In the very same session that we accepted the bill brought forward by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), we accepted the bill brought forward by the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), had to do with knives in bars. The bill was passed; the bill is in operation; the bill can work. That same bill, we passed a bill and we agreed to it, a bill brought forward by the former member for Seven Oaks, Mr. Mark Minenko, dealing with parking regulations for disabled people. That bill we found problems with and were able to address those.

The honourable members on the other side want to be critical about us and about this bill, yet they forget that we did operate in a spirit of co-operation

on this and other bills. Once this bill is passed and in operation, the honourable member for St. Johns should forget about the political brownie points when it comes to sniff. It is a very dangerous situation out there in the community. [interjection] Why the head-long battle for brownie points when we are all really trying to do the right thing here? I do not really understand the attitude of the honourable member. There has to be politics in everything, does there not? Well, it is too bad because here I am bringing forward a bill and asking the honourable member and her colleagues for support for a bill that may just make a difference.

An Honourable Member: Pass it today.

Mr. McCrae: Today would be just fine with me.

The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wants to get into the act. All he has to do is look in the back alleys of his neighbourhood to know that there is a problem there, too. Why does he shout so loudly from his seat when all he has to do is support the legislation when the question is called for later this afternoon?

Under the new act, the definition of intoxicating substance has been expanded to include Lysol, glues, cements and certain other chemicals. The reason for this is to prevent children who use sniff from switching to other intoxicants such as cleaners and hairspray which are not covered by the previous legislation. At the same time the prohibition on sale of intoxicating substances has been narrowed in scope.

One concern with the previous bill was that it could be challenged on the basis that it encompasses an enormous range of innocent activity and made it impossible for people to know clearly when their responsibility was triggered. The narrow scope of the new legislation now targets the vendors and suppliers who trade in the misery of children by selling sniff products to them. We have also increased the penalties for people found guilty of being in contravention of this act. Individuals found guilty of a first offence will be subject to a fine of not more than \$5,000 or imprisonment of not more than six months. For a second offence the individual will face a fine of no more than \$10,000 and a minimum term of imprisonment of not less than seven days, automatic jail. Corporations will be fined a maximum of \$10,000 for a first offence, and a maximum of \$25,000 for a second offence.

The intent of these tough penalties is to send out a strong message to Manitoba communities that selling sniff to young people will not be tolerated. People who are charged under the act have a defence if they can prove that they took reasonable steps to ascertain that the purchaser was 18 years old and that the product would not be used as an intoxicant. The proposed act also prohibits the use of intoxicating substances to make it clear to young people, who are the object of all of this, that sniffing is viewed as an offence. Minors who are convicted under this legislation will be subject to a range of penalties set out in Section 20 of the Young Offenders Act. The penalties, Mr. Speaker, will be diversionary or rehabilitative in nature rather than punitive. This was the concern of the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), and that is the issue we are dealing with.

Previous attempts to control this very serious social problem have failed, so we have taken great care and time in drafting this new legislation. I am pleased to note that the concept for this bill is supported by policing agencies, child care authorities and the Chief Medical Examiner's office.

Mr. Speaker, I told the honourable member for St. Johns that I would deal with some of the differences here. There need to be some differences so that we can make this act work. None of us want to go forward with a bill that is not going to work, because what service are we providing, what crime prevention or abuse prevention technique is it to bring in a bill that does not work? That happened. The City of Winnipeg had a by-law struck down. The honourable member's bill would have been struck down.

* (1430)

This bill, we hope, will not be struck down. We hope it will be successful when it is challenged. I have no doubt that it will be challenged, because the penalties are so stiff for those purveyors in these poisons. You know, one successful prosecution, Mr. Speaker, would have an extremely strong deterrent effect in the community.

I hope the honourable member will listen. When she responds today, no doubt she will criticize. I expect that, and I do not mind, frankly, the criticism. All I really want from the honourable member today is support for speedy passage. Get this job done and get the law on the streets out there so we can do something for these people who are doing so

much to destroy themselves. We have to do something about it. Those who are purveyors of this garbage are helping in the whole plot of destroying our young people.

First off, the definition of intoxicating substances has been broadened to include Lysol, glues, cements and certain other substances.

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

Second, the new bill has been written as a separate act with a purpose clause to clearly state the purpose of the act and show clearly that the purpose is within the constitutional mandate of the province, not clear enough in Bill 91.

The honourable member is not going to criticize us for—

An Honourable Member: Where is that spelled out? Where is it different?

Mr. McCrae: Well, I have gone through one.

The second point is, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the new bill has been written as a separate act, not under the Health Act, with a purpose clause in the bill to clearly state the purpose of the act and to show clearly that the purpose is within the constitutional mandate of the province.

This is all legal language, Mr. Acting Speaker. There are reasons for having these kinds of clauses. That is so you can tell the court, if it ever arrives in a courtroom, which I have no doubt it will, that this is what it is intended to do and there is no confusion about it.

The third point is that the prohibition on the sale of intoxicating substances has been narrowed in scope to better ensure the enforceability of the act. The honourable member's bill, well intentioned as it was, my advice, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that it was so broad that defences could spring up almost anywhere. Here, in the bill we have in front of us, a defence is spelled out so that if you have that defence, fine; if you do not, you better have a pretty good reason for supplying this junk to young people.

The Public Health Amendment Act contained a very broad prohibition that was susceptible to successful challenge on the basis that it captured all kinds of innocent activity and made it impossible for a person to know the elements of the crime.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms demands standards in legislation which enable the citizen to know when his or her responsibility to act is

triggered. That was not in the previous bill. And again, I make no criticism. The point is that the previous bill, the honourable member's bill, contained a very broad prohibition. It was susceptible to successful challenge on the basis that it captured a lot of innocent activity and made it impossible for a person to know the elements of the case.

The Charter of Rights demands standards in legislation which enable the citizen to know when his or her responsibility to act is triggered. So what I am saying is that the previous bill was too broad and left too much room for guesswork, and the courts do not work by way of guesswork. So the focus of this Bill 29 aims clearly at the predatory vendor who contributes to the misery of children.

Fourthly, a prohibition on the use of intoxicating substances has been included to make it clear to minors that this is viewed as a serious problem and to better accommodate the enforcement of the act in general. There was no such provision in the previous legislation.

What kind of message are we really giving to young people when we are silent about intoxicating substances in our legislation? Well, the message is that if it is not illegal, then it is okay, and you have our approbation. Go ahead and sniff till you cannot sniff anymore.

Really, what we need to do is we do need to have a prohibition here for young people. I wish we could extend it to adults too. This is a criticism coming out of Thompson, but it is not a fair criticism because it is not something we can constitutionally do in provincial legislation. We can deal with young offenders, we can deal with public health, and we can deal with substances in provincial legislation, but we cannot deal with adults ingesting these substances. We can deal with young people.

So that was another problem which has been cleared up. The bill provides for much stronger penalties than the previous bill. Those are the kinds of things that you can discuss in a committee. There again I make no criticism of the honourable member or the previous bill but, I think, with the extremely strong sanctions, we can really deliver a message to people who have been providing this kind of stuff to young people.

An Honourable Member: We could deliver the message if they ever pass the bill.

Mr. McCrae: Well, it is true that we could deliver the message right away if we pass the bill right away, and as soon as we say that, we leave ourselves open to criticism for taking as long as we have to get this bill before the House.

I have told the media, I have told the honourable member, I am willing to accept criticism in that area because we did take a good long time to make sure that the bill was the best bill that we could draft. *Mea culpa*, Mr. Acting Speaker, I accept that criticism. I do not know what good it is going to do though to continue to harp away at that aspect when really all we need to do is get on with this.

The next point is that the list of exceptions in The Public Health Amendment Act has been removed since they are no longer necessary given the narrower framing of the prohibition. That is the introduction of a reasonable basis test. If you do not have that you have got constitutional problems with making prosecutions stick.

So we can have a wonderful debate about this, Mr. Acting Speaker, or we can now put our money where our mouth is, put our votes where our mouths are and support this legislation so that we can put it to work to make our communities safer places.

It was just not that long ago I had occasion to look in the back alleys of the downtown core of the city of Winnipeg, to look under the dumpsters behind the hotels and to see some of the people, and to smell some of the people, and to be near them, and to see the problems that these things cause. So I am with the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey). I hope he will join with us on this.

I think once people like Lou Spado and others have a look at this legislation that they can hardly object. The City of Winnipeg Police were there to support the honourable member's bill, Bill 91. This is as good as or better bill. So I am surprised, frankly, at the comments from Inspector Spado today. I think, though, that he did not look at all of the information that we had made available to him through our consultations with the City of Winnipeg Police.

For example, somebody says, how can you ever prove this? How are you ever going to succeed? Well, the answer is we hope that we can. There are no guarantees in anything. There is a loophole in every piece of legislation ever written, Mr. Acting Speaker, but surely, if you are the operator of a small corner store or a drug store or something like that,

and you have got a young person who comes in, looks like a street child, i.e., a person who is poorly dressed, dirty, unkempt, late at night, smelling for all the world like gasoline, eyes watery or staring about in all directions, I mean, obviously, these are things that a vendor in these substances should look for.

We are imposing on them a responsibility to look for those things when we are placing on them an onus—make sure that they know who it is they are selling stuff to. Are they 18? Are they smelling of glue or gasoline? Is it late at night? Is the child in the company of other children late at night and these others things are present?

Is there a significant markup from the usual retail price of the intoxicant? Is the child already showing signs of intoxication? Is the intoxicant stocked in inordinate supply relative to the particular vendor's operation?

* (1440)

Issues like that are going to be looked at by the police. I do not think Inspector Spado had a look at the criteria that I am talking about which has been discussed with police authorities. Maybe he was not at the meeting. I do not know.

Were there admissions of suspicion or concern on the part of the vendor? Were other children purchasing such materials at the same place? Does the vendor take steps to ensure the product is not going to be used as an intoxicant? Does the vendor ask the kid, are you going to use this to sniff? Those kinds of things all form part of this.

Does the vendor do regular business with street alcoholics? I mean, let us not mince words. You can tell if a person is drunk or under the influence of something, if they smell. All of these things come into it, and like I said, does the vendor do regular business with street alcoholics, in whose company the child consumed the product?

I mean, obviously, Mr. Acting Speaker, I say to a vendor who claims innocence in a situation like that, give me a break. Give the child a break, too. So we have got to deal head-on with this. It has been difficult. It has been words up until now. We are trying to put it into action, and the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylcia-Leis), she received co-operation from me in 1990. I worked with her on the bill that she brought forward. I worked with her Leader on the antiknife bill which passed and is in operation.

Let not honourable members opposite try to make politics on the backs of young children who are dying because they are abusing intoxicants. Let us kick the politics out of this one. Get it passed, and get on with it.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Acting Speaker, I cannot hide the fact that it is with a great amount of disappointment and regret that I enter into this debate on Bill 29. I cannot hide the disappointment felt in our community. I cannot gloss over the anger and rage among those who worked so long and hard in this province for meaningful action on a very serious problem, a problem that has hit many of our communities, not just the inner city, not just northern reserves, but everywhere.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the problem of solvent abuse is now recognized in a very serious way to be ravaging our communities, creating very serious health problems among many of our young people and, in fact, leading to death.

For the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) to stand in his place today and defend Bill 29 and suggest that we not play politics in this House and that we show we are concerned by moving this bill through the legislative process quickly is in my mind the most blatant example of hypocrisy I have seen in this House today.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it is hard to sit here in this Chamber and listen to that kind of lecturing told from the Minister of Justice, when it was, in fact, he and his colleagues and that government that are to blame for the growing problem in our community of solvent abuse, that must take responsibility for the fact that our society has not been equipped in some way to deal with something as serious as solvent abuse. The Minister of Justice has no business in this House today to stand up and suggest and to tell members of the opposition that we should move on this bill quickly, otherwise we are playing politics.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I will tell members across the way who are busy heckling from their seats that we will not commit today our position on this bill, because they might recall, this bill came out of the community. This bill came from front-line workers, people who see the problem on a day-to-day basis, people who want something done. It came from families who have children who are victims of sniff. It came from law-enforcement people who want to

have a tool to be able to deal with this problem. It came from our society, from our community.

It did not come from one individual in this Chamber; it did not come from one political party in this Chamber. It came because concerned citizens wanted to see some action. It just so happened we heard, four or five years ago, that call, that plea for help, and took up the cause, not for political gain, not to play politics but to try to see if we could not work together and achieve something that made sense, that would go a little bit of a way to make a difference. We entered, Mr. Acting Speaker, into a co-operative process in between 1988—[interjection] And I wish the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), who keeps yapping from her seat, would be quiet and learn something about this bill and the history behind this bill.

Mr. Acting Speaker, to refresh the minister's memory, who may have not been aware of what went on in 1988 to 1990.

An Honourable Member: Sure she does. She was there.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: If she was there, you would hardly know it. Where was she? [interjection]

Mr. Acting Speaker, on the advice of many in the field, this bill was drafted. The original antisniff legislation was drafted and brought into this Chamber in good faith, and from the very beginning with an understanding from all members in this House that it was an idea worth considering, that the legislation or the proposal had merit, and that we would all work as co-operatively as possible to make this a good piece of legislation, to ensure we had something at our fingertips to be able to stop young people from turning to sniff and other solvents and become addicted to those products. That co-operative process was apparent throughout all stages of the bill. It was there every step of the way between 1988 and 1990.

All members in this House, who were here at the time, had a chance to see that process and to witness the spirit of co-operation. Something that was possible, then, because we had a minority government, then, because there had been an understanding on the part of everyone in this House that we had a problem we had ignored for too long, and, then, because, Mr. Acting Speaker, in fact politics was not at play. No one was trying to take credit for a bill. No one wanted to have a bill put forward and passed for personal reasons. We all

worked on it together, and we were all collectively excited by the work we had done together and the product that we had produced.

* (1450)

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) was one of the key participants throughout that whole process. At every step of the way, he praised our efforts and encouraged the process. On February 6, 1990, the Minister of Justice, the same Minister of Justice who has the gall to stand up in the House today and suggest we move quickly on his bill to avoid petty politics, when it has been nothing but petty politics on his part and his colleagues' part that has delayed any kind of action for three years, said: "As I have said, I have been working with the Honourable Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), who had the foresight to bring this matter forward."

He said again on March 1: "... we have to have legislation like this ... in a matter like this there is all ..."—[interjection]

Mr. Acting Speaker, I wish the egos in this room would leave and we could get down to a serious discussion of this bill.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) said on March 1, 1990: "... we have to have legislation like this ... in a matter like this there is all kinds of room for agreement amongst right thinking and caring Manitobans, which I trust that all Members of this House are."

Mr. Acting Speaker, that set the stage for a clause-by-clause analysis of Bill 91, the original antisniff legislation. As we went to committee, we heard presentations from a number of groups—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members wanting to carry on a conversation to do it in the loge or out in the hall, so that we could hear the honourable member for St. Johns. The honourable member for St. Johns to continue.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Acting Speaker, we all participated in the process of listening to a number of very good experts in the field, people committed and concerned about the problem of sniff and solvent abuse in our society today. We ask questions of all those representatives. I might add, all of us in this Chamber participated in that exchange.

We quizzed those experts, including the police department, including lawyers, including the MMA, including front-line workers, including people in the aboriginal community who have a very good understanding of the issue. We took their advice and information into the clause-by-clause stage of the bill and proceeded to review each clause in a serious way and, I might add, to make amendments where we had been persuaded by representatives who had appeared before the committee and where the advice from the Department of Justice had been given to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), and it was felt important to include in the process.

Today the Minister of Justice stands in the House and tries to suggest, suddenly, after having given his blessing to Bill 91, stands in his place today and suggests that Bill 91 had never been enforceable. Keep in mind, at no point would this minister or the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), who seemed to have taken over responsibility for antisniff legislation for the past three years—the ball has been tossed back and forth among a number of players and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. Could I please ask those two honourable members, the one for Portage (Mr. Pallister) and the one for Transcona (Mr. Reid), to step outside and have this conversation so that we could hear this debate going on? The honourable member for St. Johns to continue again.

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Acting Speaker, I was attempting to review the process we went through at the clause-by-clause stage of Bill 91, to point out that amendments were made based on some concerns raised to all of us by such participants as the Winnipeg Police Force. Amendments were made by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), based on the expert advice he had received from his own officials.

Just as one example, I go back to those hearings and that clause-by-clause process, which took place in March of 1990 where the Minister of Justice, that same Minister of Justice we have today, made an amendment and, in defending that amendment, said: The wording in the bill presently is conclusive evidence and it changes it to is in the absence of evidence to the contrary, proof of. It is in order to make the bill something that might withstand any challenge.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I cite that example to give indication—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker. I do not know what I created when I started with my remarks on this bill, but certainly there is a lot of activity going on in this Chamber that makes it hard to have a serious discussion on this bill.

I would suggest that the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) ignore whatever else is going on in this House, and perhaps we could have a serious discussion of Bill 29.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Laurendeau): Order, please. Could I ask the honourable Minister of Justice to tone it down a little bit, and I would ask the honourable member for St. Johns to not try and provoke this debate, and I would ask the honourable members on both sides in the back benches at this time to please refrain from talking. If you are going to do it, go do it outside of the Chamber or in the loge. That is the last warning.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: It is absolutely clear, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the present administration, including the Minister of Justice, thoroughly reviewed Bill 91 to determine whether it was enforceable or not at that time and concluded that it was.

All of the comments put on record show that the Minister of Justice received advice from those who had expertise in this area and made a conclusion based on that advice and advised this House that the bill was good, that it could withstand any kind of challenge.

Mr. Acting Speaker, as a result of that very thorough and positive committee process, and clause by clause analysis of the bill which resulted in several major amendments, the bill proceeded to third reading on March 15, 1990. Shortly after that we expected that the bill which had received the blessing of all individuals in this Chamber, and all three political parties, would be proclaimed. In fact, the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) said he needed some time to get the message out to the business community to retailers in order that they could prepare for the legislation, and then the bill would be proclaimed.

Well, then the waiting began. Three years went by, three years of persistent questioning on our part to determine what was the reason for the delay. We

never did get any specific answers. There were never any legal documents tabled. The minister responsible, who seemed to take over responsibility for this bill in this three-year period, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), would only say that there were some technical problems with enforcement. We tried every mechanism we could to get this government to table a legal opinion, and that failed. So to this day, Mr. Acting Speaker, even with the Minister of Justice's speech today regarding Bill 29, we have no clear idea, no understanding at all of what enforcement problems existed with Bill 91.

Further to that, Mr. Acting Speaker, having tried to analyze Bill 29 in the short time that we have had available to us since yesterday and compare it with Bill 91, I find it very difficult to understand how anything in Bill 29 will make this issue, this problem in our society any more enforceable.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister of Justice went through several points in terms of trying to compare the two bills. He suggested first of all—[interjection]
* (1500)

Right, and I tried to listen. I may have missed some of the points, but I tried to get all the points. He first of all, I believe, said that the list of products had been expanded so that it would therefore be more encompassing and more sensitive to the wide range of products now available to young people for sniffing purposes.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, we cannot buy that argument. That sentiment has no impact on this debate, does not in any way account for a three-year delay in the legislation, and gives no evidence to suggest that Bill 29 is any stronger or any better than Bill 91 because, in fact, Bill 91, the one we all agreed to and all passed, had a section in it ensuring that any other product that was deemed to be considered an intoxicant could be included in this legislation by regulation.

So there is no argument from the Minister of Justice. There is no case to be made that this bill is any better off after a three-year delay on that ground.

Secondly, Mr. Acting Speaker, the minister suggests that the possibilities for defence in this new legislation are better, stronger than under Bill 91. Well, that is where we have the most difficulty. As I said yesterday in Question Period in this House, it is our view that this bill changes and weakens our ability as a society, as a government to crack down on those who sell intoxicants to minors.

In fact, I think it is no exaggeration to say that one section of this new bill, Section 8, creates a hole so big you can drive a transport truck through it. That is precisely the point of Inspector Spado's comments and precisely why this government must take them seriously.

Inspector Spado clearly said yesterday in response to comments from the media that, and I quote: I don't know how enforceable it is going to be. I don't know. It looks like there might be some loopholes in it.

He goes on to say—and this was the point we were trying to make yesterday—it looks like we are going to have to prove that it was purchased for the purpose of sniffing. If the seller says that he thought it was not going to be purchased for that purpose, then he has an out. Precisely the point. That is what we were trying to say yesterday. That, as it now stands, with the Minister of Justice's (Mr. McCrae) new bill, Bill 29, a vendor can simply argue that he believed the minor, the young person was not going to use that product for sniffing purposes, as an intoxicant.

Surely, the Minister of Justice can see that just about anybody can do that, anybody can use this section as a legitimate defence and avoid a conviction. As I said before, how can we expect that there will be a single conviction out of this legislation. The Minister of Justice also said that this legislation puts the onus on retailers, on shopkeepers and gives them responsibility. Yes, most retailers in this province will accept that responsibility and do whatever they can, but we are not talking about the majority of retailers in this province. We are talking about that small group of individuals who deliberately prey on the vulnerabilities of young people, who will go out of their way to buy, sell and market intoxicating substances to young people who are looking for an escape from the harsh realities of their lives.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we know how that type of retailer has been able to date—who knows the law inside and out, who knows every avenue to escape a conviction and that has created enormous difficulties under the present law. It will continue to be a problem under Bill 29.

We are not saying that Bill 91 is foolproof. We are not saying it is an absolute secure way to ensure convictions of those who wrongfully sell solvents to minors. What we are saying is that there is a better

chance under Bill 91 of trying to crack down on those kinds of vendors, because it specifically says, thou shalt not sell solvents to minors unless—and then specifically outlines several conditions which clearly must be met and which require some concrete evidence to back them up, not simply the verbal statement that he or she believed the individual would not use that substance for sniffing purposes or as an intoxicant.

That makes us very worried and at this point not able to say that tomorrow we can support this bill. We have to go back to the community groups, to the individuals, to the people who have for two decades been trying to make some inroad in this regard.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) also suggested that Bill 91 would have been struck down. He said the city by-law was struck down, and he said this one would have been struck down, failing to acknowledge that the city by-law was struck down for a very specific reason having to do with jurisdiction, and that Bill 91 was drafted to ensure that the same problem would not occur again.

That belief was held up by many who participated in the process and many who came to our committee hearings, including again the representative from the Winnipeg Police Department who indicated the problems with the by-law and further stated that he felt and the Winnipeg Police Department felt that Bill 91 was worth a try, it might make a difference, let us give it a try and see what would happen.

That is what we said, Mr. Acting Speaker. We said, we know it may not be perfect. There may be some flaws. We may have to amend it. We may have to do some things by regulation, but let us give it a try.

That was three years ago. That was in 1990. That was in the year that we just began to see the serious problems emerge in our economy as a result of the implementation of free trade in 1989, the effects of other changes internationally on our Canadian economy and the Manitoba economy, when we clearly saw the increase in unemployment, the increase in the number of people falling below the poverty line, the number of homeless, the number of sex abuse cases, the number of child abuse cases, the number of people in absolute despair and destitution.

So precisely at the time we began to see our economy take a serious nosedive, this bill could

have been up, in effect and running and making a difference, and it would have made a difference, Mr. Acting Speaker. It would have made it harder for young people to get access to those products. It would not suddenly stop sniffing. It would not stop people from becoming addicted, but it would have prevented some addiction. It would have turned some young people away from very addictive products.

All of the experts in the field will tell us just how easy it is for kids to get hooked on things like glue sniffing, Lysol, nail polish remover and all the rest. So it is with great disappointment that we are here today, because we do not see in this bill the big differences that the minister said there would be. We do not see how this bill is going to be any more enforceable and, therefore, it is hard to account for three years of delay.

On top of all of that, Mr. Acting Speaker, this bill, the new Bill 29, adds a new provision that we had avoided in Bill 91 for very good reason, for deliberate reason, and that was to avoid victimizing the victim, to avoid charging the user, to avoid locking up young people because of a sniff problem.

* (1510)

Mr. Acting Speaker, this bill makes that decision. It decides and this government has decided to charge the abuser, to lock up the victim. To what end? The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) says they have done this because if it is not illegal in the minds of young people, then it is okay. Well, we have a problem in our society. It is here with us. It is happening in big numbers. It is a grave health issue, so the concern has to be with how we get through to those young people, how we stop them from getting hooked to begin with and then how we treat them.

This bill proposes in fact to lock up young people. What is this government's idea of treatment, to put them in Seven Oaks youth centre and let them out on Fridays? To lock them up and have them run away? This government, if it wants to, can drive down parts of our inner city or other places in this province right now with a bus and pick up busloads of young people who are sniffing and lock them up.

To what end, to what purpose, when in fact there are no available treatment programs for those young people? We have two in this province, and I said that yesterday in Question Period. We have the St. Norbert Foundation program which is

overexpended, oversubscribed, has suffered cutbacks as a result of this government's last budget, and the reductions to the Alcoholism Foundation of Manitoba which in turn has meant cutbacks for the St. Norbert Foundation.

This program, the only one in Winnipeg and the second one of only two in all of Manitoba, has a waiting list of over 80. It is going to take three to six months to get into that program. Well, for a young person who has now volunteered or been referred by an agency to take that treatment program, to wait three or six months, he or she is not going to be around. They are going to be gone in another neighbourhood, maybe have such serious health problems they are beyond help, maybe even dead.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that is clearly an issue that all of us have to come to grips with, but certainly this government has no business including a provision now to charge young people or have plans to lock up young people when there are no treatment programs in place. The only other program in Manitoba is Sagkeeng in Pine Falls and that too is heavily used and needed in that part of our province. So there is nowhere for these kids to go, and it is criminal for us to propose legislating a provision that would charge these kids if we are not prepared to help them.

The only other—and when we raised this in 1990, raised the issue of treatment—the only other option—and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) said at that time and probably will say again today—is to send these kids to Saskatchewan. Is that an option? Is that an alternative? No, Mr. Acting Speaker, the only alternative is for us in this province to take responsibility and to deal with the problem.

We will review this legislation carefully. At no point have we said we would either oppose it or support it. At this point, we have to consult with the people who know the issues, who are behind the original bill to begin with, who are on the front line and see the problems and have a pretty good idea of what works and what does not work. We want to consult fully and we want to hear from all of those individuals again, and we want to hear more from the Minister of Justice about how this bill is any more enforceable than Bill 91.

If it is not, which it does not appear to be, how can this government justify waiting three years, delaying proclamation of a bill that we all agreed to, that we all felt was good and necessary and worthwhile and

important? I think the Minister of Justice owes this House and the people of Manitoba a better explanation than the one he provided today. I think he owes it not only to those who have worked so hard and long on this bill and this idea, but he owes it to the young people of this province, many of whom do not have a future because of the economic and social conditions to which they are subjected and because of the difficulties they have in dealing with the horrible circumstances in their lives, and how many of them do turn to debilitating, intoxicating substances that we have talked about here today.

So I look forward, yet, to a productive, healthy legislative process around this legislation. That does not hide my disappointment. The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) still has yet to satisfy our questions about why the delay when all of the issues he has mentioned in his speech today do not seem to stand up, when there is little evidence to suggest that Bill 91 is better. In fact, all the evidence suggests to the fact that Bill 29 may be a lot weaker, a lot worse, than Bill 91.

Therefore, Mr. Acting Speaker, if that is the case, it is an absolute crime and a shame that this province has been without legislation to curb the sale of solvents to young people for this past three-year critical period when the situation facing our young people has deteriorated so much and when so many more young people have turned to solvent abuse, who have turned to sniffing, who have turned to substances that are wrecking their health and in fact causing some of them to die.

I hope we can have a good legislative process around this and maybe even perhaps the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), since he has said he is operating in good faith and wants to get this legislation through, this time around will be prepared to accept amendments to his legislation as we back in 1990 were prepared to accept amendments from him and the Conservative government.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Acting Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 16—The Public Schools Amendment Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau):
Continuation of debate on Bill 16 (The Public

Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques), on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. Vodrey), standing in the name of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), with 23 minutes remaining, and standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Acting Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to finish speaking to The Public Schools Amendment Act, because it is very important to our students. In the public school system we have 195,000 students in Manitoba who will be affected by this because, when you cut back 2 percent of your budget and then you say to the people who were elected by citizens of Manitoba and given the direction by the government that they can only increase whatever cost to 2 percent, the word that came out was 2 percent property tax, that is all they could increase.

The problem that we have here is that the school trustees right across Manitoba were not appointed by the government. They were elected by the citizens of Manitoba, just as this government was elected by the citizens of Manitoba, just like the federal government was elected by the citizens of Canada. When you have one level of government that starts to dictate to another that this is what you have to do then you might as well just appoint governments and appoint school boards.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

When people elect their representatives, whether they are school trustees, MLAs or M.P.s, they have given the confidence of the school trustees, the government and the federal government the responsibility to govern on their behalf, Mr. Acting Speaker. When that right is taken away we are regressing backward, not moving forward.

When I was speaking last on this bill, when I left off, I was just wondering how this government would react if they were told by the federal government that whatever they had in mind, you cannot do, because it is the wish of the federal government and it is ordered by the federal government that you cannot do that.

* (1520)

I know it would not be positive. It would be a very negative reaction, and they would be very upset if that happened. You cannot blame them for that, because the people elected the government of the day. It was elected by the people to govern

Manitoba, just like the school trustees were elected by the citizens of Manitoba to do what they feel is in the best interests of the citizens of Manitoba, not to be told by a government that they have to hold the line on taxes at 2 percent. That should be a decision made by the school trustees and not imposed by government.

The other thing we see when we look at some of the cutbacks that will affect school children right across Manitoba, when you have to cut back 2 percent of your overall budget—I mentioned prior to today that School Division No. 1 is the biggest division in Manitoba. It is the biggest and it has some of the poorest families that you will find in Manitoba, some of the poorest. When you have poor families, then you have people who are underemployed or have no jobs, and so you have a lot of times family problems.

When you need the special assistance that some of these schools provide to these children, when you have an alternative where you have to cut, sometimes those alternatives hit the poorest and a lot of times they hit the neediest. That is what worries me, when we have school boards that have to cut 2 percent right across the board, whether they have funds or not or whether they come from the poorer part of the city, or if they come from the richest part of the city. It is 2 percent right across the board. I think that is totally, totally unfair because it takes away a lot of the opportunities that these children need.

If you look at the example of special needs students in School Division No. 1, the highest percentage of special needs students are attending school in School Division No. 1. Right across Manitoba, 43 percent of the special needs students, 43 percent, are attending school in Winnipeg School Division No. 1. So you cannot tell me that the 2 percent that had to be cut back from the school board is not going to have a more negative impact than, say, a school division in Tuxedo, because it has to have, because you have many more students who need special assistance programs.

In the inner city, they have preschool and lunch programs, and if those are cut, what is going to happen when we see the cutbacks already pertaining to employment opportunities, and we see the cutback in social assistance for individuals, so where are the parents of these children going to find additional money to at least send their children to

school with a full stomach? If the schools cut those preschool and lunch programs out, I do not know how those children are going to be able to function in school, because if you are hungry, you do not have that attention span. That is in Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

I am really disappointed when I see that same impact happening across northern Manitoba, because we know in a lot of those northern communities, the unemployment levels are very, very high, and I am really, really surprised that the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) did not stand up to his colleague the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) and say, at least look at it to maybe cut in school divisions that have more money than others that do not.

There are a lot of those northern schools that have no fringe programs. You look at some of the special programs that some of these schools provide. They provide vocational education programs, business programs, student social service, band programs. A lot of those northern schools in northern Manitoba, they do not have a band program. They do not have the extra dollars to buy band equipment, your trombones and violins or whatever they have. They do not have that. They do not have the tax base that a lot of the school boards have in southern Manitoba.

When you look at fairness of funding, Mr. Acting Speaker, when you look at the increase of funding to the private schools and the decrease of funding to the public school divisions—my colleague for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) was up at a school division, Antler River School Division. When he was at that meeting, the superintendent said that as a result of the new formula, the contribution from the Province of Manitoba to the Antler School Division would be by 1996-97 approximately 55 percent. That is 1996-1997—55 percent. Compared to what? We heard the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) say the funding at private schools will be, should be, at 80 percent.

Is it fair to fund our private schools at 80 percent when the public school system will be at 55 percent? [interjection] I totally disagree with that, because most of our students right across Manitoba attend public school systems. I have not seen, personally, I have not seen a private school in northern Manitoba. I have not seen that. I do not know if there is any. I do not think so. I have not seen it.

When we look at that formula, it is not a very, very fair formula. We hear the government saying that we have a fair contribution—they do not even call it a tax grab, it is a contribution—from the citizens of Manitoba. It is fair across the board. I hear the members from the government stating, oh, it is another NDP member stating that again. It is another NDP member stating this and that.

I would just like to make a few quotes, and these are not from NDP members. These are from private citizens who tell you, who say the impact, the negative impact, of tax increases by the government is going to have a negative impact on our children.

For example, it says, yesterday the province started adding the 7 percent sales tax on many items previously exempted, including coffee and doughnuts. I think it is disgusting, said an owner of Robin's Donuts on Keewatin Street, it is a huge tax grab and it is going to hurt us all.

Who is that going to hurt? It is going to hurt the families that do not have high income. It is going to hurt families that are probably on social assistance. It is going to hurt families that—it is not every day in the morning, afternoon, we go for a cup of coffee and a doughnut. It is a special time when some of these families can afford to go and have a doughnut and a cup of coffee with their families. That is who it is going to hurt.

* (1530)

Another individual says: They, the government, keep raising taxes and cutting benefits. Now you cannot even take the family out for a cup of coffee without spending an arm and a leg.

I am sure some members will say a cup of coffee and a doughnut is not considered as an arm and a leg, but to these individuals that have very little expendable dollars it is like spending an arm and a leg. That is the whole difference of our philosophies, our beliefs. It should be fair. If you do not have it, why should you have to keep trying to take more from people that have very little to begin with?

It also goes on to say: The provincial government is penalizing people on necessities. They are trying to copy what the federal government has done by openly taxing people, instead of imposing a hidden tax. It is not a replacement tax. It is a penalty tax.

The price of cough syrup used to be \$7.16, including GST. Now it is \$7.63 with the PST—\$7.63 that you have to scrape together when you have

very little, because you are doing it for your child that has a very bad cold. Families do that. They will scrape every penny they have to try and look after their children. It is a little different when you pull out \$7.63 for cough syrup if you have a roll of \$20 bills in your pocket. If you do not have that—and a lot of people in Manitoba do not have that roll of \$20 bills—it is a great sacrifice. It is a willing sacrifice that families will try to do because it is imposed on them by this government.

It goes on to say: And the government is very proud and say people were treated equally right across Manitoba. This goes on to say: And not even kids will escape having to pay tax on goodies. That is a children's tax—not even kids.

It goes on to say: A Coffee Crisp bar was 80 cents, now it is 85 cents. They are taking money out of kids' pockets. That tells it all, taking money out of children's pockets.

It goes on to say: The government did have choices to make, very, very serious choices. I will give you a quote. I was reading a paper this weekend. I was at a friend's place, and they had this paper from Steinbach. It is called *The Carillon*. It is from Steinbach, Manitoba. I do not care what anybody says, that is not an NDP paper. It is a paper put out in the community of Steinbach.

It went on to say that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), when they cut 56 agencies, did not really consider the impact and did not really understand the impact it would have. It said, for an example—this is the paper saying that. For an example, it said, we looked under Manitoba Estimates of Expenditures and it said there under Valley Agricultural Society of Morris was \$195,000 last year. This year they are getting \$185,200. It is probably a very good organization, but this is the newspaper from Steinbach that was giving comparisons to the 56 agencies they cut.

It goes on to say: Another choice that the government had was harness and quarter horse racing club receiving \$395,000. This is the paper from Steinbach, so it is not NDP members who are stating that. This has come from a newspaper that is put out from Steinbach, Manitoba. It is not me saying it. It is not NDP members saying that, so the government should really think a little bit and listen a little bit.

In that same article, it made a reference to Valley Gardens being from Morris, and the reason they

said it was from Morris, because they linked it—they said, it is right in the riding of the Finance minister (Mr. Manness). That is what the paper said. You ask your member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger). He probably gets that paper delivered to his house. Ask him to show you a copy of it. It says right in that paper. It is not me saying it. It is not an NDP member saying it. It came from the Steinbach paper.

So if they see that, they must feel a little concerned for some of the individuals who have very little who have been hit the hardest, because if you have very little and you are hit even with a \$5 increase, if you do not have \$5, it is a lot, but if you have \$100, \$5 is not that much.

The other thing I wanted to raise here is along the same lines because all the negative comments that came out from this 2 percent reduction for the school boards and associations of our school divisions and the capping at 2 percent, I heard from across the floor over and over and over, it is the NDP saying it, it is the NDP saying it.

I have an article here, Mr. Acting Speaker, from an inner city teacher who is right on the front lines, who sees this day in and day out and deals with this day in and day out. The individual goes on to say that April has to be the cruelest month of the year. Despite the warm winds and welcome sunshine of Manitoba's April spring, 1,200 of our high school students are experiencing the ironic bitter edge of the pronouncement, but more for political education and reasons than for the essentials.

They are talking about the school children who have rethought their future and have realized that doors are closed over and over again, that the only way to try and have the ability to look after their families, as there are a lot of young single parents in the inner city, is that they need an education. Those individuals have gone back to school under the social assistance program which has also been cut.

I would like some day for the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to table in the House to see how much they really saved, to really see how much they saved, when a lot of these individuals were filling their days trying to further their education and hopefully becoming tax-paying citizens.

Now, how many of those same individuals will be left, as they are today, 10 years from now—how many of those individuals have now had to go onto

social assistance full time and are sitting at home instead of trying to gain an education to look after themselves and their young families? I really wonder how much this government has saved. I hope the government and the minister will review this in a year's time, and they will see they have saved very, very little if anything at all.

They cannot go home—I heard the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) speaking to the students who were cut from these programs and said, you can always go home. If you come from a low income family and a very poor family who are just barely existing, and if you are a single parent with one or two children, how can your family possibly house you and feed you. It is impossible. They are barely making ends meet for their own immediate family. That is why a lot of these families have moved away from home.

The other thing, too, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that some of these students have had very negative experiences in their own homes. That is why they have moved out. They do not have the opportunity to move back to their families. A lot of them have not even been in touch with their families since they moved out. It is to do with a lot of things that happen. They could be abused or it could be neglect or what have you, and they do not have that opportunity of going back and being looked after by their parents.

I do not think a parent should have to look after their children when they are in their 20s. That is why these students are back in school, back at community colleges, is because they have realized they are wrong for whatever reason that they quit school at a low level and at a very young age. I believe—[interjection] It is very relevant, because you talk about the 2 percent cut in the school divisions—that is going to impact on those students, yes, it will.

A lot of those students are now back at high school. You go to R.B. Russell school and there are a lot of young, single parents who are going back to school trying to get their Grade 10, Grade 11, Grade 12, because they want to further their education to hopefully find a meaningful job and to look after their young family. At that school, Mr. Acting Speaker, they even have a daycare set up to try and assist these young families because they have realized that they were wrong for whatever reason when they dropped out.

All they are asking, and I think every member in this House at one time or another, whatever reason, has asked for a second chance for something. Everyone has done that and that is all these students are asking, because they realized that they made the wrong choice and now they are asking for a second chance to try and get into a position to further themselves and to be able to look after themselves and their young families.

* (1540)

Mr. Acting Speaker, that is why, when you look at some of the increases—like the government said that we did not raise taxes—when you tell a school board 2 percent and then you impose a \$75 straight across the board whether you make \$10,000 or \$100,000, that is not a fair tax system.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I see my time is running out, so thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton)? [agreed]

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to contribute a few words to this debate on this very important piece of legislation, namely, Bill 16. I thank you for allowing it to stand in the name of the member for Thompson.

Mr. Acting Speaker, members on this side—[interjection] Well, you can go out and have a cup of coffee. You have my permission.

This bill disturbs members on this side of the House because of some very basic features of the bill. Of course, the primary feature is that it limits the authority of school boards. It limits the authority of the elected school trustees in this province, and it does cause us great concern because what it does is to contradict the very sanctimonious pronouncements of this government during the throne speech, when hundreds of Manitobans are here to listen, and the media is there to report, and the world is told in the throne speech—[interjection] Well, I am against it.

Now, I answered the question from the member for Arthur (Mr. Downey), interrupting my train of thought, but I want to get back to the main point, one of the main points that I want to make, Mr. Acting Speaker, and that is, it is perhaps a philosophical position that was stated by this government in the throne speech.

I quote. It says, and this is the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Acting Speaker: "My government realizes that Education and Training are the keys that unlock a world of opportunity and a future of economic growth and prosperity."

Certainly, everyone in the world, I would trust, would agree with that statement which seems to be very much of a statement that would have absolutely no argument, that everyone could agree with. Yet what we have here is a bill that is attacking, again, the education system and is undermining our public education system in the province of Manitoba.

It limits the authority. I want to deal with several points. One point I want to make is that it definitely limits the authority of locally elected trustees. You simply take the power away from the school boards when you tell them that they cannot raise taxes by more than 2 percent. So I would say that the school trustees of this province will be very frustrated in dealing with this matter, in trying to cope with their jobs as school trustees at the local level. There is no question that this is an interference with local autonomy.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it makes you wonder what role is left for the local school boards. Indeed, in some provinces, I must say there has been a shift whereby the provincial authority has taken the power, the administrative authority, away from school boards and is taking it unto themselves, is taking it to their own departments of education.

You see that particularly in some of the eastern provinces, in the Maritimes, in Newfoundland and so on, and it makes you wonder what has happened to local democracy, where we presumably elect people to take on a responsibility and to make decisions, including a decision as to how much additional revenue they need to operate that particular school division in any way they wish.

I say that what this is going to do, among other things, it is going to discourage people even further from getting involved in school boards. In fact, it is already a fact that school trustees are elected with a very small percentage of the popular vote for a very small percentage of the electorate, because people do not come out and vote for school trustees.

I am sorry to say that in some municipalities, you only get 9 percent, 10 percent, 11 percent of the electorate who come out to bother to vote in school board elections. I say, if the understanding is that the school boards are becoming less relevant, then

I would say this is going to discourage people even further from participating in the election process whether it be as a candidate for a school board or whether it be simply as a voter who should take the responsibility and go to the ballot box and cast a ballot one way or the other for the candidate of his or her choice.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

So I cannot see this bill whatsoever encouraging people to become involved in administration of school divisions throughout Manitoba. It takes away the ability of school trustees to make changes that they may wish to make. [interjection]

Mr. Speaker, how can it assist anyone if they are—[interjection] Okay. This is a good point—the overtaxed people of Manitoba. Yes, tell me about the overtaxed people of Manitoba when you took \$75 property tax credit away from them. You tell that to the people of Manitoba.

On the one hand, the minister brags and says she wants to hold down tax increases, and I quote the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey): They—meaning the taxpayers—cannot afford tax increases year after year, quote, unquote, from the Minister of Education.

So one week we get that from the Minister of Education. The next week, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) comes along and gives a \$75 increase on the average property owner in this province, no question about it. Not only that, the Pensioners' School Tax Assistance Program, as well, has had the effect of increasing the burden of property taxes.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, this bill is bad for democracy. It is bad for democracy. It seems to imply that those people who are prepared to take their time and offer their services, to sit on school boards around the province, become a member of the school board, cannot be trusted somehow. They cannot be trusted or they cannot be given the responsibility to do what they think should be done in the way of changes that may require further funding because of special circumstances, who knows.

There is no question that you have to have a balance between the central authority in the Minister of Education and the government, because of its involvement in financing, but also the funding comes from the local level, as well. Therefore, traditionally,

in our society, in our province, the locally elected officials have a great deal of authority.

But what is happening, we are eroding that authority. We are taking the power away from them. As a result, the school boards of Manitoba are becoming less relevant than they have ever been in the past, and I say we need a balance. We need a balance between the authority of the school board and the authority of the Minister of Education and the Department of Education. This bill is tipping the balance in favour of centralization by the Minister of Education and by the Department of Education.

Mr. Speaker, the school trustees of this province are very upset with what this government is doing. I do not know whether many of the MLAs in the Legislature did take the opportunity to have breakfast with school trustees at their recent convention in Winnipeg, but I did and many of our colleagues did. We got the message loud and clear about what this government was doing to school divisions and to education in general in this province.

* (1550)

There is no question then, Mr. Speaker, that one of the major criticisms that we have to offer is this undermining of the authority of the local school board, and that is the reason we will be opposing this particular piece of legislation.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there is no question that this legislation ultimately continues to undermine our education system. We have talked so loftily about how important public education is, how important education is at all levels, how important it is to have a good quality of life, we have to have a well-educated population. Also, to have economic growth we have to have well-educated and well-trained people. We have to have well-trained young people and I guess old people. We talk about investment in human capital as the basis for economic growth.

This government is working steadily to undermine the quality of education in this province, and this Bill 16 is one of the latest in a series of moves by the government to undermine education. You can look at small examples and you can look at some large examples of what this government has done to attack the quality of education in the province of Manitoba.

One area, to use a small example, is literacy funding. Literacy funding is down \$24,000. In fact,

you can go through the Estimates of the Department of Education and see the various cuts that are made, some rather substantial, some are small, but nevertheless all in a downward direction. Given the phenomenon of some inflation, still the fact is that we are dedicating fewer resources to maintaining a top quality educational system in the province of Manitoba. Ultimately we will all suffer on that account.

We will all suffer. Certainly you will not, as I was saying a moment ago, without adequate training, without adequate investment in people, without adequate human capital, have the economic growth that we all desire. All we have seen is an attack by this government of the education system as we know it. We certainly see the undermining of the public school system in favour of the private schools in this province. That is another story in itself, Mr. Speaker. Certainly this is a serious blow to the public school system as opposed to the private schools in this province.

Again we can look at other examples of the erosion of education in this province. Simply eliminating the student social assistance program was a major blow. Here you have young people, and maybe not so young people, who for whatever reason have been unemployed or could not get a job, they do not have UI, they may have had it at one time, but they ran out of it so unfortunately, they end up on welfare, on social assistance.

This program that was set up back in the Schreyer years was an excellent program because it recognized the need to enable people to get off welfare and to become a productive member of society. That program was just one of many programs that were instituted by the Schreyer government to help the disadvantaged in this province.

This surely was a beacon. This type of program was a beacon for the rest of the country, that here was a progressive move by the government of Manitoba, by a government, to enable people to become trained and to get off of welfare. I know the argument was made by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), I believe, when it was eliminated—well, nobody else does it. That, Mr. Speaker, is not an argument for eliminating the students social assistance program. It should have been evaluated on the basis of what it was doing. Was it performing? Was it enabling people to get training and therefore to become employed?

Admittedly, the unemployment situation is very, very sad in Manitoba today, and I know of many families whose children, I might add, have had education at the college level, at the university level, and who simply cannot get jobs, some ridiculous situations—this is a bit of an aside, Mr. Speaker, but where one young lad who has graduated as an electrical engineer ends up working at some electronics retail outlet, and I think that is a shame. What a waste of resources, having trained the person. So I can see where student social allowance recipients may be trained but still may not get a job simply because of the horrible unemployment situation that we have and because of the lack of growth that we have.

We have the elimination of professional development days of teachers being proposed and coming down the track, and that too is undermining, in my judgment, the quality of education in this province. The ACCESS programs were cut in the Estimates book here in this year's spending. The ACCESS programs are cut by \$1.2 million. Well, that is a rather significant cut to education, Mr. Speaker.

Another area is the cuts to diagnostic and assessment services. This was a major blow to, particularly, I believe, rural Manitoba, where no longer will professional people, psychologists and others who can offer a diagnosis to students who are having difficulties and provide assessment services—those services will no longer be available.

Of course, the school boards could hire them. I guess they have the ability to hire these people if they wish, but then you are limiting the ability of the school boards to increase revenue to do this, so the school boards are in a real bind. There are certain basics, certain important services being taken away on the one hand, and on the other hand, you are limiting the ability of the school division which may wish to reinstate those assessment and diagnostic services. You are limiting the ability of those school boards to do so.

All in all, I say that this Bill 16 magnifies the implications of these cutbacks, some of which I have just discussed, and of course there is, we all know, the serious cutbacks to the universities. This is a very serious situation. It is making it much more difficult for university students to attend in Manitoba, including some of the foreign students.

I know at Brandon University, there were a lot of foreign students coming, but, now, with higher and higher tuition fees, some of them are looking at other universities and other provinces. I know one student in Brandon, a foreign student at Brandon University, who told me that the whole group of them were looking at Newfoundland and they were looking at Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan there, where they were prepared to send in application forms and virtually perhaps attract en masse all the foreign students, or nearly all the foreign students from Brandon University over to the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and that as a result of escalating tuition fees and discrimination against foreign students.

What was particularly galling, I might say, to the students was the fact that it was going to apply to those who had been here a year or two and not just to those who have not yet come.

It is one thing to say to a foreign student who has not arrived in Canada that this is a rate that is higher than the provincial rate for Manitoba residents, but it is another matter to change the rules in midstream when the students are enrolled in the program and then are told after a year or two that the tuition fees are going to go up considerably more than the fees for Manitoba residents because they are from a foreign country. It is simply not fair. As I said, I suspect that we are going to lose a lot of foreign students on that account.

Mr. Speaker, all of these examples I have given are to substantiate my thesis that this government has consistently, and in a comprehensive way, attacked the education system in this province. Bill 16 is one of the latest attacks, one of the latest moves by this government to erode education.

I believe the impact probably might be felt greater in rural Manitoba than in the city of Winnipeg or perhaps even the city of Brandon and maybe some other major centres. I think the smaller divisions that we have in rural Manitoba have less flexibility and will find it more difficult to cope with this particular move by the government. They will feel the impact of Bill 16, I believe, more so than the larger school divisions, so they will be especially hurt.

Of course, they are hurting right now with the elimination of a very important program in the schools, and that is the rural school dental program for children that has been eminently successful. It

goes back again to the Schreyer years and has done a terrific job in raising the quality of dental health care in rural Manitoba. I know the parents out there, throughout Manitoba, appreciated that program. They saw that their children's teeth were being looked after and now, virtually overnight, that important program is being eliminated.

* (1600)

Mr. Speaker, we are going to go backwards on that account because the government is being penny-wise and pound-foolish. It is going to cost Manitoba society far more for dental care in the future than it is today because there is no question that it is cheaper to cope with children's dental problems when they are very young than when they become teenagers.

We know, and as some dentists have said and some school administrators have said, there are going to be many hundreds, if not thousands, of children in rural Manitoba who will no longer get dental care because they are far away from a dentist, or because they do not have the money, or perhaps they never get around to it for whatever reason.

Having that program operating through the schools assured rural Manitoba of a really good quality dental care program for the children, and I for one am very, very sad about it.

Well, I guess that is not education but it is in a way indirectly related, and certainly it was a service delivered through the school systems.

A great deal of what has gone on by this government, in all these cutbacks, relates to the phobia that this government, and indeed many other governments unfortunately have about debts and deficits. That is all we get ad nauseam about the challenge of debts and deficits. We have a debt-and-deficit mentality as though that was the most important thing facing the government of Manitoba today.

Mr. Speaker, I say, that is not the most important problem facing Manitoba today. The most important problem facing Manitoba today is the lack of economic growth and the lack of jobs for our people, and the fact that, because of the lack of jobs for our people, we have just too many people on lower standards of living, and too many people, in fact, tens of thousands of people, leaving this province. They are leaving this province to look for opportunities elsewhere.

It goes back to the fact that we do not have economic activity here, and it goes back to the fact that this government has totally failed in terms of stimulating the Manitoba economy. In fact, the government has assiduously ignored the economic problem, in my judgment. They have not brought any program whatsoever to fight the recession and to create jobs.

They could have done many, many things, including public works, which is a traditional way. It was used in the Great Depression. It has been used by many governments successfully. It is one way to stimulate the economy, to put real assets in place and to provide work, and hopefully, with the multiplier effect, to provide jobs for other people.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that we have a deficit mentality and we are using this as an excuse, in my view, to cut back on a lot of social programs not just in Manitoba, but in other provinces, and indeed at the federal level. The fact is, as the minister himself noted the other day and as I have noted myself from time to time, Manitoba spending per capita is the lowest in the country. We are not big-time spenders in Manitoba. We have traditionally been on the low end of the scale under all governments on a per capita basis.

I believe the figures that I looked at from the Royal Bank of Canada, which compared the various provincial budgets, Manitoba had the lowest spending per capita of any of the 10 provinces in the past couple of years. I say, we do not have a spending problem, at least a program-spending problem, we have a problem of lack of revenue. That is the problem facing the federal government as well as other provincial governments.

I remind you that there was one Erik Nielsen, one time a very prominent Conservative in Ottawa, who was given the job of reviewing government spending. This was a task force set up by the Conservative government on program review. It was set up in the mid-'80s and that task force showed that Canada's debt, and the debt of many of the provinces, were a function not of program spending, but of tax spending, of tax expenditures, that is, tax deferrals, fast write-offs of capital costs, depreciation allowances, RRSPs, special provisions for family trusts, capital gains exemptions, and scores of others.

This grew enormously, Mr. Acting Speaker, throughout the '70s and '80s. As a result,

government revenue just did not accelerate to the extent that it should have. As a result, we achieved these, if you can call it that, we realized these deficits which accumulated into more debt.

In 1991 Statistics Canada did a study. It revealed that 50 percent of—at that time the debt was about \$400 billion—that 50 percent of the debt was due to the failure of revenue collection to keep up with the gross domestic product—the failure of revenue collection to keep up with the GDP increase, and 44 percent of the debt was due to interest charges on the accumulated deficit, and just 6 percent was due to increased spending, that of all types. Of that "all type of spending," only a third of that was social spending. In other words, social spending only accounted, according to their estimate, for about 2 percent of the total federal debt.

Well, the Neilsen Report that I referred to, Mr. Speaker, estimated that between \$20 billion and \$25 billion in revenue was sacrificed each year through tax expenditures, and there were some reforms made in 1987 which closed a lot of loopholes, but even so, the government admitted that upward of 60,000 profitable corporations would pay no taxes for the year 1992. Now, I know that is essentially federal, but it has an impact on all the provinces as well because we share the income tax. We have a sharing income tax system.

As a result as well, we have wealthy individuals in Canada who have the lowest tax rates of any country in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. I think this is one result of the regressive system that we have, our dubious distinction of having the highest number of billionaires per capita in the world. Only two industrialized countries have no estate tax. One is Canada and the other is Australia. Half the countries in Europe also have a netwealth tax.

Mr. Speaker, what I am suggesting is that this in Bill 16, we are saying, well, we have to do this again. The rationale again and again is because we do not have the revenue and we cannot increase the taxes. I am saying if you look at, as Eric Neilsen looked at—and he is not a New Democratic member. He is a member of the Conservative Party and one who had the responsibility of carrying out this program review. The fact is these tax breaks accounted essentially for the lack of revenue growth and have been the major source of accumulated debt in the recent years under the Mulroney government.

Talking about that, Mr. Speaker, because this is quite relevant to most of the moves of this government—a large part of what happens in Manitoba is because of what the federal government does, not what a provincial government does. You know, we have a very sad situation in Canada where we have 11 percent of the people are unemployed. Just imagine, 11 percent of the workforce are without jobs in this country and close to that in this province. In other words, we have men and women who say they want to work. They are in the labour force. They are ready and willing and able to work, but they cannot get employment, and I say, what a waste of resources.

Our most precious resource is being underutilized. Those men and women could be and should be working, producing goods and services that we all want, and we will all be better off. We will all be wealthier on that account. But, instead, we seem to be satisfied to allow 10 percent, 11 percent in this country to stay unemployed.

The argument is, well, the government cannot do much about it like it used to do years ago. It cannot do public works, it cannot do job creation programs, it cannot engage in things that will stimulate the private sector because it does not have the money.

* (1610)

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are facing a very serious economic crisis in this country, a very serious unemployment crisis in this country. When we had a serious crisis last—I cannot think of any downturn of the business cycle as bad as this since the 1930s, since the Dirty Thirties, the Great Depression.

We had a crisis during World War II, and for members' information, the bulk of the war effort of World War II was financed by borrowing, not by taxing—some taxes, yes, but the bulk of it was financed by borrowing, and in 1942, 25 percent of that borrowing was done directly from the Bank of Canada.

So we did not say, sorry, Adolf Hitler, we cannot fight any more because our national debt is too ruddy big. We cannot fight because the debt is too big. Sorry, we have to bring all our troops home and we have to stop fighting. Well, of course, we did not do that.

I say, today we see the phenomenon of the Bank of Canada not being utilized the way it was during World War II and the way it was for a long time after the war in terms of money creation. Mr. Speaker, if

the Bank of Canada was used the way we used it to fight a crisis during World War II and after the war, we could have a lot less unemployment in the country today.

Even up until the mid-1970s, the bank created enough new money to absorb 30 percent of the federal government deficit, and that figure now is down to 7.5 percent. As a result, the private banks are doing it. They are getting rich.

The government sees its debt held by the public growing and says, in panic, well, we cannot do anymore about it because our debt is too big. All we see governments doing then, by cutting back and restraining, is making the unemployment situation even worse and causing economic growth to flounder even more so.

So I say, Bill 16, this bill to again attack our education system, is a product of that mentality. It is a product of that philosophy. It is a product of that hysteria that seems to have overtaken many of the governments in this country, and it is being used to justify spending cuts that will end up doing more harm than good, Mr. Speaker.

I would say that to have the notion, as I said earlier, that spending is out of control is in fact a wrong notion. The fact is, on an after-inflation basis, the spending by the federal government has been flat since 1985. In fact, on the contrary, governments in Canada are running surpluses in terms of their operations. In fact, this government is running an operating surplus.

Although I do not know whether members across appreciate it or not, the fact is this is being used as an excuse to bring in Bill 16, which we are discussing today. It is another excuse to cut back, another excuse to cut back on social spending, another excuse to cut back generally on programs, and I say that in the long run, we will all suffer on account of it.

I cannot help but think of our good friends in Japan, who are well known for being very successful in developing their industries and developing their economy. In fact, the economy of Japan has become one of the most advanced economies in the world today. They have come an enormous way in the last few decades because they are a hardworking people and because they believe people should work.

Do you know what the Japanese have done now? They have had a bit of a recession, but their

response to the recession is not to cut back. What the Japanese have done is they pumped in another hundred billion dollars into their education, research and public works. They did not cut public spending; they increased public spending in order to stimulate the economy, to get people working.

Mr. Speaker, you are going to see the Japanese economy continue to expand, and we are going to be shooting ourselves in the foot in this country, as we are right now, by making these cutbacks and becoming hysterical about debts and deficits.

Mr. Speaker, I say it is regrettable that Bill 16, again, is the latest in the long list of efforts by this government, using this or being affected by this deficit mentality or hysteria, to cut back on a very important part of our social system, namely, the education portion thereof.

This bill also indirectly attacks teachers and other school staff because it is going to make it ultimately more difficult for them. This is a generalization, but it is going to make it more difficult for them in the long run because it could lead to larger classes—[interjection] Seven minutes, okay, thank you—it could lead to a larger teaching load, and we all realize that we get better quality teaching if you have a smaller class rather than a larger class.

The teachers of Manitoba are very upset with this government at this time. This is one of the reasons—it is not the only one, but it is one of the reasons why teachers in this province are upset and are going to be expressing a degree of frustration and anger with this government in a very public way, I believe, in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question then, that the teachers of this province, and we have some very fine teachers, are going to have a more difficult time in coping because this bill is not just for one year. It could have an impact for two years and three years, and, who knows, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) might decide next year to extend it even further. We do not know how long this government will continue to restrain the ability of school boards as it has done under this particular bill.

So as I said before, we have talked to a lot of school trustees, and they are very unhappy with this particular bill. The recent convention, as I said, of school trustees that I attended gave me an opportunity to hear from the trustees and to hear their complaints with this government about many matters, including this as well.

Mr. Speaker, I will close at this point and just once again state that this government should reconsider this bill and do the right thing, and that is withdraw it from the Legislature.

Thank you.

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

Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock?
[agreed]

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 5, 1993

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