

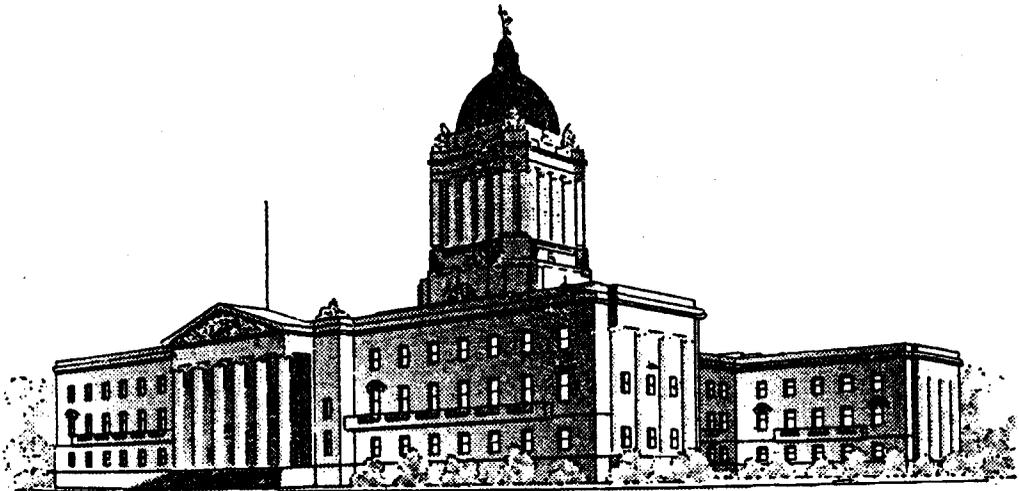


Sixth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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Speaker*



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MANTOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u>
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	P.C.
DUCHARME, Gerald, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	Lib.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	NDP
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	NDP
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
GRAY, Avis	Crescentwood	Lib.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	NDP
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCORMICK, Norma	Osborne	Lib.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	NDP
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupert Island	NDP
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	P.C.
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	NDP
SHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	NDP
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP
<i>Vacant</i>	River Heights	
<i>Vacant</i>	Flin Flon	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 14, 1994

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****PRESENTING PETITIONS****Physical Education in Schools**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Goodluck Nwaerendu, D. Edg, George Johanneson and others urging the Minister responsible for Education (Mr. Manness) to consider reinstating physical education as a compulsory core subject area.

Children's Dental Program

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Marilyn Gross, Elie Gross, Reuben Gross and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) consider restoring the Children's Dental Health Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Handi-Transit

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Lynn Schneider, Stacie Hagberg, Annette Spinak and others urging the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) to consider working with the City of Winnipeg and the disabled to develop a long-term plan to maintain Handi-Transit service and ensure that disabled Manitobans will continue to have access to Handi-Transit service.

Physical Education in Schools

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of James W. Hoddinott, Donna Moman, Merle Klyne and others urging the Minister of Education (Mr. Manness) to consider maintaining physical education as part of the core curriculum from kindergarten to senior high.

Children's Dental Program

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Anna Waldner, Tracy Waldner, Sara Waldner and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

Housing Authorities Voluntary Boards

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Dorothy Noroznick, P. Sudermann, Isabella Wong and others requesting the Minister responsible for Housing (Mrs. McIntosh) to consider cancelling the recent unilateral rent hikes and restoring the voluntary boards of the housing authorities.

Improvement of Highway 391

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Annie Bonner, Russell Bonner, Murdo Bonner and others requesting the government of Manitoba consider reviewing the state of Highway 391 with a view towards improving the condition and safety of the road.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS**Physical Education in Schools**

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Mr. Lamoureux). It complies with the privileges and the practices of this House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: The Clerk will read.

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

THAT in July 1994, the Minister of Education introduced an action plan entitled *Renewing Education: New Directions*;

THAT this report will make physical education an optional course in Grades 9 to 12;

THAT the physical education curriculum should be regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of students;

THAT the government is failing to recognize the benefits of physical education such as improved physical fitness, more active lifestyles, health promotion, self-discipline, skill development, stress reduction, strengthened peer relationships, weight regulation, stronger bones, reduced risk of health diseases and improved self-confidence.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister responsible for Education to consider reinstating physical education as a compulsory core subject area.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of tabling the Annual Report for the year 1993-94 of the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, and, as well, a report of the Agricultural Producers' Organization Certification Agency.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism for the year 1993-94.

* (1335)

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table Manitoba Perspective on the Federal Government's Proposals on Social Security Renewal.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Manitoba Perspectives on the Federal Government's Proposals on Social Security Renewal

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I also have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, when the current Government of Canada came into office, it announced that one of its priorities would be to achieve a fundamental redesign of that network of social services that has come to be called Canada's social safety net. The need for fundamental reform is clear both for fiscal and for social reasons. The increasing costs of social services in Canada are simply not sustainable.

Today debt service charges are the largest single annual expenditure of the Government of Canada, and they are growing. Reform is a fiscal necessity, but new approaches to the social services that Canada's governments provide are also a human and a social necessity.

It is clear that in many respects our current social services just do not work very well. In particular, it is clear that in too many instances they trap Canadians in dependency and fail to provide real pathways to independence and opportunity, and so, for both fiscal and social reasons, Manitoba supports reform.

On October 5, 1994, as part of the federal effort to achieve a broad national consensus about social policy reform, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Human Resources for Canada, released a federal government discussion paper entitled *Improving Social Security in Canada*. In that paper, the minister says, and I quote: The next generation of social programs must not just share the wealth and protect those who are disadvantaged among us. They must actively create opportunities for Canadians and in so doing help drive economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, the government of Manitoba agrees and we will be responding to the federal discussion paper and taking an active and positive part in what we hope will be a meaningful and realistic national dialogue about the future of our social services. We begin our participation in this dialogue with some firm convictions of our own, convictions that we believe reflect the values Manitobans share. Manitobans believe that government has a responsibility to provide basic supports for the most vulnerable in our society,

and we believe that for the vast majority of our citizens the best social security is a job and that the best social services are those that provide opportunities for people to become economically self-sufficient.

We also believe that the new generation of Canadian social services must respond to the specific social reality of each province and each region in Canada, and here we confess to some concern and disappointment at the fact that in the federal discussion paper there was virtually no mention or acknowledgement of the special situation of Canada's aboriginal people.

Manitoba's population includes a higher proportion of aboriginal people than that of any other province and that proportion is growing. Many thousands of aboriginal Manitobans lead secure, healthy and successful lives, but many others do not. The incidence of poverty and all its attendant ills are significantly higher among aboriginal Manitobans than in the community at large. This poses a special set of challenges to our social services.

* (1340)

Today in Manitoba half of our social assistance caseload and about two-thirds of all the children in care are aboriginal. The Government of Canada has a special constitutional responsibility with respect to aboriginal people, and the way it discharges those responsibilities has staggering fiscal and social implications for the province and for the people of Manitoba. So we will be asking that services to aboriginal people and the federal government's constitutional fiduciary responsibility for these services be a central part of the generation of social services that we build together.

We also believe that it is important that as we proceed to renew our social services, we look at the entire network of services in the light of the needs of our communities. This cannot simply be a matter of changing a few federal programs or reducing federal expenditures, because the system of social services that Canadians rely on is an interlinked system. Changes in one program or

one government's level of involvement inevitably affects other programs and other levels of government.

So we must look at the total resources available and at the needs of our citizens, and we must identify the best ways to use those resources to achieve our goals of independence and financial self-sufficiency for the greatest possible number of Canadians.

We cannot focus on the reform of single programs, no matter how badly some of those programs may need reform. I can think of no better illustration, Mr. Speaker, than the fact of unemployment insurance. Its cost to Manitobans far outweighs its benefits. Each year, we pay \$170 million more in unemployment insurance premiums than Manitobans receive in unemployment insurance benefits or payments.

We support the general directions of the changes proposed in the federal discussion paper which would see total unemployment insurance costs lowered and a greater share of the total UI spending dedicated to training so that unemployed people can become employable, but increased training for people on UI is of no benefit to people who cannot qualify to receive UI benefits.

In particular, many aboriginal people and many other people from disadvantaged groups have not had the opportunity to qualify for unemployment insurance, and so they are effectively excluded from the opportunities these new training initiatives aim to achieve. But at the same time that the federal government is planning to increase spending on training for people on UI, we are seeing a steady erosion in the levels of federal support for other training activities. That works to further disadvantage an already disadvantaged group in our society.

We have real difficulties with the federal proposals for post-secondary education. Manitobans believe that the access to quality education is the key to our future prosperity. We are concerned that the federal proposals involving, as they do, a massive reduction in federal support

for post-secondary education and dramatic increases in the levels of student debt would undermine both the access and the quality, so we will be encouraging Ottawa to join us in exploring alternative approaches.

Manitoba already has one of the most highly developed child care systems in Canada, and I think we are proud of the commitment that successive governments in this province have made to this social service. We welcome additional federal support, and we would anticipate that the additional support will be provided on a fair basis to permit us to continue the development of an increasingly flexible system of child care that will provide Manitoba parents a range of options.

In the area of social assistance, we support the general direction of the federal proposals, building in more flexibility and designing services that will encourage and facilitate independence, but we have some special concerns.

We are already working in co-operation with Ottawa to develop social services that provide effective pathways to financial independence. The Taking Charge! pilot program for single parents in Winnipeg aims to provide the skills, the supports and the opportunities needed to become financially self-sufficient. We are optimistic that Taking Charge! will provide a model that can be applied elsewhere in Manitoba and right across Canada. We believe that we can learn to spend the money more effectively and to achieve better outcomes for people. But we are concerned at any suggestion that the federal government should lower the levels of support for social services that Manitoba currently receives under the Canada Assistance Plan.

Since 1991 Manitoba taxpayers have had to absorb some \$60 million in costs because the federal government is abandoning its responsibilities for child welfare and social assistance for Status Indians living off reserve. The federal discussion paper identifies the reduction of child poverty as one of its central goals. In Manitoba about one-half of aboriginal

children living off reserve live in low-income families. The response to that reality cannot be a further reduction in the federal government's support for social services to aboriginal people in particular.

At the present time the federal government is in the process of dismantling the Department of Indian Affairs and changing the basis of its support for Status Indians on reserve. Those changes will have an as yet unknown effect on our ability to provide appropriate services for all Manitobans. We understand the fiscal crisis that the federal government is facing, but under our Constitution the federal government has a special responsibility for aboriginal people. Surely, discharging that responsibility prudently, creatively and effectively must be an integral part of any true renewal of Canada's system on social security.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that this statement I have made today will help to clarify the main concerns that Manitoba brings to this national dialogue about the next generation of social services for Canada. We need to ensure fairness for Manitobans and we need to work in full partnership with the federal government in reshaping our social security system. Thank you.

* (1345)

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I would like to respond to the statement of the minister released—how should I say it?—in a long overdue fashion in the Chamber here today.

Members will recall on a number of occasions last spring and into the summer of the year that we have asked a number of questions about what are the proposals of the provincial government to deal with the changes that the federal government had announced in the early part of 1994.

Mr. Speaker, rather than responding to the proposals of the federal government, we had asked the provincial government to take an aggressive approach with the federal government before the document was released, and we are quite

disappointed that this document is now being released to the public of Manitoba two weeks before January 1, at a time when the federal government committee is wrapping up its work, at a time when the federal government in early 1995 is drafting the legislation that they will incorporate in the budget in February of 1995.

Let me make a few points about the paper. First of all, there seems to be a tale of two cities in dealing with social programs and finances in Canada today. On the one hand, people are hearing stories about banks making billion-dollar profits in our country, and on the other hand, we are hearing more and more about how the most vulnerable people are the ones that must be victimized by changes that are being made by the federal government in terms of social policy review.

Yes, social policies must be reviewed in this country, but we have to put everything on the table. We have to put the revenue issues on the table, and we have to look at the programs and review and innovate those programs, because all Canadians would agree to have one program, Unemployment Insurance, being run by the federal government and to have another program being administered by the provinces and the municipalities and social services and welfare is not applicable to the late 1990s moving into the 21st Century.

We would be the first to agree that we need a national program that looks at the floor of benefits rather than having franchises province by province by province and this kind of cheque-book federalism that we see contained partly in the response made by the provincial government here today.

This government will have no credibility with the federal government when it talks about building bridges for people, because in a number of areas they talk about dealing with the most vulnerable to give them the opportunities for the future. This is a government that has cut New Careers. This is a government that has cut ACCESS, along with the federal government, and

this is a government that has cut student social allowance.

This is a government that has made it more difficult for foster children and foster care for aboriginal families, so the first point of this debate must be intellectual consistency. You cannot ask somebody to do what you have done the opposite, Mr. Speaker, and I think that is very, very important.

We think the federal government is making a major error in post-secondary training and education. Whether it is community colleges, apprenticeship programs, universities, we are going to a system now that is changing Canada. We are breaking the kind of intergenerational support that we have seen in this country for decade after decade, where people who are working and are paying taxes support people to get an education through the universities and post-secondary community colleges. They, in turn, get jobs, get opportunity, pay taxes and support both a health care system and an educational system.

This proposal that will have students paying \$50,000 to \$60,000 has to be a concern, because when these people go through universities, how can we expect them to support other generations in terms of health care and in terms of the value system of sharing and co-operation, which has been a tradition of Canada, which is being broken down by the federal Liberals, and I say, shame on them. I say, shame on them.

We have to have a different vision, and this is going to be particularly difficult in rural and northern Manitoba. All of us have met with students in high school now. The university students may be protesting to some degree or another, but it is the high school students right now—the Minister of Education (Mr. Manness) was at Sisler this week; I was there last week—just do not know where to turn.

*(1350)

They do not know where they are going to get any opportunity to get a post-secondary education. They are asking why they will not get an

opportunity in the future and why their group has been chosen to be sacrificed in the so-called exercise of dealing with our financial situation.

Mr. Speaker, we think the whole issue of social policy review is important to the province of Manitoba. Every time the new federal government acts like the old federal government and cuts \$1 billion out of the UI program, it represents a \$30-million cost, we believe, in our calculations, to the social assistance program here in Manitoba, and therefore, when the federal government is going to cut off thousands of seasonal workers and move them from unemployment to welfare, it is going to make a very big difference in our communities and in our quality of life and the dignity of work that we see throughout Manitoba. So we will work with the provincial government to have a much more integrated approach of welfare and unemployment insurance.

In our alternative speech from the throne, Mr. Speaker, we suggested that we have to get business and labour together to start banning the numbers of hours that people have in overtime. We believe that is absolutely essential, and I am pleased to see today that the advisory committee of the federal government is leaking out that it may be recommending to the federal government that proposal.

That should have been on the table with the policy paper that the federal minister released a couple of months ago, and that is why the NDP, in our alternatives, had proposed an idea like that.

It does not make sense for our young people to be laid off because they have no seniority in some of these plants, including some of the aerospace operations, and on the other hand, you have large numbers of people getting massive overtime. That does not make any common sense in our economy, and we have to come to grips with that.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that we must have a partnership with First Nations people. We have asked those questions in the House. We cannot say this is your responsibility, federal government, and this is our responsibility, provincial

government. They are all Manitobans. Aboriginal people and everybody are all Manitobans, and we have to come to the same table on children's health, on justice issues, on child welfare issues. We have to work together. We have an opportunity with the framework agreement. We do not want to point fingers at each other. We want to work together to solve these problems, so that we can deal with the aboriginal population of Manitoba and the challenges that we all have, Mr. Speaker, in dealing with all of our people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just close on the issue of poverty. Manitoba, Alberta and Newfoundland have the highest child poverty rates in Canada. How do you justify, in provinces with the wealth of Manitoba and the wealth of Alberta and even Newfoundland, these numbers of 62,000 children living in poverty?

I read yesterday or the day before a document that indicated that Harvest alone, the number of kids who require food from a food bank, has gone up from 1,900 a year ago in October to over 3,400 kids in one year. That is an issue we all have to come to grips with, and, Mr. Speaker, in a country with such great wealth, we have to do everything we can to eliminate this tremendous poverty.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, having listened to the minister, one understands why it took seven pages to get across some kind of a position on this, because the government—and I see and hear as the minister reads her statement—is torn.

On the one hand, they feel they want to co-operate because I think they are relieved that there is finally a government in this country that is looking at some changes to the system which are long overdue. [interjection] Well, you know, listen. I mean, you were here; I was here. We heard the Speech from the Throne. But for the Winnipeg agreement they are anticipating, the Infrastructure program, the Taking Charge! program, what was there in that Speech from the Throne?

They stand up and say, well, this is good, but they are kind of concerned because they do not want to get too friendly; they do not want to get too co-operative. No, no, they have to keep their powder dry. They are getting into an election, and they play politics every single day in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, and you see it. They are sitting there looking for any political advantage, any political point, and what is the progress?

* (1355)

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, it is a lot of hypocrisy on the part of this government as they continually play a political game in this Chamber. No one in this country should object to change in our social safety net across this country. These programs only the NDP apparently object to change. Change is not an option. These programs are 30 years old, and they were put in place by Liberal governments and they need to be reformed to serve the next 30 years. Only the NDP do not seem to understand that. The reality is that they are not meeting their original purpose as they were intended to.

Do you know that of every person on unemployment insurance in this country, less than 10 percent ever receive any job counselling, any discussion at all about whether or not they can fit back into the workforce, in what capacity, in what way?

And these people say that we do not need to change; we do not need to look at these things. No one should fear the debate which is occurring in this country over the next year to change these programs, to ensure that they are here for the next 30 years.

It is a good thing that somebody in this country has dragged this provincial government into doing something to prepare this province and this country for the 21st Century. This government says—[interjection]

Well, coattails—who was it who flew down at government expense for Kim Campbell's inauguration for five months, Mr. Speaker? For

heaven's sake, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister) should understand the political history.

Mr. Speaker, this government says that they want nothing to do, they want no responsibility for aboriginal peoples who leave their reserves. That is their official position from this document and from all of their actions in the past seven years. The truth is that they will not see progress unless they are prepared to accept that these people are Canadians, they are Manitobans and they deserve all of our attention and they deserve all of our best efforts on their behalf. All levels of government must commit themselves to every citizen of this province and stop playing games between provinces.

Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting for an Urban Native Strategy. Remember that? Was it five years ago we had that commitment from this government? Where is it? In fact, two months ago you saw the announcement in the Brighter Futures program of a federal Urban Native Strategy. This government has totally abdicated at the provincial level any responsibility for First Nations or aboriginal peoples who have left reserves.

Post secondary education, this provincial government gives \$1 to post-secondary education for every four that the federal government gives in this province, one for every four. Mr. Speaker, 20 percent of post-secondary education funding comes from this provincial government. Over a five-year average in this country that is the second lowest of any province next to British Columbia. In '91-92 it was the worst. Only B.C. has a lower percentage of contribution to post-secondary education.

They are not in a position to take the moral self-righteous high road that they do in all of their discussions and documents. If they want a partnership they have to be prepared to go to the table with some integrity.

They sit here and say, in this Chamber, do not cut a buck out of the post-secondary education

because it is going to hurt the quality of that education and access. As soon as someone else says we can do more with less, what do they say? Oh, the quality of education access is going to crumble—the hypocrisy again of this government saying year after year that it is okay to cut and then when anyone else asks to tighten the belt they shift their tune and they say no, you cannot do it, only we can do it.

This government does not walk like they talk, never has. They are playing politics every single day in this Chamber, and anybody who has been in this Chamber and is not a member of the other two parties knows that. The political game that is going on in this Chamber is a political game of convenience, which is to say, we kind of want to change, we kind of know that it is the right thing to do. The reality is they do not want to co-operate, they do not want to go to the table with integrity and with co-operation to have progress occur in this province.

Mr. Speaker, finally in response to the minister, let me say again and repeat again that this country must be prepared to review every single program that we offer, provincially and federally, to ensure that it is the highest priority for our dollars, it is meeting the need that it is intended to and it is a proper role of government. No one should be afraid of that review on an ongoing basis. It has been far too long in this country, in this province that we have avoided that debate and that discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome all members of this Chamber to that debate in a constructive fashion in this country for all of our citizens, urban, nonurban, aboriginal, nonaboriginal. There is no difference. We are in this together in this country, and we must move forward together. Thank you.

* (1400)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 218—The Plain Language Act

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for

Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 218, The Plain Language Act; Loi sur la langue courante, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to correct the imbalance of power that is too often perpetuated by the written language in legal relationships and between citizens and their government. The legislation will get the gobbledegook out of consumer contracts, government documents, statutes, to bring down language barriers. It will help to make sure that legal and bureaucratic language is understandable to all and that all Manitobans will have real access to information about their rights and duties.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon from the Windsor School fifty Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Joy Smith and Mr. Charlie Siegel. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

From the Red River Community College, we have thirty-eight English language students under the direction of Miss Shelley Bates and Miss Lorna Hiebert. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Health Care Facilities No-Deficit Policy

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

We asked questions yesterday and we asked questions last week both on community health

programs that had been cut by the government and on deficit policies that had been changed by the government. Mr. Speaker, it is safe to say there is a tremendous amount of confusion outside of this building in terms of hospitals and programs for patients in Manitoba.

We have some hospitals that have allegedly an amnesty, so to speak, on their deficit. We have other hospitals that are quoted today as negotiating their last year's deficits plus this year's cuts with the provincial government. We have other hospitals that do not know whether they have an amnesty from the provincial government or not and how long it will last. They suspect it lasts just past the election.

I would like to ask the government whether they could table today what is the specific breakdown of which hospitals have been approved on the deficit changes that the government confirmed with Seven Oaks and which ones do not have that policy and approval from the provincial government.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, you know, if there is any confusion these days with respect to that, it is precisely because it is being driven by that member opposite and his colleague for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and all of his colleagues.

He talks about cuts in health care, and this government is spending one-half billion dollars per year more than it was when it took office in 1988 from the New Democrats. This government is spending 34 percent of its entire provincial budget on health care. That is the highest percentage of any government in Canada. This government is spending the third highest on a per capita basis of all the governments in Canada on health care.

So the confusion, of course, is because of the misinformation being put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. He furthers that misinformation by last year arguing that we ought to be putting more money into hospitals, and this year, when we are putting more money into our hospitals because of covering deficits, he starts arguing that we

should not cover the deficits. Well, those are the kinds of things that I do not think are befitting of the Leader of the Opposition and that is why people are confused.

I am glad that he gave me the opportunity to respond to that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Maybe the Premier missed Jules Benson's presentation. You know Jules Benson—he is well known to the Conservative Party—the kind of generous pension plan he has been given by the Premier. Maybe he missed his presentation on the budget cuts to hospitals, not increases. Maybe the Premier missed the cuts to hospitals last year.

So all we ask the Premier to deal with this confusion is, can he table today the specific facilities that have received a deficit amnesty from the provincial government? They have all received cuts both years in a row.

Can the Premier, today, indicate which hospital facilities have the amnesty from the provincial government, how long that lasts, what is the long-term plan, so we will know the specific impact of this confusing policy from the provincial government on patient care here in Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, just to respond to the preamble of the Leader of the Opposition's question, the pension arrangements that are being given to Mr. Benson are precisely the same pension arrangements that the all-party-appointed committee has advocated for members of the Legislature, matching contributions towards RRSP, exactly what all members of the Legislature are going to be given as a result of an impartial, objective review by a nonpartisan group appointed by all members of this Legislature, and, I might say, substantially less than what was given by the NDP government to one Mr. Marc Eliesen and many other political hacks who were appointed by his government.

With respect to the specifics on health, I will let the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) respond to that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Now we know where the lack of leadership in answering questions comes from. It comes from the Premier.

We have been asking questions for the last three weeks about health care decisions this government is making. Yesterday, we asked a specific question dealing with the Health Sciences Centre. We have heard that it may be \$30 million to \$35 million over two years. We heard it may be between \$15 million and \$20 million. We heard that it is not getting the deficit amnesty that other hospitals may get. [interjection]

Well, if the Premier has the answers to the questions, he will end the rumours right away, but if he is just going to chirp from his seat, Mr. Speaker—[interjection] Well, the administrator at the Health Sciences Centre confirmed today that the cuts are in the millions of dollars.

Can the Minister of Health table today the specific reductions by millions of dollars for each health facility and which health facilities get an amnesty on their deficits and which ones do not, so all of us will know what the score is in the province of Manitoba for patient care?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): The honourable member and his colleague next to him spend as much time as they can attempting to confuse the public, but what they do in the process is confuse themselves.

The one thing that is very clear and constant in all of this is the very, very significant increases in health spending in the last few years under this government here in Manitoba. Earlier the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) met with hospital officials, made it clear that \$1.2 billion would be going to hospitals, community health centres and personal care homes in the coming year. Within that budget, Mr. Speaker, all of the facilities now have to begin working with government and with themselves and with each other and with their boards and their staffs to develop their budgets.

In the middle of that process, honourable members opposite like to throw in all kinds of

confusing statements, and they will no doubt continue to do that, but the Minister of Finance has made the situation very clear.

* (1410)

SmartHealth Records Confidentiality

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has also said that the new \$100-million Royal Bank deal will offer security like the provincial drug program. We understand from the pamphlet sent to every Manitoban that you have to use your PHIN number, your personal identification number, to access the system. I will table a copy of part of the pamphlet sent to all Manitobans. We know that people are able to access the system without using the personal information number, without using the PHIN number.

Can the minister explain how the new system will be secure when, in fact, the security arrangements put in place for the old system appear not to be working?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I can understand how the honourable member comes to ask these kinds of questions, because he knows darn well that a public health information system is a highly desirable thing for us to have and will enjoy very, very significant public support. So his only approach without knowing anything at all is to dream up some boogeyman that he can try to raise in this Legislature, which has been the consistent approach of members of the New Democrats right along.

The honourable member has not answered my question. Who does he want to keep information from? What information is he talking about? If there is a total vacuum of information and nobody can get at it, we are going to have serious problems.

So I would like the honourable member to be clear, what information he is talking about and who he wants to keep it from. If he does not want doctors and pharmacists in emergency rooms to have information, then he should tell us that, so

then we know that we do not need to debate anything with him.

Development Costs

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Of course, Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question about the fact that the PHIN number is not being used in all cases to access the system and that the assurances of security in the system are just assurances, more comments, more deny, deny, deny, by this minister.

My supplementary to the minister is in regard to the \$100-million Royal Bank contract. Can the minister confirm that the \$100 million is a developmental cost? Will he outline for us who will be paying the access fees once the system is up, who will be getting the profits from the system once it is up, and how much the Royal Bank is contributing by way of finances?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I think it might be useful if we arranged a briefing for the honourable member, so that some of the questions that he has can be answered by someone other than myself, that as we move towards implementation of this system, many of those questions will be answered, and they will be answered because we will be asking those questions of our partners in health care.

How best should this be done? How best should that be done? How best should we be protecting the proprietary nature of some of this information? Should we have a PHIN situation that the honourable member refers to?

So that what we have announced the other day, Mr. Speaker, is that we are moving forward with SmartHealth and all of our other partners in the health system to develop an automated health care system in Manitoba.

The honourable member, if he waits, he would know that I also announced that this would be developed over a period of five years. I mean, it is not going to be something that is going to appear tomorrow and that he can scare everybody about

today, so that we can show tomorrow that his concerns are taken care of.

I can tell him one thing without any hesitation, proprietary information and information that ought to be kept secure will be, and if it requires legislation, my colleagues will be there to provide me with that. I said that very clearly yesterday, as well.

Justification

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we would look forward very much to a briefing, as would the two companies who phoned me who did not receive tender documents, as well, with regard to the tendering process, to find out how the tendering process and other aspects worked.

My final supplementary to the minister is, how can they justify the expenditure of \$100 million, and where will this money come from? Will it come from the so-called savings in the system that they are doing as a result of the hospital budget cuts that are going to occur over the next several years?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Something that the honourable member and his colleagues merrily supported during the earlier part of the '80s, and before that, was double-digit increases in spending year after year in health care and in other areas. [interjection] And double-digit tax increases, as well, they imposed on us and on our fellow Manitobans.

What we are proposing to do, Mr. Speaker, with our public health information system is make a more effective system. That does not mean we have to take out large segments of our system to pay for it, but what we have done is arrested that terrible growth that the honourable members opposite like to foster.

Their continuing questions in the House tend to tell me they want to see that thing continue until we choke the life out of our health care system. That is not on, and the public health information system will help us keep a healthy health system for many, many years.

Prime Motor Oil Environmental Cleanup Costs

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment.

Back in February of 1993, the provincial government, the provincial Environment department, stepped in to assess a situation at a firm in the city, Prime Motor Oil's site in St. Boniface. That was after six months of monitoring of that site.

A year later, in February of 1994, criminal charges under the provincial act, The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act, were laid against the principals, as well as the company.

Mr. Speaker, after seven remands, on November 10 of this year, the final disposition of that charge took place. Those charges, and the total fines levied, after findings of guilt against all parties under that act, was a grand total of \$400—\$200 to the company and \$200 to Mr. Maurice Marion, who was a principal of the company.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the estimate for the cleanup of that is between \$180,000 and \$200,000. That is the taxpayers' expense of cleaning up that polluted site.

Is the Minister of Environment satisfied that the act has been upheld sufficiently, that justice has been done after seven remands for \$400, after \$200,000 of cleanup costs to taxpayers of this province?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Second Opposition is obviously well versed and trained in the law, and I am not going to venture into criticizing the actions of a judge.

Obviously, if we had anticipated that this would be the level of fine, we would have, in fact, issued tickets which would have been in a higher amount. The law allows for fines in these circumstances to mete several tens of thousands of dollars, and the

judge obviously made his decision based on the information that was before him.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, there was a finding of guilt. There is at least \$180,000 worth of damage done to the taxpayers.

I want to just ask the minister—[interjection] Well, Mr. Speaker, if the minister is upset, why was there not an appeal launched? They had 30 days to file an appeal. Why was there no appeal? Secondly, why did this minister not ask for, through the Crown attorneys, a jail sentence or have a stiffer fine? The maximum was \$500,000.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, in this particular case, I think the member willingly overlooks the fact that we may be able to recover personal recoveries from the owners to offset these costs.

The fact is that, historically, the opposition has been very adamant that this site presented a situation of grave danger to the environment. In fact, during the process of cleanup and the management of this site, it has been determined—and while it is unsightly, it needs to be cleaned up and there was, in fact, a lot of inappropriate action in the handling of the materials—that, in fact, the concerns have been unsubstantiated in terms of spreading off-site or of providing a long-term and lasting detriment to the environment.

I think the member ought not overlook the fact that we will continue to get everything we can from the owners responsible to recover the costs associated with this cleanup.

Mr. Edwards: We have just heard that so many times, it is losing credibility.

Mr. Speaker, back in February of this year, the minister's official Mr. Wotton said that it is a possibility the government could be stuck with the bill, but explained that the issue is going to be an element of the Justice department's investigation.

We were told earlier this year that the Justice department, through this process which provided

for a \$500,000 fine and/or six months in jail—that this would be the remedy we were going to get.

My final question for the minister: Why has this minister not sought compensation for the public expense from these people found guilty of polluting? Why did they not appeal the decision if they were not happy with it? Can the minister guarantee the people of this province that we are going to get some of this money back?

* (1420)

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, obviously, the member would not accept my guarantees if I did give them to him, so I think we will deal with the next part of that question.

An Honourable Member: How many times have you given them?

Mr. Cummings: Well, who do you want me to fire, the judge or the lawyer?

Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the judicial system. We anticipated that the process—obviously many of these processes one would handle differently if—[interjection]

Perhaps the member has another question. I would be interested to hear what it is.

Water Supply—Selkirk Government Strategy

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Natural Resources.

In 1993, all levels of government commissioned a ground water study for the town of Selkirk as part of the commitment under the Partnership Agreement on Municipal Water Infrastructure Program. The report found that there is no surplus capacity in the aquifer.

I want to quote from the study: In extended dry periods, the situation becomes critical.

I would like to ask the minister if he is aware of this study and what steps his department is taking to address this issue.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question as notice.

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, that is rather unfortunate. There is a great deal of uncertainty in the community over this study and the future of the water supply. The mayor of Selkirk has said that the planning board needs more information and this province should provide it.

Will the minister then make a commitment today that he will meet with the officials of the town of Selkirk, the R.M.s of East St. Paul, West St. Paul, St. Clements and St. Andrews to assess this problem and to find solutions to our community's long-term water supply?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I will give the member the undertaking that I will meet with those municipalities and the people he has asked me to meet, and I can meet with all the other ones and we will make arrangements.

Amsco Cast Products Inc. Negotiations

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): My final question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Can the minister tell the House the status of the negotiations for the purchase of the Amsco Cast Products plant in Selkirk? Will he include in those negotiations a guarantee that there will be no jobs lost at the Selkirk plant?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): For the member's information, it is not the responsibility of the government to negotiate any particular deal. In fact, we are here to provide services if there is some support we can give to the completion of a successful deal, preserving the jobs that are there.

Firearms Control Safety Courses

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the honourable Minister of Natural Resources. It deals with firearm registration.

There are three elements, as I understand it. First of all, we have to have a hunter safety course and also the FAC under the provincial law and the firearm safety course under federal law. Under the current legislation, hunters must take a firearm safety course even if they have been hunting for over 40 years, in some cases 50 years, and the costs are quite substantial.

One person from Thompson is attempting to charge members of the Fox Lake First Nation \$1,242 for a maximum of 15 people. In addition to this, the band is supposed to supply a classroom and an interpreter.

For many northern First Nations residents and northerners, in general, the costs are extremely difficult to cover, as well as totally insulting. If refresher courses are needed, they should be done by local hunters.

My question to the minister is, has he considered a course of action or has he engaged in any dialogue with his federal counterparts to address this very important issue?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very valid point. The legislation and the regulations that are being required are by the federal Minister of Justice, who is basically coming down demanding that all guns be registered, that a special course be taken.

We, as a province, put a position forward to the federal minister saying that in Manitoba those people who have taken a hunter safety course, one of three courses basically that are given voluntarily in the province, should qualify under the FAC.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member for Rupertsland make contact with the federal

Member of Parliament Elijah Harper and other Liberal members and tell them to raise this issue with the federal Minister of Justice, because I agree with none of it.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, further on an issue, Treaty No. 5, which was signed on September 20, 1875, states: It is further agreed between Her Majesty and the said Indians that the sum of \$500 per annum shall be yearly and every year expended by Her Majesty in the purchase of ammunition and twine for nets for use of the said Indians.

This is further guaranteed under Section 35 of Canada's Constitution where existing treaty and aboriginal rights are hereby affirmed.

Given the high cost of sending instructors to northern communities, can the Minister of Natural Resources explain why local people are not used where possible to conduct the firearm safety courses, or the RCMP?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that over the course of years, the courses that have been offered within the province, the hunter safety courses, have been done by people voluntarily. We have people within my department who basically train the instructors, and these people go out and give these courses voluntarily.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be careful, but I am sure that the member for Rupertsland is again making reference to the requirements for the federal course that is being taken.

I am prepared to take that issue, get more information on it and write to the federal minister, raising the objection and the concerns it has raised in terms of the costs to the people.

Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, I also want to say I anticipate that if the federal government proceeds with the gun registration, it is going to cost millions of dollars to do it, and it will have totally no impact whatsoever.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for answering my first question during my second question.

Since these courses are costing as much as \$100 for more hunters, some of whom have hunted for maybe over 40 years, 50 years, will the minister try to work out some flexibility in the courses, which are insulting to many long-term hunters? Some do not read English and some do not understand the English language, for example. Perhaps a program initiated through New Careers could be considered by the minister.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with the suggestion in terms of seeing whether we can work something out, but I have to repeat again that the courses the Manitoba government is responsible for do not cost the people that kind of money, because they are being administrated and basically the training is given by people who do it on a volunteer basis.

It is again the federal government that is creating these kinds of problems, and this is going to be part of a major make-work project by the time they get through with all this gun legislation.

Cable Television Negative Option Marketing

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

On February 1, 1995, the Manitoba cable TV subscribers are going to be faced with an undemocratic marketing process known as negative options, where the cost of the service will be automatically added to the customer's bill and can only be removed if the customer phones in to cancel the service.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know, can the minister tell this House how many Manitoba consumers will be affected, and does he support this approach?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I can first of all say, no, I do not know how many people are going to be affected. Secondly, my department is looking at that issue at the present time.

* (1430)

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Speaker, we have been getting calls from consumers about this undemocratic process, and we would like to know when he plans to take steps to ban this approach.

Mr. Ernst: As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, to the first question, my department is looking at this at the present time.

Aspen Park Furnace Replacement Costs

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, my final question to the same minister is that for nearly two years, the residents of Aspen Park in Gimli have been waiting for reimbursement for their faulty gas furnaces.

I would like to know from this minister, will he keep the government's promise to reimburse the Aspen Park residents for the cost of replacing their faulty furnaces?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that a true supplementary question is to get clarification on the initial question, okay? Now, does the honourable member have another supplementary question?

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Speaker, my new question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is this. Will the minister keep his government's promise to reimburse the Aspen Park residents for the cost of replacing their faulty furnaces?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the member wishes to have that answered by the minister responsible and has directed it to the wrong minister.

I should indicate that the matter of reimbursement for the furnaces has been looked into. We will be making an announcement very shortly. We looked at legal precedent. We looked at court cases established in that area.

We know, of course, the fault was not the government's in the matter of the furnaces. However, we have looked at legal precedent, and we will be making an announcement shortly on that issue.

Impaired Driving Prevention Programs

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for the Liquor Commission.

In the past two years, this government has made major changes in The Liquor Control Act which allows for four private wine stores to open seven days a week. Unfortunately, a program established to educate youth about the risks of drinking and driving has been cancelled due to a lack of public funding just in the past few weeks.

Has this minister or the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) taken any initiative or action to see that to prevent alcohol and risk-related trauma in the youth program is continued, so that the youth between the ages of 16 and 24 may continue to have this program made available?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): In answer to part of the preamble, the changes in the act were passed in this Legislature some two years ago and are now being implemented, so I do not think that the member need be surprised by it.

This government gives substantial funding to the Addictions Foundation to present programs within the communities and within the system, and that support for the Addictions Foundation is continuing.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Speaker, this program has been made available and was used last year alone by some 1,500 students, including 50 from Riverton High School who have attended this program. I would like to table letters from my high school students asking that this program be maintained by the government.

Will the minister read these letters and request that his government spend and provide the \$40,000 that is needed, so that we can continue educating our young people in the dangers of drinking and driving?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, there are many worthwhile programs sponsored by the Addictions Foundation and by other community groups. The government's support for the Addictions Foundation is in place, and their programs are offered within that funding that they receive.

There are other groups that receive funding from other sources that perhaps are not continuing on, but our commitment to the Addictions Foundation has been a very substantial one.

Highway Construction Projects Oak Hammock Marsh

Ms. Norma McCormick (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

The Department of Highways' 1994-95 construction project identifies as a previously approved project the upgrading of Highway 220 from Provincial Trunk Highway 67 to the Oak Hammock Marsh. Ducks Unlimited and Manitoba Highways say this work is necessary to control dust by increased traffic.

Can the minister tell me, what is the projected cost of the asphalt surfacing on this road, and how does this compare to a more environmentally acceptable alternative of using compacted and coated gravel?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, the member asked us very specific dollar figures. I will bring those to her at the next sitting of the Legislature.

Ms. McCormick: My supplementary is to the same minister.

When this project was first approved, it was anticipated that the annual visits to the Ducks Unlimited facility would increase from 85,000 to

210,000. In fact, the number of visits are less than half those projected.

Will the minister explain why his department is continuing with this project when the road is not being used as a project?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, thousands and thousands of people, particular young people, young people in school, go to Oak Hammock Marsh for the educational value of that very important sanctuary.

Mr. Speaker, I answered her question previously and said I will find out the appropriate cost, but I would think dust in the air is very environmentally unacceptable and we are trying to control dust.

Ms. McCormick: My final supplementary to the same minister: As the Ducks Unlimited facility is in a deficit position and its very survival may be in question, would it not make sense to hold off on this costly project until the numbers of visitors to the facility at least come close to the projected figures?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I am really appalled that this member will be criticizing this department for building good roads to help tourism activities in rural Manitoba, particularly with learning the educational value about wildlife. I am really amazed that this member is against educational value of wildlife in rural Manitoba.

Post-Secondary Education Tuition Fees

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): The Minister of Family Services has just tabled a document indicating that university fees will increase in Manitoba to \$4,700. My understanding from discussions with AUCC this week and, in fact, from a meeting that AUCC held in Manitoba is that they anticipate that fees will rise, in fact, to \$7,000 to \$8,000 in the first year of Axworthy's program. It depends upon the kinds of assumptions you make, and I expect we will have the chance to debate this difference in figures later on.

But the real question, Mr. Speaker, is the impact on young Manitobans. I would like to ask the Minister of Education, will the minister confirm that recent studies have shown—and these are American studies—that for every \$1,000 increase in fees, there will be a 7 percent loss of students. Using the minister's figures for now, that indicates around a 15 percent loss of students in Manitoba.

I want the minister to confirm these projections.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I cannot confirm her projections, but I can say if the member reads the document tabled today by our minister, we have taken a conservative approach.

We did that because we honestly cannot believe that the federal government will move to a program which will see incurred that type of total indebtedness by our student body upon graduation from a post-secondary institution.

So we chose the words in the document tabled by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) very, very carefully because in our view, this whole income-contingent payback system has to be thought through very, very deeply, and in our view, has to be looked at very, very carefully, because just to see students finally leave post-secondary institutions with upwards of \$40,000 or \$50,000 indebtedness, in our point of view, does not represent a solution.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, so we are, in fact, working with a range of options from about \$5,000 to around \$8,000.

I want to ask the minister, because the tabled paper only deals with university fees as an example, will he tell us whether the same assumptions will be applied to community college fees? That is, will their fees be doubled as well?

Mr. Manness: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I do not know whether it is up to me to try and give greater impact or greater rationale as to the federal government thinking or musing on this particular issue, but, certainly, we are well aware in our

responsibility that right today, college tuition fees represent between 9 and 11 percent of the total cost of educating towards a diploma or towards certificate standing.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is wise to expect there will continue to be pressures on tuitions in colleges, notwithstanding the federal reform with respect to post-secondary fees.

Again, I would sense that if Mr. Axworthy and the federal government has their way and they go the way they appear to be wanting to go, there would be a significant impact on tuitions in post-secondary institutions.

* (1440)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, well, if we use the American projections, what we are looking at is a loss of post-secondary students in Manitoba of several thousand students over the next few years.

My question for the minister simply is, what is his long-range plan? I raised this with him in June, and at that time the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said that he could not believe, in fact, that the federal Liberals had such a program in line. I cannot believe that story can possibly be true, he said.

So where is the government's long-range plan for these students? Community college fees are going to rise; university fees are going to rise. Are these people simply going to join the ranks of the unemployed?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, the member asks a very good question and one that I have no difficulty answering. We showed within the Education Estimates in last year's budget where the focus was. With every additional dollar that we had, we took in support of the community colleges, and that will continue.

We are very mindful of the very significant recommendation that came down from the Roblin commission, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), I am sure, would support this

statement. Every extra dollar that we can find within the education envelope will be directed in support of those students choosing to go into the community college system.

New Careers Program Status Report

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a question for the Minister of Education.

As part of the government's decentralization program, the New Careers office was opened in 1990, with quite a bit of fanfare I might add, and at one point—

An Honourable Member: Were you there, Len?

Mr. Leonard Evans: I was there. At one point, they had nine staff positions, but the New Careers program in Brandon seems to have almost disappeared, and the staff have been reduced by six, leaving three people with virtually no programs and no students.

So my question to the minister is, is the minister about to close this office entirely in the near future, or is he waiting until after the next election?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member is asking for yet another invitation to another event, should there be one within the area of education, or really what the essence is of his question.

It will come as no surprise to members opposite, particularly those who have focused in on some of the policy decisions made with respect to the ACCESS program, that all of the training programs are being evaluated from time to time, and for those that are found wanting in some dimension, there are policy changes that are made that reflect upon them.

I cannot answer definitively the question put forward by the member today, but I can tell him, and it is in keeping with the response I made to an

earlier question, every dollar that we save or that we sense is not being spent well in any of the training programs, Mr. Speaker, will be redirected into the community college system.

Decentralization Brandon, Manitoba

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I have a supplementary question which should be directed, I guess, to the Acting Minister of Rural Development in charge of decentralization or perhaps the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission.

Will the minister confirm that there has been no net increase in civil service jobs in Brandon since the decentralization program started? In other words, can he confirm that the 99 jobs slated for Brandon have been cancelled out by a series of reductions, such as the cuts to the New Careers office?

Hon. James Downey (Acting Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, I will take the numbers part of the question as notice.

However, I can inform the member that I do know that the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation has been moved to Brandon. We do know that rural library services has been moved to Brandon and several others as part of the decentralization program.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Those are all part of the 99 jobs I referred to, Mr. Speaker. I invite the minister to look at the employment data available from the Civil Service Commission.

Will the minister acknowledge that with the job losses at the Brandon Mental Health Centre, including transfers to other regions in the province, as well as the elimination of well over a hundred positions, that the decentralization program has become meaningless for the city of Brandon and that the provincial payroll in Brandon is declining significantly?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the decentralization program as being meaningless to

Brandon or any other community. In fact, all one has to do is listen to what the mayor of Brandon or some of the municipal leaders have said, how positive the decentralization program has been for generally the areas outside of the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Health Care Funding Announcements

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), that under Rule 27.(1) that the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the confusion in the health care system caused by recent conflicting funding announcements.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member for Kildonan, I believe I should remind all honourable members that under our Rule 27.(2), the mover of the motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member each of the other parties in the House is allowed not more than five minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I recognize what the rules say with respect to this motion, and I will I think clarify why this debate is so necessary.

In the last several weeks, the words out of this government with respect to health care have been so confusing and so distorted that it defies logic to try to determine what has happened in the health care sector. As a consequence, Mr. Speaker, at a meeting of the board of directors at Health Sciences Centre yesterday and in dealing with staff, we have staff at the various centres in the institutions that are in crisis because they do not know what is happening with this government and on the day-to-day decisions that are made.

If we do not have this opportunity to debate this matter today, we may adjourn and we may not be

able to deal with these issues before Estimates which will probably be in late February or early March. This is the first opportunity for us to have the opportunity to deal with this following the Throne Speech Debate.

I want to mention to all members of the House what is at stake. Within the last week, some deficits have been paid by this government to some hospitals and some have not. Within the last week, Jules Benson, the chief accountant of the province had said hospitals are being cut 2 percent, perhaps personal care homes are going to get 1 percent, perhaps community centres are going to get 1 percent, and now we hear that Health Sciences Centre has been cut \$15 million to \$20 million next year.

Hundreds and hundreds of jobs are at stake, Mr. Speaker, and members on the opposite side make jokes about this. Hundreds of jobs are at stake, hundreds of patients' lives and hundreds of patients' health in jeopardy as a result of this.

At the same time, the government is signing or in the process of signing a \$100-million contract with the Royal Bank to give some of this money to the Royal Bank to develop a computer system.

There is nothing more urgent or crucial than our health care system and what this government has done. We have an opportunity now in this Chamber to try to clarify for those health care institutions that are meeting this very moment to determine what will happen to the staff, to determine what will happen to the dollars. We have an opportunity to perhaps clarify and stop and deal properly with this \$100 million that is going to the Royal Bank. We have an opportunity to deal with that today before the government signs on the dotted line.

It may be our last opportunity in this Chamber before we adjourn. It may be the last opportunity, the only opportunity, before we go into Estimates, before the contract is signed, before the hospitals have to put out their notices of layoffs, before the budgetary decisions have to be made. We do not have another opportunity to do this.

I do not think that I have to indicate any further about the urgency and the importance of this debate in this Chamber and the significance of health care and the fact that we represent Manitobans and there is no opportunity for Manitobans to discuss and to have clarified what is happening with respect to the health care cuts, what is happening, because the minister says, Estimates. By that point in time, the numbers will be formed. It will be too late. In fact, I daresay it is too late at this point, but we are attempting to resurrect some opportunity to discuss and to impact on this government before it is too late, because two weeks ago, it was 2 percent to the Health Sciences; now, it is somewhere in the range of 8 to 10 percent. Who knows what it will be tomorrow? Who knows where this money is going? We need it for community-based health care. We need it to improve health care. We need to make determinations on this.

This may be the only opportunity for members of this House and Manitobans, through us, to have an opportunity to not only influence this government with respect to these significant decisions, but at the same time, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the government can try for once in the course of this debate, because they have not done it in Question Period and the minister has not done it in the hallway, to explain to Manitobans just what the funding cuts are, just where the money is going, just whether our community health centres are going to get the 1 percent increases they are supposed to get, or not; where this \$100 million is coming from; where it is going; how it is being applied before they sign the contract, not after they sign the contract.

* (1450)

This may be our only opportunity in this Chamber to deal with these most significant issues because if we adjourn—and in fact there is no means on the agenda of this forum, of this Chamber to deal with it. There is no bill. There is no opportunity to discuss and debate this issue. The throne speech is completed. Resolutions are on the Order Paper, but there will be no opportunity for this resolution, or a resolution of this kind to arise given that the members opposite

have made this determination only in the last 48 hours. Only in the last 48 hours have we heard about these significant matters, and this may be our only chance to deal with these significant factors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the members of the NDP would come in here and embarrass themselves as they have just done. I cannot believe that. This House has been in session since the 1st of December. On the 2nd of December, or the day following the throne speech, they have in fact in past years introduced matters of urgent public importance, but what happened over the last eight days? Did something change?

On December 2, the first opportunity they had to do this, Manitoba was spending more on its health care than any other province in Canada. That has not changed in the last eight days. Manitoba has the third-highest level of health care spending per person in Canada. That has not changed in the last eight days.

We are spending on home care now—we have increased it more than 90 percent since this government has been in office. That has not changed. So for eight days there was no matter of urgent public importance. What happened?

In addition to that, for eight days they have had an opportunity to debate it. Every member, I believe, of the opposition has spoken, every member, Mr. Speaker, and yet, they each—[interjection] Perhaps I am mistaken. Almost every member of the opposition has spoken on the throne speech debate. Do we see them stand up, chapter and verse, on matters of health care? No, we did not hear that. So if it is such an important issue, what has changed? Nothing has changed.

Quite frankly, I think they are so inflated with their own importance over having delayed the vote last evening and prancing around in front of the television set saying how great they were in delaying the House that they finally realized this

morning in the cold light of day that they have to do something when they come in here and not come up with kinds of make-work projects like they are plying with this particular issue, Mr. Speaker.

Lastly, I want to tell you that the matter is so urgent that the Estimates of Expenditure that the member refers to take place on April 1, 1995, four months from now. There is no urgency. There is no matter of urgent public importance, and I submit, it is clearly out of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that there is in fact a need to debate this particular issue today, that it is in the public's best interest to have this issue debated primarily because of two concerns that have been pointed out time in and time out since yesterday, where we have had the Health critic from the Liberal Party, we have had critics from the New Democratic Party raising the issue. We have not been provided any sort of answers, and I do believe there is reason that this debate is necessary.

Let me start off by pointing out that there are, in fact, no relevant bills that are before this House in which we can enter into this discussion. Let me also point out that the grievance is not an opportune time because before we can start giving grievances might not be until four or five months down the line potentially.

The budget debate—the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province has indicated to the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Edwards) that he will introduce a budget after the federal Liberal government has introduced their budget. In terms of the Estimates, the Estimates follow the Budget Debate, so that would again mean that we are talking four, five months down the line before we are even into the Health Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, when the government has indicated to the different health organizations and professionals that hospitals would be looking at, for example, a 2 percent cut, when we look at some of the hospitals having current deficits, some

of which I understand are in fact being forgiven, I believe that there is the need to further clear the air in terms of where this government is going on health care.

This is the primary reason why we in the Liberal caucus feel that the public's interests would in fact be best served by hearing what the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and other ministers have to say about health care because it is vitally important in the province of Manitoba.

It is also equally important to get on the record the opposition's concerns, and it would be a very well-spent day if we would start talking about the health care and what this government is doing with respect to the 2 percent cut to the hospitals and the whole issue of deficits with the hospitals.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (1500)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to thank all honourable members for their advice as to whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) should be debated today.

In accordance with our Rule 27(1), I did receive the notice required. According to our Rule 27 and Beauchesne Citation 389 and 390, there are two conditions required for a matter of urgent public importance to proceed: a) It must be shown that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention, and b) that the subject matter must be so pressing that the ordinary opportunities for debate will not allow it to be brought on early enough.

In my opinion, it has not been demonstrated that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not debated today. I am therefore ruling the matter out of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): It is with regret, Mr. Speaker, that I challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Ashton: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is, shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Cummings, Dacquay, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Ducharme, Enns, Ernst, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, Manness, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Orchard, Pallister, Penner, Praznik, Reimer, Render, Rose, Sveinson, Vodrey.

Nays

Ashton, Barrett, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Edwards, Evans (Brandon East), Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Gray, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McCormick, Plohman, Reid, Robinson, Santos, Schellenberg, Wowchuk.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 27, Nays 25.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, will you call Bill 5, please.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Food Donations Act

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer), that Bill 5, The Food Donations Act; Loi sur les dons d'aliments, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and introduce for second reading Bill 5 to this House and recommend expeditious passage of this by all parties here in the Legislature this afternoon.

The mission of the Department of Family Services is to strengthen and support Manitoba families. We are there to ensure families have assistance and tools needed to be independent and to enjoy the quality of life we expect in our province. My department does a tremendous amount to achieve these goals, but at the same time we recognize and we realize that we cannot do it all alone. We must work with Manitobans, with the private sector, community organizations and individuals, and together we can form a network of support services that will be available to Manitobans in need. Mr. Speaker, as part of this commitment to partnerships, I believe that government must work to facilitate community participation wherever possible.

The Food Donations Act is an example of how our government is facilitating community participation.

Manitoba has had a long tradition of helping our neighbours when they are needy. Our province's first settlers met with many challenges and they

succeeded because they pulled together as a community. This community spirit is still strong today in our province. Manitobans are still quick to extend a helping hand to someone who needs assistance. Food donations are just one example of how our communities pull together to help others.

Mr. Speaker, the main purpose of this new legislation is to encourage increased donations of surplus food by removing barriers caused by concern over liability. We have been told by corporate legal representatives that they feel there is a need for greater legal protection against liability for corporations that donate surplus food. In essence, this act makes it clear that a person, unincorporated organization or corporation who makes a food donation cannot be held liable if that food causes illness or other injury unless the food was contaminated or otherwise unfit for consumption and there was intent to cause harm by the donor.

Mr. Speaker, this includes individuals, corporations, community clubs, restaurants or other organizations that distribute food on a nonprofit basis. We believe that this protection will encourage corporations, unincorporated organizations and individuals to share surplus foods.

The Food Donations Act has been drafted in response to a need brought to my attention by Winnipeg Harvest. During this past summer, we consulted with the staff at Winnipeg Harvest to discuss their concerns and hear their suggestions on how we could address this barrier to donations. This act has been designed to address those concerns. Furthermore, corporations have indicated that this added protection is a significant factor in the willingness to make charitable donations of surplus food.

Manitoba joins four other provinces in introducing legislation of this nature. It is an important step towards facilitating community partnerships, and it compliments other initiatives taking place in the Department of Family Services today.

Over the past year we have introduced a number of new programs that respond to identified needs in areas in our communities. One area that is gaining attention in virtually every province in Canada is the need to reform our social safety net and encourage jobs and training for people who are on social assistance.

As the Minister of Family Services, I find myself in a position where I can play a role in this process, but I also want to stress that government cannot do it alone, nor should we nor does anyone want us to. We must work together with the private sector, community organizations and individuals to provide family support networks and create opportunities for work.

* (1530)

I am pleased that we have already begun this process of renewal for our province's social support network. I have had the pleasure of making a number of announcements as part of our government's Making Welfare Work initiative.

We are targeting welfare programs because there is a growing recognition that our traditional safety net programs may be hurting the people they are most designed to help. If they are holding people back by fostering dependency rather than encouraging retraining, employment and greater independence, then we must change them, and that is what we are doing with the help of Manitobans.

In May of this year I launched the Making Welfare Work program, and we have already introduced three job creation projects as part of that initiative. In June we announced the expansion of two community service programs that help approximately 420 welfare recipients get back into the workforce while improving Winnipeg's infrastructure. We have also started a pilot project to create employment opportunities in rural Manitoba. This project will help approximately 450 Manitobans re-enter the workforce. These two projects give Manitobans who are on social assistance the chance to gain job experience and long-term employment.

With employment comes greater financial independence, higher self-esteem and renewed confidence. These families are then less dependent on special support services and food donations. All of these factors contribute to improved quality of life for both parents and for children.

Mr. Speaker, when we raise the issue of child poverty we see a direct correlation between single mothers on welfare and children living below the poverty line. Manitoba has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Canada. In July of this year there were approximately 12,800 single-parent families receiving social assistance in our province, and those numbers do continue to rise.

My department recently completed a review to identify key concerns regarding teen pregnancies. We discovered that 65 percent of single teenage parents have not completed high school, and more than half are on welfare. Under the current policy, single parents on social assistance are not expected to seek work until their youngest child turns 18.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to many Manitobans, many young women who are in the workforce and become pregnant and are expecting their first or second child. They indicate to me that, yes, they are pleased that we have maternity benefits for six months so that they have the ability to stay at home and bond and nurture their babies, but they are required to go back to work after six months and find alternate forms of support and child care to ensure that their children are being well looked after. There seems to be some resentment on the part of these women who do have to go back into the workforce when they see a policy that is a detriment to creating healthier attitudes towards work when they see other women who are able to be supported on social allowances until their youngest child turns 18.

That says to me that there is something wrong with our system that encourages that kind of dependency. We have to find other answers, and we have to find other solutions, for those that need to choose welfare as a career option, other than having the opportunity to build their self-esteem and to know that they can contribute in a very

positive manner to our Manitoba community. A life on welfare does not create the opportunity for that mother or her children to break the poverty cycle.

There is not a province across the country, including those that are governed by parties that members opposite represent, both the Liberal and the New Democratic provinces across the country, Mr. Speaker, none of them have in place a welfare program or a program of last resort that will enable the poverty cycle to be broken. Those are the people that do require the assistance and the need for food banks in order to help them support and nurture and look after their families.

We know that many single parents do experience long-term welfare dependency. We know that there are generation after generation that need the assistance of welfare in order to sustain and live lives that I do not think are terribly adequate. As I said, there is an equally strong likelihood that their children will join the statistics of child poverty, and those statistics do not paint a terribly wonderful or promising future for Manitoba or for indeed many Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, we often talk about young people being our future leaders. Well, it is clear to me and I think it is clear to all of us that many young people will need our help today to prepare them for the challenges for tomorrow.

We have looked creatively at ways to deal with the issues around single parents and the dependency and the system that we have put in place as politicians that has created that dependency. As I said earlier, welfare has become a career option and sometimes the only career option for many of our young people in Manitoba and right across Canada. I believe that is unacceptable, absolutely unacceptable, in my mind.

That is one of the reasons that we have worked very aggressively—[interjection] Mr. Speaker, I hear the member for Wellington indicating that we are blaming the victims. I am not blaming the victims. I am blaming a system that has been put

in place by successive governments. It was a system that was in place under the NDP administration in this province that has created that dependency and that is unacceptable. It is unacceptable, in my mind, and it is unacceptable for anyone to think that we should create a dependency where people depend on social allowances and welfare as their only option and their only opportunity.

I say shame to the member for Wellington for even thinking that it is the victims we are blaming. It is the system that was put in place by her government and governments before her and was perpetuated by her party, and it is time for that to change. That is why we are looking at new and innovative ways of delivering service to single parents in Manitoba.

I have to say that I want to give the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy and the federal Liberal government some credit in helping to develop an initiative that will be made in Manitoba that I would venture to guess will be a program that will be able to be applied to the rest of Manitoba and to all Canadians as a result of an innovative new approach to asking business, the volunteer community, the service providers that are presently out there and single parents to join together in the new Taking Charge! initiative to try to build independent, individual plans around single mothers, trying to address their needs, helping them to set goals, not setting goals for young women, but—[interjection] Well, Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult for me to believe or to understand how the member for Wellington could believe that there will be a work opportunity for every young single parent when 65 of those who are on social allowances today do not even have a high school education. What kinds of jobs does she believe are out there for them at this point in time?

* (1540)

Mr. Speaker, we are going to have to develop the training programs, understanding that high school education is absolutely important for these young women if they are going to be able to get into any kind of meaningful work opportunity or

training opportunity. That only makes common sense.

There is an opportunity here for us, as different levels of government, to work together, to join forces to combine our resources to ensure that we build individual plans, plans that will help young women to complete their Grade 12 education, plans that will provide on-the-job training, plans that will provide other forms of training based on job opportunities that might be available out in the job market and to encourage some women whom we know do very well as small business operators or entrepreneurs, to look at that as an option for employment opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the Taking Charge! initiative in the storefront operation will be able to accomplish some of those things. It is a pilot project. It will be looking at some screening criteria, and it will be looking at making a contract with individual young women, realizing and recognizing that there is a commitment that has to be made on both sides.

We know there are many young women out there who do want to work. We do know that the systems and the barriers that are in place for them today are those barriers that have been put in place by government. What we are trying to do is to get the whole community working together around trying to find positive solutions.

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

I believe it is a leading-edge program. I think both we and the federal government will find in the days to come and the years to come that it will be a program that will be extremely successful. Women in Manitoba in the past have had barriers placed in front of them, and we have had programs in place as governments that try to fit them all into the same mould.

This program will look at a more sensitive approach, helping to build goals and careers and options and opportunities for our young women. I am extremely excited about the prospect of that happening right here in our province of Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we all have had dialogue and discussion, although maybe not quite as much as I would have anticipated based on the opposition's, especially the Liberal opposition's throne speech that was presented and the focus and the emphasis that they placed on child poverty. I guess both opposition parties did. I would have anticipated or expected that in the first days of this legislative session there would have been several questions on the issues of child poverty. I know it was the Leader of the Liberal Party that indicated—at least I recall one of the reasons they indicated that they were not going to be voting for our throne speech was because it did not deal with the issue of child poverty. I believe that is the only place he made mention of child poverty. I do not recall him—with it being one of the highlights on his agenda in this session. I do not recall him standing up once and asking a question or being concerned at all about child poverty or what Manitoba's response might be.

I think we speak very clearly. When you look at the paper that was tabled today in the Legislature on Manitoba's perspective on the federal government's proposals on social security renewal, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think we speak very clearly on what our position is. I do not think we have to hold our head in shame when we look at the kinds of initiatives that have been put in place by this government to try to reduce child poverty. We have made it a priority of this government.

If we look back to before we came into office and the track record of the former NDP administration, you will see that we were right at the top of the child poverty level back in those days. I do not think that is anything that any government takes any pride in. I know that the NDP administration of the day did not take pride in having the highest levels of child poverty, and we, in Manitoba today as a government, do not take any pride in having any amount of child poverty in our province. We would like to see that eliminated or eradicated.

I would like to just talk very briefly, Madam Deputy Speaker, about some of the initiatives that

have been introduced by our government since we took office in order to try to address the issue of child poverty.

We are one of the only two provinces who offer income supplements to low-income families through our Child Related Income Support Program, more commonly known as CRISP. We have subsidized housing available for many low-income families. As well as that, families with children who spend a large part of their income on rent can receive benefits from our Shelter Allowances for Family Renters program, our SAFFR program.

We have taken some very important steps in using our income tax structure to keep more dollars in the pockets of low-income families right here in Manitoba. The Manitoba tax reduction under personal income tax was substantially increased in 1989 under this government from \$50 to \$250 per child. This measure increased incomes for less affluent families at a cost to Manitoba taxpayers of about \$28 million. I think we have made a commitment to low-income families through those initiatives.

An Honourable Member: Where were the Liberals on that issue?

Mrs. Mitchelson: My colleague asks a good question. Where were the Liberals when they voted on the budget that would leave more money in the pockets of low-income Manitobans?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I am telling you again, we voted against it.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The member for Inkster says that he voted against it, and he sounds very proud of that lack of support for low-income families, Madam Deputy Speaker. He should be ashamed of himself.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was against the budget, not some of the actions this government is doing—

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

* * *

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Deputy Speaker, by the member for Inkster standing up on that point of order and clarifying that he voted against the budget, he voted against low-income families. I think we need to set the record clear on that.

I indicated earlier and I will say it again, that he should be ashamed of himself. It is fine for his Leader to stand up in this House and move an amendment indicating that we are not doing enough to address child poverty, when they as an opposition party, when a budget was introduced to increase support and leave more money in the pockets of low-income Manitobans, he voted against it and his Leader voted against it.

I say again, shame on the Liberal Party in Manitoba for their lack of concern for low-income families.

Madam Deputy Speaker, taxes paid by low-income Manitoba families are among the lowest in Canada. For a married couple with two children, and I think it is very important for the opposition to hear this, no Manitoba tax is paid until the family's income reaches \$18,960. Canada, that is, the federal government, and most other provinces require substantial tax payments at this income level.

Our taxation levels are among the fairest in Canada, and just to indicate that other provinces are recognizing and realizing, in the 1994 Saskatchewan budget there was a tax table that spelled out what all provinces were doing in the area of taxation. That NDP Saskatchewan budget indicated that for a family with a total income of \$25,000, Manitoba is listed as having the lowest combined personal taxes and basic charges in Canada.

* (1550)

Madam Deputy Speaker, actions speak louder than words and by the actions that we have taken to reduce the burden on low-income families, we have the fairest tax system right across the country right here in Manitoba, and that is what we have done to try to address the issue of child poverty. I do not think our record on child care can be criticized by members of the opposition when we have the second highest per capita child care spending in Canada. Since our government took office, that was back in 1988, support and funding for child care has increased by 73 percent. The number of subsidized spaces in the province has increased by 84 percent. We have nothing to be ashamed of in the province of Manitoba when we have the second highest per capita spending on child care across the country and we have the second highest salaries for child care workers in our province of Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have had some dialogue and discussion with the Child Care Association and child care directors over the last short period of time, looking at what our response might be to the additional federal dollars for child care that have been promised in the red book.

We are in discussions with the federal government on it at the present time. I question and have asked for clarification from the federal government whether in fact the money they are promising is actually new money or it is money that is just redirected from somewhere else. When the federal government and the Minister of Human Resources is out talking to the community and indicate there could be up to 70 million new dollars in Manitoba for child care initiatives, I question whether it is money that is just taken from one hand and placed in another.

When the federal government talks in its reform process about capping the amount of money we get, cost-shared money, are they going to take dollars away from us under capped cost sharing presently that provide for support for child care and give it back to us in another manner? I do not have clarification on that issue from the federal minister, and I am not sure whether in fact any new initiative for Manitoba will provide more support

for child care or for families with children in Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I already talked about the Taking Charge! initiative that we have jointly put in place with the federal government that should, over the next five years, help 4,000 single mothers on social assistance obtain employment. We have also announced and established the Children and Youth Secretariat to better provide co-ordinated services between the Departments of Family Services, Health, Justice and Education. I believe that approach is long overdue. There needs to be the ability for us to respond to needs in the community based on a co-ordinated approach without departments within government making decisions that only deal with a part of a person or a part of a family. This new initiative will co-ordinate that service and assure us that we utilize our dollars in the best manner possible to provide services to children and to families right throughout our province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when we talk about children, I also am very pleased that we were able to announce a co-ordinated strategy on adoption of older children in the Child and Family Services system. In talking with those who work in the Child and Family Services system, one of the downsides to decentralization under the former NDP administration was that most of those working in the agencies in the city of Winnipeg and I guess indeed possibly right throughout the province of Manitoba became generalists rather than specialists, and there had been a decreased focus on adoption and permanency planning within the agencies.

When we talk about the issue of child poverty and children having to use food banks, I think there is not one easy answer to the issue of child poverty and the need for food donations and food banks, but it does cross the whole broad spectrum of support services for families and for children right throughout this province.

So in trying to find permanent, stable homes for children who need those homes, we are looking at a co-ordinated approach that will bring the

community, the agency and the department of government together around ensuring that children have the earliest opportunity to have a stable family relationship in a permanent home. So that is one of the benefits that we see from the adoption initiative that has been announced.

The Family Support Innovations Fund was announced in last year's budget and many projects have been approved. There are still others that are under consideration at the present time, will support families in their own homes, children in their own homes, so that we can try to ensure a better life and a better family relationship for those children without having them have to be taken out of their homes and put into care to receive services.

One of the areas too, and one of the groups in society that does sometimes have the problem of living a life of poverty are those who are abused and mistreated. Women that are abused and have to for whatever reason leave that abusive situation tend to need support services that we have provided through our shelter system and most recently announced longer-term housing and support services to abused women and their children through second-stage housing.

I am hearing a lot of positive comments back from the community around the new announcements that have just been made and the refocusing of our dollars into that kind of support so that women can get on with their lives and feel safe and secure and have the supports needed to make that happen and not have to live a life of poverty through social assistance and the use of food banks for sustenance or sustenance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think we as a province have taken a balanced approach on the issue of child poverty. We recognize the wide, broad range of social support services that need to be in place, and we will continue to try to work with Manitobans to ensure that in the best possible way we look to decreasing the dependence on government programs.

As the Leader of the Liberal opposition today said in his comments on my statement, programs

that are 30 years old that are not today doing what they were intended to do 30 years ago are not meeting the needs of the '90s, programs that do need to be changed, programs that do need to be reformed and need to be renewed. We need to try new and better ways of finding positive proactive approaches to decreasing the reliance on government and increasing people's ability to become independent and self-reliant.

We have indicated—and I will say again one of the most important comments I think that we have made in the paper that talks about our perspective on social security renewal—that the best social policy for Manitobans and for Canadians indeed is a job. If people have the opportunity to work, to contribute and to build their self-esteem and to feel good about themselves and to break the cycle of poverty, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that we go a long way in trying to resolve some of the issues around poverty and the need for the use of food banks.

* (1600)

One of the underlying themes in the paper that was tabled today in the House is the issue of our aboriginal people. Excuse me, Madam Deputy Speaker, how much time do I have left?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister has five minutes remaining.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I do want to indicate that the concern that we have with the papers that have been tabled for discussion by the federal government are concerns around the aboriginal population and the lack of federal commitment to our aboriginal peoples that they have under the Constitution and under the treaties that were signed with aboriginal people many, many years ago. I would hope that we would get support from the New Democratic Party in our discussion with the federal government around the accepting of that responsibility. It is not trying to blame or lay blame or not accept responsibility as a province for all Manitobans,

because we do have a responsibility for all Manitobans, but there is a special responsibility for the Canadian government to aboriginal peoples.

When the former Conservative federal government made the decision unilaterally to offload that responsibility onto Manitoba taxpayers, my colleague the Minister of Family Services of the time stood up in this House and made a statement and asked all parties in this House to support us in our fight to get the federal Conservative government of the day to live up to its responsibility. He made a strong statement in the House, and if I could just recall and bring to your attention the comments that were made by both opposition parties at the time.

I think it was the member for Wellington at the time, who was the critic for Family Services, stood in her place in this House and indicated—and I will quote her comments from March 20 of 1991, ". . . that what the federal government is attempting to do is morally wrong and, as well, is illegal. We believe that the aboriginal rights to social services have been included in treaties that have been negotiated over the centuries with the aboriginal peoples, and it is a federal obligation under the Indian Act. This behaviour on the part of the federal government is not to be condoned in any way, shape or form." And she goes on, Madam Deputy Speaker.

That was the position of the New Democratic Party back in 1991, and I guess I would ask for their support and their commitment today to confirm that position and ensure that Manitoba taxpayers are only a part of the solution, but there is a responsibility for Canadian taxpayers to aboriginal peoples.

I recall also the Liberal critic, Reg Alcock, who is now in a position of power and authority at the federal level. I will quote what Mr. Alcock said on that day. He said, "I think it is a disgraceful action on the part of the federal government. I can tell the minister that I personally—I know my caucus will support him absolutely in his attempts to force our federal government to live up to their

responsibilities. They have destroyed or are in the process of destroying the health care system in this country. They have badly hurt post-secondary education, and now they are attacking the native people. I think Mr. Mulroney and his gang of crooks that he heads should be brought to heel."

That was the quote from Reg Alcock, the then-Family Services critic. I believe that the Leader of the Liberal Party today was sitting in his seat and nodding in approval of these comments, and now that Mr. Alcock is in a position of power and authority at the federal level I would hope that he would stand up for Manitobans and ensure that he rectifies this situation on behalf of Manitoba taxpayers and Manitoba aboriginal people in the days and months ahead.

I will be writing to Mr. Alcock indicating to him that I want his commitment. I also want the commitment from the Liberal Party in this Legislature. I want their commitment to stand up on the convictions that they had back in 1991 and ask them today whether they will recommit themselves to this issue or whether they have done a complete flip-flop and whether their word is worth anything in this Legislature. Or do they change their minds once they have the power and the ability to govern? Do they change their minds and say: That was then, oh, we do not take any responsibility. We were only in opposition, and we can have it both ways. Or, will they stand up to their convictions? Will they stand up for aboriginal people in Manitoba? Will they stand up for Manitoba taxpayers and accept the responsibility that they indicated the federal government had back in 1991, Madam Deputy Speaker, pay the bills, ensure that aboriginal people in Manitoba have fair treatment and fair opportunity under the federal Liberal government that they did not receive in the past?

I believe that the position of both opposition parties was spelled out very clearly in 1991. I will be asking them to recommit themselves to the aboriginal people in Manitoba, to Manitoba taxpayers to ensure that there is fair and equal consideration of Manitoba's unique perspective as we move through social security reform, and

ensure that our aboriginal people do not have to be users of our food banks, that this legislation was brought in place to encourage donations. I am hoping that by the commitment and the actions of both opposition parties that we will see less and less use, but we want to be able to protect those Manitobans that are caring and willing to give and provide assistance to fellow Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not going to speak too long. My voice will not allow me to do that.

I was prepared to get up today and talk about The Food Donations Act. I was surprised to see the Minister of Family Services get up today and spend maybe five and a half minutes of her 40-minute filibuster of her own piece of legislation talking about The Food Donations Act and the rest of the time trying like crazy to pat her government and herself on the back for their extraordinary behaviour to the people of Manitoba.

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a very important bill, a very important issue for the people of Manitoba. The Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), in introducing this legislation, has to set the background, the reasons why this legislation is necessary.

The fact that the member across the way is imputing motives is also out of order, and I suggest that you call her to order for that issue.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. First of all, it is not unparliamentary to suggest that someone is filibustering; second of all, the member did not accuse the minister of filibustering the topic of the bill. I think she was filibustering something else. Some of us on this side wondered if we were listening to debate on this same motion; and third of all, despite my two contributions to this alleged

point of order, I probably feel there is no point of order, and we should allow the member for Wellington to continue.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable government House leader did not have a point of order. The honourable member for Thompson did not have a point of order.

* * *

Ms. Barrett: Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak very briefly about some of the comments that were put on the record by the Minister of Family Services that in her very explanation about The Food Donations Act.

* (1610)

The minister talked about young women in particular choosing welfare, and I believe the words were fairly close to exact: choosing welfare as a career option. She said this several times. She also said that the system creates dependency.

I would like to suggest that women and families and individuals do not ever choose welfare as a career option. For the Minister of Family Services of all people in this Legislature to stand in her place and suggest—name, not suggest—state on at least two separate occasions that young women on social assistance choose welfare as a career option is absolutely reprehensible.

Point of Order

Mrs. Mitchelson: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Very often the systems that are put in place do not allow for any other choice for young women. It was a system that was in place under that administration that did not allow for any other choice or alternative for young women but welfare.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Family Services does not have a point of order.

* * *

Ms. Barrett: Madam Deputy Speaker, the other comment that the minister said was that this system creates dependency. The government prior to her government coming in, the government of the New Democratic Party, tried to narrow and tried to take away some of those barriers. Programs such as New Careers—[interjection]

Point of Order

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) made a great strong point a few moments ago that speaking to this bill had to be speaking to this bill. So far she has not done it and I wonder if you can call her to speak on the topic.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I would remind all members and ministers that indeed second reading is supposed to be relevant to the bill.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Deputy Speaker, in my opening comments I stated—and if the minister had been listening she might have heard—that I was going to speak very briefly about some of the comments the Minister of Family Services made. If I am allowed to, I will speak very briefly to those. If I am allowed to, then I will—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Deputy Speaker, the member is still not addressing the points of the bill, and I would ask that you call her to order. She herself has made a point of saying you have to be relevant and she still is not being relevant even after being instructed to be so.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not believe that the minister even had a point of order or even mentioned that she had a point of order in your acknowledging her to have the ability to speak. So I think on a point

of order, the minister had no right whatsoever to speak on this debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Once again, I did caution all honourable members to be relevant to the bill. However, I allowed the minister a considerable degree of latitude, and I think in the interests of fairness in the House that on this bill only one member of each party will be allowed some latitude.

Ms. Barrett: I would hope that, given that the minister had approximately 35 minutes of irrelevancies, that between myself and other of my caucus colleagues we can have 35 minutes.

However, Madam Deputy Speaker, that aside, this is an incredibly important issue and I do not want to trivialize it in any way. I would like to say, before I talk specifically to The Food Donations Act, that the minister's comments about the system creating dependency does not take into account the fact that the previous government put in place programs that were designed to reduce and tear down those barriers the minister was talking about, programs such as New Careers, the ACCESS programs, the Student Social Allowances Program and the Single Parent Job Access Program, to name only a few.

All of those programs have been either eliminated or totally decimated by this government. For the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) to say that the system creates dependency in the same breath that she says that young women choose welfare as a career option is nothing short of scandalous.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on The Food Donations Act, I am delighted to see the Minister of Family Services and her government took a serious look at the alternative Speech from the Throne which was put forward by the official opposition several weeks ago. In that alternative Speech from the Throne we said that we would put in place a food donations act, and we did in the Legislature.

Our private member's bill is very similar to the legislation that we are dealing with today in Bill 5. When I stand and talk about The Food Donations Act I am sort of torn, because on the one hand we did put in a piece of legislation that is very similar to the piece of legislation we are debating today, so we recognize that this is a problem that needs to be addressed.

On the other hand, and this is something that I do not think came through loud and clear in the minister's comments, this act, whether it is our act or the act we are debating today, is by definition an acknowledgement of failure. It means that we in Winnipeg and in Manitoba and in Canada and in all North America and probably throughout the world today are institutionalizing poverty.

The whole concept of food banks was virtually unknown 10 years ago. Today we have huge numbers of food banks throughout our country and in our province. I think that given the fact that this is a problem, we do need to address it in the short term, but I want every member of this House to know that our position while we support in principle Bill 5, The Food Donations Act, our position is very clear, we want to work to eradicate poverty. We want to work to eliminate the need for food banks entirely, and that this government has done nothing in that regard and, as a matter of fact, has gone in the other direction.

* (1620)

To put in context the need for this piece of legislation, I would like to talk about some of the statistics that should frame our discussion, particularly in light of the fact that the minister talked about single women and single parents and she talked about the aboriginal community. She did not, Madam Deputy Speaker, talk about many of the other people who are forced to use food banks in our society today, two groups of which I will mention.

Our minimum wage of \$5 an hour, which is among the lowest in the country and has not been changed since 1990 or 1991, has forced 11,000 Winnipeg working families to use the Winnipeg

Harvest food bank. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, having a job in this society under this mean-spirited government does not mean you are off poverty. Eleven thousand families. How many children are in those families? There are 62,000 children in poverty in the city of Winnipeg alone, many of whom are in families of the working poor.

Another group that the minister neglected to mention when she was talking about the users of food banks, when she was blaming the victims, are university students. We now have another class being offered or another whole area being offered at our Canadian universities. There are food banks at 13 campuses across Canada. Four of them are in Manitoba: the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, Brandon University and Red River Community College. That includes the vast majority of students who are in some form of post-secondary education—are attending university and community colleges where there is a food bank. The whole concept again, food banks are essential because of a lack of help to students on the part of this government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister said that one of the reasons and one of the ways to eliminate poverty and eliminate the need to have food banks was to have a job. That is very interesting, and it would be amusing if it were not so sad, coming from a government that has done nothing to help create jobs in this province in the six and a half years they have been in government. As a matter of fact they have eliminated jobs. There are fewer people working in the province today than there were when this government got its majority in 1990, and as I stated earlier, in the city of Winnipeg alone there are 11,000 of those working families who are living below the poverty line, who are making use of food banks.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister talked about child poverty. Again, unbelievable coming from this government where in the last four years they are second or first or third in the country in child poverty. We are third now, this year or in 1992 only because of Alberta, another Conservative government—do not let me get started on the province of Alberta—and

Newfoundland, which has huge structural problems in its province. We are right up there with them, a province that should not have the incidence of child poverty, that should not have the incidence of poor students, that should not have the incidence of poor working families that currently happen in this province. We are a rich province, as the Premier said yesterday. This should be the best place in the world to live and the only reason it is not is because of the action and inaction of this government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not want to spend any more time on this because others wish to speak on this bill. I would like to close by saying, as I stated earlier—oh, there is one other group before I quit that I would like to briefly talk about. The minister spoke about this too, when she talked and she quoted members of the opposition in our concerns about the way the federal government, last government and the current government, are dealing with the aboriginal people.

This government trots out the aboriginal issue whenever it serves them. Do they deal with the issue of the northern trails, as the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) has very accurately stated? Do they deal with the fact that northern highways have been reduced from 15 to 20 percent of the expenditure on highways to less than 4 percent? No, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is only when they can use the aboriginal community to make political points that they raise these issues. They have done an abysmal job dealing with the issues of the aboriginal community, whether it is in the North, in the Parklands, in eastern Manitoba, in southern Manitoba or here in the city of Winnipeg.

For the minister to stand and raise that issue again as an opportunity to try and make points is politics of the worst sort. I will close my remarks and look forward to other people's comments on this bill.

Ms. Norma McCormick (Osborne): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of Bill 5, The Food Donations Act, and make note that the spirit and the intention behind this bill was the subject of the resolution put forward by the

member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) in the last session of the Legislature, so we commend the government for acting on his suggestion and to putting forward this bill.

We would also like to go on record that we urge the government to proceed to third reading and that we will in committee look forward to seeking public input and to encouraging support.

I find it very frightening, however, that this bill has prompted a far-reaching discussion on the issues of child poverty. For anyone to purport that this bill can in any way address the issue of child poverty is absolutely shocking. There was a very good document produced in 1992 by the Nutrition and Food Security Network of Manitoba, An Action Plan for Food Security for Manitobans. In no place in this document does the subject of food banks get recommended as a solution to hunger and malnourishment in Manitoba.

Instead the legislative and policy legislations recommend a number of things which I believe should be also part of a responsible government's initiative. For example, we need to talk about the question of food security and income security. The document points out that many people are precluded from getting decent food because they do not have access to adequate income or purchasing power. A specific recommendation is to establish a common method of calculating social assistance rates and to increase social assistance rates to meet the actual feeding costs for children, as well to increase the CRISP funding in order to address the issues of child poverty in Manitoba.

The other problem identified is the problem of access to nutrition information. The document recommends the establishment of a health care policy that recognizes nutritional assessment and culturally appropriate intentions, particularly for disadvantaged people. It has been recognized that many of our food preferences are linked to our cultural experiences, and in fact what is available through food banks is commonly not culturally appropriate food, so the access to information to people in terms of how to purchase food

nutritionally is an essential part of this recommendation.

The other area the food strategy speaks to is the importance of social supports. It recommends that government support and expand family resource centres throughout the province, that it designate the telephone as an essential component in a social assistance budget and expand the congregate meal program for the elderly. It also talks about examining the feasibility of Meals On Wheels type programs to supply meals to homeless people. Again, no mention of food banks.

Appropriately, it talks about making available affordable food, not free food but affordable food. It recognizes that the cost of food in northern areas, northern communities far outstrips that of the cost of food in the urban areas, and by encouraging donations of food to food banks, we are doing nothing to reduce the disparity in food costs between northern and southern communities.

* (1630)

It also talks about the importance of allocating funding to establish programs for teen parents and talks about the importance of nutrition and food purchase programs in educational programs throughout the province. Again, with the back-to-the-basics approach this government is taking in education, many people fear that this kind of very important life skill information is not going to be available to young people.

We also, in November of this year, hosted a child poverty forum, and here we learned first-hand about the impact of poverty on the health and nutrition status of poor people. This is evidenced by low birth weights, by premature death rates in poor children and higher utilization of the health care system. We have abundant research evidence that connects good nutrition with positive health status, yet little is done to ensure that poor people have a guaranteed access to good food.

We also learned about the other factors which preclude the possibility of people getting adequate food. Many people are concerned that the poverty

crisis is now turning into a food crisis. Income disparity in this province is polarized as never before. People face family and economic disparity in income security; they are cynical and fearful about changes in the future. Many communities and people feel disempowered.

I find it really troubling that the minister's remarks to her own bill talked about the importance of a good job as being a solution to poverty, and yet what has been done to ensure that the jobs that are available for poor Manitobans are in fact good jobs?

We have a higher rate in this province of unemployment and underemployment. The jobs that have been created according to the labour statistics are part-time, low-income, low-benefit jobs. Families do not have enough money to buy food; therefore, they are relegated to food banks.

Our maintenance enforcement system is a continuing disaster. Families cannot count on court-ordered child support being there. There are 22 people trying to administrate thousands of orders, and there is no possibility that this money is forwarded to families in a regular or consistent or timely manner.

The minister used the opportunity of this bill to talk about child care. In Manitoba, the situation is getting worse because, with the capping of subsidized child care spaces and the dropping of fees from \$11,000 down to \$9,600, the imposition of a \$2.40-a-day fee for the use of a subsidized child care space simply takes money out of the family's budget to apply for food.

It is very interesting that much evidence exists to show that single parents and poor families find their food budgets to be the most flexible of all items in their family budgets, and when cutbacks are necessary to meet more pressing needs, it is commonly the food budget that gets the short end.

There was a study done which indicates that among low-income, single-parent families, other demands took precedence over the purchase of good food. Their key concern became satisfying

the energy needs of their children. Shortages were dealt with by rationing the available food in the household and making meals out of staples such as potatoes and bread. In severe crises, first the women started going without meals themselves and then the children. Outside assistance, and here we are talking about food banks, was only sought as a final option. Similar situations result in low-income pregnant women having difficulty realizing their nutritional needs, and they feel guilty about increasing their food take for the benefit of their unborn babies while the remainder of their family remains with a limited food supply.

At our poverty forum the most eloquent speaker spoke of the decisions of having to do without food herself in order to be able to face the faces of her hungry children. We have alternatives and we must seek alternatives to food banks. It is not acceptable to pretend that a Food Donations Act is a solution to poverty, malnourishment or hunger in this province. This minister has challenged me and my caucus members because we have not asked questions on the issue of child poverty. I am very willing to admit that there was a time in the last session when I put some faith in my ability to express myself, to bring to the attention to this government to get these issues understood and acted upon. In the last session I used my energy to ensure that the government rethought their approaches and gave consideration to our suggestion as alternative approaches hoping that the approaches would change.

In this session I have no longer faith that this government is prepared to accept a change in its approach, and I have come to the conclusion that it is not the approach that must change, it is the government that must change. You know, to say that the solution to poverty and hunger in this province is employment begs the question of, what kind of employment is available? It begs the question—[interjection] The problem in Manitoba is that we have the second lowest minimum wage cost in the country. We have demonstrated evidence that 12 percent of the people who present themselves to Winnipeg Harvest food bank have been employed in the last week, and the employment income is not adequate to meet the

nutrition needs of their families.

The Canadian poverty rate is 19.8, and it has gone up from 15.2 in 1981. In Manitoba we have an actual rate of 27 percent poverty for children. So why are children so poor? To say that they are poor because their parents do not have jobs is fallacious, and even if the members are correct in saying that there are four jobs for every unemployed Manitoban, take that as a statistic that for the moment we might be prepared to expect, I would ask, how can these parents seek employment in absence of an adequate child care program? Who is going to be caring for their children? Who is going to pay the \$2.40 a day out of a minimum wage job which nets \$9,000 or \$10,000 a year? How can a parent be expected to spend \$2.40 times 200 working days a year and still have money left over to feed their family?

An Honourable Member: What is Lloyd Axworthy doing about this problem of poverty?

Ms. McCormick: I am pleased to answer my friend for Burrows and talk about the \$70 million that will be coming into Manitoba in support of child care. Unfortunately, I find it a tragedy that this money comes in to compensate for the deficiencies in a provincial program.

* (1640)

We cannot any longer pretend that the marginalizing of women in the labour force into low paid, low skilled jobs is going to be a solution for women. This government talked about its initiative for training for tomorrow to try and encourage women into jobs that pay a decent wage. But where are the initiatives toward pay equity? Why do we still find it acceptable that a woman doing what is considered to be women's work, should be working at a low income salary, when a person who would go into a job as a welder or a machinist or a carpenter can reasonably expect to bring down \$40,000 a year? It is not acceptable that we continue to marginalize women in the workforce and then to deprive them of the supports that are necessary to be able to take employment and to be able to go out with some

confidence into the labour force to ensure that their effort is in fact paid off with enough money to be able to support their children.

I am hearing the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) talk about me being more left wing than the NDP, and I have no reason to apologize for defending the interests of women and children in this province. The other irony in this is that as we talk about ensuring that women can participate, we hear on and on and on about the Take Charge program, about the importance of providing single parents with an opportunity to choose another career—as the minister says—other than welfare, but this same minister has denied the Lakeview Children's Centre money to continue its operation to provide the children of Langruth. So I do not think it is consistent to suggest that we can in any way encourage the participation of these mothers in the labour force without recognizing that the issues of pay equity and child care have to be addressed first.

In addition, we need to recognize that we are not just talking about food security from a perspective of nourishment. We also need to recognize that in our society we have got some problems of isolation, of too much money being commanded to compete with the food budget, too much money going for housing, for transportation, and all of the needs that are met take precedence over the money that a family can afford to spend on food.

In the nutrition and the food security strategy I spoke of earlier, the legislative and policy initiatives call for supporting and expanding family resource centres both in Winnipeg and throughout the province as essential for breaking down the barriers of isolation and loneliness, and to ensure that people who are in the community have the opportunity for respite, to learn about food preparation and to establish themselves connecting into a network.

We have looked in our own community at the concept of a community kitchen. In fact, I had encouraged the Mayfair Resource Centre to put forward the proposal to the minister through the Family Support Innovations program.

Unfortunately, this proposal was neither funded through the minister's program nor, unfortunately, through the Brighter Futures program.

We need to look at expanding congregate meal programs for the elderly. This is a way of encouraging social interaction as well as to improve the nutritional status of seniors. We need to look at the feasibility of establishing mobile food distribution to provide meals to the homeless. This would also provide a way of ensuring that there is some kind of ongoing contact and support with these people who have the lowest and least nutritious food consumption opportunities.

We need to also recognize that we cannot institutionalize food banks as a solution. When the Canadian Association of Food Bank Providers was created several years ago, I believe it was in about 1986, it was thought that food banks would be a temporary response to the recession and that it would be likely that as the problems of hunger and nutrition deficiencies in Manitoba became apparent that it would result in government taking over, and that governments would in fact address the problems of hunger and malnutrition, but in fact the opposite has happened.

As things got tough for individuals in the recession they also got tough for governments, and government spending often was cut back at the consequence of the poorest and most marginalized of our citizens. So the idea then that food banks were a transitory and temporary response is now appearing to be abandoned. Unfortunately, again, that is evidenced by the bill, that we have lost our ability to think up more creative ways, and that we are now approaching food banks and clothing exchanges and other kinds of community things, which really do isolate and demean people, as a solution when in fact it is only further evidence of social policy failure.

We need to recognize that the numbers of food banks are growing not only in Manitoba but across the country. It is estimated that there are almost 300 food banks which are eligible for membership in the Canadian Association of Food Banks.

In closing, I would encourage that in considering this that members recognize that this is not in any way a solution. This is only a tragic necessity in a country in which we, you know, thought of ourselves as a land of plenty. We encourage the reduction of the amount of food that is wasted. We encourage the other initiatives, however, by this government to reduce the numbers of families in which children and parents go hungry every day. We want to then accomplish a reduction in the waste of surplus food. That is the only laudable aspect of this bill, and that in fact we will hope that not only the need for food banks, include donations, is transitory, but that eventually we can come up with more appropriate and more creative solutions to the problems of hunger and poverty in our province.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a very interesting bill to speak on, Bill 5, The Food Donation Act, for many reasons.

I would like to point out, first of all, that the first party to introduce this idea in the Manitoba Legislature was the New Democratic Party, and that we announced this before the start of the session and said that we would be willing to and would introduce a bill. So we can support the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) in this bill for borrowing a good idea, although I think we should give credit to the Winnipeg Harvest food bank and maybe call it the Winnipeg Harvest food bank bill because we know that this idea was suggested to us by David Northcott, their executive director.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

It does address a problem for food banks, and I think addresses it appropriately, and solves the problem of companies not wanting to be sued for donating food that is inappropriate. Of course, if they donate food knowingly that is unsafe, then of course they are still open to being sued, but I think that the bill covers the problem and deals with it adequately.

Food banks in Canada really only began in 1981, I believe. They began in Alberta, and they began in response to government cutbacks to social programs. As a result, they spread to other provinces as other provinces also cut back in social programs. Graham Richards has written an excellent book on food banks and done an analysis and points out that there are two basic kinds of food banks in Canada. There are food banks established on the charitable model of which Calgary is an example, and the Winnipeg food bank was established on that model in 1984.

There is also the advocacy model, and most of the advocacy model food banks were established by unemployed workers or unions, and the difference is that the advocacy model food banks were involved right from the beginning with trying to help the individuals who came to them for food with their other problems, with applying for unemployment insurance, with getting the benefits that they were entitled to from different social programs and intervening and advocating with government. In fact, the Edmonton food bank is an excellent example of this, and on a regular basis, they provide statistics to the government of Alberta and lobby them to make progressive changes.

* (1650)

Interestingly, in Manitoba, it was not people working with the poor that started Winnipeg Harvest food bank. In fact, churches in the inner city that were working with the poor lobbied against Winnipeg Harvest from being established in the first place because they realized that it would take pressure off governments to provide adequately for people and that food banks would very quickly become institutionalized, and I will say more about that later.

However, it has been very interesting to watch the transformation of Winnipeg Harvest food bank. I remember back in 1984, when David Northcott was part of the inter-agency group food network and we wanted to get Winnipeg Harvest to help us to lobby the government of the day or governments at all three levels, he said he was

unwilling to do that, as did the Salvation Army, because they were afraid it would jeopardize their corporate donations in food. However, they have changed since then, at least the Winnipeg Harvest has, and now they take part in all the initiatives from the Social Planning Council and inter-agency group and in fact do lobby governments and take part in press conferences, as they did at the Social Planning Council recently.

There are a number of problems with food banks, particularly food banks that are set up on the charitable model. I am reminded of a wonderful quotation from Bishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa. He said, and I quote: We do not want to be picking up the crumbs at the master's table any more. We want a hand in planning the meal.

It is very significant that since he said this, the black majority in South Africa now have the opportunity to plan the meal since they have one member, one vote and have a majority government elected by black people, so now they can plan the meal and they can bring about justice solutions whereas, in the past, they felt they were the victims of injustice.

I think there are some parallels in Canada. I believe that aboriginal self-government is a good example, where aboriginal people are saying that they want a hand in planning their own future, and governments are slowly moving in that direction for First Nations.

Why do we have food banks, and why do people use food banks? Well, the first is that the vast majority of people using food banks live in poverty.

I was part of an organization that took part in a survey on that very topic in 1988 in co-operation with the Winnipeg Harvest food bank and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and a number of churches, including North End Community Ministry where I worked, and we interviewed the individuals. I was one of the ones that interviewed numerous individuals that came on a weekly basis for the food handout.

The statistics, as a result of those interviews, were compiled by the Social Planning Council. They found very interesting results. They were able to chart the results and show that as people's income increased, use of food banks declined, and there was a summary of this in an article called, *Hunger in Winnipeg*, in the Institute of Urban Studies periodical, issue No. 31, June 1990. They said, and I quote: The use of emergency food is confined to renter households with incomes under \$21,000. Within this group predominantly single males with incomes under \$7,000 used emergency food outlets. The second most vulnerable group was low-income families with children.

So this points out that the primary reason that people use food banks is low income and that once people have money, once they have an adequate income they no longer use food banks. That really should not surprise any of us because I think people give up a lot of their dignity and pride when they go to receive a free handout. I do not think it is easy for those people. I do not think they do it because they want to. I think in most circumstances people do it because they feel forced to.

Secondly, and I think this relates to the increasing use of food banks, there have been numerous cuts to benefits of people on low income, including by this Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), who participated in this debate, and also by her predecessors in the Conservative government since 1988. I do not need to list them all here because I have listed them many other times in debate, but just to give one example, the provincial government has not increased social assistance rates, by the end of December, for two years. Normally there is an annual increase. Last year they announced in November that there would not be an increase January 1, it would be in April, but when April came around there was no increase in social assistance rates. There have been many other cuts to benefits as well.

Of course, there have been increased costs, for example, the 140 percent increase to fees for children in subsidized child care.

One of the major reasons why people use food banks is that some parts of their social assistance budget is inadequate, and one of the major ones is the inadequacy of rent. In many, many cases people are paying \$100 or more a month in excess rent, and they are taking it out of their only discretionary areas, their food budget, their personal needs budget or their household needs budget, and as a result they run short of food. What do they do to make up for that? They supplement it by going to a food bank.

Another important reason is emergencies. If people have an emergency come up, there is no money in their social assistance budget over and above their special needs fund of \$150 a year, and the special needs funding is becoming increasingly difficult to get.

Another important reason that people use food banks is the inadequacy of the minimum wage. The minimum wage has not been raised for some time. At \$5 an hour it is much, much less as a percentage of the poverty line now than it was 20 years ago, and so, of course, its purchasing power has declined. So many people that use food banks are in fact working, but we would call them the working poor.

Finally, and I think a rather significant reason that people use food banks is that the food is free and that should not surprise anyone. I remember when we discussed the issue of food handouts, I think through the ministry, one of our board members from Sturgeon Creek said: Well, if there was free food at the end of my street I would be there too. And this is someone from a higher income neighbourhood of Winnipeg who certainly did not need the food banks, but I think put her finger on an important reason why people go. If you have a choice between paying for something and something that is free, many people will take advantage of something that is free. Actually one of the reasons people use food banks is that it does give them some discretion. They can supplement their income by free food on the one hand, and on the other hand buy something that they need. But one of the problems is that it institutionalizes food banks.

An Honourable Member: Those that have a guilt complex and want to donate.

Mr. Martindale: Well, the minister is helping me out here and I appreciate that. He is saying that people that have a guilt complex want to donate. Certainly food banks do provide that function in our society. Regrettably what this does is it makes people in our society think that food banks are an appropriate solution to the problem of poverty when in fact they are not a very appropriate solution. For example, the kind of food that is donated. The majority of the food—and I know this from helping unload the trucks from 1984 until 1990 where I worked—the No. 1 quantity of food has to be bread, the second is doughnuts, and third, comes everything else. Much of it is seasonal. When vegetables are in season, Winnipeg Harvest food bank has vegetables. When people respond to a food drive, there are canned goods. But the kind of nutrition that people are getting is very inadequate.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows will have 30 minutes remaining.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m. time for Private Members' Business.

Point of Order

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Mr. Speaker, I beg leave of the House today to bring forward a resolution that is on the Order Paper, No. 70, and because of the urgency of this I would like to ask for leave of the House to bring this forward. It is the resolution with regard to the armed forces, the Air Command Headquarters, No. 17 wing, being transferred to Ottawa. Because of the economic impact that this is going to have on the residents of Manitoba, especially the immediate area around Sturgeon Creek, I would ask for the leave of the House to move this resolution forward so that we can go forward on behalf of all Manitobans and all members of the House with a united force to make our point to the members of Ottawa and the M.P.s in government.

* (1700)

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member has prefaced his remarks with a point of order, and I am going to deal with it as a point of order. I see the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is up. We will call it a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that had the member and the government been sincere with what the member just put on the record, the government House leader would have approached the opposition House leader. In fact the Liberal Party does have a resolution that is there before us right now. If the government was in fact sincere in wanting to deal with this issue, I would imagine the government House leader would have approached us and maybe we could have accommodated each party or members of the different parties in the Chamber, because we equally have very important resolutions that deserve to have the debate.

So leave is going to be denied because this government does not want to co-operate on dealing with serious issues before this House.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, firstly let me say that I think it is highly inappropriate that the House leader of the second opposition party would impute motives to the respect of this issue and the question of sincerity of the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

Mr. Speaker, this is private members' hour. Under private members' hour any member in this House may stand up and seek any kind of leave and seek any kind of consensus within this House whenever he feels like it, or she for that matter. This is private members' hour. This is not government business. This has nothing to do with the government House leader. It has to do with a private member who wants to deal with a private member's issue.

Mr. Speaker: That is correct. What we have before us right now is the member for Sturgeon

Creek asking for leave to bring forward Resolution 70, CFB Winnipeg.

Is there leave at this time to bring forward Resolution 70?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? Order, please. I have to hear this. Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave is denied.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 1—Youth Drop-In Centres

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that

WHEREAS youth crime in Manitoba continues to be substantially above the national average; and

WHEREAS the suicide rate among young people has almost doubled in the last thirty years; and

WHEREAS teenage pregnancies in Manitoba are well above the national average; and

WHEREAS unemployment among our young people is averaging close to 20 percent; and

WHEREAS the student drop-out rate in Manitoba schools is 17 percent, one of the highest in the country; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has cut funding to education in the last two years despite the fact that opportunities for young people entering the workforce depend on obtaining a quality education; and

WHEREAS among the education programs cut were those which provided students with extra-curricular activities; and

WHEREAS young people at a recent Youth Forum hosted by the MLA for The Maples and at the mayor's Youth Task Force identified the need for youth drop-in centres to give kids a safe place to spend their spare time; and

WHEREAS youth drop-in centres will give young people an outlet for their energies, will give them a place to hang out other than the streets, and will facilitate the creation of role models for young people by having someone kids can talk to at these centres.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Education to consider working co-operatively to increase the number of youth drop-in centres in Manitoba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to be more creative in the use of public facilities to provide spare-time activities for youth.

Motion presented.

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): I would ask whether or not this resolution is in order given the fact that it calls upon government to significantly increase spending in support of what might be a worthy cause, Mr. Speaker, but that it goes some distance, although it plays kind of loose with the wording. I recognize that. So, in the sense that it is calling upon government to increase the number, that is a funding issue. That is a calling for more funds, and I submit that this resolution is out of order.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Manness), the operative words are in the resolution, that they "urge" the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Education to consider working co-operatively, and on the second BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly "urge" the government to be more creative in the use of public facilities.

Therefore, the honourable Minister of Education and Training does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Kowalski: The genesis for this resolution started April 9, 1994, when in this building we had a forum for 60 young people from throughout the province—from the suburbs, from the core area, from reserves. Amongst other things that I have reported on in this Chamber and the Listening to Youth report that I have circulated to all members of this House, the young people told us that one of the things they need is a stronger connection to the adults in their life and a stronger connection to their communities.

Also, they said that the recreational facilities, the sports programs that were good in the '50s and '60s were not appropriate for their generation, and as a result there were not sufficient recreation opportunities for them.

This practice of holding forums to listen to youth, I was glad to see that the City of Winnipeg mayor, Mayor Thompson, continued the practice, as I believe the Justice minister continued to follow the lead that we set by meeting with young people and listening to them. When the mayor formed her youth task force of young people, afterward she released a report in October of '94 called Youth Speaking Out About Youth Violence. It is a very interesting report done by the young people of this city, some of whom were gang members—again, a broad cross section of young people.

Amongst their recommendations was No. 8 on page 12 of that report saying: to encourage more creative use of public facilities, to provide spare time activities for youth and create safe places for youth using vacant housing, storefronts to provide recreation and youth services. To quote the report further, it said, there was a lot of discussion about why the use of public facilities for youth centres might be problematic for the public.

Some of the issues raised by the members of the task force were: some people may not want to have these sorts of programs and facilities in their

neighbourhood; they had to find places that were reasonable and accessible for everyone; when kids hang out in malls and storefronts people get nervous; intolerance in the community for that generation of people.

* (1710)

They also said that people say it is a good idea as long as they keep it away from us, but then they noted that at Unicity Mall in the city of Winnipeg they have a drop-in centre that has not been a problem. As a matter of fact, it has been cited by this government as an example of a good program. As a result, many adults have come onside and supported that drop-in centre at Unicity Mall.

The mayor challenged the young people to describe very specifically what sort of facilities they wanted to see made available. The youth responded by suggesting a number of criteria. They wanted a place to do the type of activities that they wanted to do, not that adults wanted them to do. Included in that was pool tables, ping-pong tables, things that kids were interested in, everything from skateboarding to listening to music. It should be an active, lively place where young people felt welcome.

One of the things that I got from both my youth forum and reading the mayor's youth task force report is that young people want a direct role in planning and creating this type of facility as opposed to adults who create facilities that they believe are what the young people want. They said they want basketball courts, baseball, floor hockey, and they cited Rossbrook House as one of the types of facilities that has made a big difference in the community.

The mayor asked the young people, what would they be willing to do? How would they be willing to participate? The young people told the mayor that they are prepared to help with the organization of running the facility, organizing the programs. They would work as volunteers at the centre, use funds from different programs to create, and they noted that government could not be expected to do everything, so the community should play a role,

and the government's role in this is the role of leadership.

That is why, when I was presented with a petition by 400 young people from the Ken Seaford Junior High requesting a youth centre in our neighbourhood, I formed a committee of young people, and they were the ones that planned and organized a youth drop-in centre in our neighbourhood. It was them and the young adults, people between the ages of 18 and 25, who volunteered to supervise the young adolescents in our community.

As a result, we received over 40 volunteers who were raised in The Maples and had a commitment to our community. These young adults formed a partnership with the young adolescents, and the relationships that developed during the period of time that the drop-in centre started in August, and it has continued on, has been beneficial to the whole community.

Qualitatively, I could tell you of accounts of young people approaching these young adults and talking about things that they might be hesitant to talk to their parents about, everything from teenage pregnancy, that they had been approached by a boyfriend or a girlfriend to take drugs, fear from gang members.

Maybe they did not feel comfortable talking to their own parents, maybe they did not feel comfortable talking to other adults, but these young adults in our community, they built a relationship with it. As a result, I believe many things that would have resulted in the justice system or would have ended up in the Child and Family Services caseload did not.

In fact, that has been borne out by my colleague from Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) who, at the same time, developed a youth drop-in centre in his area. According to John Wiens, the superintendent of Seven Oaks School Division, they have statistical information that the caseload in Child and Family Services during the time that that drop-in centre operated decreased greatly. In fact, the small amount of wages paid to the people who operated

that drop-in centre was far surpassed by the savings in money in the caseloads that would have gone to Child and Family Services.

In The Maples drop-in centre they averaged 70 to 80 kids each day, but going as high as 121 on some nights, and these kids loved the facility. Again, there was not a lot of government funds. This was community members, young adults coming together and serving the community. As a result many of the young adults have used that experience on their resumes, as work experience in their programs in social work, in recreational studies. So it was beneficial not only to the young people but also to the volunteers who worked in it.

Also, I have talked to the community constables in that area. Constable Ron Bell, who works out of the Citizens for Crime Awareness office in The Maples, could attest to the fact that this summer was a little bit better in The Maples, there was less fear from youth crime in our neighbourhood as a result of a youth drop-in centre, doing something that is effective. This is the sort of effective solution that may not be simplistic and appeal to the political rhetoric that the government tries to address about youth crime, but it is effective.

It has been shown to be effective in the drop-in centre that the member for Kildonan created, and it has been effective in The Maples. That is why I am calling on all members of this House to support this resolution so that this government could show leadership and follow the example of Unicity Mall, The Maples youth centre, and the Edmund Partridge youth centre as a program that has worked, is effective and has not only a direct impact on youth crime and violence but on Child and Family Services caseloads, and is a benefit to all.

So I call on all honourable members to support this resolution.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I treat this as a serious resolution, although I call into question why it was the Liberals and the NDP would not see fit to bring forward a resolution that certainly is as immediate and, I dare say, more immediate.

I feel I know the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), who wants to provide a forum to deal with some very important issues dealing with Air Command in our city, has been prevented from bringing forward the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I read the resolution in detail, and when one goes through all the WHEREASes, certainly the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) builds upon the points and lays out the facts and tries to portray through the WHEREASes that the government is to blame for the increase in crime in our province, for the fact that our youth seem to have, generally speaking, more time on their hands and therefore are more apt to find themselves into trouble. I would like to say that this resolution, as I see it come forward, and it has some redeeming qualities, still typifies typical Liberal social engineering to the nth degree.

As I listen to the solutions that the Liberal Party seems to have in the area of education, in the area of crime, not the least of which, of course, is the gun control legislation they so heartily support, it appears to me that the Liberals honestly believe you take these institutions of democracy, you bring forward a bill, you try and enshrine yourself, envelop yourself around them and believe that if you pass a law, that if you find a few more dollars, everything will be okay. Then you walk away and tell yourself what a good job you have done and try and leave society believe that you have done your part.

Mr. Speaker, here is another resolution that speaks toward doing exactly that.

An Honourable Member: It would not cost a cent.

Mr. Manness: The member says it would not cost a cent. Mr. Speaker, I can accept that. It does not necessarily cost a cent, and yet these are only going to be successful if indeed a number of circumstances come into play, none of which we can guarantee in this House, nor can we guarantee by way of this resolution. What the member is asking us to do is build four walls and a roof, or if

not to build them, to put into place, to rent them, to lease them and to put in equipment accordingly. The member believes that if we do that, all is well and good and we will solve the problem—nonsense, absolutely nonsense.

* (1720)

Mr. Speaker, this is what is needed if indeed his solution is about to work, and no resolution can guarantee that. He needs role models. He needs a role model, for example, someone by the name of Minish Norang [phonetic], a former street kid himself who now, I understand, takes the lead or maybe is the resident in the Teen Stop Jeunesse in St. Vital. Funds are, by the way, put there by, you know what, Manitoba lottery revenues coming through the special funded community agency side of the Lotteries organizers.

It is not money that is making that work. It is not building. It certainly is not this resolution. It is a role model, and somebody who has been there understands and knows, but it needs something more than that. Why is it today, when we look at where the state of society is compared to where it was decades ago, how come so much more idle time? Why is that?

The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) talks about The Maples, and I was in one of the northwest high schools, Sisler High, and I was speaking to a Grade 11 history class, and a student had to leave promptly at five to three. He had to leave the class, and this was a very good student, and I asked the teacher, I said, where is he going? To another class? She said, no, he has a full-time job. Our best student has a full-time job. Not that I am advocating that be the case, but the reality is, there is an awful lot of part-time work for individuals. That used to be the way it was in urban settings in our province. That is the way it used to be.

Mr. Speaker, you know what? We cannot pass a law here, we cannot bring in a resolution that is going to in any way entice our young people, who have idle time on their hands in many cases, to go and look for something that is going to consume

some of that time. A law will not do it, and the member taunts me by saying, ah, his solution is—meaning me—go look for jobs. All I am trying to point out—how is the old saying, the devil will find work for idle hands. That is the saying. So this institution in a free society cannot force our young people with idle time to go out and find work, but I will tell you, that will do more than this resolution.

So, Mr. Speaker, we need more than that. There was a time in the urban setting that the institutions of the community, the service clubs, the churches and the community clubs, all one has to do today is—if anybody thinks there is a shortage of places for people to come together and meet, the city is full of community clubs. It is absolutely full. But nothing upsets me more when I approach the community centres today and you look at the windows and they are covered with bars. They are covered with bars, but there is not a shortage of places to meet. There is not a shortage of places for youth to come together in our society today.

So, Mr. Speaker, the resolution then is not going to deal with that, is it? No, it does not. But the Liberals' simplistic way of thinking is that you bring a resolution forward, you find some more money for a facility, you put some more amenities into it—I think I heard the member talk about pool tables, card tables and whatever else—and it will all work. It will not. I wish it would, because that would be so easy to fix.

Well, the resolution covers the waterfront. It says, youth crime continues to rise. It talks about suicide rate, it talks about teenage pregnancies, it talks about unemployment. I thought that was what we were trying to fix, and the member says the solution to all of that is that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to be more creative in the use of public facilities, to provide spare-time activities for youth. Ergo, that is the solution to all of the former.

Mr. Speaker, our society realizes how important it is that we try to have facilities and that we try to have activities for our youth. Long before the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) was in

the House and long before I was here, our forebears understood how important it was. What they did, of course, through their various institutions over many, many years was, they provided, and the facilities are there today.

If one wants to go into basements and gyms associated with churches, they are begging for activity. If one wants to go today into the community centres in our cities, in our towns, they are begging for youth and activity. They are there. What is missing is not facilities, what is missing of course is leadership. What is missing is role models from the community, not community leaders such as ourselves who have accepted the call to be here and pass resolutions. That is easy. What is difficult is to find those people who are going to give their time and indeed who are going to show by example that their way of contributing to society is worth following.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot pass that in this House, and once the member, and the Liberals particularly, learn that, these resolutions I think will begin to diminish somewhat, because this is, in my view, doing nothing but trying to create false hope. It is trying to say to those—and I take very seriously the commitment made by the youth who were in attendance at that forum, because I think many of them probably are the ones who are sincerely trying to strive to find solutions. They are searching and they know something is wrong. In their minds, this might be the solution, but those of us who are older should know better. We should know what the solution is. It is more time by those of us who want to give that time to the community, and indeed, it is not as simple as following the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it was pretty important that we put forward, certainly, our party's comments to the extent that individuals come forward. Individuals from the community who either have been there or, secondly, are the role models or, thirdly, have programs, their time to offer, this government will stand in support of it. We have done so through Lotteries revenue, the same Lotteries revenue the members of the Liberal

Party particularly criticize. They say, where is it going? To what use is it going?

* (1730)

Well, Mr. Speaker, a small portion of it is going to the very youths that the resolution speaks to, yet more important than the money is the individual to whom you direct the very scarce resources so that they then can lead the community.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, I want to give just some background as to how I have come to conclude that the objectives set out in the resolution are certainly supportable, although I think there has to be some changes to it, but it is easier for one to talk to care providers and read books and think up all kinds of solutions to rising violence among our youth and rising crime.

Shortly after I was appointed Justice critic, I began consultations and going across the province, up and down, all sides of the province, meeting with youth to determine what they thought the solutions to rising violence in their generation were. There was a consistent theme that was not evident in the literature and not as evident from the service providers. They kept saying over and over again, we need a place to go and something to do. Over and over again, I heard that. I heard that from church groups. I heard that from individuals who were at risk. I might say, Mr. Speaker, that I probably met with over a thousand youth now. Our caucus decided that it was important that we reach out to youth organizations and reach out to individuals and go out and meet with the youth of the province and involve them in a real way in finding solutions.

Whether it would be youth from the Youth Centre or from Marymount or whether it be from high schools or church groups, we were there and we listened. So the objective of the resolution is, I know, based on a need identified by youth themselves. That is, there has to be a place to go and something to do more than there is.

We think about what has happened in Manitoba over the last several years alone. The government has, as a priority, created these huge gambling casinos in working class neighbourhoods of Winnipeg and, by doing so, has created what now is in the evidence an increased risk to youth in Manitoba. Indeed, it just makes sense that if the parents are at the casino, the parents are not providing a nurturing relationship with the youth in their families.

I believe that it is the loss of nurturing relationships in our families which is a key factor leading to what is now evident in the crime statistics and in the antisocial behaviour reported by caregivers and educators and parents and other people in the community and indeed by other youth.

The government has created these great structures for gambling, enhancing the risk to youth, and then it says to youth: How come you are in trouble? How come you are being more violent than your generation has been before?

Well, there are linkages, and when the government goes as a priority and it creates these great gambling halls, it should at the same time, if it does see that as an objective in pursuing its gambling initiatives, have an obligation to provide services for youth. It has an obligation to use its fundraising ability and its ability to make change in the community in a positive way to allow such funding and to spur youth programs and not, as the Minister of Justice has said, leave the youth programming, such as SKY, to be funded by garage sales.

We cannot have garage sale justice in Manitoba.

Now, when we are talking about the places to go and the things to do for youth, the immediate response by adults, I suggest, has been, let us open up a gym somewhere. I say, well, that is a good first start, but we have to get way beyond that—way beyond that. Every time there is a facility that is simply a gym, there should also be the chem lab, there should also be the art room, there should also be the music room, there should

also be the computer lab, because not every kid out there is inclined or wanting to get involved in organized sports, for example, so we have to expand our thinking about what kinds of facilities we have to encourage.

In speaking with the youth in my community—and I am working with youth at St. John's High School to establish a drop-in centre in that community—they are saying, we also want things like employment counselling, we want other kinds of support services, we want help to understand other challenges that we face in the community and in our families, so we have to have multi-dimensional, multi-service facilities.

It was interesting in visiting Inkster School in my constituency not long ago, the principal said, you know things are not the way they have ever been in this community, things have changed even in the last couple of years, the challenges that are coming in the doors of that school are like never before. There are children in need. There are children at risk as never before. Things have changed in this province, and as I have said on many occasions, in no small way due to this government's policies on creating the conditions that breed crime.

It is the policies of this government which result in statistics like: among the highest poverty rates in Canada, the highest drop-out rates in Canada, the highest number of children in care in Canada, among the lowest minimum wages in Canada, that breed antisocial behaviour, that breed family breakdown. It is all related. There is a cause and effect, and the government has to understand that.

It was interesting that a youth service provider said to me not long ago, I wonder how many of the problems that we are facing in Manitoba with youth right now are due to service cutbacks to youth only a few years ago. So it is one thing to deal with the symptoms, but the focus has to be on addressing the causes.

When we look at opportunities for youth and places to go with something to do, I think we are dealing with a little bit of both. We can perhaps

help those youth at risk. We can prevent the youth from falling into the at-risk category, and, at the same time, I think we can prevent the development of idle time; we can develop peer groups that are positive.

Now, the problem with the resolution is that it is so fuzzy. It says that the Legislature "urge the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) and the Minister of Education (Mr. Manness)," I want to first of all deal with that. I do not know why Justice and Education are singled out.

It is the responsibility of many other ministers of this government to deal with the challenge of rising youth crime and violence. For example, I do not understand why the Minister of Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik) is not listed there. I think that does not speak highly of the insights of the Liberal caucus into the needs in aboriginal communities, because aboriginal communities are coming down here. Unfortunately, that is what has to happen; they have to come down here. They went to the SAG Conference, and they said, look what we are doing. We need help. Our communities are at risk.

* (1740)

Mr. Speaker, the resolution also neglects to put in there the Minister responsible for Recreation. But the northern, the forest camps, the Recreation forest camps proposal, it is critical that that be expanded. I think that another problem with this resolution is that it asks the government to work co-operatively to increase the number of youth drop-in centres in Manitoba. It provides no mechanism by which that is to be done. If you are going to do that, let us at least suggest how you do it.

Now the NDP, in its alternative throne speech, has proposed such a mechanism, Mr. Speaker, and that mechanism was to establish a youth places grant program to enable communities to establish drop-in centres and co-ordinated activities for youth. It is important that there be a grant program, No. 1, that there be monies available.

I know, and I know the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) knows, of the difficulty in securing

funding, and it often does not take much funding because you can often have a co-ordinator, sometimes even part time, but that can spur so much volunteer work. It just needs the spark to light the fire, and other than a grant system, you have to enable youth participation, because the resolution does not rule out some adult-imposed programming on Manitoba's youth.

I was at a conference on the 1st and 2nd of December, Mr. Speaker. It was under the youth strategy project sponsored by, I believe it was, federal monies. It was called Bridging the Gap, and it was attended by youth, many of them, most of them perhaps, youth at risk and service providers for youth. I took great advice from that conference, where they said time and time again: Empower us; let us work with you; give us decision making; do not put us aside and say that we know better; we are the ones on the front line. Indeed one of the greatest honours I have had since being elected was to be the subject of a video presentation at that conference, where I said, as I said to the students at St. John's High School, I will not get a youth drop-in centre for you, but I will work with you. So the message is from youth to adults, do not do it for us, do it with us. So that has to be a part of this resolution.

I also want to comment that, of course, the objectives of this resolution are a very small part of the solution, and I have talked about how the government has in no small way created the conditions which are breeding crime in this province. This is a very, very small part of the solution.

We also, Mr. Speaker, have to look at the violent culture that we have created, and we as legislators have to be always mindful of what can be done to reduce the notion now apparently ingrained in Canadians that violence is the way to deal with conflict.

So, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), that the first RESOLVED clause be amended by deleting the words after "urge" and substituting "the government to consider implementing the youth

places grant program as proposed by the NDP to ensure adequate funding to spur locally controlled programs and places for youth throughout Manitoba and to ensure youth involvement in designing and managing the programs and places."

Mr. Speaker: On the resolution moved by the honourable member for St. Johns, I am going to take this matter under advisement, and I will come back to the House with a ruling on that one.

The honourable member for Sturgeon Creek, to continue debate on the resolution.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and to speak on this resolution with some reservations, of course. It is obvious to see what the Liberal agenda is in terms of looking at the bigger picture as far as Manitoba is concerned when they insist on bringing in a resolution that is a Band-Aid issue rather than debate the real issues of the economy in this province and to allow my resolution to come forward.

I have some real concerns about this resolution that the honourable member for The Maples brings forward. The real issues in this resolution we should be talking about are jobs. I think that jobs are first and foremost in this economy. I would ask the member for The Maples, in his resolution, what the 4,000 families in Sturgeon Creek, working at the air force base are going to do with their children when they have to move to Ottawa, if that is not an important issue. He would sooner set up a youth centre. I think he is missing sight of the real fact here. I think that although I have had some experience with youth drop-in centres, he goes on to give the impression that the Liberals are the pioneers of youth drop-in centres.

This is something that my wife Jeanie and I have been involved in for seven and a half years. I think that we have had a little more experience than the member for The Maples or the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), as they are referred to in this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) also references a very interesting aspect in terms of the benefits of youth drop-in centres when he references crimes of youth and makes reference to the fact the impact that lotteries have on the youth crime and what the youth centres are going to provide. I would remind the member for St. Johns that it was his government, his NDP government, under the leadership of Premier Ed Schreyer, that brought in the lotteries in 1973. They even went as far with their movement on lotteries to buy the sites, where the Club Regent and McPhillips Station are now located. I do not know what you would call that.

I realize that hypocrisy is maybe not a word in this House that is enjoyed by this House, but I cannot think of any other word that we could look at. I think these are things that we have to really look at when we are talking about the real issues and what the impacts are going to be because nobody is more concerned with the youth in the community than I am, and my involvement in my constituency with the youth element in terms of what they are doing. To say that the resolution is going to provide the leadership—I do not know what they are suggesting, if you build it, they will come.

* (1750)

I think the honourable Minister of Education (Mr. Manness), probably in his reference to the fact that the facilities that are out there today are not lacking in any way. Community clubs have facilities second to none in this city, and in many cases they are laying dormant and being used for bingos rather than youth centres. Community clubs were designed to fulfill the means of providing activities for youth, and to say that this resolution is going to offer something for the youth in the community, I think that the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) is sadly mistaken when he is suggesting through this resolution that if government takes the lead that the youth are all of a sudden going to rally around and come to these youth centres, well, I can tell you that will not happen.

My experience with the youth and the community—involvement that I have had over the past seven and a half years with my wife and other people in the community—has been one where the community takes the responsibility rather than government. I think that is first and foremost in all aspects of dealing with the real issues, because the community knows what the real issues are in their community, and they vary from one community to the other.

It is interesting too, Mr. Speaker, that through our involvement with the young people—and they talk about organization and providing the leadership—one of the things that we do in terms of letting the community know or the young people know is about the drop-in centre or the youth centre that we have at 1970 Ness Avenue and has been there for a number of years and has been moved from other locations. This is I think about the fourth location that this youth centre has been, and it is sponsored by the Focus on Youth Incorporated, which my wife and other community-minded people have been involved in over the past seven years.

We have been involved not only with the aspect of volunteering, my wife and I spend probably Friday and Saturday nights more often throughout the winter months at this youth centre than we do anywhere else. But I think as far as the youth are concerned, they tell us that if they want the organization to succeed, the youth are the ones that have to take the lead on this—not politicians, not teachers, not police officers, but the youth themselves.

We have found that when we go to the schools to let the young people know that we exist—and we are open from 7 p.m. till 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights during the winter months—we go to the schools and we go through the administration at these schools to let the message out through the administration to the students that this is open, the students tell us that if you want anything to get through to the students, you do not go through the administration, you go through the student council, because if you go through the administration the students will not even hear it.

They are not interested. They are interested in what the youth can do for themselves, and if it is endorsed by the youth, then they will participate, but they will not participate if the administration and governments and police officers are going to be overseeing this and controlling this. Youth have to take the responsibility themselves, Mr. Speaker.

So when the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) and the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) suggest that by government taking the lead in providing this facility, putting more government money, and they are not talking only small amounts of money here, Mr. Speaker, we are talking significant amounts of money, I think we have to address other issues before we address the real problem.

Certainly the youth in the community are well served through the activities that are in the schools today. We have a large number of caring teachers that give of their extra time, and we have community-minded people who give of their time through coaching hockey and all athletic sports, bingos and just places to hang out at community centres.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that those are the real things that we have to look at, but I think it is not for people like the member for The Maples or the member for Inkster to say that this is a resolution that should be adopted and should provide the lead as far as government is concerned to provide the drop-in centres to give the kids a safe place to spend their spare time.

There are lots of safe places for these people to spend their time. It is a matter of looking for it. It is a matter of trying to find because they do not have to look very far. Community clubs, community centres, schools in most areas, in any community that you want to go to would be open to these young people if there was an organization and there was a volunteer from the community that would go to the schools and allow them to do things in the vacant gyms that are not being used. To provide a facility, I mean, it is there for the taking and there for the asking. It is a matter of

people taking their community responsibility and dealing with it in a community-minded way.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned when the member for The Maples will address a resolution, to think that this is going to be able to be accomplished through a resolution rather than dealing with real people and getting people involved, because that is really what we want to do, to motivate the community, to motivate the people to take the responsibility.

As far as the member for The Maples, I commend him for what he has done in terms of setting up a drop-in centre or a community centre for the young people, but I hope that he will continue to work with the community to ensure that they are going to be able to take responsibility for that themselves rather than looking to government to do those things, because that is not what we are looking for. That is not the place for government.

If he thinks that he comes into this Legislature to provide this kind of legislation and not allow the important aspects—I spent seven and a half years in youth drop-in centres, and I have probably made a greater commitment than he has ever made

as far as the youth in the community are concerned than he will ever make.

Maybe the member for Inkster might have some questions of that, but that is okay, because I hope that the member for Inkster will continue to question that, because we will never see eye to eye, because he does not understand where he is going. One day he is this way and another day he is that way. I hope that he will have some difficulty understanding what I am saying, because if he does, then I know that I am on the right track.

That is I think what we have to do. If the member for Inkster and the member for The Maples suggest that this is going to be able to be achieved through a resolution, then I think we are on the wrong track.

Unfortunately, it is unfair that the member—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek will have two minutes remaining.

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, December 10, 1994

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