



First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u>
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
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DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
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ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
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GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
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McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
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PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, September 18, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS****Canada Post - Unsolicited Mail**

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Ms. Friesen) and it complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

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

WHEREAS each year over four billion advertisements and flyers are mailed to Canadian households by Canada Post alone; and

WHEREAS each Canadian household receives an average of 1,300 pieces of unsolicited mail each year; and

WHEREAS the number of trees used to produce this vast quantity of unwanted advertising is substantial; and

WHEREAS the amount of junk mail has doubled in the past five years; and

WHEREAS much of this advertising material is non-recyclable and ends up in landfills costing municipalities millions of dollars each year; and

WHEREAS repeated requests from consumers to have Canada Post not deliver junk mail at their homes have been denied; and

WHEREAS if it was mandatory that advertisers and distributors of unsolicited mail and flyers use only recycled material in all unsolicited mail and flyers delivered by Canada Post, this material could be recycled.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly request the federal minister responsible for Canada Post to consider bringing in legislation requiring all unsolicited mail and flyers to use recycled materials.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for 1993-94 and also the 1994-95 Annual Report, as well as the First Quarter Report for the period April to June 1995, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw all honourable members' attention to the loge to the left, where we have with us this afternoon Mr. Paul Edwards, the former member for St. James.

Also this afternoon, I am pleased to introduce to the House the six young people who have been selected to serve as Pages at this session. They are, beginning at my right, Jennifer Adolphe, Fort Garry School Division No. 5; Mirko Dajic, Winnipeg School Division No. 1; Anna Tennenhouse, independent schools; Colleen Simonson, Midland School Division No. 25; Kyle Jaroweck, St. Vital School Division No. 6; Chantal Deslauriers, St. Vital School Division No. 6.

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**Emergency Physicians' Strike
Government Action**

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

Madam Speaker, we asked questions last spring dealing with the whole issue of doctor shortages in rural Manitoba and the problems with specialists here in the province of Manitoba. Many of us are now hearing about the great concern the public has about the situation at our

the great concern the public has about the situation at our emergency wards in our community hospitals.

I would like to ask the Premier, in light of the fact our Health critic wrote on September 1 and called on the government to take action to prevent this withdrawal of services--it suggested ideas such as appointing a mediator--I would like to ask the government what action it has taken and why did it not take this action before the withdrawal took place.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I have not seen the letter that the Health critic wrote, but I can say that the matter, of course, has been in the hands of a conciliator since some time in August and that this morning a letter was sent by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), who is out of the province at a Health ministers' meeting, I believe, in British Columbia. A letter was sent to both parties urging them to go back to the table to ensure that they do everything possible to achieve a resolution to the strike.

Mr. Doer: In the last withdrawal of services, there was a mediator appointed by the government, who, of course, is different than a conciliator.

Madam Speaker, when the government was faced with the withdrawal of services and a strike at the sugar beet plant, the Minister of Labour was involved. Various ministers of the government were involved, trying to bring the parties together to show some leadership on behalf of the people who were directly affected by this strike.

I would like to ask the Premier, why has this government not shown the same kind of leadership and resolve at the ministerial level to get this dispute settled and get this withdrawal of services over, so that patients in Manitoba and in Winnipeg who are affected can have the confidence in their emergency services in their community hospitals, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, of course, in any work stoppage, there is an onus on the part of both parties to work and to address the issue. The preferred position of the government is that the parties of the dispute resolve the dispute, and we are anxious to see them go back to the table. I believe that the letter does indicate that the conciliator, Mr. Chapman, can act as a mediator, that the

government, I believe, is prepared to see him be the mediator, if that is acceptable to both sides, and that the mediation process begin as quickly as possible.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I recall the former Minister of Labour bringing both parties in the dispute on sugar beets into his office, taking a high-profile leadership approach to try to get that dispute resolved.

I would like to ask the Premier whether he has met with the two sides, whether his Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has met with the two sides, whether his Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) has taken any action at all. Has there been any leadership on behalf of this government? Because many people are quite worried that this may be a, quote, experiment to see how we can deal with the reduction in emergency services, rather than the government taking a leadership role to get this issue resolved on behalf of the people who are directly affected, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, there is no experiment. The decision to withdraw services was that of the doctors involved. I will indicate that these are the same doctors who, just a matter of a couple of years ago, were given a 26 percent increase in their salaries, in their compensation, and are now asking for a 15 percent additional increase. Clearly, it is they who have triggered the work stoppage and they who are the aggressors in this situation in withdrawing their services and denying the people of Winnipeg and Manitoba their services.

We are not embarked on any experiment whatsoever. Whether or not we learn anything from this work stoppage, obviously we will by virtue of the manner in which we have had to cover for the services, but that is a matter for another time.

* (1340)

Winnipeg Jets Operating Losses

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, with a new question to the Premier, the Premier will recall that he signed an operating-loss agreement with the Winnipeg Jets in 1991. The Premier will also recall that over a period of time we were able to determine that the potential losses in that agreement that he had signed was later revealed by the Provincial

Auditor to be potentially \$43.5 million.

During the election campaign, both he and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) promised to cancel that agreement by May 1, 1995. Unfortunately, after the election campaign, another story is unfolding in our community.

I would like to ask the Premier, Madam Speaker, how much money is the provincial government responsible for in the operating-loss agreement for this season, and how much is he accountable for in terms of the agreement that he signed in 1991?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as has been indicated many times to the Leader of the Opposition--this obviously is not a new issue; it is not even a new question. It is an issue that the Leader of the Opposition continues to regurgitate. The matter has been well documented. It has been well discussed, has been reviewed by the Provincial Auditor.

The fact of the matter is during the period of time that we have been in the midst of the loss agreement, the province's share of losses has been something in the range of about \$10 million to date. It is anticipated that the province's share of the losses for the forthcoming year will be somewhere in the range of about \$8.5 million, which would bring us to a total, I believe, of \$18.8 million, and during that period of time the province's direct income--direct income from the operation of the Winnipeg Jets in Winnipeg is expected to be \$27 million, a net benefit of some almost \$9 million to the taxpayers of Manitoba.

That is the circumstance. It has been well documented and it has been reviewed by many authorities, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doer: I guess if you can have a decrease in crime with an increase in lotteries, you can make money out of losing a hockey team in terms of its profit and loss figures.

Madam Speaker, during the election and specifically during the CBC debate, the Premier (Mr. Filmon), along with the Minister of Finance, had continually said, this agreement expires May 1, 1995; we will not be putting more than \$10 million into a new arena and this agreement is cancelled.

The Premier went on further to say that the NDP was wrong to save money by cancelling the operating-loss agreement because only \$1.8 million has been put into the budget for the '95-96 fiscal year to cover the operating losses of the team because the agreement is going to expire.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier, where is the government going to get the money that the Premier indicated would be necessary? Where is it coming from? Is it coming from health care? Is it coming from education? What public services will be affected by the Premier not keeping his word in terms of cancelling the operating-loss agreement with the Winnipeg Jets?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, as the Premier outlined, our requirement estimate for the period June 1995 to June 1996 is just over \$8 million. That has an impact of approximately \$6 million on our fiscal budget for 1995-96. We do have some capacity to handle a good portion of that, about half of that, within our Urban Economic Development Initiative line. That has not been allocated, the same line that we utilized last year to support the economic side of having the Winnipeg Jets here in Manitoba.

I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that besides the direct tax revenue that flows to our government as outlined by the Premier, because of the inability to find a long-term solution to keep the Jets in Manitoba, they will be sold as quickly as possible. The two levels of government, the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba, will receive 36 percent of those proceeds, some \$30 million, so I would anticipate that before our fiscal year is over, our share of those proceeds will be allocated to our government, and those will be in the vicinity on a net basis of at least \$10 million.

* (1345)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the provincial government had told us two years ago that the losses would be cancelled on June 30, 1994. Then they told us again in the election campaign--in fact, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) himself told the public of Manitoba, I believe in the first week of March, that the agreement is dead. The agreement with the Jets expires. They no longer will be on the life-support system from the provincial government. Of course, that was a pre-election

promise from the Minister of Finance and from the Premier, and, unfortunately, after the election we saw all those promises go out the window in terms of what action they would take.

I would like to ask the First Minister, with all the crisis we see in health care, with all the pressure that is being placed on all our resources in health care, can the Premier assure us that we are not going to have underspending in health care and underspending in education as we saw last year of some \$23 million and \$10 million respectfully? Will we get our guarantee that we are not going to see an underspending in those vital human resources, so the Premier can break his word on the loss agreement from the Winnipeg Jets?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the member should know, as a former member of cabinet in a government of Manitoba, that there is always a provision in place for spending lapses in departments throughout government, and, in fact, spending lapses occur as part of the operations of government consistently and have for decades.

In fact, I know that during the time of the Pawley administration, of which he was a member, there were lapses in spending in health care that I believe were as much as \$90 million in a year. In fact, they instituted the policy of putting lapses in as part of the budget process.

That is because the spending in areas like health and education are not under the direct control of the bureaucracy or the ministers of government. They are, in fact, allocated to third parties such as hospital boards and hospital administrations and, therefore, there is not an ability to exactly keep everything to the nickel. In fact, in many cases, there are millions of dollars that do not get taken up based on the way in which hospitals are administered. So, as a consequence, I would say to him that that is something that has happened for decades and will continue to happen year after year because of the way in which the budget process works. He knows that as well as I do.

What I can tell him is that the money that has been allocated for expenditure in health care is there for that purpose, and the care of the patient is first and foremost in the minds of government when it makes its decisions and its allocations.

Emergency Physicians' Strike Government Action

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, on June 20 of this year, the head of the emergency department at the Health Sciences Centre wrote the Deputy Minister of Health indicating that emergency services were in crisis at the Health Sciences Centre and at St. Boniface Hospital, and the government chose to do nothing. On September 1 we wrote asking the government to do something about emergency services and the government did nothing. We are now two weeks into a strike, and the government this morning has indicated that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has written a letter asking the sides to get together.

Madam Speaker, will the minister and will the First Minister today live up to his promise during the election campaign to protect health care and indicate to Manitobans specifically what advice they are giving to the conciliator and/or mediator, what the position is and whether or not mediation will be undertaken to try to resolve this strike before the situation gets worse?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I will take that question as notice on behalf of the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae).

* (1350)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I will table the letter that I referred to from the head of health at the Health Sciences Centre to the Deputy Minister of Health four months ago, and no action was taken.

My question for the Premier, Madam Speaker, who was available to deal with the Jets, who had a Finance minister available to deal with the Jets situation but apparently will not deal with the strike situation--

Madam Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Chomiak: What will this government do to try to resolve the strike which is now deteriorating according to a doctor at the St. Boniface Hospital and by all indications is getting worse? What action will this government take?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, as I have already said in response to exactly the same question by the Leader of

the Opposition (Mr. Doer), a letter has gone out to the parties involved in the dispute by the Minister of Health this morning urging them back to the table and offering the appointment of a mediator with certain conditions and terms that are designed to try and get an early solution to the problem.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, my final supplementary to the Premier: Will the Premier indicate what the government strategy is to deal with emergency doctors in light of the fact that this letter from the head of emergency services at Health Sciences Centre indicates the problem is the government's \$19-million cutback at Health Sciences Centre and the \$10-million cutback at St. Boniface that is resulting in the difficulties? What will this government do to resolve the crisis which is going to also result in the loss of up to a quarter of the emergency doctors from Health Sciences Centre?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, as I indicated, this government has been receptive to and I think concerned about the circumstances of the emergency doctors and went so far as a couple of years ago to give these very same doctors who are now out on strike a 26 percent increase in their salaries to bring them into a position in which they are competitive with emergency physicians in other provinces. The government has indicated not only its willingness but its desire to ensure that we do everything possible, everything reasonable to try and bring an end to this dispute.

I do not believe that a 15 percent demand coupled on top of a 26 percent increase two years ago is reasonable. If the opposition critic believes that, then he will have to justify that to the public.

Immigration Agreement Meeting Schedule

Mr. George Hickey (Point Douglas): My questions are for the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Given that the total number of immigrants and refugees arriving in Manitoba has declined by nearly 50 percent since 1990 and the number of immigrants coming to this province is down 16.5 percent for the first five months of 1995, and given that the English-second-language cuts will further this decline, why has this minister and this minister's government not met with the federal

government since May to finalize an immigration agreement?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Officials from my department met last week with officials from the federal government to deal with the question of immigration and an immigration agreement for Manitoba. Also, I will be meeting with the federal minister in the near future. In the meantime, we have put a number of proposals forward for the federal government, all of which they have rejected at this time, to bring more immigrants to Manitoba. As a government, we will continue to pursue the federal government for an immigration agreement and to see that some of these projects will be accepted in the near future.

ESL Programs Government Commitment

Mr. George Hickey (Point Douglas): What action has this government taken to keep the same level of English-second-language programs in Manitoba, given your election promises on this issue?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): I can indicate to my honourable friend that the provincial contribution for language training has remained constant within the province of Manitoba, and the federal government has consistently been downsizing the amount of their budget contribution both from the program for language instruction for newcomers and also from the labour market language training fund. We have registered our concerns with the federal government, both the Department of Immigration and the Department of Human Resources. There is a need out there for language training. We will continue to meet our commitment, and we will continue to urge the federal government to put more resources into that area.

Mr. Hickey: How does this government plan to attract immigrants when it allows head taxes to be implemented and cuts in the English-second-language programs to be made, such as cuts to school divisions for ESL?

* (1355)

Mr. Gilleshammer: We covered this in considerable detail in Estimates, and I would have thought by now that

my honourable friend would have a better understanding of it. The changes that he references are changes made by the federal government. The imposition of the head tax is by the federal government, and I would ask him to maybe urge his friends in the Liberal caucus as well as the members of Parliament here from the city of Winnipeg to rethink some of their decisions as far as immigration is concerned.

Emergency Physicians' Strike Government Action

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Emergency services that are offered through our hospitals, Manitobans believe, are absolutely essential services. If you have a cardiac arrest or any emergency requirement, you like to believe that you can go into a hospital and be serviced and be given that attention that is necessary.

My question to the Premier is very concise and to the point. Has the government considered forcing emergency room doctors back to work?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Acting Minister of Health): On behalf of the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), I will take that question as notice.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), at what point in time will the Premier of this province deal with the issue of emergency services to all Manitobans and consider back-to-work legislation?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Speaker, I will take that question, as well, as notice for the Minister of Health.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, also, can the Premier indicate whether or not he has even offered or the Minister of Health has even offered the concept of binding arbitration in order to try to put this emergency strike to rest?

Mr. Derkach: I will take that question, as well, as notice for the Minister of Health.

Domestic Violence Review Committee Meeting Request

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, my

questions are for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

I understand that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, also the Minister of Justice, has just returned from Beijing where the main focuses of discussion were violence against women and women's economic development.

I applaud the minister's global initiative but ask if she will now act locally by convening the Domestic Violence Review committee, which I understand has not met for two years, and ask this group to discuss the Manitoba situation with regard to violence against women.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, I was very pleased on behalf of our province to attend the conference in Beijing. The federal government extended the invitation, and I am very pleased to tell the people of the province of Manitoba how I was able to participate fully, particularly in areas which fall to provincial jurisdiction, such as areas of education and literacy and the administration of justice.

Madam Speaker, the committee to which the member has referred has given a great deal of advice over time, particularly when this government took the initiative to set up the Domestic Violence Court. I will be meeting with that group, certainly, as an agenda is developed for that.

Flin Flon/Creighton Crisis Centre

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, has the minister discussed the Flin Flon Crisis Centre and the impact of its closing on the Flin Flon community with the Violence Review committee?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, our commitment to violence against women is second to none across the country. We have worked very diligently to ensure that all women in the province of Manitoba have the ability for safe, secure protection in times of need.

We are continually working and discussing and dialoguing with the northern part of our province including Flin Flon and the crisis centre in Flin Flon to see how we can come around the issues of ensuring that there are shared and co-ordinated services between The

Pas and Flin Flon and some of our remote areas so that women indeed can be protected and served right throughout our province.

Ms. McGifford: If the mission of the Domestic Violence Review advisory committee is to give service providers the opportunity to give advice, I ask the Minister responsible for the Status of Women if she would please meet with this committee and discuss the Flin Flon Crisis Centre and its closing with them as soon as possible.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, as my colleague the Minister of Family Services has just answered, our support to crisis shelters across this province is a very good record. I know that the Minister of Family Services has regular contact with that particular area and certainly where there are issues to be dealt with, I believe that they will be.

* (1400)

Gambling Information Release

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, the issue of gambling has been one that has been discussed by many Manitobans, and the continuing difficulties Manitobans are having in obtaining information is no clearer than the report that was released by the minister tabled in the House today along with the annual report from 1993-94.

Since we are soon going to be into a committee hearing on lotteries for the first time in two years, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Lotteries (Mr. Stefanson) if he could provide background information to the 38 pages out of the 70 pages of this report that attempts to defend a drastic increase in gambling that has taken place. In particular, since the report cites studies from Pittsburgh, Texas, South Dakota and the U.S. Senate, will he release the report of the KPMG and Ernst & Young report which was done by the Lotteries commission here in Manitoba and was used as justification by this report?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, I am not entirely clear where the member for Thompson is coming from. They ask for more information, they get provided with

more information, significantly more information in the annual report of Lotteries, information released in terms of the first follow-up study on problem gambling in all of Canada by Dr. Volberg, the next quarterly report, information on the community-by-community breakdown. We provided significant information in the course of the last several days. As he himself suggested, we are going to committee, I believe on September 28, it has been agreed to. I look forward to providing him with significantly more information at that committee.

Social Costs

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I am coming from Thompson, which is losing \$2.4 million from the community from lotteries revenue, but--

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson, with his supplementary question.

Mr. Ashton: I would like to ask as a supplementary whether it is government policy as is stated in this report that an increase in gambling can lead to a reduction in crime, one of the many studies from the United States cited by the Lotteries commission and this minister of the benefits from lotteries.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, the member suggests he is coming from Thompson and he is concerned about the allocation. I would like to think that the people of Thompson recognize this money is going to all of the priority needs of government from health care and education to economic development and to eliminating the deficit, something that that party has difficulty identifying with, but I believe the people of Thompson support those kinds of directions.

Again, in terms of the information in this annual report, significant information in terms of studies done all across North America, studies done here in Manitoba, I look forward to sharing information and discussing them when we are at committee.

Information Release

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): As a final supplementary, if the minister cannot justify the statements in terms of crime, will the minister at least

release the report by KPMG and Ernst & Young which was conducted by the Lotteries commission, and release any information that contradicts the only independent study that was done by University of Winnipeg economists that points very clearly to problems in Manitoba because of the dramatic increase in gambling that has taken place under this government's tenure?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): I think many would question the member's reference to an independent study, but in terms of the specifics about the KPMG study, I am looking at the opportunity to release that. I expect that we will be able to release that as well, along with all of the information we have provided in the last weeks and the continued effort to provide as much information, not so much for members opposite but for all Manitobans to clearly understand all of the issues, all of the ramifications.

We do currently have the Desjardins committee doing a review of gaming in Manitoba, and we expect that report within the next few months.

Winnipeg Jets Funding

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, all through the spring and summer this government said that its only role in the Jets fiasco was to build an arena. Yet in June this Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) advanced a \$5 million secret payment to Thompson Dorfman Sweatman, not revealed at the time, as the down payment on the hockey team. Surely the need to pay the \$5 million was an indication that while the flesh might have been willing, the spirit was pretty weak.

My question to the Finance minister is why did the Minister of Finance break the word of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in terms of an involvement in buying a hockey team? Why did you break your word?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, there was no breaking of any word and there were no secret agreements or individuals who knew that the first time--individuals know that the first time that a deposit was made that the government provided some of that on the basis that that deposit is fully refundable and we expect it to be fully refundable with interest. So there

was no risk to the Province of Manitoba. It was a means of assisting with the cash flow to meet the deposit requirement. That and only that money is fully refundable, will be coming back to the Province of Manitoba, and I expect it to come back with interest and I expect that to happen very shortly.

Interim Operating Agreement

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): My supplementary, Madam Speaker, is to ask the minister to cite the clauses in the agreement which might give substance to his, I think, forlorn hope that there will be any interest returned on that payment. It is very clear from the interim operating agreement that the interest is not returnable in the case of default by the proposed purchasers.

What is the clause that gives you hope, Mr. Minister, that this interest will come back?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Well, the member for Crescentwood refers to forlorn hope, Madam Speaker. We will see what the final outcome is on this.

We have had discussions and negotiations with the current majority owners of the Winnipeg Jets Hockey team, and we do expect not only that that money will be refunded as is supposed to happen but that it will in fact be refunded with interest. I expect that to happen, as I have already indicated to this House, very shortly.

Information Release

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, will the minister advise the House how much money has been paid to the various private sector volunteers such as Mr. Sweatman, Mr. Osler and the company of five people who helped to put this fiasco together? Will the minister release in chapter and verse the specifics of the payments to those individuals?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Again, if the member for Crescentwood has paid any attention to my comments or the comments of our government on that whole issue, Madam Speaker--and it appears he has not--we have indicated that there will be a full accounting and disclosure of all of the money, not only the money provided by the Province of Manitoba, the money provided by the City of Winnipeg, the money provided by the federal government, the money provided by the

private investors. Again, that is being worked on right now by the Spirit of Manitoba. We expect that to be released very shortly along with ultimately an audit by independent auditors.

Again, as I have indicated, and I hope he noticed, Madam Speaker, we do expect our own Provincial Auditor to play a role in terms of co-operating with the City of Winnipeg auditor and doing an audit of various expenditures that were incurred by the Spirit of Manitoba and MEC.

Public Beaches Safety Standards

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

During the summer of 1995, the lives of many Manitoban families were shattered. Simultaneously, our province's reputation for beach safety was tarnished as Manitoba experienced a dramatic increase in the number of drownings at our provincial parks. Despite a myriad of calls for action from a wide range of concerned citizens, this government continues to ignore the life-threatening situations at our public beaches.

In the light of the public concern for improved beach safety, has this minister launched a review of the safety standards and procedures currently in place at our provincial beaches with the goal of making our province's beaches safe again and saving the lives of citizens in the future?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, will the minister then pledge to reinstate the Manitoba beach patrol program in order to demonstrate this government's concern for human loss as opposed to its overriding fixation on budgetary considerations?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Speaker, let me first of all express, I think everybody has regretted the unfortunate and tragic deaths that have taken place, some of them I think needlessly, and I think we all feel bad about that.

Subsequent to that, I have met with various councils and groups and got petitions presented to me. I have also

had a discussion with the Chief Medical Examiner of the province who will be arranging meetings between the RCMP, various community organizations, councils, my department. These meetings will be taking place very shortly. We will discuss and look at options by which we can improve the safety of Manitobans at the beaches.

Mr. Struthers: Will the minister then bring forth legislation providing protection from liability concerns regarding the beach patrol program?

Mr. Driedger: Madam Speaker, once these meetings have concluded, we will be looking at a variety of recommendations that I hope will come out of that, and at that time the government will decide what course of action will have to be taken.

* (1410)

Crow Benefit Elimination Adjustment Fund

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, since we first heard the announcement of the disbandment of the Crow benefit, we asked many times that this government take a strong stand to ensure that Manitoba farmers were not shortchanged. Unfortunately, this has not happened, and we see that the program is in disarray. Deadlines are being extended and farmers are now picking up the costs.

Can the Minister of Agriculture tell us what steps he has been taking to ensure that there are not further delays and Manitoba farmers will get their fair share of the money, since they are now paying the higher freight bills but not having any of the assistance promised by the federal government?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the honourable member will recall that last April we convened a lengthy meeting here in the Legislative Building. This session was still in session, and we put forward, together with the main organizations involved in agriculture, in fact all of the agriculture organizations, Manitoba Pool and some 16 commodity groups, we put forward a Manitoba position, a Manitoba position that regrettably the federal government did not follow that would have resolved many of these issues.

I really take no great pleasure in reminding her that she

failed to affix her signature in support for that Manitoba position at that time, which would have circumvented many of the difficulties that the federal government now has.

But it is a federal government program. It is a federal government responsibility for its delivery. I have added my voice to the support for extension of deadlines. I certainly add my voice to other problems that there are, including the small acreage payments. There is no reason why the program cannot accommodate 50 acres or less if they are, in fact, in cereal grain production, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Wowchuk: I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture if he will tell us whether or not he has also pressured the federal government to put in place some guidelines to avoid the problems that we see between renters and landowners at this time.

There are no guidelines in place. Renters and landowners are not coming to an agreement, and there is no protection for the renters who are the ones paying the higher freight rate. Will the minister tell us whether he has asked the federal government for guidelines there?

Mr. Enns: Madam Speaker, I anticipated that problem; so did Manitoba Pool; so did Manitoba's major farm organization, the Keystone Agriculture Producers organization. That is why Manitoba suggested a very simple system. Go by the wheat permit which every farmer has and there would be no issue about it, but, again, the member for Swan River refused to support that position--refused to support that position, and now we have a complicated system of arbitration, and, yes, it is going to cause undue delay and cost.

I am particularly disturbed, Madam Speaker, that some of these monies, Canadian taxpayers' money that was meant to help Canadian farmers and Manitoba farmers is going to Europe, going to France, going to Italy, going to Germany. Surely that is not where Canadian taxpayers' money should be going, but she supported that kind of position when it was introduced by the federal government.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister to correct the record. We have always stood up for farmers and it is--

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member for Swan River, this is not a time for debate or rebuttal. The honourable member for Swan River, to pose her final supplementary question.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister if he would correct the record and show clearly that it has been the New Democrats who have always stood up for small farmers, and will he make a clear statement that he is going to stand up for small farmers and put it in writing that it is small farmers that he supports and that funds will be going to the small farmers where they should be going instead of being shortchanged as they are by the federal government and by lack of action from this Minister of Agriculture?

Mr. Enns: Madam Speaker, the record is clear, as I indicated in my response to the first question. Last April, we brought together a farm coalition representing Manitoba farm interests, agriculture interests.

It had very straightforward recommendations to make to the federal government. They included payment being made to the permit holder, not to the landholder which would have avoided all of that, and it was a position supported by everybody, including at that time as yet unelected and proven to be a nonelectable Liberal representative on that occasion, the candidate who ran against my good friend and colleague the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), but even the Liberal Party supported Manitoba farm organizations in that request which would have meant that no taxpayers' money had left Manitoba and gone to foreign parts.

It would have avoided entirely the argument of small or big farmer. All agricultural land would have been treated equally and would have been in keeping with what Manitoba Pool and all farm organizations asked for.

Madam Speaker, I do not want to unnecessarily start a dispute with her but she refused on behalf of the New Democrats to support that position. She refused to support that position.

Point of Order

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, I would like you to ask the minister to correct the record. He has indicated that we did not participate in the meeting. The fact of the matter is that we were invited as observers to that

meeting. I was sent a communique from that meeting on very short notice asking for approval on it, and we were not part of the meeting. I would like the minister to correct the record. We were invited as observers to that meeting.

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

* * *

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Emergency Physicians' Strike

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry),

THAT under Rule 27, the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the threat to the health care system posed by this government's lack of action on the emergency doctors' strike.

An Honourable Member: You have support.

Mr. Lamoureux: Lots of support.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster, to speak to the urgency of a public debate.

* (1420)

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as Beauchesne's points out, there are a couple of circumstances which have to be covered in order to allow for an emergency debate. First and foremost, it has to be demonstrated that the public interest would in fact be best served. I will venture to argue as to why it is in just a moment. Secondly, there is no ordinary opportunity which will allow the matter to be brought to the attention of this Chamber.

Because this is somewhat of a unique session in the sense that we are now going to be debating bills, there are

no other opportunities in terms of grievances under the normal circumstances. A concurrence has been passed. The budget in itself has been passed. There is no legislation that is there before us that would allow us to enter into the debate on what is in fact a very important issue to all Manitobans. That brings me back then to why it is in fact in the public's best interest that we set aside today's time to debate this very important issue.

We in the Liberal Party believe that emergency services in our hospitals are a part of the core essential health delivery system that we have in the province of Manitoba. We like to believe that if in fact, as I alluded to earlier in Question Period, you have the unfortunate circumstances which see, whether it is a cardiac arrest or any other ailment, Madam Speaker, that you can in fact go to a hospital not in fear that the emergency ward is going to be closed down. Today it is Victoria; tomorrow it is Grace.

I believe the party had put forward a very reasonable question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) today dealing with--

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member for Inkster that, as stated in Beauchesne's Citation 390, the member is to be speaking at this point to the urgency, and the urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion.

Members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities to debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the longer the emergency room doctors' strike continues, the greater the likelihood that patients will be put at risk. The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) cannot prove otherwise, and for that reason we believe it is absolutely essential, in the public's best interest, that in fact we have that debate today.

I commented earlier in terms of why there are no other circumstances which would facilitate that debate, so I would ask your deepest consideration, Madam Speaker, and ask for full concurrence from all members of the Chamber in support of this matter of urgent public importance.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I think the member for Inkster has leapt to a giant conclusion, erroneously so. The question of the entire health care system coming apart as a result of an emergency doctors' strike in certain hospitals in Winnipeg is not happening. Service is being provided 24 hours a day at two hospitals and for 12 hours a day at the rest of the hospitals. The fact that we have 60 or 70 hospitals in Manitoba, and we have certain physicians at certain five hospitals is not the end of the health care system.

In terms of the ability to debate the matter, yes, the member is quite correct that we do not have Estimates or Supply or legislative opportunities to debate, but if he thinks the matter, in his mind at least, is so important that it should be discussed--and I do not agree with his proposition that we need to have an emergency debate, Madam Speaker, but if he really thinks that it is important enough to discuss, I would invite him to submit a resolution under Private Members' Business, and the government will support the elevation of that resolution to the top of the Order Paper at the first opportunity so that the discussion can take place in the House if he deems it so important.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I rise to support the motion on behalf of our party concerning the need for debate. It is fairly clear that an emergency has risen largely because of government inaction over the past several months.

Earlier today, we tabled a copy of a letter dated June 20 from the head of emergency services at Health Sciences Centre talking about the impending crisis, Madam Speaker. We wrote on behalf of our party to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) on September 1, asking the minister, in light of the apparent possible breakdown in negotiations, to take some action to try to resolve this matter, and we have only heard now, today, that the Minister of Health has written a letter, in fact, to the parties urging them to get back to the bargaining table.

It seems to me, Madam Speaker, that this is an opportunity. The situation facing hospitals is quite serious. Last week, we had an emergency doctor at St. Boniface Hospital indicate that things were not going well as the government line would have us believe, and the situation is becoming more critical day by day.

The lack of government action, the government having

the opportunity to instruct the negotiators of MHO, the government having the opportunity to step in, the Minister of Health being responsible for the cutbacks that have resulted in this strike results--[interjection] and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) will have his opportunity to speak in the debate--this has resulted in a crisis situation or a near-crisis situation at the hospital, and no appropriate solution has been offered by members opposite today, so we on this side of the House would like to have an opportunity to suggest to the government, to debate with the government, possible courses of action, first and foremost which is the recommended appointment of a mediator who can step in and resolve this issue and not doctor-bash and not let Manitoba patients become guinea pigs at the bequest of the government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I thank honourable members for their advice as to whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) should be debated today.

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

I see no other opportunities in the immediate future for the House to debate this issue as the grievance process is no longer available nor are there any directly relevant bills or resolutions. I note that Speaker Rocan, in January 1991, ruled in a similar fashion on a matter concerning the nurses strike.

In my opinion, this is an urgent matter and the first opportunity the House has had to debate this. I do see that the public interest would be served by having a debate and I am ruling the matter in order.

The question then before the House is, shall the debate proceed?

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it. [interjection] A recorded vote.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, under the rules, of course, it indicates that we are required to have four members in order to call for Yeas and Nays. I can assure the House that there are two members from the Liberal caucus currently present who are in favour of having the Yeas and Nays and if there are in fact two other members inside the Chamber we would like to see the vote.

Madam Speaker: Is there support for the member's request for a recorded vote?

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Perhaps to simplify the process, I would call for Yeas and Nays.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member does have support. A recorded vote has been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is: Shall the debate proceed?

Division

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

Yeas

Ashton, Barrett, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Friesen, Gaudry, Jennissen, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Nays

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Ernst, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, Mitchelson, Newman, Pallister, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I was paired with the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh). Had I not been, I would have voted with my party.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 24, Nays 28.

Madam Speaker: The question is accordingly lost.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**House Business**

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a matter of House business, I have already advised members that on the 21st of September at 10 a.m. the Public Accounts committee and the report of the Provincial Auditor will be considered before that committee.

On Tuesday, September 26 at 10 a.m. will be considered the report of the Manitoba Telephone System; on Thursday, September 28, at 10 a.m. the report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation; on Tuesday, October 3, at 10 a.m. the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission; on Thursday, October 5, at 10 a.m. the Manitoba Development Corporation; on Tuesday, October 17, at 10 a.m. Venture Manitoba Tours Limited; on Thursday, October 19, at 10 a.m. the Crown Corporations Council; on Tuesday, October 24, at 10 a.m. the Communities Economic Development Fund; Thursday, October 26, at 10 a.m. the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation; and on Tuesday, October 31, at 10 a.m. the Workers Compensation Board; and Thursday, November 2, at 10 a.m. the Manitoba Hazardous Waste Management Corporation.

Would you then, Madam Speaker, please call Bills 2, 5, 6 and then the balance of the bills in the order they appear in the Order Paper.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 2—The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 2 on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, le remboursement de la dette et la protection des contribuables et apportant des modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I want to put a few comments on the record on our thoughts on Bill 2, the proposal for the so-called balanced budget legislation.

Most families, of course, in this province--and I think all of us know that most families in this province want to see responsible finances in their own family. They want to balance their budget. They want to deal with their finances with honesty and integrity. They want to know where they stand and where they actually stand in realistic terms at the end of the day. They want to respect long-term investments. They want to deal with long-term investments and assets in a very important way, because it will have long-term implications for their family's future and they want to use prudence, Madam Speaker, when they deal with the potential elimination of assets or the reduction of the assets that they may or may not have in their family and in their future.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, we believe this legislation, although cynically worded and cynically labelled in terms of title, does not pass the test of honesty, integrity and long-term investments in the province of Manitoba, honesty in terms of how we deal with our numbers, and would not be prudent for some of the long-term investments and assets that we must deal with both in human and capital terms in the province of Manitoba.

It is like a Trojan horse, Madam Speaker, that it appears to be a good idea. Of course, who can be against balancing budgets? None of us are. All of us try to do that every month at home but when we open up the Trojan horse, when we look inside of this so-called gift to Manitobans, we see treachery, we see dishonesty, we see deceit, and we are, quite frankly, worried about it and quite disappointed at the government in the way in which this has been introduced in the House and the way it is being purported to be sold to people of good will across all political parties in terms of this legislation.

* (1510)

Madam Speaker, the first thing a bill like this should do is, it should pass the test of reality. It should pass the test of reality in terms of the integrity of numbers of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the Minister of Finance's budget under his so-called legislation. How long did the reality last of his numbers? It lasted 10 days after he had tabled his budget in this Chamber and had tabled the balanced budget legislation.

We had the Dominion Bond Rating agency coming out and basically saying that the Minister of Finance had false numbers, was deceiving the people of Manitoba, that rather than running a surplus we were running a deficit. If a legislation cannot last 10 days, what does it say about the integrity and the honesty of members in this Chamber about the long-term financial issues that are very important to all of our families?

No one can deny that. But how can we respect a government whose integrity falls like a house of cards 10 days later and uses this as a cynical Trojan horse in an election campaign? Why did they do that, Madam Speaker, and why are they expecting people over the long haul not to judge this legislation on the reality that their families feel rather than on the rhetoric that we hear from the members opposite and the deceit, quite frankly, that we see in this legislation? Is this legislation honest?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Doer: It is not.

An Honourable Member: I think it is.

Mr. Doer: Well, you think it is. The member from Great-West Life thinks the legislation is honest. I

apologize, the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews).

I dare say that we will go through some of the reasons why we say so, because to say that this is dishonest must be backed up by words that we will say in this House today on this legislation, and we will back it up.

I know it is a cynical pre-election ploy, and I know the strategy was very straightforward. Here you have a government that is a Conservative government that has run a deficit year after year after year, and how do they deal with this issue? Do they say, yes, we have run a deficit; yes, we have run a record-high deficit in 1992 and 1993? We had to run a record-high deficit because of the recession here in the province of Manitoba. We had good reason to run a deficit. No, they do not want to say that. They want to repackage themselves as balanced budgeters. You know, poof, we have not run a deficit. Presto--and presto may have a lot to do with this legislation--there is no deficit here in this legislation. The kind of an illusion, a mirage, that we see from members opposite--\$762 million--no, it did not exist. Record-high deficits--no, that is not us, that is not the Conservatives. Well, maybe it is the Conservatives. That was not the Filmon team. Well, maybe it was the Filmon team, but not the Conservatives. They are kind of interchangeable, these terms.

Madam Speaker, why can this government purport to be running a surplus under their own legislation when in fact they are running a deficit under all the independent evaluations of this legislation? Does reality not mean anything? Does your word not mean anything?

I mean, it was one thing to be able to say to the people of Manitoba that we will save the Jets. It will cost you \$10 million, and we cancel the operating loss agreement for the hockey team. Well, have we saved the Jets?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Doer: Were they willing just to cap their payments at \$10 million?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Doer: Did they cancel the operating agreement for May 1?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Doer: Strike one, strike two, strike three, and you are out.

Madam Speaker, the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) was taking people to the polls saying, you know, vote for us, we will save the team. We will cap the losses to \$10 million. We will even reduce lottery involvement.

An Honourable Member: I was in Grand Beach on the election day.

Mr. Doer: Oh, I was not here. He was out in Grand Beach reducing the lottery dependency that he promised in the election campaign. He was in Grand Beach. What a novel way to solve it. Did they like the team in Grand Beach?

Well, I can tell you at the Blueberry Restaurant in Grand Beach, in Grand Marais, they do not think highly of a promise that is broken. The member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) will know that in Grand Beach, which only has one restaurant open on April 25, they would have been very much against the promises made from members opposite and they are quite disappointed that the word of this government does not mean anything any more. It just does not mean a thing.

So we come to the second big promise of the Conservative government, and the Trojan horse that we see: We will bring in balanced budgets. We have had a conversion on the road to Damascus. We have been riding our horse so long and the sun has struck us down and, hallelujah, we will no longer be running deficits. Poof, it is gone; zap, it disappears.

Well, Madam Speaker, you know I hate to give the members opposite the Dominion Bond Rating agency numbers.

Now, I ask members opposite, if they are such hot-shot capitalists, do they go out and invest money on stocks based on Dominion Bond Rating agency or do they go out and buy stocks on the basis of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) that gave us the hockey team and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) who gave us the VLT and Hazardous Waste Corporation?

I suggest that if you are looking at stocks, you will look at independent advice; if you are looking at investments, you will look at independent numbers; if you

are looking at buying a house and a mortgage, you will not listen necessarily just to the real estate agency that says, this house is worth a fortune, you might talk to some independent people and get some independent advice. That is not a bad idea.

What is the independent advice about the government's own numbers? Well, I hate to tell you this, but you are actually running a deficit. You are running a deficit here in the province of Manitoba of some \$96 million.

Now, if this legislation cannot last two weeks in terms of its honesty and integrity, how cynical are you opposite just to say to people, oh, vote for us, we have got this balanced budget legislation. It does not mean we are going to keep our word to balance the budget. The Dominion Bond Rating agency is saying clearly, you are running a \$96-million deficit. That is not the only independent agency that is saying the same thing.

Have any members opposite read the reality of your numbers on the Canada West Foundation? Yes, they like your proposed legislation in theory, and they did give you high marks for your theoretical legislation, but the opposition here has to deal with the reality of people's lives, the reality of families here in Manitoba and must deal with the reality of your legislation.

An Honourable Member: Spend and tax.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, well, the spend-and-tax government is indeed opposite, and the member for Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) will know how well he has ~~taxed~~ in terms of the province of Manitoba. The Canada West Foundation also says that the government's--

An Honourable Member: When did you start wearing glasses?

Mr. Doer: Well, you have to look at the fine print to see how bad the Tories really are, unfortunately. I had to buy these glasses. The member opposite asked me when I got these glasses. I had to buy these glasses in the election campaign to see the words "Progressive Conservative" in the blue and white sign. Before that I could read everything.

Now, I do not know whether I am getting older or you are getting more deceitful, but I had to buy the glasses to read Progressive Conservative on the signs because

somebody said there really is Progressive Conservative on your signs. I did not believe him, so I had to go out to Shoppers Drug Mart and invest \$12 in these glasses, and I do not even know how to use them properly yet, but I will get to learn that.

The Canada West Foundation also points out that this legislation or this budget is mushy in its numbers. It is dishonest in the way that they are presented and that the government is not--operative word not, no--is not running a surplus in 1995-96; it is running a deficit. So that is the second independent agency that is dealing with your numbers, your budget and your dishonesty. Madam Speaker, how can we in this House stand up and pass legislation that will not disallow dishonest numbers for the future?

* (1520)

You know, your words will be in Hansard for years, and you may think it is slick and politically correct to pass legislation today that may be politically popular, but what about your words over the longer haul? What about your words in Hansard for the rest of your lives and the rest of your lives after that? When your families and your grandsons and granddaughters read this legislation and your comments, will they say you were honest about it, or will they say you were just a group of cynical politicians trying to pass off a Trojan horse here on the people of Manitoba? Well, this caucus in this party opposite will take the long-term view and vote for honesty, not dishonesty as we see in this legislation.

Now, Madam Speaker, let me raise a third point between reality and this government. Well, Madam Speaker, are you going to calculate unfunded liabilities of pension plan in your calculations of deficits or not? A very simple question. Are you running a deficit if your unfunded liability in pensions is dealt with? Now it is rather ironic that the unfunded liabilities of pensions was established in the '60s by a former Conservative government. It is also probably rather fitting to point out that the unfunded liabilities for pensions was partially dealt with by the former New Democratic government in having plans in place for all the Crown corporations to deal with the unfunded liabilities of pension.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba is in better shape than other jurisdictions. We are not the worst province in Canada. We have a system where the employees' portion goes into

a fund and the employers' portion in Crown corporations goes into a separate fund, but the employees' portion since the '60s, and the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) was probably in the government at the time, I am not sure, but it was part of his government--that portion does not go into the pension fund.

Now, in Ottawa none of the money goes into the pension fund, and it actually makes up the majority of the debt, paper debt, based on inadequate funding of pension plans. But, Madam Speaker, are you going to have a balanced budget legislation that disallows the Auditor to say that you are really running another \$100-million deficit per year? How honest is that? How much integrity does that have?

I am surprised the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) could even allow this bill to be passed whether he is at Grand Beach or some other exotic location on election day. Obviously he does not--[interjection] Beg your pardon?

An Honourable Member: Why was he there?

Mr. Doer: Well, I do not want to guess why he was there.

Madam Speaker, but how can you have this? Pensions should be a big issue for you. Pensions should be an important issue to you. You work for a company that generally is involved in long-term financial planning, and it is usually involved in long-term financial planning--usually means employees' share goes into a fund and the liability is dealt with. Just for the same reason why we cancelled our own pension fund and why the federal Liberals should have cancelled that obscene pension plan in Ottawa. We should have some integrity not only in terms--[interjection] Blaikie and the NDP are in favour of the same pension plan we have here in Manitoba and none of us--

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): He is the biggest benefactor of them all.

Mr. Doer: If the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wants to defend the federal Liberals' pension plan, go right ahead. I cannot wait to pass that. I read Jim Carr's column that he was running federally. I guess that is what is going on here. He is protecting his future, and I am shocked and surprised. All of us did the right thing

here, and part of doing the right thing is also being honest about the integrity of the numbers and the liability they form. So I ask the government opposite. This legislation has not even been passed yet. The ink is still before us, and you have three independent sources say, basically, your numbers are deceitful.

An Honourable Member: Not true.

Mr. Doer: Well, not true. I guess, who are we going to believe-- the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) or the Dominion Bond Rating agency, the Canada West Foundation, the Provincial Auditor? [interjection] The member for Lakeside is still so disappointed that he could not get his mechanical alligator into the Ducks Unlimited site at the Oak Hammock Marsh. I hope he wins the next battle at cabinet, but I cannot start to talk about those things here in this Chamber.

Madam Speaker, this is the problem with this legislation. It may be salient for a couple of weeks and a couple of months, but we should not be passing legislation in this House that cannot pass an independent test nor can it pass a long-term test of the people that come behind us, because I think all of us should be concerned about what we are foisting on our families and our province in terms of the integrity of what we are doing.

Madam Speaker, let me deal with a couple of other issues. What will be the calculation of the deficit? Will it be the bottom line of the government? In the third statement from the Provincial Auditor, there will be a number at the end of the year that says whether the deficit has gone up or whether the deficit has gone down. You know, the only year that that has happened where it has gone down in the last number of years? It was not 1995-96 in your proposed budget, and we will still await the accounts. It was not 1994-95. You had a deficit. It was not 1993-94 where the Auditor said your deficit was \$762 million. It was not '92-93; it was not '91-92; it was not '89-90. It was the last NDP budget in 1988 and 1989. That was the last time the deficit actually went down.

Now, why did that happen? Mining revenue went up. The economy performed a lot better than was anticipated. The budget was not balanced. The public accounts at the end of the day were balanced with a \$55-million surplus, and that, in turn, was reflected in the bottom line.

So I ask ministers opposite, are you going to take a cut on your salary as this legislation proposes on the basis of the public relations statements of the government, or are you going to take the cut in your salary based on the Provincial Auditor's bottom line?

I suspect we are going to see this flim-flammy continue, the flip-floppery, flim-flammy of the Filmon team, Madam Speaker, and we will not see this sort of allegation, this commitment on the bottom line, which is already predicted to go up \$140 million this year. We will not see it.

Let us look at another issue that families have to look at, and that is long-term decisions that they have to make. It is not a very wise thing for a family to have financial strait jackets in place that are so strict and so inflexible that for one month if you are a few dollars short on your grocery bill, you sell your house for half the price it is valued because you have to make up for the food costs that month. For example, if you have to take out Autopac renewals in a certain month for two cars, and if you have to make other decisions affecting you family, do you take out a little bit of debt or do you sell your house because you are just panicking?

I say it is a very foolish family that takes an asset and sells it for less than what it is worth. That is also-- [interjection] What is that?

An Honourable Member: The member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) says, sell one of your cars.

Mr. Doer: Sell one of your cars. Well, maybe, the member for Rossmere inherits a house and inherits cars and inherits boats, trains and buses, but some of us opposite have to actually take out mortgages on our houses and are in that situation. Sell one of our cars. Yes. Sell one of your cars for half the price. Get rid of it because, over the short term, you cannot make ends meet.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker-- [interjection] I beg your pardon? One of the other criticisms of this bill is, how many farmers would have been wise to sell their farm last year when the prices were low and the situation was tough as opposed to waiting till this year?

* (1530)

Some of the suggestions made by the bond rating agencies are also--and this crosses all of the ideological spectrums, I would suggest, in terms of common sense--you cannot take an asset that you own and sell it in the short run and show that as an operating revenue in the long run.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you cannot take McKenzie Seeds, sell it last year-- [interjection] The Dominion Bond Rating agency also says you should not take an asset, and you cannot take an asset, and do two things with it. One is, show it as an ongoing revenue item. You just cannot do that. They just totally dismissed it. Wrong. Out of the bottom line numbers. They also said you cannot move it from one year to another.

In other words, you manipulated the sale of this corporation. You sold it last year. You showed it as an operating revenue this year, and you are just being totally dismissed in terms of the rating agencies and anybody else financially looking at the books because it is not an ongoing operating revenue. It is not individual income tax. It is not corporate income tax. It is not federal-provincial transfers. It is not revenue you get normally in terms of taxation levels. It is an asset that you cannot show as a revenue.

Now, why did the government not have the integrity, if they are going to sell McKenzie Seeds, to show that against the long-term debt of the province? Why was it not sold and shown against the debt that was entered into, some of which was paid off with the profit and surplus of McKenzie Seeds in previous years?

If you are going to be honest about an asset, you would have actually shown it against previous years' debt. Let me give you another example. Under your legislation, you could sell Manitoba Hydro and not show the debt, not show the proceeds of that sale against a long-term debt for Hydro. You could show that as an ongoing operating revenue item in this year's current budget. That is absolutely wrong. Well, you had better read the rating agencies. You better stop reading the Conservative press releases and start reading some independent information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have legislation. If you look at Saskatchewan's legislation, they disallow and make it illegal for a government to sell an asset and call it an

operating revenue for the current year. You cannot do that. You cannot sell your house for half its value and say to the lending agency or your banker that my income is really \$200,000 a year, when it is in fact \$60,000 a year, because you have lumped in \$140,000, if you have a house like some of the members opposite, and show it as an asset. You cannot do that, you cannot do it. It is not an ongoing revenue. So this government is rolling the dice in this year with all its lottery money and all its assets that it sold last year into one budget year, and it is rolling the dice in terms of the integrity and dishonesty of this legislation in terms of Manitobans.

Let me deal with a couple of other issues. Mr. Deputy Speaker, long-term investments are good sometimes for the province. Long-term investments are good for our families. Long-term investments produce assets that are valuable to all of us. In a family, taking out a mortgage generally is a good idea. Most of us would argue that taking out a mortgage has been a good investment if we have made it for our long-term financial security. Not always, but most of us would argue that it is not a negative investment. In other words, having debt for a mortgage is not a bad idea.

I do not know how many members opposite inherited houses, you know, got them given to them in their families, but most of the people we represent actually had to take out a mortgage. You know, had to take out--dare I say it?--debt. You know, that stuff you have been running for the last six years--debt. They actually had to take out debt to have a mortgage. Now I do not know whether I am supposed to use the d word, debt, but maybe I will use the m word, mortgage, and it will be good for me under the h word, honesty, to be able to say that. You know, mortgage, asset, debt, pay it off, have something to show for it. The province has been the same way. The province of Manitoba has been the same way. Let me give you a Conservative example.

An Honourable Member: You said you did not have to pay off the debt.

Mr. Doer: Let me give you a Conservative example. Well, you have not paid off the debt yet. Just do not give me the rhetoric. You know, walk the walk, do not talk the talk, my friend.

Let me give you an example: Duff's ditch, the floodway in the city of Winnipeg. You know, I do not

want to tell you this, but there was debt there. Duff Roblin did not pay for the ditch in one year. He did not pay for it in the same fiscal year. He actually had to borrow money for a long-term investment, and it came out of the operating account. Now under your legislation, if that tipped the scales for a balanced budget, it would be illegal. You would not have a long-term vision of Duff Roblin in terms of building that investment. You would not have that investment. You would have floods every year, and then your deficits could float away in a flood every year and your work could float away every year in a flood instead of being prevented in terms of a floodway. There is a good Conservative--they were a different kind of Conservative in those days. That was that endangered species called red Tories, you know. They are no longer around I guess.

An Honourable Member: They are red-neck Tories now.

Mr. Doer: Yes, they are Filmon-team Tories now. You know, they are not the Duff Roblin Tories. Now, there is a long-term investment. How many people--the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) would know that this is not a bad idea. Now, he would probably argue it should have gone a couple of miles further south. I ask him to take up that argument with the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) about why it does not cover certain points of his constituency. Of course, he would also know, and many members across the way, the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), the member for Riel (Mr. Newman), the member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay), well, many members across the way in areas that are adjacent to rivers would know that has been a good long-term investment. This is disallowed in your legislation. You know, one year go ahead. Hopefully nothing happens. This is a pre-election promise. Go ahead, disallow long-term investments and not worry about it.

Let me give you a second example.

An Honourable Member: The public supports it.

Mr. Doer: Well, the public supports it. You did that in 1992-93. You ran a \$700 million deficit. It is disallowed in this legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me give you another example. This is an important example for the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews). Leaf Rapids in 1982 was going to be closed

down. The commodity markets had sunk so low that the community of Leaf Rapids, a single-industry community, was going to lose a thousand jobs because of the "vagaries of the marketplace." Now this is not an act of God that is covered in your legislation. It is an act of person, man, humankind because it is an act of the market, commodity prices go down. The situation is in serious trouble, and the situation is really in desperate states.

Should you borrow money, go into a little bit of debt to keep a mining community operating? Should you go into debt to keep farmers on the land? Should you go into debt to have people working at the pulp and paper mill in Pine Falls so that investiture can take place? Should the government have any role to keep people working in our economy to bridge the commodity markets, to bridge the marketplace, to bridge the economy, to have long-term jobs in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say, yes, because the one-year investment in Leaf Rapids has resulted in, dare I say, debt. There was some debt incurred—in a thousand jobs for the last 15 years. That is not a bad idea. Some of the investment and debt that was taken on for the Pine Falls Paper mill, I hope, keeps those people working. [interjection] Well, that is not what you said in Pine Falls. When you got off your white horse—well, I will stop there. I could keep going on. It is so tempting to keep going on. So there is another example of a capital investment debt for a long-term economic situation.

What would you do in the next recession? Is a recession an act of God? Was the Depression an act of God in 1929? I would argue, it was not. It was not a disaster in terms of a forest fire or a flood or a crop failure from the weather. What would you do in the Depression? Is your answer to a depression a recession, everybody to ride around in "Bennett buggies," as the Conservatives did federally in the early '30s? Why did you run a deficit in 1992, which Harold Neufeld said was \$842 million? That is not an act of God. Do you want to walk away and let people virtually starve to death if there is a depression or recession because commodity markets change? Is that your philosophy because it is not our philosophy?

If you want to have people starving to death in our streets because you have a silly balanced budget legislation that does not deal with people working, you are welcome to it, but I think it is very, very unfortunate

for the people of Manitoba and they will see the reality of this legislation. I hope we never see a recession again through the term of this government, but God knows. It is not an act of God; and if job creation and hunger are not criteria in legislation, it is totally inconsistent with the values of this Legislature and the values that most of us hold in terms of the kind of society and the kind of beliefs that we have for our communities.

* (1540)

Let me give you another example where long-term investments make sense for human beings and for our province: access programs. The evaluation of access programs has shown that for every dollar you spend, within seven years you get it back, and you get it back for every year thereafter. The dignity of creating training, employment and careers in our communities where people do not have the opportunity is a long-term investment that, yes, sometimes has long-term debt that results in long-term paybacks and long-term increases in our economic activity and the fibre of our community.

Do you have any strategy to deal with child poverty except to blame the federal government? Do you have any compassion for kids who are going hungry in our streets instead to say it is somebody else's fault? Do you have any investment for those kids? How can you talk about love thy neighbour as thyself when you do not give kids who are going to food banks a helping hand to get out of hunger and to get a life of dignity? How can you say that you believe in supporting your neighbour when in fact it is let the survival of the fittest take place? That is not the kind of community I want. It is not the kind of community Manitobans believe in.

We want to deal with child poverty. We want to deal with education and training. We want to invest and sometimes that means that you borrow money just as a family would borrow money to put their kids through education if they can afford to, just as families will borrow money to keep their family working, just as families will borrow money when another member of their family is in a very difficult situation. Sometimes it is important that we see people first and that we have long-term investments, long-term flexibility and legislation that allows for the best in people and not allows for the Americanization of our values and the Darwinian fulfilment of the Republican agenda that we sometimes see opposite.

Let me look at another issue. It is rather interesting that when we read the report from business, the biggest impediment we see in business is the inability to borrow money to get a business started. Now, again, many members opposite may have inherited their businesses from their families, may have married into businesses and had them bequeathed to them. They may have had that situation, may have had these little things trickle down to their communities and their families, but there are some people that actually have gone out, rolled up their sleeves and started businesses. There are some members—and maybe this is outside the reality of the House of Lords across the way—but there are people actually who have had to start businesses.

An Honourable Member: What you are saying is, you do not have anybody over there that might have done that?

Mr. Doer: Well, I can respond directly, and I will not even talk about the Habkirk [phonetic] farm out in the member's constituency where there was actually, dare I say it, some debt the odd time.

The government's own capital report, the government's own report from small business says the biggest problem small businesses have is they cannot get borrowing debt from banks. So why are we trying to run the province dissimilar to how businesses are run? Businesses sometimes have to borrow money. Sometimes they have to invest. Sometimes they have to modernize.

I have a personal example. You know, there are no media in the room, I will give a personal example. My spouse wanted to start a business one day and had to borrow money. We had to put up our house as a mortgage, a collateral for that business. The business has gone fairly well—not fairly well—well, but she had to borrow money. In fact, she felt that women had a more difficult time borrowing money than men. That was her opinion based on direct experience. I thought that she had more trouble borrowing money because of who she was married to, but it is maybe a different story. Nonetheless, debt, collateral, assets.

How many companies today are debt free? Do companies say we have to modernize to compete but we cannot do it because we cannot incur any debt? Do companies sit there and say, oh, we do not want—in fact, I read the Financial Post the other day. This Belgian

company that unfortunately bought Labatt said, we think that is a good thing. Without debt, we cannot have assets. Without assets, we cannot grow. Without growth, we will not survive. We will fail. We will go bankrupt.

So members of the opposite way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should know that sometimes borrowing for modernization and investment and job creation is not a bad idea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one part of this debate that is missing is the whole issue of what do we owe. What do we owe is part of the debate, and all of us are concerned about what we owe. We own between 10 cents and 12 cents on the dollar. It is a lot less than the City of Winnipeg, which was bequeathed to us by the gang of 18 which had prominent members opposite, which is about 19 cents on the dollar because they expanded the city for about 800,000 people when there was only about 560,000 people at the time. Wherever a developer's shovel went, they would follow, really intelligent long-term investments, and the federal government is about 38 cents on the dollar, and that is a very serious situation.

In Manitoba it is between 10 cents and 12 cents. Now, we criticize you and you criticize us, and we have all run deficits, and none of us except the last '88-89 year has been a surplus—[interjection] No, more. The conversion on the road to Damascus again, but we own things. I remember this conversation with the former Minister of Finance. I think Gene was here in the House. We were speaking about Bill 3 or 4 at that time, a bill that was totally kind of rejected in the middle of the campaign after the former Minister of Education and the previous Minister of Finance left this political scene. All his commitments to some of those blue books went out the window.

But I remember once when my second daughter was born last December, he said, how do you feel about your daughter owing \$7,000? I said, well, I would prefer she owes nothing, but I do feel good about the fact that she just came out of a hospital that she owns in her own community. She had wonderful doctors and nurses who helped to take care of her. We travelled on roads that we owned. We have gone to a provincial park that we own. My other daughter is going to a school that we have paid for.

We have debt. We owe money and we should keep it in check. We should keep it in balance. I did not like the

fact that you ran the record high deficit in 1992 and '93. I did not like it. I did not like the fact that we have gone from \$300 million on welfare to about \$600 million on welfare in one year, because you had no job creation programs, but I would rather have you run the debt than put everybody on the street starving.

You ran the deficit. It was \$762 million or \$862 million. How can you run one way throughout your whole term in office and then allege to be running another way as a pre-election Trojan horse?

My daughter goes to a school now that is a wonderful little school in the community; she owns that. The capital costs are paid for. So my answer to Clayton Manness is, 10 cents on the dollar. She has a lot of things she owns, too, not just all negatives, not all that she owes.

We have a wonderful province with wonderful infrastructure, with wonderful, beautiful natural resources, with wonderful human infrastructures of education and health care. In fact, I think those are our advantages as a province. I do not think we can win the race to the bottom as a economic strategy. I think we have a wonderful opportunity to compete with the world on quality of life, quality of opportunity, quality of our communities, affordability of our province.

Compete on the qualitative things. Do not try to compete on the race to the bottom, because today we may be competing with Alberta, tomorrow we are going to compete with Nebraska, the next day we may be competing with Alabama, the day after we are competing with Mexico, and after that, we are competing with some other jurisdiction. We must compete on quality of life. Quality of life means we invest in hospitals, we invest in schools, we invest in people that need the most of our opportunities, and I think part of the debate is missing.

* (1550)

Those are a couple of points, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to talk about one other point, and that is the so-called referendum legislation. Now, this is probably the most cynical part of the bill, because in 1992-93 or 1993-94 the government came up with a budget that they again told us did not have any taxes, does not have any tax. Well, I have the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) briefing note. The Premier's briefing note says the taxes are the equivalent of the sales tax application change, which

again was contrary to an election promise in 1990, and the property tax credit change was the equivalent of over \$100 million—and the gas tax increase—was the equivalent of well over \$100 million and would represent a significant increase in taxes in Manitoba.

The Premier's briefing note again goes on to say that the so-called we-do-not-tax government had raised taxes by the equivalent of a 5.7 percent increase in personal income tax. In other words, you could get the equivalent amount of money of \$114 million by increasing Manitoba's income tax rate from 52 percent to 57.7 percent or the Manitoba sales tax increase from 7 percent to 8.4 percent. It is like crime. If it was not so serious, it would be funny. Crime goes down because lotteries is now legalized, you know. I know now why the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) is saying we are not going to have any crime problem. You are going to legalize everything and then we will not have any crime problem.

Crime is going down. You have not talked to any police officers. You have not talked to any social workers. You have not listened to any judges. You have not listened to anybody that is in the pulpit, from any religion, week after week, or a rabbi or anybody else in the front lines. Crime has gone down. This is the Tory reality. Increase gambling; decrease crime. What is next? What are you going to legalize next? I did not inhale, says the members opposite. Maybe that is the next one. This is the kind of Tory—you know, it is so Orwellian. I would think you would be against George Orwell's stuff. It is so unbelievably Orwellian. Crime going down.

Taxes, we did not increase taxes. Now you look in the budget. It is not a tax increase; it is a spending decrease. We have decreased spending by 2 percent or 3 percent or whatever you said. Where was it? Property tax credits. You know, your property taxes go up \$75, but you should be happy. That is a spending decrease. You should be very, very happy. This kind of Orwellian kind of newspeak that we see opposite from members opposite. So I ask you the question, if you have any integrity and any honesty, how can you have this so-called taxpayers' protection not protecting from your own tax increases? This is an ominous sign that the Conservative government plans to decrease property tax credits next spring and increase property taxes all across this province? What hypocrisy we see from members opposite. What hypocrisy, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As I said before, we sometimes in a depression, in a recession, we want people working. It may take us a couple of years to get people working. We do not want Bennett buggies. We do not want the situation we see in the United States. If you have been in any major American city in the United States and not only seen families begging, but children begging with their parents along some of the poshest avenues of those beautiful cities, it is absolutely tragic.

I know members opposite do not want that. We want a long-term strategy on child poverty. We want a long-term strategy in educating and training our children. We want a strategy to make sure that our assets are not sold at fire-sale prices because the government of the day is afraid to take a so-called decrease.

We want honesty and integrity in terms of the bottom line. Is it going to be the bottom line or is it going to be the press release from the Tories that evaluates whether in fact they are going to impose this legislation on themselves?

We want a vision of government, yes, that is like a family that balances their books but sometimes takes out some investments, takes out a mortgage, educates their children, takes their kids on a holiday if they need it and can afford it, has a long-term view that we do not just let people, you know, grandparents--[interjection] Well, the member opposite is unfortunate. He had money again for his little pet projects but not money for child poverty and dealing with the kids who are going hungry here in this province.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

Madam Speaker, why can we not have responsible legislation that is honest, that does not allow people to sell off Crown corporations, that honestly reflects the deficit and is not dishonest, that has a long-term strategy for our capital investments, has a long-term strategy on our human investments, and, yes, deals with debt in a realistic way just like families do? You pay off your mortgage but you have a house; you pay off your hospitals and schools but you may have to invest in other long-term investments.

We need a real, responsible piece of legislation in this Chamber, not a piece of legislation that is a Trojan horse. Let us have the long-term integrity that Duff Roblin had

when he built the floodway, the long-term integrity that Ed Schreyer had and the long-term integrity of previous governments when they dealt with Leaf Rapids. Let us take the long-term view in a responsible, balanced approach to human priorities and fiscal priorities. Let us be honest about our Crown corporations.

I remember a quote the other day from somebody talking about Harold Wilson condemning some of the balanced budget legislation in England, and said, you do not want to sell off the family silverware over one year because you are in a straitjacket on some of these very, very antiparliamentary pieces of legislation.

Let us treat our legislation like families, where we have mortgages, we have investment, and we take a balanced approach over the longer haul. This does not do it.

We will be voting against this Trojan horse and we will be proud to do so. We will try to bring the reality of this legislation before the people of Manitoba over the long term, because we recognize that challenge. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

Madam Speaker: It was previously agreed that this would remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): In view of the hour approaching four o'clock, I am wondering, Madam Speaker, if there might be leave to go straight into private members' hour and call it four o'clock.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to call it four o'clock? [agreed]

The hour being 4 p.m., as previously agreed, private members' hour.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Res. 3—Putting Children First

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I did not plan this this way, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), that

WHEREAS low birth weight babies account for 75 percent of the neonatal mortality and low birthweights are a significant contributor to infant and childhood diseases and mortality; and

WHEREAS a strong pre- and neo-natal nutrition program followed up by a school-age nutrition program would alleviate this devastating problem; and

WHEREAS an expanded campaign against fetal alcohol syndrome which includes warnings on liquor bottles and a broad public education component is required; and

WHEREAS an intensive family life program should be a part of the health curriculum to deal with the high numbers of teen pregnancies and the unacceptably high levels of sexually transmitted diseases in young Manitobans; and

WHEREAS supports are needed in the schools for teenage moms and their children, including daycare options and outreach programs delivered by public health nurses; and

WHEREAS recreational initiatives such as physical education must be a part of the core curriculum, and the importance of life long physical fitness should be stressed as a preventative health measure; and

WHEREAS because children spend so much of their time outside the home in school, schools should be regarded as an integral component of community-based health programs for children, including immunization, pregnancy education, medical services for special needs students, drug and alcohol education; and

WHEREAS bringing public health nurses into the school system would allow teachers to teach; and

WHEREAS schools are also an ideal forum for speech and language therapy, services which must be expanded across our province; and

WHEREAS a systematic program is required to deal with Aboriginal children whose health status is consistently lower than the average population and who

face a disproportionately high number of barriers to good health, such as poverty, and other social factors; and

WHEREAS rural children must also receive special attention, including a restoration of the Children's Dental Program, a cost-effective and beneficial program in rural and remote areas; and

WHEREAS real action to deal with children's health requires interdepartmental co-ordination of all services to children as well as specific protocols and a province-wide record keeping system to ensure that information is shared quickly and efficiently; and

WHEREAS because so many childhood injuries are preventable, Manitoba's child safety program should be expanded within our communities; and

WHEREAS the present policies of the Provincial Government do not address the need for improved health services for our children, especially in areas like the Children's Dental Program and Audiology Services where there have had dramatic cuts to programs.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider implementing a Healthy Child strategy to address the needs of Manitoba children and give them a better chance for a healthy future; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Provincial Government to consider including the following components in this Healthy Child Strategy:

- a province-wide prenatal nutrition program;
- a preschool nutrition program delivered through a public, nonprofit and affordable daycare system;
- school age nutrition programs;
- an expanded campaign on fetal alcohol syndrome;
- an aggressive policy on teen pregnancies including more preventative education and outreach to teen mothers;
- mandatory physical education in the school curriculum;
- bringing more public health nurses into the school system;
- a greater investment in speech and language therapy;
- a targeted Aboriginal Youth Health Care Strategy;
- health initiatives for rural and northern children;

- the establishment of service protocols for all provincial government departments in dealing with children; and
- an expanded Child Safety Program.

Motion presented.

* (1600)

Mr. Doer: It is an honour to get up and speak on this resolution, a very positive set of alternatives that we first put forward last year to the people of Manitoba. I think it is something that crosses all political lines. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We have heard that before, whether it is dealing with a car, dealing with a renovation in a home. Why can we not use the same philosophy in investing in our children and investing in our children's health in the longer haul?

Madam Speaker, we had put forward this proposal last fall, the fall of 1994. The government unfortunately did not join us in the debate until a couple of hours before the provincial election. This sort of bothered me because on the day before, virtually the last Friday before the provincial election was to be called, it was like planes over O'Hare. You know, they had to take a number in terms of press releases that were landing onto the communication floor of the Conservative government and coming forward with their strategy to politically neutralize what they believed to be potentially negative issues in the campaign. That is too bad that this was dealt with that kind of cynicism, if I might say, in terms of what this meant, because before that time, allegedly, and our sources now tell us that there was already in place a health for Manitoba's children strategy.

Now why did they not release this document much earlier in terms of the proposals for Manitoba kids? I dare say, Madam Speaker, because it was critical of the government. It was critical of the government for cutting audiology services. It was critical of the government for expanding gambling in rural communities and mentioned cases where parents had left kids in cars in rural communities while they went in and gambled. It was critical of the government of having--[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, if I could speak. The member for Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) should do

more on behalf of the rural communities and less yapping in terms of this House perhaps. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: I know the member for Rural Development does not care about the report that said the kids are being left out in cars while people are gambling, but some of us do care. If you do not mind, we would like to talk about this report.

Has the member read it? I doubt if the member has read it. I doubt very much whether he has read this report. [interjection] Have you read it? I have read it, and it sounds like the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) has not, so next time he wants to heckle in the House, perhaps he will do his homework and read more than the western report before he gets in this Chamber.

I guess that is the kind of cynicism we see with a Rural Development minister that led to the fact that this government would not release this report well before the election. Why did we not have a good debate? We always talk about having positive debates about ideas. Here we had an opportunity. The NDP opposition put forward a plan in November of 1994. The government was sitting on a secret report that they had for some time before that.

There were some ideas obviously that were not coincidence, that we agreed upon. Why can we not have an intelligent debate about kids and their future in health care when we both are putting forward good ideas and maybe some unworkable ideas well before the election campaign? Why did we not do that? Why did we not all read this report? It is a good report. I applaud the government for commissioning this report. I applaud the government for having this report. I think it is one of the best reports in Canada. For that, I say, good, but why can we not debate the issue? How long was this debated in cabinet? Was it read by every cabinet minister before this release at a Friday afternoon press conference?

I believe this deserved more than a Friday afternoon press conference. I believe this report deserved a good full-scale debate. We all talk about the privilege and dignity of representing our constituencies in this Chamber, and then, when we have an opportunity, a golden opportunity, to talk about one of the most

important issues in this House, across ideological lines, well, you know, we just hand it out as one of seven press releases on a Friday afternoon--missed opportunity.

Now, as I say, I applaud the government for having this report. They are to be commended for the people that they chose and the quality of the report that they present. The question is, what are going to do about it? We obviously have failed the test of getting it out in the public debate well in advance, but what are we going to do about it now? Are we going to have positive programs in place to deal with some of the great recommendations that come in here?

Are we going to deal with having nurses in schools? What a great idea. It is a wonderful idea. It is an idea we support. Why have nurses going to Texas when they can stay in Transcona? Why have nurses going to California when they can stay in any community across Manitoba? Why not keep our people here? Let us spend as much time and effort to keep nurses and doctors in Manitoba as we spent to keep hockey players in this province. What a great idea.

I think it is a very good idea. There are some very good ideas in this report. We are talking about the neonatal program. Now, some of these programs will cost money. Some of these programs will save money. It has been described by all the research and also in this report, not just the NDP's word, that you can have target programs for neonatal programs. There are density areas that can be identified in here for neonatal programs that will, in fact, save not only the dignity of the child who is born properly and healthily but also will save us money.

The calculations are that the cost to all of us for a child that does not have proper nutrition at birth and is underweight and undernourished is a horrendous amount of money. I think it is \$750,000. I am just trying to recall the number. It was actually ironic--we do not often agree with The Globe and Mail editorial, but a couple of weeks after we put forward our proposal, we saw a Globe and Mail editorial saying these are the kinds of good ideas we have to start implementing in health care, preventative health care.

We see it in this report. Where is it? Why have we not had it announced? Why can we not take a long-term view? Why do kids not matter in terms of what we are going to do? I think they do to members opposite, but it

is more than just saying and feigning it, it is doing it.

* (1610)

Madam Speaker, another recommendation is to have school-age nutrition programs. Maybe we should have a nutrition program in the legislative cafeteria. I know I should have better nutrition, and I know that is important for all of our health care. All of us should stay healthy and eat balanced food, but a lot of kids do not get this stuff and a lot of kids could get this stuff. It could save us again over the longer haul.

It talks about having physical education in our high schools. Do you realize how many hours kids are watching TV now compared to where we were when many of us went to school? I know we are not all the same rate. Horrendous amount of hours per week.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources):
I did not have TV.

Mr. Doer: Did not have TV for you. They had a little bit of TV for me, and they have a lot of TV now. Some members in this caucus probably had a lot more TV. I mention the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), and that is a compliment.

So why are we not having a program on phys ed? We had to fight the Minister of Education and the government Premier and the Minister of Health to reinstate physical education and to have it absolutely solid in the government curriculum. There has been no leadership in this area. The government was going to have physical education rolled back, and it still has it rolled back in some ways in terms of the number of hours available. Hopefully, we have members opposite now in the new caucus that understand physical fitness. I have seen the odd member across the way running in the Manitoba Marathon. There may be others who are concerned about the long-term view, and phys ed is important.

All the studies have indicated that if kids do not get good physical fitness habits in their teenage years and with the amount of hours of television they are watching at home, the sedentary nature of kids at home, unfortunately we are in for more serious trouble in our health care system than we want to admit. We have to have good positive physical education in our schools;

besides, the old saying is, and I like to believe it, a sound mind in a sound body. I happen to believe that makes a lot of sense, and I think all of us in this Chamber should all support that.

Fetal alcohol syndrome. Why do we not have labels on liquor bottles? Why do we not just put them on liquor bottles? If they can do it in the Yukon, why are we not doing it here? Oh, it may cost us a lot of money. I tell you that any liquor company that wants to sell liquor in Manitoba, you could tell them to put labels on the bottles as a condition of selling booze in our liquor stores and they would do it. They would find a way with the technology to put a label on a bottle. What is wrong with doing that? Why can we not just do it? Why do we just talk about it and deny it and not do it? I mean, it is so easy. They have done it in the Yukon. [interjection] You do not like the idea. Well, I am surprised the member does not like the idea, but we will just keep giving you positive ideas and, hopefully, you will accept a few of them.

The whole idea of family life education in school. Right now Manitoba has--not according to the NDP, but according to this report that I know some members have read--the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Canada. I do not know where we stand with North America, but it is one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates, I think, in North America. This is not a minor problem. This is a serious, serious problem here in Manitoba, and we have to do something about it. We have to have family life education in our schools, and we have to work in partnership with our schools, with our parents, with our parent advisory committees, with the communities to get programs in. Kids have to know this stuff. I am not talking about an assault on the religious beliefs of people. I am talking about just common-sense family life education. I am talking about having it in schools where hopefully those kids who do not get it at home--ideally, kids get it at home. All of us agree with that. Nobody has any difficulty with it. Ideally, kids get their religious training on family life education issues in their church. Nobody disagrees with it. But also, what about those kids who are not getting it at either place? Where are they going to get it? School is the next best place to get it. Let us go ahead with it. Let us go ahead with the recommendations here in this report.

The whole issue of health care programs in our schools, I think, is a very good one. Let us look at the

whole issue of youth assessment programs. Again, this report is very critical of the decline in assessments in audiology and speech programs here in Manitoba. You have cut money out of those programs. Most people in the field, again, say that the best time to invest in speech and hearing programs, the best time to invest in behaviour programs is when the kids are young, not later on. Invest at the front end.

The lineups in Winnipeg for some of the rural kids are eight and nine months. Some of the people are telling us it is over one year. It is doubling and quadrupling in terms of its access for kids. Four- and five-year-olds, three- and four-year-olds, I think, were in our community settings that we have heard from. That is wrong. We should be putting money into these programs, investments into these programs, at the front end. It makes a lot more sense as this report says. This report has a lot of common-sense recommendations. It may not be consistent with the Tory priorities, but it has a lot of common-sense recommendations.

The whole issue of aboriginal children. This is a big, big challenge for us. I was disappointed when Ron Irwin took shots at the government, and the government took shots back. That is not going to solve a thing to have two political jurisdictions pointing at each other in terms of who is better and who is worse in terms of aboriginal children.

I want our provincial government involved in these discussions on aboriginal health and involved in discussions on aboriginal health for our children. I do not want them sitting on the sidelines. I do not want the Minister of Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik) to be in the bleachers. I do not want the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) to say, not our job, somebody else's jurisdiction, because people move from one community to another. There is tremendous mobility in this country, and there is even more mobility in this province, and you ignore this challenge at your peril. You ignore this challenge at your economic peril, and we ignore the challenge of dealing with aboriginal kids and aboriginal health at our collective challenge.

This report says 17 percent of our kids by the year 2011 are going to be aboriginal, so to have the Minister of Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik) and the federal Minister of Native Affairs pointing fingers at each other is not very good for the long-term future of our kids.

We think there are some good ideas in this report. We think there are some good ideas in the proposals we put forward in the election and before the election. We think there are some good ideas in this Chamber. Let us get on with it. Let us put in a child strategy that will make us all proud, and let us take the long-term view for our kids. Our kids are our future, and it is time that we started dealing with our future and in terms of our children with a comprehensive healthy child strategy. Let us not argue about it. Let us go ahead. Let us go forward. Let us get it done. Thank you very much.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I am very pleased to rise and speak to this amendment. I have to thank the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) for in fact raising the issue of our children in this Legislature through this resolution and indicate to him that we as a government have a strong commitment and a strong desire to ensure that our children right throughout the province of Manitoba are loved and nurtured and provided for and cared for.

I do not want to take ownership as a government over all of the children in our province in respect to having to dictate to or dominate Manitoba families in Manitoba communities what they should and could be doing in conjunction with government to ensure that children are well looked after and cared for in our province, and I take some exception to some of the comments by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) when he indicates in this House and to Manitobans that there is no commitment from our government.

Madam Speaker, we have made a major commitment and have tried to look at focusing our energies and our resources throughout government to provide appropriate services for children to reduce the overlap and the duplication that presently exists.

* (1620)

I noticed he used the report that was prepared by our government in consultation with the broader community around children, and the recommendations that came forward were good recommendations, recommendations that many we have already implemented and others we are working on. Madam Speaker, I take some offence to the comments that he believes the New Democratic Party is the only party that is thinking about children in our province. We have over the last number of years over the

mandate of this government taken the issue of children and support for our children and the health of our children very seriously, and there were a lot of announcements made prior to the election.

I might want to correct the Leader of the Opposition when he says it was a Friday afternoon. I believe it was a Friday morning when the announcement was made on the Child Health Strategy. The reason I know it was in the morning was because that afternoon we also talked about the Child and Youth Secretariat and the undertakings that had been in progress and were completed that afternoon, announcements around children with severe medical disabilities.

It was an issue that I was able to discuss at many doors during the election campaign because my constituents had concerns about the fragmentation of services for children, how they had to go to several different departments within government, several different agencies to try to get some resolution to the problem that existed and the help and the support that they needed, the special needs support that they needed.

Madam Speaker, I was able to respond in a very positive manner to say that we had come to grips with the issue and resolved the problem so that within government, rather than having to go to three or four different governments, people who needed the service were able to go to one intake place within government in the Department of Family Services through Children's Special Services to get the help and the support and the referral that they needed.

Madam Speaker, we had the Departments of Education, Health and Family Services working in conjunction, one with the other. There were financial resources transferred from the Department of Health to the Department of Education so that in fact nurses and those who had special training would be right in our schools, paid for by the Department of Health so that the professionals that were needed to provide the supports and the service would be there. Money was transferred and reallocated from Health to Education. Money was transferred from the Department of Health to the Department of Family Services so that training programs could be undertaken for the teachers and the paraprofessionals in our schools to do some of the non-nursing, nonmedical functions.

Madam Speaker, I believe this is a very positive step forward in looking at co-ordination of services, and that was undertaken by the Child and Youth Secretariat, and their work is ongoing.

As I hear the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) talk about the numbers of adolescent or teen pregnancies in the province, in fact it is indicated in the report, and all of the information that we have does indicate, that Manitoba indeed does have the highest number of adolescent pregnancies per capita across the country. I do not think that is a number we are terribly proud of. I think it is an issue that—I know it is an issue that has been very near and dear to my heart and an area that I have personally taken a very aggressive approach toward trying to resolve.

As I travel throughout Manitoba and meet with many community organizations and individuals in this province, I hear first-hand the comment about babies having babies in our community, and how can we possibly come to grips with that issue and ensure that everyone that becomes pregnant understands that parenting becomes the very first responsibility for that individual.

I think we have to focus our energies and our efforts on getting the message out that if in fact you do become pregnant, your first responsibility is to that unborn child through the duration of your pregnancy so that you learn to take care of yourself, to eat nutritional meals and to ensure that that child gets off to a good, healthy start to life. Once that child is born, how then do we ensure that the parenting skills are readily available so that in fact there is an understanding that the first and foremost responsibility is to that new child that has been brought into this world and that if we want to ensure that child gets off to a good start, the first step is to take care of yourself during pregnancy and the second step then is to learn to parent that child in a responsible manner?

I do not think there are any of us in this Legislature, in any of the three parties that are represented here, that do not believe that parenting is a very major responsibility. We all try our very best to do the best we can and know that we do not always make all of the right decisions. Some of us make mistakes as parents, but I think we have to try to put the tools into the hands of people to learn to parent responsibly and ensure that our children are off to a good, healthy start both nutritionally and through bonding and through nurturing and through loving and

through caring.

Madam Speaker, I think those issues are paramount as we look to trying to come to grips with the issues around adolescent pregnancy. We also know, not only do we have the highest number of adolescent pregnancies per capita, we know that those born to adolescent parents are six times more likely to use our child welfare system than two-parent families. That is of major concern to me and to us as a government as well because we do see the increasing costs and the need for children to be protected as a result of neglect and abuse in their family situations.

It is important that we do not deal with any one issue in isolation of another. That is one of the reasons why we have tried to develop a co-ordinated approach through the Child and Youth Secretariat, so that the Department of Health that has prime responsibility for health and wellness and nutrition, the Department of Family Services that deals with adolescent pregnancies, that deals with Child and Family Services and social allowance services, has a co-ordinated approach.

We also do know that those that are involved in the child welfare system are often involved in their later years in our justice system. That also has very much an increased cost, not only to the taxpayers of Manitoba, but a cost to society.

Madam Speaker, it is incumbent upon us to look to the resources that we presently spend in all of the areas in Health, in Education, in Family Services and in Justice and redirect resources. We all know, and I have said many times to many of those in the community that I have responsibility for, that there is no more money. We are a government that is committed to balanced budget, and we do know that there are a lot of resources going out into our community to deal with the issues around our children. Those dollars have to be co-ordinated and used more effectively. They have to be redirected from areas that we presently spend them on if in fact we have programs in place that no longer meet the needs of the '90s. That is the reality. It is a reality that all social services ministers and all governments are facing right across the country.

I was very pleased to learn from the Premiers Conference that was just held that never before has there been the like thinking of provinces of different political stripes than there is today where we have the Province of

B.C. with a New Democratic government looking at the same issues as the Province of Manitoba with a Conservative government, and the Province of Newfoundland with a Liberal government saying, how do we come together to try to better address the issues surrounding our families and our children and those who are in need in our communities?

The political barriers have been broken down, Madam Speaker, when we look to trying to resolve some of the issues that we are all facing as governments right across the country. I do not think there is any one government that can claim ownership over wanting or trying to do more than another. I do not think there is any one government that has all of the solutions. If we had all the solutions, we would not be spending the dollars that we are today that are required to meet the needs of our families who are in difficult circumstances in our society.

Madam Speaker, we take some pride in the report that has been discussed today. We take pride in the accomplishments and the co-ordination of thinking throughout government departments. We will continue to work with and take suggestion from the opposition, from other provinces if they have found solutions that are working, and we will continue to dialogue with the community.

* (1630)

I think I have to reiterate today that this is not a government responsibility alone. There is a family responsibility and there is a community responsibility for us to all come together around these issues and try to find positive solutions within the resources that we presently allocate today for the children of Manitoba. The issues are real issues. I do not think any of us want to downplay the need to ensure that our children are being supported, being nurtured, being cared for and being loved in a manner that we would all want to see.

I must say that I believe our government is moving in the right direction and that I would hope the opposition would join with us and come forward with constructive solutions to the problems that exist today.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that Resolution 3 be amended by deleting all the words following the first WHEREAS and replacing them with the following:

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba recognizes that the health of Manitoba children is a primary concern to all of us, and that children have an inherent value and vulnerability that requires that they be nurtured and protected as our future generation of leaders, workers and parents and as an enormous social investment for our society; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba has recognized the concern of Manitobans about the current health needs of children as identified in disease and social burdens and that such needs are a reflection of broader determinants of health that include poverty, family integrity, housing, employment and nutrition; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Justice announced changes to the Maintenance Enforcement Program; and

WHEREAS many of the initiatives to the Maintenance Enforcement Program reflect the ideas gathered from Manitobans during a series of consultations held throughout the province; and

WHEREAS many of the initiatives will strengthen enforcement efforts and enable the program to get more money into the hands of children and families.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly support the provincial government and the Minister of Justice for taking an important step in strengthening the Maintenance Enforcement Program.

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: Due to the length of this amendment, I will take it under advisement in terms of whether it is in order.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, am I then addressing the main motion?

Madam Speaker: That is correct.

Mr. Sale: For a very few brief moments there, I thought that the government was willing to do what the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) said, and that is to work together on a very vital issue, but I see that they want to substitute rhetoric for action.

I would like to add my congratulations to the members who did the hard work to put this report together. Dr. Postl in particular is one of Manitoba's great resources in the area of children and children's health. He has an enormous background in northern health matters in particular, having been the director of the northern health unit for a number of years. He brought together on this report an excellent team of people. I was pleased to read both some earlier drafts of this report which became available and the main report itself, and I commend the study team for putting this report together.

I would say to the members opposite that this is indeed an issue which ought to be nonpartisan. I would like to recall to the immediately previous speaker, the honourable member from River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), her memory to a time the Social Planning Council in 1979 and '80 when the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg of which I was then the director formed the task force on maternal and child health and brought together members of the community, of the health sector, volunteers and members of the government, which at that time was a Conservative government and had just been elected in fact when the task force began its work.

At that time we had the worst neonatal health record in all of Manitoba in Winnipeg's inner city. We intended by concerted collaborative action to move that record from the worst to at least an acceptable level. It has taken more than a decade to do that, but I am sure that members opposite as well as members on this side of the House are pleased to know that the neonatal mortality rate and all of the indicators that go with that particular rate have improved largely due to the very careful and very hard work of the volunteer community, places like the Health Action Centre, Mount Carmel Clinic, the various other community clinics of the inner city, and in some way in particular the city Public Health Department.

I am pleased with that kind of progress, and I would hold that up for all members as a sign of the way that we must go if we are to be serious about addressing the very difficult problems of child poverty and child health. So I am dismayed that the government felt it necessary to talk out this resolution and did not instead join with us in a unanimous vote for children and a unanimous vote for a nonpartisan approach to action on the part of children instead of to a narrow partisan attempt to deflect all of the legitimate criticisms that are noted by the hundreds in this report into windy phrases that signify very, very little.

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

I am very disappointed that the minister opposite felt it necessary to turn what could have been a nonpartisan collaboration into a partisan, nasty, narrow little debate. Children deserve better. Our children deserve better. I would remind the House that the honourable minister is a nutritionist by background, has some expertise in that area, and knows very well the difficult issues that face children in the inner city; would remind all members that Mount Carmel Clinic in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated the value of prenatal nutrition, that the Montreal Diet Dispensary in Canada pioneered all of the research which showed that it was ever so much cheaper to provide good nutrition to mothers while they were pregnant than it was to remedy the problems after the fact.

I know that the minister agrees with that because she spoke privately with me about that in the 1970s. She has spoken publicly about it since. I know that there is no disagreement on that, so I ask her why would the government not simply stand in support of a detailed antichild poverty strategy, why would the government not stand together with all members and make this a priority of which all Manitobans could then be proud?

I would ask the members opposite, just which piece of this strategy do you not like? Just which piece of it was so offensive that you had to amend this resolution? Was it because you want to make teenage mothers the victims? Was it because you are not in support of a better prenatal program for inner-city poor women? Is it because you do not like family life education? Perhaps it is because, as I experienced as a bureaucrat in a government, previous to government, a minister who refused to sign program supports for inner-city family centres. I watched while the minister of that government sat and said no, I will not support child-parent centres in the inner city. I will not sign the grants for child-parent centres, so that what happened was the Core Area Initiative had to sign those grants so those poor little centres could stay in place.

* (1640)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are centres which cost, on average, \$30,000 a year, not a big spending priority--\$30,000 a year. The Minister of Education of that day, of that government, the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr.

Derkach), would not sign those permits, would not sign those grants.

An Honourable Member: Shame on you for Where is your integrity? Tell all.

Mr. Sale: Well, I think it is in a somewhat better position than that minister who would not sign those, that finally were signed, at a higher level of that same government.

Is it that you are offended by the notion that there should be particular strategies for public health nurses into our schools? Are you upset with the idea that we should place 80 to 100 nurses in our highest risk schools? Is that why you felt you had to amend this motion? Perhaps it is that you really do not have a deep commitment to fetal alcohol syndrome education. Perhaps that is the part of our motion that you had some trouble with, that you wanted to get rid of so you would not have to say, we are going to put labels on these bottles; we are going to really spend some resources in dealing with the single greatest cause of deformed children.

Perhaps it is that aboriginal and northern children are not the highest priority for you. Perhaps that is the part of the motion that you did not particularly like. Perhaps child safety is something that is not high on your priority list, and for that reason we had to get rid of that part of our motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very concerned that this government does not seem to be able to understand the research put together by a consultant that they brought into a major conference several years ago, Dr. Fraser Mustard, whose Institute of Advanced Research in Canada they support. They provide, I believe, \$100,000 out of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism's department for the Institute of Advanced Research.

Dr. Mustard has shown conclusively, absolutely biochemically conclusively, that the first 18 to 24 months of an infant's life is the time during which the immune system of children is literally programmed by the nutrition and family interactions of those children. It is not something which I think we sufficiently yet understand the miracle and wonder of, but there is a biochemical crossover from the affection, the nurturing, the environment of the child in the first two years of its life that actually permanently programs that child's

immune system. It is an amazing piece of research in which Canadian doctors, Canadian scientists have led the way in discovering this linkage between early childhood experience and the immune system of children.

There is no more critical time than the time just before and just after birth in the life of a child, and to say, as the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) appeared to be saying during debate, that we have to just talk to the parents, this is the parents' problem, if they do not do it right, it is the parents' fault, well, I come from a background that says you do not visit the sins of the parents on the children. There are some sins of parents we cannot help but the children inheriting, and we regret those, but we should never by public policy say, well, if that child is damaged it is the parents' fault. I am afraid that that may be the fact, but it is not an acceptable public policy to make that something that we just say, well, there is nothing we can do about it.

So I am deeply concerned that the members opposite feel unable to support this excellent resolution.

The member talked about this study. This study sat on the minister's desk for months and months and months. It was finally released, as the minister says, on a Friday morning. It sat all the way through an election. There was another study, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a study on midwifery, also something that bears deeply on the lives and health of northern and native women and of women everywhere in Manitoba, but particularly in rural and remote areas.

That study sat for a year on the Minister of Health's desk. Has it been implemented? Not yet, not yet, although we are in favour of it, just as the member opposite rose and said they are in favour of a strategy to deal with child poverty. They have had eight years. I do not see a strategy yet.

We offered in this motion a strategy, a very detailed strategy. We offered it in a nonpartisan way. We offered it a year before the election. We offered to work with the government on this. We offered specifics.

And what was their response? Their response was to attempt to amend the resolution out of existence and to replace solid, concrete proposals for action with windy promises of being very concerned about the life and health of Manitoba's children.

I hope that the government will take seriously the opportunity they have in this motion to rise in support of the original resolution as moved by our Leader. I hope that the government will rethink the wisdom of moving an amendment that will clearly, transparently put them not on the side of children but on the side of wind and bureaucracy.

So I ask the government to reconsider the wisdom of amending a motion which is so clearly a nonpartisan opportunity to be supportive of Manitoba's children. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all I would like to just say that certainly we as a government have been putting children first. I do believe that, ongoing, this has been indicated. Also, my presence within the system of working with children in the school system for the past 18 years, I believe that certainly we have been responsible in our mandate as teaching and educating our children.

In 1993, a 55-member intersectoral committee made up of Health, Education, Justice and social services professionals and community stakeholders was brought together to develop a co-ordinated child health strategy for Manitoba.

The resultant report, the Health of Manitoba's Children, was released in March of 1995. This report was the first of its kind in Canada. It forms the basis of our intent to fundamentally restructure services to our children. The report focused on the study of overall children's health issues, such as injuries and violence, treatment services, special population groups, lifestyle and the impact of socioeconomic and health factors.

As a result of this unique population health report, we can now recommend strategies targeted to children specific to their needs. This process of targeting will improve equity in health for Manitoba's children. The report notes that early intervention is a key strategy for healthier children, adolescents and adults. I believe that this is what is taking place at the present time, and certainly it is an intention of our government to continue to do that, but early intervention is a key component of that.

Fifteen hundred copies of the final report have been printed and already approximately one half of these have

been distributed to interested individuals and groups both within and outside Manitoba.

This report is the most comprehensive provincial study of health for children. It has 116 targeted recommendations for children's health, 42 of which are in the process of being implemented. I would like to reiterate that 42 of these are already in the process of being implemented and that in consequence is what is taking place with this report.

* (1650)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in response to the need for an integrated approach to child services, this government has established a Children and Youth Secretariat. The Health of Manitoba's Children report has been referred to the secretariat to provide, to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations by the different departments.

Other recommendations that are in process are to support the establishment of an aboriginal health and wellness centre to co-ordinate services for special needs children, to develop a healthy start approach to prenatal nutrition and to develop a province-wide approach to fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects children.

I believe that this is in answer to the question that was raised as to is anything being done regarding fetal health syndrome. Yes, it is, and so certainly we are working at that.

The Children and Youth Secretariat has formed an implementation working group to review the remaining 74 recommendations. It consists of a half-time individual from Health, along with representatives from Education and Training, Family Services, Justice and the secretariat. Here again I would just like to add to the fact that the whole area of education, the minister in her department is looking at that. Family Services, as was just indicated to us, is taking part in that discussion, as well as Justice. It is important for us to recognize ongoing that yes, we are addressing this, and that is through the whole area of the Children and the Youth Secretariat.

The present government has a strong commitment to Health, Education and Family Services as priority areas and has increased the share of each program dollar from 66 cents in 1987 to 72 cents in 1995. Again, I would just

like to draw out the fact that, yes, more dollars are being put into the area of Family Services, Health and Education. We are ongoing spending money to do this, and yet on the other hand I would also suggest that dollars do not always cure the ills that we have. So we need to continue an awareness program. We need to continue to work through our schools, through Family Services, through the Health departments in order to educate the people in order that they in fact can get a better feeling of themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Manitoba government is investing \$4.5 million through the Winnipeg Development Agreement to test innovative, community-based approaches to provide early intervention for children and families at risk. Here again we are looking at the early intervention program. It is important that we get in touch with these people before in fact we are running into problems.

The service system will refocus to bring services to where children are, including strengthening the school as a primary site of contact for health, nutrition and education service. Again, ongoing. This is something that has been taking place for a number of years. I know that my contact with our division over the last number of years has certainly indicated that they are increasing the awareness in this program. This is a part of the mandated program that our students need to take. My own children, in fact, are involved in this. So I am pleased to see that ongoing we are making strides in improving this area.

The public health approaches will also be strengthened. Public health nurses, health educators and home economists will be more directly involved in neighbourhoods and the community in providing prevention and early intervention supports. So here again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can see that the public health is continually working at it. They are involving their people, the nurses, the health educators, the home economists. They are trying to encompass all people, all players, within that department in order to best provide the information that is needed.

The Children and Youth Secretariat is developing and targeting strategies for community-based co-ordination, prevention and early intervention for adolescent pregnancy, fetal alcohol syndrome and children at risk. Manitoba Health is developing community-based approaches to address childhood asthma and respiratory

problems as well as injury reduction and safety issues. We are implementing community-based prenatal and child nutrition strategies through local sites such as community nurse resource centres and community health centres. Again, this is an innovative approach of dealing with the problem as has been described.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am encouraged to see that these things are taking place, and this is all a part of the plan that we as a government are looking at.

There are also a number of child-focused measures to address a range of needs, and I would just like to address a few of these. The co-ordination of services and policy for medically fragile children. Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a new \$550,000 Child and Adolescent Treatment Clinic which provides additional treatment for children with acute psychiatric needs. Then we have a province-wide approach to fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect children. A new \$2.5-million Family Support Innovation Fund provides assistance for pilot projects to return children in care to their families and to support families whose children are at risk of being taken into care and then working with the aboriginal community to build on cultural and community strengths to address a specific child health-related issue. Manitoba is involved in the development of a new aboriginal head start program in the city of Winnipeg in conjunction with aboriginal groups and the Government of Canada.

The government believes in a holistic approach to the physical education and well-being and remains committed to having mandatory physical education during the formative school years and further believes that the physical well-being of our youth is best addressed in an integrated approach involving an active partnership with families and communities. The Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship has already piloted a number of innovative projects in this area.

I would just like to go back to the area of the mandatory physical education during the formative years. I believe that this is a very vital part of our children and the involvement that they have within the school system, also very vital in the whole area of their own physical development, and whereas some enjoy being involved in this, it has become mandatory for them to do it, also for those who do not wish to be a part of this exercise.

Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the children and the Youth

Secretariat has already initiated the development and the implementation of a specific intersectoral protocol for delivering integrated services to children with emotional and behavioural disorders. So we are continuing to work in that area. I just want to reinforce the fact that the children and the Youth Secretariat, they initiated this program and are continuing to work at it. The Children and Youth Secretariat has also--

Point of Order

Mr. Praznik: Yes, my apologies to the member for interrupting him, but I understand that about a few minutes before the hour of four o'clock we agreed, as a House, to call it four o'clock. The time allotted for any one debate is one hour, and I think, if the Speaker and staff will check their record, that one hour should have been elapsed, I believe.

Because we are going to be going through this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a number of days during this sitting, I think it is important to have a clear understanding of how these times work. I may be wrong, but the time is one hour, and we did start early, so that should have us complete our work a few minutes early, before six.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will get confirmation of that by the time we sit tomorrow, but, for today, is it the will of the House for today to call it five o'clock? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, that is not what is before the House at this time. Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock? The honourable member still has time to go. No.

Mr. Praznik: On the same point, as we are establishing these rules somewhat, I would ask for the advice of the Chair. We did agree to call it four o'clock some minutes before four and that the time allotted to any one debate is one hour. If I am wrong, I stand corrected, but I would just like the clarification for the purposes of the smooth operation of House business that we truly understand the operation.

* (1700)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I informed the honourable government House leader, I will look into this matter and

get back to the House with the decision tomorrow. The honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) had the floor, but the hour now being five o'clock, the honourable member will have two minutes remaining the next time this matter is before the House. As previously agreed, the first half of Private Members' Business is now over, and we will commence with the second hour of Private Members' Business, with the honourable member for River Heights on Resolution 4.

Res. 4--Maintenance Enforcement

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), that

WHEREAS it is not acceptable to have families and children live in poverty because court ordered maintenance payments are ignored; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Justice has committed to the well-being of children and families; and

WHEREAS the Minister of Justice announced changes to the Maintenance Enforcement Program; and

WHEREAS many of the initiatives to the Maintenance Enforcement Program reflect the ideas gathered from Manitobans during a series of consultations held throughout the province; and

WHEREAS many of the initiatives will strengthen enforcement efforts and enable the program to get more money into the hands of children and families.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly support the provincial government and the Minister of Justice for taking an important step in strengthening the Maintenance Enforcement Program.

Motion presented.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this legislation which we are referring to today is one of a series of legislation that was brought by our honourable Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey). It touches on The Family Maintenance Act, and I would advise this Chamber that this is something of which I can attest I have had personal experience in years gone by having been an advocate before the courts of this province. I can advise this

Chamber that it has been an issue of great frustration for a practitioner and for many of the people who have been involved in the process of domestic law before this province that there are individuals who have shirked their family duty.

The Family Maintenance Act takes a general philosophy that people who are subject to vulnerabilities, be those spouses who have remained stay-at-home spouses, be they children who are unable, of course, to sustain themselves, that these individuals are subject to the whims and vagaries of the domestic courts, to the domestic law, and that too often in our society spouses or parents, whoever they may be, invest the emotions of the turmoil of domestic dispute and discord. That is visited upon the future of the children and the defenceless members of family.

It is essential, and this government has annotated and taken cognition of the fact, that these vulnerable individuals need protection. In fact, one would note, and I think has already been noted in this Chamber today, that children are our most precious product. They are our citizens of tomorrow, and when they are in their formative years, when they require sustenance, when they require education, it is imperative that they receive this upbringing and this enforcement.

Therefore, after having noted that there were situations which were slipping between the boards, where there were situations in our province where these children were being forced upon the public weal, where there were children that were falling into neglect, where there were spouses that were not receiving the due maintenance that they were entitled to even though the court system had adjudicated on the issues, even though advocates had stood before the courts and presented the facts, there were still the evils of abandonment, there were the evils of neglect. Therefore, it was the wisdom of this government that came forward to take remedial issues on this situation.

I can further attest that during the course of this most recent election, it was my privilege to walk the streets of River Heights, and I can tell you on more than one occasion that I was approached by constituents who remonstrated with me on a very intimate level giving me the individual cases of hardship which they had suffered through abandonment, through neglect, and through the fact, describing to me in vivid detail, that their children

were not receiving the support to which they were entitled and which had been ordered.

Consequently, as a result of this situation our government has taken the initiative to pass a series of legislation. In fact, the analysis of the legislation will show that it falls into several different categories. One of the primary categories which this legislation touches upon--and I would suggest that the legislation to which we are referring are The Personal Investigations Act, The Highway Traffic Act, The Pension Benefits Act, The Garnishment Act and The Parents' Maintenance Act. This bundle of legislation in fact makes three imperatives or three focuses, foci perhaps, that are relevant to this issue.

The first is from a penal point of view to draw the attention to the offending party that in fact our courts and the court orders of this land with regard to domestic issues are not to be ignored. The first issue on this score is that drivers' licences and motor vehicle registrations can be lifted. They can be suspended and that would then invoke all the administrative fury of our Highway Traffic Act, and, ultimately, the Criminal Code should somebody persevere and be an offending parent under the domestic law and have their highway traffic privileges suspended. If they should persevere with driving a motor vehicle and be apprehended they face very stiff penalties under the criminal law and under The Highway Traffic Act.

This will bring home very quickly to nonsupporting parents the full implications of the default which they have effected. This will be a very vital step in putting teeth into the support and teeth into the principle that this government will maintain that these individuals in our society cannot be abandoned. They cannot be left to welfare or public assistance. They must be supported by the responsible and capable parties who are the appropriate people to bear this responsibility in our society.

The second point which this legislation has implemented is that there will be reference of a defaulting parent to the credit bureau. So, if there were an individual entrepreneur, be that whichever parent was responsible for the maintenance and support, the credit rating of the individual in question would be called into question. Therefore, there would be a public declaration, a publication, a declaration to our community that this person was a defaulting parent and all the appropriate

opprobrium would be levelled at that person in an attempt to persuade, to coerce, to involve this person in rising to their responsibilities.

* (1710)

A third point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which this legislation has presented is that if in fact a person is called before the domestic court in question, the Court of Queen's Bench, as the defaulting parent, now the Court of Queen's Bench and the domestic court process have a very significant remedy which can be invoked in the case of contempt, in the case of continued default. That is that jail can be ordered. Commitment to the common jail can be ordered for such a defaulting person in the event that there has been continued contempt of the court order. That penalty has been increased from 30 days to now a period of incarceration of 90 days. There are also monetary impositions which can be levelled, and they have been raised from \$500 to that of \$1,000.

These are very significant issues which our government, which our honourable Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) has invoked in order to sustain the less capable, the vulnerable people in our society, the people who cannot help themselves, the people who need the protection of the government.

There is another issue which, as a practitioner before the courts, I can attest, has been an issue of great frustration. That is that if a defaulting parent, or a defaulting party, has secreted or arranged their affairs in such a fashion that there are assets that could be spent on supporting their dependents and maintaining their appropriate responsibilities, if these assets are merged and mingled with that of another party, and the obvious situation arises where a partner has moved away from a first parenting unit and moved to a second establishment and involved their assets with the second partner, up until now, the courts have been helpless, and the parties enforcing the domestic law have been helpless, to actuate those assets that have been comingled with a second party.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to advise this House that this legislation has directed and mandated that these assets can be seized in satisfaction of these legitimate debts. It is then a reverse onus so that the party who should be making his responsible payments or her responsible payments then may approach the court to tell

the court why these assets should not be used to satisfy the just debt but, nonetheless, the onus is on the offending party to satisfy the default.

This is a major step, I would suggest, in encouraging people, in directing people to satisfy their appropriate responsibilities. These are issues that I can affirm to this Chamber have been issues of great frustration and great concern to the people, the constituents of River Heights, and to many, many of the people who find themselves, unfortunately, before the courts in the issue of trying to enforce legitimate court orders that have been passed and promulgated in their favour. They have been unable to satisfy their just debts.

Another issue which this government has seen fit to address is with regard to secreting of assets, which now has been revealed through the scrutiny of the court process is where pension benefit credits have been accumulated by a responsible party, or in this case actually unfortunately an irresponsible party. The vulnerable person can access those credits before they are due and payable or become crystallized and payable to the pensioner.

So we were left with a case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where a parent or a spouse was able to direct his or her affairs so that they were secreting assets in pension funds and RRSPs, and these are now assets that are accessible to the vulnerable people in our society in order to sustain the needs which are legitimately ascertained by our court process.

So this has been a very significant and laudatory step that our government has taken in order to assist the citizens of Manitoba who find themselves in this position.

There is another area of activity which this legislation addresses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is that the system of collection, the system of enforcement has received further improvement by the direction of this legislation. There has been a computer system involved.

The third area which I would very briefly like to address today is that there has been vigorous petitioning by our Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) to the federal government to effect changes in the bankruptcy law and the insolvency laws of our country in order that these can no longer be used as a shield to prevent the appropriate payments to wives or husbands and children in our domestic environment.

So for these reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would make the resolution which I have presented today to this Chamber that this Assembly support the provincial government and the Minister of Justice in these groundbreaking steps that they have taken to protect the people in our society who require this protection. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to commend the member for River Heights for bringing in this resolution to the Legislature. I think it is important that we reflect on what has taken place during this session, particularly regarding the proposals that are embodied in legislation that this Legislature recently approved. It is important that we reflect on that because of the concerns that have been brought to this Chamber, not only by the opposition but by all of the individuals who came before the standing committee of this House and expressed grave disappointment with the contents of that legislation and said time and time again to the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) that what was being proposed was simply inadequate, was not sufficient, to deal with the poverty and the financial abuse that is being suffered by women and children in Manitoba, women and children who are entitled to maintenance.

The government, of course, finally came in with some proposals after seven years of inaction, and it came in with proposals shortly before the provincial election. We are glad to see that the government did fulfill its commitment and, after the election, bring in the legislation once again. The measures, and I am not going to summarize them because the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) did that, were so restricted in scope that presentation after presentation wondered how the minister could have missed the point that comprehensive reform of maintenance enforcement was needed in this province.

If the member for River Heights is so concerned about maintenance enforcement in this province, I urge him to impress on the Minister of Justice and indeed all of his colleagues that the minister listen and read again the presentations made by people from the committee. The minister at the committee said, when we proposed several amendments, that she was not throwing any of those ideas out, but she would be willing to look at them and perhaps bring in changes at some future time. I think the member has a role to fulfill here, and I encourage him to fulfill that role to its fullest.

* (1720)

After the presentations were made to the committee, the opposition moved I cannot remember how many amendments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but let us just say that the presentations went to about one o'clock and the amendments then took place to about 3:30 in the morning. There was not one of those proposed amendments that was accepted by the government, not one, despite the fact that we had proposed these changes going back for, I think, almost two years. Many of those changes had been proposed in this Legislature, in this Chamber, whether in Question Period or at other times, and the constituents and the people who rely on the maintenance enforcement system put forward those suggestions going back years. There is not one member in this Chamber who, I am sure, is not aware of the needs of the women and children of Manitoba, particularly those who must deal with the aftermath of divorce and separation.

It boggled our minds that the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) could turn her back on those needs, on all the detailed recommendations for change. What we need is an overhaul of the maintenance enforcement system. We do not need a paint job. That is what we got.

We moved an amendment to ensure that the cost of raising the child be considered first and foremost by the courts when awarding maintenance. I cannot imagine how such an amendment could be rejected, particularly after hearing the concerns of the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe). If a government is in touch with reality, with the needs of single-parent families, how could such an amendment be rejected? That was the major recommendation, in fact, the essence of the report from the Manitoba Association of Women and the Law.

Second, we moved an amendment to require the automatic pay cheque deduction of maintenance payments, and we moved that because we wanted to prevent arrears from arising in the first place. It is our experience that once arrears begin to accumulate, the courts too often will forgive those arrears. I am not aware of debts that are owing by other parties being erased as arrears for maintenance are. There are two standards being applied in our community.

Third, we have urged that a family maintenance advocate's office be established to help people with the

legal system, to help people deal with the maintenance enforcement office and to make sure that maintenance orders are secured on behalf of custodial parents.

Fourth, we have argued that the collection of arrears by the government be made a first priority against property. We have seen this Legislature in the past give a priority to the payment of taxes, to debts under The Summary Convictions Act, I believe, for traffic tickets, for debts owing to the Workers Compensation Board for debts relating to the payment of wages, but have we given the priority to the women and children of Manitoba who are entitled to maintenance? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have asked, where are the priorities? Why do parking tickets come before women and children? Why do employer debts to the Workers Compensation Board come before our women and children? Again, the government rejected outright that proposal.

Fifth, we have argued vigorously and we moved an amendment so that interest and penalty charges are applied to late payments. We are bewildered that any other court order for the payment of money is accompanied by interest. I am not aware of many debts at all that do not attract interest. Now, the minister in the committee said, well, if you are in default, if you have arrears, why add interest? You are still not going to get it. She misses the point that if you apply interest, you are providing an incentive for people to prioritize the payment of maintenance, to prioritize it above all of the other debts that do attract interest.

When you ask yourself, well, what debts should I pay this month, you are going to look to see which has the highest interest rate. It is just some basic common sense that we are asking be applied here, and we look to the province of British Columbia which has enacted some very progressive provisions that require the payment of interest. The minister said, no, I am not interested in that, and yet presentation after presentation, I think on more than any other topic, urged that interest be applied to arrears.

We asked to move an amendment that awards be automatically indexed to the cost of living. Again, no interest from this government.

7. We urge that the government look at removing more than just licensing privileges, licensing of automobiles. We have to bring to bear all the power of the state we can

to enforce maintenance payments. This is no time for halfhearted measures. It is a time that we get serious.

8. We ask that the legislation prevent the forgiveness of arrears. I just spoke earlier about how the courts too often just erase all the arrears. The minister said, oh, you cannot do that because circumstances change. Well, there are mechanisms in the legislation to allow for an appeal and to allow for the variation of maintenance awards, but arrears that built up to nonpayment, simple nonpayment, are still being erased off the books and yet nothing is going to be done by this government.

9. We have argued that there should be a workable formula established for maintenance awards, and for that there has to be consultation with the federal government and, I think, the other provincial governments. We have seen some discussions take place about formulas; quite frankly, the formulas are just too low. They are not generous whatsoever. We think the province should take a leadership role in working towards a formula that will indeed meet the needs of children and women in Manitoba.

We asked and we moved an amendment in committee so that a workable—I am sorry, to require the court to take into account the tax implications of maintenance awards because we have seen the federal government and, of course, the Supreme Court of Canada say that custodial parents have to face some very severe tax implications. We think that that issue can be dealt with if the courts are required to consider the tax implications when making awards. Again, the minister said, no, not interested.

We recently heard the minister talk about the need for breaking down interprovincial maintenance barriers. We find it interesting that at the highest level this government is interested in breaking down the trade barriers in Canada, but has it taken any meaningful lead in breaking down the barriers to maintenance enforcement in this country? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have also argued that the government has to begin a public awareness campaign so that individuals know they are entitled to maintenance in the first place.

* (1730)

It is one thing to talk about the shortcomings of the maintenance enforcement system. It is quite another to let people know that they are entitled to use it because we

know that there are many people who are entitled to maintenance who think that they cannot sign on to the program perhaps because the ex does not have custody or visiting rights or perhaps out of fear. Unfortunately, there are individuals out there who are not pursuing maintenance because they see the government as just a big bureaucratic mess, which it has been, documented in this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Without a comprehensive overhaul of the maintenance enforcement system, we regret that bureaucratic mess will continue, that people will not sign on to the program, people who are in need. More importantly, the poverty and the financial abuse of women and children in this province will continue.

We also need a public awareness program so that the people who are responsible financially for their children take that right seriously. There are many out there who think that because of that bureaucratic mess they will get off scot-free and the arrears will be erased. In many cases they are right. We have a lot of work to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I thank the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) for raising this issue once again in this session, and I ask that he speak with the Minister of Justice not only with a view to ushering in a comprehensive overhaul of maintenance enforcement but to get the minister to revisit why she took away appeal rights from custodial parents with the set of amendments that were brought into this Chamber. The minister and this government took away the right of appeal of a decision of the Deputy Registrar as to provisions of a payment plan.

I just received a copy of a letter that was sent to the Minister of Justice dated July 5, 1995, from Rosella Dyck, one of the individuals, a custodial parent, who appeared before the Standing Committee. She said: Women who are escaping abuse do not need their rights taken away. That is like putting them in jail to protect them. Rather, they need help to stand against the abuse. It is good for them to have an enforcement agency to collect for them. However, when they have gained enough strength and energy to stand against the abuse, then they should be enabled to do so. Encouraging women to stand up against abuse gives them strength. Removing the rights of the payee to appeal disempowers women totally. It does not protect women. It simply gives the defaulter more power and control over--

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

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps just as a point of order, you might want to indicate to members when they are speaking how much time they have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Your light had been flashing for two minutes. You might have covered it up with your notes.

* * *

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise in support of Resolution No. 4, and I second it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government's maintenance enforcement legislative initiative was and is designed to enhance Manitoba's ability to collect maintenance payments. These initiatives are quite extensive. They are substantial amendments to The Family Maintenance Act. There are corresponding changes to The Personal Investigations Act, The Highway Traffic Act, The Pension Benefits Act, The Garnishment Act and The Parents' Maintenance Act.

Listening to a number of the comments that have been made within this Assembly and out and to many different legislators from the Parliament of Canada, the Legislatures throughout our land, I think it would be the will, and I think I can safely say this, to have legislation that covers everybody for every instance. This has gone on for many, many years and indeed our legislators, and us being some of those legislators, have done our best to come up with programs and initiatives that would cover almost every instance. As the saying goes, that is almost an impossibility.

I believe that all of the members in this Assembly would agree that the end of a marriage or the end of a relationship does not and cannot release an individual from their obligation to support their family. Breakup of a family has a significant impact on the children involved. The hurting of the children, in these cases, is the reason for the legislation that was passed earlier.

It was mentioned by one of the earlier speakers that the times that he had run into people on the campaign trail

who had problems such as this--and probably all members, if not most of the members, have had friends or even relatives or people that they just knew, an acquaintance, who have had these kinds of problems. Most times the man and woman involved do not even mean to cause harm to the children, but because it is such an emotional thing between the two people, without realizing they are doing it, they do use the child as a pawn. When you have that happen to friends who are very close to you or even relatives, it does hurt to see this kind of thing happen, and especially then, when it is the children who are involved and the children who are hurt, it is even worse. The hurting of children, as I have said, in these cases, is the reason for the legislation.

When there is not enough money to go around, the children may go hungry, they may go cold, they may feel unloved, unwanted and do not understand what is happening or even why.

Many of the maintenance payments that are not paid or the reasons for that are even hampered more by people moving to other provinces or even right out of the country, be it from here to the United States or something of that nature. It makes it very, very hard to follow or to collect on.

When I mention legislation that covers everybody for every instance, we could sit here all afternoon and think of many instances that in fact it would be almost impossible to cover. The reasons that payers have for nonpayment are many, but none can be strong enough when children are the ones that take the brunt of their action.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

There are approximately 11,700 orders administered by the Maintenance Enforcement, and these orders involve approximately 20,000 children. These children relied on the program to protect them, but it fell short. Our responsibility to protect the rights of Manitobans of all ages has resulted in the amendments before the House earlier this year.

It was quite nice to see the maintenance enforcement initiatives pass, and I commend the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) and the government for bringing it forward. We have strengthened efforts in collecting maintenance enforcement payments because the court

payments impact directly on the future well-being of children and their families. There are many individuals who seek to avoid their obligations as determined by the courts, and the result is the families are faced with poverty. I think that we have all heard stories of people who have left the jurisdiction, be it the province, gone into other provinces or, like I said, even into the United States, and when confronted by somebody else, a friend or somebody who just happened to run into them, their remark of "social assistance will look after them," or something of that nature, it kind of hurts to see somebody with that kind of an outlook.

* (1740)

Paying maintenance for their family has to be a payer's first obligation. Changes to the maintenance enforcement act has or will, as I have said, strengthen enforcement efforts, provide invaluable information on the location and assets of delinquent payers and help get more money into the hands of children and their families. Maintenance payments are a moral and a legal obligation. Manitoba Justice had a series of eight consultations across the province and much of the direction taken has come from those consultations.

In expanding our enforcement programs we have or will be able to suspend or refuse drivers' licences and motor vehicle registrations. Reporting delinquent payers to the Credit Bureau should shock a few of our payers and we have increased the maximum jail term to 90 days from 30 and raising the maximum fine to \$1,000 from \$500.

Seizing jointly held bank accounts and other assets to pay maintenance orders should also shock a few into taking on their duties as they should. Also assessing accumulated pension benefit credits before retirement payouts begin will also help.

There will be an improvement of program resources also of increased staffing levels: two legal counsel positions, one support staff position, one enforcement officer for maintenance enforcement work, an automated voice response system for telephone inquiries to improve communications between officers and clients making more efficient use of the officer's time for enforcement efforts, an improved computer system which frees up more of an officer's time, information sessions for family law lawyers and recipients enrolled in the program.

The Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) requested a review of federal legislation also. These requests include changes in the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act which will give maintenance recipients and their children high priority in the recovery and distribution of funds. The Bank Act should be amended to simplify means of seizing assets for support payments and help enforcement efforts. The federal government can also play a crucial role in locating defaulting payers and ascertaining their place of employment. For example, information from Revenue Canada and other federal data banks to help locate the payer's residence and place of employment is crucial. Establishing a register of the T1 form submitted for new employees in Canada will also help.

The maintenance enforcement initiatives and the requested support from federal counterparts make our position clear. As I have said earlier, children are the No. 1 reason for the legislation that was passed earlier. We see many, many cases--and I have run into a number of cases within my constituency, not a lot but a number of them--and each time the hurt of seeing a family separated, the children not just separated from their parents, from their mom or dad but also sometimes in many cases from their grandparents, and the hurt just goes on and on.

It is not just the children, but they are the most important in that sense, but it is the prolonged hurt throughout the family. As I have said it is impossible to cover every instance, but I think that people throughout our community, the extended family has a part to play, not just in the legal aspect but in the moral aspect of helping our people, our young people especially, to understand the responsibility taken on by them when they enter into a relationship or into marriage.

There are many cases from within churches where there are pre-marital classes given by the church, by ministers, priests, to people who are looking at taking that big step of marriage or to enter into a relationship. I have taken those classes some 29 years ago. Things of this nature were in fact relayed to me and my wife at that time, and I took them seriously, but I think we have to also see that 30 years ago it was a bit of a different society, if you will, to what we have today. I have heard many people relate to our society today as a more permissive society and you could take that in many different ways, and it is true. It is true. You can look at the things within your home and what you would allow in your home, for example, movies. [interjection] Well, I do

not think that quite fits here, but we can talk about that any time you wish.

I think that I have run out of time, but I would just like to say that I agree that this Legislative Assembly support the provincial government and the Minister of Justice for taking an important step in strengthening the Maintenance Enforcement Programs in this province.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure that I can put a few words on the record with respect to family maintenance and maintenance payments and so forth. It is in fact a very important issue, and I do not believe it is necessary for me to run out the clock but in essence just indicate in terms of where the party comes from on this particular issue.

There were a number of amendments that we brought forward with respect to the legislation that was introduced. We were very supportive of the government taking relatively quick action in terms of passing it after the election. Seven years is a long time to wait, but in essence after the election they did move relatively fast. We were disappointed in terms of the government's response to the number of presentations and the lack of apparent listening that they were not doing, because there were a number of amendments. The member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) pointed out and made reference to a number of those amendments.

There were presentations that were made that could have made this legislation much better. When I had the opportunity to speak on the legislation, Madam Speaker, I believe I had commented something to the effect that we are pleased to see the legislation before us, and at its passing we look forward to see the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) bring in additional legislation to fill in the gaps that were pointed out so very clearly. So I do believe that this particular resolution is somewhat premature, that in fact there would have been a more opportune time possibly at the end of the next session or whenever the Minister of Justice did bring forward the amendments that we had advocated for, the New Democrats had advocated for and in fact Manitobans had advocated for. I do hope and trust that she will, the minister will, bring forward other legislation to do just that.

It is interesting that prior to this resolution we were talking about poverty and many of the negative

consequences of poverty, and you can connect the two resolutions to a certain degree in terms of how much of an impact neglect of maintenance payments has on the poverty of many individuals. It is predominantly, likely in the high 90 percentages, Madam Speaker--I do not have the actual statistic in front of me--of those being the single parent, being the single mother, and whatever we can do to ensure that those maintenance payments are in fact being enforced that we should move in that direction. If it is possible to move in an apolitical fashion, albeit, that is probably the preferred way of going, but my feeling on this particular issue, as the past has indicated, is that it is going to take a great deal of prodding from the opposition in order to get the government to take action.

* (1750)

Madam Speaker, I trust and hope that this government will follow up. Because as both resolutions--and the former one, the one that we earlier talked about is, again, a resolution which we could support in principle in order to achieve a better standard of life for so many Manitobans, so many single parents, to ensure that maintenance payments are in fact being maintained, thereby doing that we are going to be able to provide the many necessities.

In many cases that is what we are talking about, the bare necessities for some of those children as a result of neglect from one parent in not making those maintenance payments, that those necessities are not being met and that goes right from clothing to food and so forth.

So hopefully, in conclusion, we will see some action from the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), hopefully, ideally, before this time next year we will be able to complement the bill that was passed earlier in June.

I thank you for the opportunity just to say these few words.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I want to speak on the resolution before us. First of all, it would be appropriate to suggest that perhaps the timing of this resolution is rather unfortunate for the government, because this is all too typical of some of the mass-produced type of resolutions we are seeing from members opposite.

They must have developed a computer program, that they just plug in the title. In this case it is to do with

maintenance enforcement where they congratulate themselves on something they have presumed to have done. The problem in this case is I would suggest they better reprogram the computer because here, despite the fact that we have delayed dealing with private members' hour until after our summer recess, we now have a resolution that is congratulating the government in an area where they brought in a bill and guess what, Madam Speaker? They failed to proclaim the provisions of that bill. I mean this is sort of like the nursery rhyme, they put in their thumb and they pulled out a plum and they said what good boys and girls am I.

Madam Speaker, if I was the member who brought this resolution in--I must admit today in caucus, when I looked at the Order Paper and when we came to discussing the strategy--I would have suggested I might want to be absent rather than introduce this puffery, this self-congratulation about something that has not happened.

To my mind this is like the Monty Python skit, one of my favourites, where they run through the rules, rule No. 1, rule No. 2 and you get to rule No. 6 and there is no rule No. 6. Here we are talking about the Maintenance Enforcement Program and we are talking about a bill that was passed, and there is no bill. It has not been proclaimed and yet we have the member--and I will say that I have been in the position of being a government and bringing in resolutions. I do not think I brought in any resolutions that were quite as self-serving from the government side as this one, but I had an occasion to ask questions of government members when I was a government member, so I have been there.

I know what it is like and I must say to the member there were times when I said no, I am not going to get up and ask the minister what good things he or she has done recently, but here this is not a question that asks that, this is a resolution. If we were to pass this resolution, this would be recorded in the history of this Legislature as a statement by the 57 members of the Legislature indicating that they did really congratulate the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) on doing something that has not been done.

So I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, there is only one thing we can do with this. There are actually two, pardon me. One is, the member that has brought this in--we have five more minutes left--the member could

stand, I think, and indicate that perhaps this was brought in by error, and we can almost pretend that this past hour has not happened, or second, we can vote this resolution down because this government has not done what it has said in terms of maintenance enforcement. The bill they brought in they have not proclaimed yet. What is stated in this resolution has not happened.

So I would suggest, Madam Speaker, so that we at least can look our constituents in the eye and say to them we have done something positive on this day, our first day back since the summer sitting, I would suggest the best thing we could do would be to say, this resolution which makes no sense, that has not happened, how about we just defeat it.

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): Well, that is a negative statement, if I have ever heard one, from the member for Thompson.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand up and speak to this resolution. Actually, on second thought, I do not think I am pleased to be speaking to this. It is a sad commentary on society that we have to pass this kind of legislation to expand our powers because there are some people who do not wish to take their responsibilities properly.

Our bottom line, as the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) stated many, many times, is that we feel, even if there is a marriage breakup, that does not say to one spouse, sorry, you have no more responsibility. There are responsibilities. As I say, it is a sad commentary that we have had to bring in this kind of legislation because some people do not take those responsibilities seriously.

Now, I do not want to leave the impression that every spouse, whether it is male or female, shirks their duties. That is not the case. I was not here for the total members' hour, so I am not too sure whether any of the members who were speaking talked about the statistics, but I think it is interesting to note that 95 percent of the almost 12,000 orders administered by our Maintenance Enforcement Program involve child support for over 20,000 children. So we are not talking a small sum.

Now, the bottom line, as I say, for this government, why we are doing this, is that we feel that, regardless of a marriage breakup, there is still responsibility for

partners to assume for their children, and, if the court orders certain kinds of financial payments, that person must not shirk or try to deliberately avoid those responsibilities. So we, as a government, have a responsibility to pick up the slack, and our responsibility is to protect the rights of Manitobans of all ages. In this case, it is usually a single parent and the child or the children of that family.

One of the things that we have done to send that message out there that people have to be accountable is to expand our enforcement powers. We have not made changes just to the one act. We have also introduced corresponding changes to The Personal Investigations Act, The Highway Traffic Act, The Pension Benefits Act, The Garnishment Act and the Parents' Maintenance Act. We are tackling this in as broad a spectrum as we can because the message has to get out there that we mean business, that the spouse who is not following through on the maintenance payment has to have a consequence, because what has been happening in the past has not worked. People have been slipping through the cracks, and we have to look for better ways to ensure that that spouse follows through on his or her obligations.

So one of the first things that we have done, as I say, is expand our enforcement powers. One of our major thrusts in this area has been to report delinquent payers to the Credit Bureau. These changes will give the Maintenance Enforcement Program people the ability to report people who fail to make their support payments to the Credit Bureau. I think all of us know what this can do to our credit rating. It can downgrade our rating or seriously impair. This is not good news for the person who tries to get out of their obligations.

Another thing that we have done is to suspend or refuse or recommend suspension or refusal of driver's licenses and vehicle registration. Again, we believe that this will be a very serious--

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render) will have 11 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 8 p.m. this evening.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, September 18, 1995

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