



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



Vol. XLVI No. 54 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, September 25, 1996

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

Name	Constituency	Party
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.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
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.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, September 25, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Manitoba Telephone System

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of R. Dealon, L. Hembroff and M. Hembroff and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) not to sell the Manitoba Telephone System.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Manitoba Telephone System

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

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

THAT the Manitoba Telephone System has served this province well for over 80 years providing province-wide service, some of the lowest local rates in North America and thousands of jobs; and

THAT MTS has made over \$100 million since 1990 and this money has stayed in Manitoba; and

THAT MTS contributes \$150 million annually to the Manitoba economy and is a major sponsor of community events throughout the province; and

THAT MTS, with nearly 4,000 employees including more than 1,000 in rural and northern Manitoba, is one of Manitoba's largest firms, headquartered in Manitoba and is committed to Manitoba; and

THAT the provincial government has no mandate to sell MTS and said before and during the 1995 election that MTS was not for sale.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) not sell the Manitoba Telephone System.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT the Manitoba Telephone System has served this province well for over 80 years providing province-wide service, some of the lowest local rates in North America and thousands of jobs; and

THAT MTS has made over \$100 million since 1990 and this money has stayed in Manitoba; and

THAT MTS contributes \$150 million annually to the Manitoba economy and is a major sponsor of community events throughout the province; and

THAT MTS, with nearly 4,000 employees including more than 1,000 in rural and northern Manitoba, is one of Manitoba's largest firms, headquartered in Manitoba and is committed to Manitoba; and

THAT the provincial government has no mandate to sell MTS and said before and during the 1995 election that MTS was not for sale.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the

Premier (Mr. Filmon) not sell the Manitoba Telephone System.

Rail Line Abandonment

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS rail access is vital for the shipment of grain and other farm commodities in rural communities; and

WHEREAS the proclamation of the Canada Transportation Act on July 1, 1996, gives railways the ability to abandon lines throughout Canada with minimum notice; and

WHEREAS on July 2, 1996, Canadian National announced that it plans to abandon four rail lines in Manitoba including the lines from Dauphin to Minitonas and Swan River to Birch River; and

WHEREAS the abandonment of these lines would put the future of grain elevators at Birch River, Bowsman, Ethelbert and Fork River amongst others at great risk; and

WHEREAS the federal government sold CN without any conditions other than the headquarters of CN remain in Montreal; and

WHEREAS the loss of these rail lines will have a major negative effect upon the overall provincial economy; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has not made any plans to cover the costs of upgrading roads in the areas where rail lines are threatened with abandonment; and

WHEREAS the federal government has not committed any money from the Western Grain Transportation Adjustment Fund to upgrading roads in communities where rail lines are being abandoned.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Transportation and the federal Minister of Transport to ensure that the communities currently using the Cowan Sub and the Erwood Sub are able to continue shipping their grain to markets.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): I would like to table the Annual Report for the Manitoba Water Services Board, and I would also like to table the Annual Report for Rural Development.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I would like to submit the Annual Report of the Civil Service Commission for the year 1995-1996, as well as the 1996 Annual Report of the Organization & Staff Development of the Manitoba Civil Service Commission.

Madam Speaker: I would like to table the individual reports of members' expenses for the year ending March 31, 1996. Copies for all members will be distributed at the end of Question Period

* (1335)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon 35 visitors from the Main Street Senior Centre under the direction of Miss Irene Massinon. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Labour Disputes Mediation

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

On August 9 in a response to questions about Manitoba's record of days lost to strike and lockout, which were approaching record numbers in this province, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) said publicly, from time to time a strike is not a bad thing. It allows people to focus, quote, on the issues.

Madam Speaker, in light of the fact that strikes have been going on week after week in this province and lockouts are now in their second week—we are now approaching record numbers of days lost to strike and lockout since 1919—in light of the fact that the Minister of Labour in saying that strikes are not a bad thing and also crossing the line of neutrality yesterday in many of his comments, would the Premier please appoint a neutral Minister of Labour and appoint a mediator so that we can get on with settling our disputes rather than continuing to throw gasoline on the fire?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, decisions with respect to whether or not to go on strike are made by unions through their leadership and their process, and in every case the decision is not one on the part of government that causes the vote to take place or causes people to make that decision. I assume that they do not take those decisions lightly. I assume that they take the advice of those whom they elect to lead them and those whom they elect to provide them with information under which they make their ultimate choices. Those choices are not ones that government makes.

From our perspective, obviously, we would not like to see any strikes, but the fact of the matter is that when there is a conflict that results on the part of a strike vote, the consequences apply to both sides. Those who want to withdraw their services suffer certain consequences, those organizations that are being struck obviously suffer certain consequences and the people who depend upon both of them to serve their needs suffer consequences. Hopefully, those decisions are made in ways in which people look at all sides, but certainly at the end of the day the decision on whether or not people will go on strike is certainly not a decision that a government takes.

Lottery Employees Labour Dispute Mediation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question again is to the Premier. The decision to appoint a mediator is within the responsibility

and authority of the provincial government. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) has taken different positions on different days about why he is not appointing a mediator. We have gone close to a hundred days in the lottery workers strike that is taking place. This is not healthy for our economy. It is not healthy for our communities. It is not healthy for labour-management relations, and it is time that the government took a leadership position, appointed a mediator, and got this issue resolved.

We have heard all kinds of different reasons from the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) of why they cannot appoint a mediator—oh, they are too far apart, or they are demonstrating, or the election of an officer in a union—none of which is a reason.

When the Premier spoke about how far apart the doctors were with the government, he mentioned 15 percent and 25 percent, yet he still went and his government appointed a mediator. Will the Premier now do what he did with the doctors in the province in the emergency wards of the urban hospitals and appoint a mediator to solve the problems, rather than finger pointing in this province and in our community?

* (1340)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, obviously the decision to appoint a mediator is one that will take place as a result of the best advice available. I accept the advice of the Leader of the Opposition as a former leader of the union that is now striking. He obviously has a particular wealth of experience and perspective that he brings to his recommendation.

The fact of the matter is that for the most part, when mediators are appointed, it is at a time when the issues have been narrowed. I was given even just yesterday a list of the issues that still remain on the table. I think there is something like eight, maybe even more. The gap with respect to the wage demands is very substantial, and they really are not at a situation in which we are likely to get any positive result from a mediator.

That is the best advice that we have been given, and under those circumstances we take that as the best advice. I accept that the Leader of the Opposition with his own particular perspective has a different view on this issue, but we are taking what we believe to be the best advice available.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, having been both on the management side and the union side and having even dealt with Sterling Lyon—I always trusted him for his word, which is becoming a real issue with this government, and the honesty and integrity of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) and other members opposite.

Let me quote you another example. The president of the Tache Home Nursing family group, the family association committee, said he has been seriously misled by Ministers of Health, Labour and the Minister responsible for Seniors dealing with the Tache nursing home situation.

These are families talking about ministers of the Crown. They all seem to have the Premier's IBM disease in terms of telling the truth and honesty about what is going on. It took again a mediator to get beyond the mistruths of the government ministers to get a settlement on behalf of the people. All we are asking for is the Premier to not take sides with the union or the Lotteries Corporation. We are asking for a mediator to solve this strike, solve this dispute, get beyond the bias of ministers opposite and get on with the settlement in the best interests of our total community.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, we heard many times in 1985 and '86 countless Manitobans talk about the value of the word of the Leader of the Opposition who went to different people and told them about his political beliefs and philosophies and his desire to run for different parties and all sorts of things, the kinds of commitments that he made publicly, and Manitobans, of course, have attempted to take the word of the Leader of the Opposition on numerous occasions and they have made their judgment as to whether or not they believed him to be credible in 1988, in 1990, in 1995. We know exactly the credibility of the Leader of the Opposition, as do the vast majority of Manitobans. So let him not attempt to give lectures about credibility and about truthfulness and honesty because he has demonstrated by his actions his lack of credibility and his lack of integrity.

Lottery Employees Labour Dispute Mediation

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Yesterday we asked the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) about his comments to lottery workers that he would extend the strike for seven

days for every day his house was picketed and that the count was now up to 28 days.

The minister then went in the hallway of the Legislature and told the media that the public—that he would not appoint a mediator as long as the workers paraded near his house. It is my understanding, Madam Speaker, in information that I have just received that that condition has now been met.

I want to ask the Premier, can this Premier explain how the Minister of Labour can use the issue of the MGEU election of officers and the removal of picketers from near his house as conditions for the appointment of a mediator to resolve this Lotteries dispute? How can he justify those two conditions, Madam Speaker?

* (1345)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, in response to the questions of the Leader of the Opposition just a few moments ago, I laid out my perception of when a mediator can be effective in resolving a dispute. I indicated at that time that those conditions did not seem to prevail at this point and until those conditions change, I do not believe that the advice that we are receiving would suggest that we ought to be appointing a mediator, and that is exactly the circumstance that prevails.

Minister of Labour Replacement Request

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Then perhaps the Minister of Labour will do the honourable thing and recognize that he now has a clear conflict of interest, as the Minister of Labour, where he is both acting as the prosecutor of the government's case in these negotiations and the judge of Mediation Services and he is shown to be a deliberately vindictive and biased individual with respect to these negotiations and in his role as both of these people, Madam Speaker, and that he should remove himself from the office of the Minister of Labour and let someone else come into this position that can act in an unbiased and impartial manner.

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, Question Period is a time for questions and not a time for debate—

Madam Speaker: On a point of order?

Mr. Ernst: Yes, Madam Speaker, on a point of order—not a time for debate, such as the member for Transcona has been conducting for the last minute or so.

Madam Speaker, in addition to that, a supplementary question, which is the member's right to have, needs no preamble, and he should be brought to order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I do believe the—

Madam Speaker: On the same point of order?

Mr. Ashton: On the same point of order, I think if the government House leader cared to review the member's question, he was very succinct. He asked the minister whether he would withdraw himself given his obvious bias, given his Clint Eastwood style of labour relations in this province, and I suggest we allow the minister to answer whether he is going to, because of his bias, remove himself as Minister of Labour.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. To ensure that I review all the details, I will take the matter under advisement and report back to the Legislature.

* * *

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I have in fact received a letter from Mr. Olfert indicating that he has removed the pickets from all locations other than outside the Legislative Building and actual work locations. I think that is a very positive move in that it demonstrates to me that there is indeed an intent to arrive at a collective agreement. However, the mere fact that pickets, and not just pickets but unidentified people, have removed themselves from my house or from other locations is not a reason to appoint a mediator. The reason to appoint a mediator is that it will assist in facilitating the end to a strike.

I will review the issues and determine in due course whether a mediator is appropriate, and I will do so on the basis of appropriate legal principles.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Transcona, with a final supplementary question.

Mr. Reid: It is clear then the minister cannot even be trusted to keep his own word.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Transcona that our rules are very clear. There is to be no postamble, no preamble, prior to a supplementary question. Would you please pose your question now?

Mr. Reid: My final question is to the Premier. I challenge the Premier that, based on the Minister of Labour's (Mr. Toews) statements yesterday, if he does not want his government to be known as a biased, vindictive, ruthless bully, he replace the Minister of Labour and immediately appoint a mediator to solve the Lotteries dispute in this province.

If the Premier does not want his government—

* (1350)

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): The hypocrisy of New Democrats on this issue knows no bounds. I remind them of the days of the Pawley-Doer administration when the then-Minister of Labour, Al Mackling, in the midst of a dispute between Eaton's and the United Food and Commercial Workers Union publicly cut up his credit cards to demonstrate which side he was on in the strike. That is the kind of hypocrisy you get from New Democrats.

Children's Special Services Funding

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Family Services and this government profess to support families. In spite of their rhetoric they cut the budget for Children's Special Services this year by \$277,000.

Can the Minister of Family Services tell the families of children with special needs how she can justify making cuts to their respite care and at the same time support her government's policy of travel for cabinet ministers'?

spouses and senior civil servants, or are there two sets of rules, one for family preservation for cabinet and their spouses and senior civil servants or another for families of children with special needs who are confined to their homes?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I do not thank my honourable friend for the tone of his question, but I do thank him for his question because it does allow me again the opportunity to tell Manitobans that in the area of Children's Special Services since we became government the budget has been increased by 113 percent.

Madam Speaker, it is the one area within my department that has received increases year after year because we as a government believe and I believe that the most vulnerable people in our society are those who need to be supported. Every extra dollar that has been available in my budget has gone towards services for those with disabilities. Although the demand is increasing and we are having difficulty meeting those demands, there is more money and there is more service, more families being served.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, I would like to table page 60 of the minister's own Estimates book, which shows that the budget on this line was cut by \$277,000 this year.

Will the Minister of Family Services assure the Romanchuk family, who have had their respite cut—a condition that was brought to the minister's attention by a letter on October 28—that all of their respite will be restored so that this family is not forced to put their son into the St. Amant Centre at a cost of \$56,000 a year? Will she restore their respite funding?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have met with many families that have children that need services in the break in the session, and I understand the concerns and the issues that they raise.

We, as a result of those meetings and discussions with families, are doing a complete review of services for those with special needs to look at how we can use the dollars that we have in the most effective manner to ensure that the majority of families that need our services will be supported. Madam Speaker, that is happening as

we speak, and we hope to be able to deliver the services that we need to deliver in the most appropriate and most comprehensive fashion in the very near future.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask this minister if she will take a request to Treasury Board to restore the funding, not just to the 21 families whose situation has been brought to the minister's attention but to all the families who had their respite care—or does she believe that her government's policy of family preservation only applies to cabinet ministers and spouses and not to families with children with special needs who are suffering as the result of this budget cut? Will she do the right thing and restore it?

* (1355)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have indicated clearly and I will say again that there is more money for families with special needs children today than there ever has been in the past. We do know that the issues and the demands on the program are increasing in major ways year after year. Madam Speaker, we are going to try to address those issues on an individual basis.

I want to indicate to you that the one area within my department that I am working—and I have talked to many families and have indicated the one area in my department that I believe needs to be preserved and enhanced is the area of support for families with children with special needs. There has not been a reduction, and I will continue to work on behalf of those families that do need our support and that all Manitobans believe need to be supported.

Home Depot Omand's Creek Protection

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Urban Affairs.

Last night we learned that the newest plan from the hardware chain, Home Depot, involves construction of the new store on the properties between St. Matthews and Empress in my riding. The new plan calls for the property line and part of the building foundation and wall being within the flood protection line and partway down the riverbank. The plan also requires a new roadway to

be constructed over Omand's Creek. This roadway would be in addition to the roadway that already exists near the velodrome site.

My question: Given that Omand's Creek is recognized as a provincial waterway, will the minister inform this House which level of government has the authority to approve construction into and over Omand's Creek?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, as to the particulars regarding the zoning and the application of the zoning, the member must be aware that that falls within the jurisdiction of the City of Winnipeg.

The reference in regard to building over or on the riverbank of Omand's Creek, I would have to check as to the ramifications and implications before I could give a more complete answer on that. I will certainly get back to her as I get that information forwarded to me from the City of Winnipeg as to what their exact plans are and what type of implication it does have on that waterway.

Public Hearings

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, will the minister assure this House and the people of Winnipeg that hearings will be available for members of the public, particularly those in our local community, so that we will have the opportunity for input into this proposal?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, I believe under the zoning applications, all go to a public hearing within the neighbourhood district there, so I am sure that once signs are posted and the indication of where the meetings are, the public and the member can make representation.

Omand's Creek Protection

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, given that the construction is scheduled to begin in three weeks and there have been no public hearings, what action will this government take to ensure that Omand's Creek is protected?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, I can only reinforce and reiterate to the

member for St. James that, within the application to the City of Winnipeg and their zoning application, there is a provision for public hearings and that has to be adhered to before things go before decision making. I believe the posting of the signs and I believe the notification in the newspaper outlines where and when the public hearings will be, so it is just a matter of keeping on top of it.

Minister of Labour Bias

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

In response to one of the questions from the New Democratic Party, the Premier said, in trying to point out hypocrisy on the NDP's behalf, that Al Mackling, the Minister of Labour, ripped up his Eaton's card, giving the perception that Al Mackling was indeed on the management side.

Madam Speaker, I would argue—or, I am sorry, on the union side. [interjection] That is right. Perception. It talks about the importance of perception.

My question to the Premier: Will he not agree that the perception, because of the remarks from the Minister of Labour, is that the Minister of Labour is not on the side of the unions, that in fact, he is quite clearly on the side of the casino and the management on this particular issue?

* (1400)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I want to just summarize my former answer very slowly so that the member for Inkster gets it.

The perception was, of course, in a conflict between Eaton's and their workers that in cutting up the Eaton's credit card the Minister of Labour was on the side of the union. That was the perception, of course, that was being created. Having said that, Madam Speaker, one could take, I think, from the actions of ministers at any time in almost any situation a perception of bias.

That is not the issue. The issue is that when there are conditions that would allow for the probable success of a mediation process, then those circumstances would

result in the minister appointing a mediator. Those circumstances, we do not believe from the advice we are being given, prevail today, so therefore the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) is not making that appointment because he does not believe—we do not believe, given the advice that is available to us—that there is a probability of success that will result from the appointment of a mediator. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Lamoureux: What I am asking the Premier to acknowledge is that there is a perception that the Minister of Labour has taken a side, and by taking that side he is saying that he is not in a position—

Madam Speaker: The honourable member has been recognized for a supplementary question. Would you please pose your question now.

Mr. Lamoureux: Does the Premier agree that the statements by his Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) have created the perception that the minister is taking sides in the casino labour dispute?

Mr. Filmon: The member for Inkster is entitled to whatever perception he wants to adopt in this circumstance. What I am saying is that the Minister of Labour, on the best advice of those who are experts in the field of labour relations will give him and the best advice available to us is that, with about eight different items and a significant gap in terms of wage demands, there is no likelihood of a mediator being successful in the circumstances, so under those conditions he is not appointing a mediator. Should those conditions change, then obviously he will re-evaluate the situation.

Mr. Lamoureux: Will the Premier, at the very least, acknowledge that the manner in which the Minister of Labour has handled this particular dispute is going to have a long-term negative impact on any future negotiations with MGEU regarding any other sort of government services being provided by government?

Mr. Filmon: No, Madam Speaker.

Laurier School French Governance

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): My questions are for the Minister of Education. I have raised before in this House the dispute at Laurier School between the Division

Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine and the Turtle River School Division. The minister has taken a hands-off approach. I think her memorable contribution was that she could not make cousins love each other, and although a mediator did meet briefly and separately with some parents, the situation has continued to deteriorate with children being educated in private basements and with the government facing the prospect of a legal challenge from the parents of the DSFM.

My question for the minister is: What long-term plan does she have to ensure that her department is carrying out the government's mandate to provide an equitable French governance education to the families of Laurier?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, just before I provide my answer, if I may, I had risen to table some information that was requested before. I believe the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) is particularly interested. He has something to table as well. This is the information requested by the member for Wolseley on the employment development centres, so I provide three copies.

In response to the question, Madam Speaker, if I may begin that now, this is a very serious issue. The member is absolutely dead wrong when she says we have adopted a hands-off approach, and I think it is not good to treat an issue like this with sarcasm and the implications when I had indicated my concern that this issue had divided families and that, try as I might with mediators and so on, I could not make the people become fond of each other and settle their issues out of a desire to help each other. This is not something we should be playing around with as trite comments. They were not meant as trite comments.

Madam Speaker, we have been dealing extensively on a daily basis since somewhere around mid-August with the situation in Laurier. The deputy minister and I travelled to Laurier, met with the two bodies concerned, both of the factions there, which are both Francophone peoples. This is not English-French; this is French versus French. This is Section 23 parents who want français teaching and Section 23 parents who want French governance having a dispute amongst themselves.

We met there for a half-day with the two parties in an attempt to bring resolution to the issue in August. We since then have had a variety of constitutional lawyers,

legal counsel from both divisions and the province working together as a trio with the people, the superintendents and the board members of both divisions, and I am still hoping and optimistic that they can come to an agreement with the measures we are now using to help resolve that situation, but it is not being ignored by any stretch of the imagination.

Ms. Friesen: Une question supplémentaire à la ministre de l'Éducation. Est-ce qu'elle pourrait déposer le coût de sa solution temporaire, les trois classes portatives? Est-ce que la ministre peut nous assurer que les élèves vont avoir accès à la bibliothèque, aux chambres de bains, au gymnase et aux autres facilités nécessaires pour une éducation équitable au Manitoba?

[Translation]

A supplementary question to the Minister of Education: Could she indicate the cost of her temporary solution, the three portable classes? Can the minister assure us that the pupils will have access to the library, washrooms, gymnasium and the other facilities necessary for an equitable education in Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the member's question indicates absolutely that not only does she know that I have been meeting regularly with these people, she knows what the lawyers are talking about with each other. In her first question she attempted to make an insinuation that the minister had a hands-off attitude and was doing nothing. She then in her second question reveals that she knows all the details of the things we are talking about out there to try to resolve the situation, putting a misperception on her first question that can only be called deliberate and that is, I believe, not entirely in keeping with the honour with which members should conduct themselves in the House.

I indicate to the member that in response to her question—she probably already knows the answers to it, but I indicate to her that I do not have the costs in front of me right now. I can get them, but I do not know what the ultimate costs will be because I do not know what the ultimate agreement will be between the school boards. I do believe, and the member knows I believe since she knows all the dealings we have had extensively on a regular basis with two divisions, that it is always in the best interests of all parties if those two groups together could come to a consensus, each taking ownership for the

decision rather than having a forced imposition put upon them that one or the other will never feel true allegiance towards. For long-term solution, in answer to her concern, I believe that a mutually agreed upon solution is best and I believe that we will achieve it.

**Port of Churchill
Shipping**

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Highways and Transportation. Since the '93 federal election, during which the Port of Churchill was promised a million tonnes of grain, per year shipments have averaged less than a third of that level. This year is not much better, with likely less than 10 ships, even though the season lasted until the end of November last year.

Now, given this dismal result, I would like to ask the minister to inform the House what progress this government has had in trying to ship other commodities other than grain through the Port of Churchill.

* (1410)

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, there has been a long sequence of activities carried on by this government working with all the stakeholders to try to be sure that the future of Churchill becomes better than the past has been. We are certainly disappointed that the federal government made promises in the last federal election that they have not lived up to. That is disappointing.

With the federal government and with stakeholders, the task force on Churchill took place over two years ago. From that, Gateway North was formed for which both federal and provincial contributions have gone towards making it work. Appointees have been put there with the initiative to try to bring to fruition opportunities for people to do commerce through the Port of Churchill. It is an ongoing process. There has not been the level of success that the federal government promised would happen, but we work together with them to try to achieve some level of success through the private sector.

**Rail Line Abandonment
Northern Manitoba**

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, there was a meeting over three weeks ago with the

president of CN who, at that time, indicated that this government was prepared to sell for scrap virtually all rail lines in northern Manitoba.

I would like to ask the minister whether or not he has told the federal Minister of Transport that the province believes that a system line that includes the bayline, the Sherridon line and the Flin Flon subdivision is in the best interest of farmers and the northern economy. Has the minister also received any response from the federal minister on this issue?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, the member is right. We met with the CEO, Mr. Paul Tellier of CN, and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) was with us in the meeting. We stressed very strongly the economic need for a viable rail network in the North. We stressed to him that if CN was not prepared to carry on that network, it was imperative that they offered it to those people or interested parties who saw an economic advantage in running that railroad.

I have been very encouraged by Gateway North Transportation in their effort to put that economic unit together. We also told CN that it would be very important that they sought out other interested parties that might see an economic opportunity to haul ore, pulp, grain or whatever other commodity on either or any of those lines in terms of an economic unit. Madam Speaker, we have strongly stressed that they must pursue an economic unit and find the people who are prepared to operate that.

Arts Industry Employment Opportunities

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, on Monday when I asked the Premier about the CBC financial cuts and job losses, he told the House that he was in regular communications with certain well-known politicians and CBC officials, but he failed to say exactly or specifically what actions he would take to protect or aid about 150 local CBC employees who will likely lose their jobs in November.

I want to ask the Premier, who over the weekend and certainly on Monday said he was a patron of the arts, what specifically he will do to keep this pool of talented,

highly skilled and creative employees working in Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as a direct result of the efforts of this administration in ensuring that we supported, for instance, the development of a film, video and music industry in Manitoba through what was initially a federal-provincial program, Cultural Industries Development Organization, that, of course, as was typical, the federal government withdrew all their funding from, this government continued its funding in it and converted it into a provincial organization, the Manitoba film and video—I cannot remember the final name of it—organization.

As a result of continued support throughout the last eight years, we have gone from a situation in this province in which we had about \$1 million of film production in 1987 to being on course to reach \$50 million of film production in this province this year or next. That is, I think, an example of the kind of industry and economic opportunity that we are developing for those who are in film, video and other production areas, obviously sound-video-film areas that might be of course an opportunity for people who are with the CBC. We are very strong supporters of developing this kind of industry and will continue to show that support and continue to put our efforts behind it rather than just the empty rhetoric that the opposition member puts forward.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, two weeks ago it was 275 jobs at the Weston Shops; today it is Richardson Greenshields and also the CBC. Who knows what is next, but my real question is, is there a specific strategy to keep these highly skilled, creative, talented CBC employees in Manitoba and working at real jobs in Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: I guess the member for Osborne has the question written and so she does not listen to the answer, but I told her of the growth and development of an industry from \$1 million a year to \$50 million a year and I happen to know because I have taken specific interest in it, that many of the people who are employed in these productions, writing, filming, editing, performance in these films are people who formerly worked with television stations and radio stations, so indeed this is exactly the kind of employment development that they

ought to be interested in because it is right in line with their skills and talents.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Hog Industry

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to address the members this afternoon. I want to talk about this province's growth in the pork industry. As members may know, last July 1 the dual marketing system for hogs became effective. Whole hogs marketed, whether through Manitoba Pork or directly through processors, are subject to a levy of \$1.01 per hog. This regulation allows more flexibility in the hog marketing system which will create greater opportunities for job growth, exports and processing in Manitoba's pork industry.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba's hog industry is regarded as one of the province's greatest areas for economic growth. This province's hog production is expected to double by the year 2000, creating 8,000 new jobs in production, processing, distribution and related industries. New export sales could pump an additional \$500 million into the Manitoba economy each year and on-farm investment another \$350 million.

Right now the Manitoba hog industry has an unprecedented opportunity to be a catalyst for job growth. Manitoba has earned an international reputation for superior pork quality, and with the end of the national grain transportation subsidies, our province will have the most competitively priced feed grains in the nation. Now we must not only expand our production of hogs but also capture a greater share of the processing so we can extract even more economic value from this industry. With every additional 1,000 hogs that are produced and processed in Manitoba we can gain six more jobs. On September 16, Maple Leaf Foods acquired Burns Foods. This government's change in Manitoba's pork hog contracting monopoly is credited in part from Maple Leaf's decision to buy, to acquire Burns. Maple Leaf's chief executive, Archie McLean, at the time said that Gary Filmon and Agriculture Minister Harry Enns take full marks for the leadership they have taken with regard to the contracting of hogs.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, Schneiders corporation began a \$40-million expansion of its Winnipeg hog plant to expand exports. This is an example of how this government is working to create opportunities for Manitoba.

* (1420)

Indian Act Amendments

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): I, too, have a statement for the House. On September 23 and 24, the Assembly of First Nations held an emergency conference in Winnipeg to debate proposed changes to the Indian Act by the federal government. Over 800 delegates, including chiefs, councillors and elders from many different nations from across Canada attended the meeting, at which they unanimously passed a resolution rejecting the amendments.

The resolution in part reads that the Chiefs in Assembly reject the proposed Indian Act amendments and reject the authority of the federal government to make laws over First Nations and that the Chiefs in Assembly direct the national chief, Ovide Mercredi, to call upon the Prime Minister to meet with himself and the Chiefs in Assembly before the end of November this year to undertake a substantive discussion on what measures First Nations would like to undertake on a bilateral basis to address their priority issues, including the implementation of the inherent right, aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations.

Further to that, the Chiefs in Assembly are urging all chiefs in Canada to begin consulting their people at the community level to develop more appropriate processes on the implementation of First Nations rights and jurisdiction. A chiefs committee on the enforcement of First Nations-Crown relationship will identify options and strategies to combat legislation and identify priorities with respect to a redefined First Nations-Crown relationship.

These are important issues which will have a major impact upon all First Nations people in this province. First Nations people have every right to be suspicious of the federal promises that they have seen over 125 years of paternalism and racism masquerading as assistance. In conclusion, the federal minister and his colleagues should

listen to what Grand Chief Ovide Mercredi, the AFN and chiefs from across Canada are saying, that the parallels between the current amendments and the 1969 white paper are very strong. The minister should scrap his proposals. Proposals that change the Indian Act should come from First Nations and not be unilaterally imposed upon them. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

La Verendrye Community Activities

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, I rise today to tell you a little bit about the sunny attitude in La Verendrye throughout the summer and, indeed, I am sure will permeate into the future.

Madam Speaker, I travelled from one end of my constituency to the other throughout the summer. I do it all year but more so since we were out of the Assembly. I visited many, many communities and I have approximately 18 communities in my constituency. It runs all the way from St. Adolphe at the Red River, Ile des Chenes, Landmark, Lorette, right through to West Hawk, Falcon, Rennie, Prawda, and so on.

The functions that I attended were really super community functions, parades. The one thing that was really noticeable, and although it was there in the past but not as strong, is the family portion of those community functions—very strong and very well attended. The other thing that I noticed in a couple of them was the trade shows that they were putting on—again very well attended. Many of the businesses and people throughout the area that had a sale of items were there and it was also very well attended.

I also attended a number of different openings of businesses and expansions of business, changing over of businesses, some that had been renovated and so on, and as late as Monday I was at another grand opening in Ste. Anne. It was the opening of a food store, and it is owned and operated by Mr. Jacques St. Vincent. I wish him and his wife all the best in the future in their business.

There was a little bit of tough luck in the farming community with some hail that hit a few of our farmers, but on the whole the crops are looking very well and are coming off. I really think they will do very well.

Madam Speaker, I know I am running out of time, but I wanted to touch on—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Sveinson: I am sure that in the future I will have another chance to tell you how sunny things are in La Verendrye. Thank you.

Highways—Northern Manitoba

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Over the last number of years one of the big concerns in northern Manitoba has been in regard to our transportation links, particularly the poor state of our highways. I find it rather ironic that this week, as we mourn the passing of a former member for Thompson, Mr. Joe Borowski, in looking back, Madam Speaker, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

In 1969, when Mr. Borowski was elected as an NDP MLA for the then-constituency of Churchill, later to be re-elected as part of the Schreyer government, the big issue at the time was the fact that the Conservatives were ignoring northern roads. In fact, they had developed the fine art of announcing 20 miles of pavement just before every election. It was a 700-odd mile trip from Thompson in those days to Winnipeg, and we had a one-lane bridge. What it took was an NDP government to get elected to build a two-lane bridge, to build Highway 6, which cut the journey by 80 percent, and to pave every single square inch of Highway 391.

What has happened since that time? Well, the pattern continues itself. The NDP, in the 1980s under Howard Pawley, went and developed northern roads, spending as much as 20 percent of the budget on northern highways. It built the road into Split Lake and Gillam. It built the Easterville Road and paved that road, and it upgraded every single northern highway.

Where are we today in this year 1996? Back to the future with this Conservative government. Just like in 1969, we have a government that has cut back on northern roads to as little as 5 percent of the budget in recent years. Highway 391 and other roads need fixing; Highway 280; the highway into Cross Lake and Norway House.

I say to the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay), learn from history. Do something that is different this time and fix up our northern roads. If you do not, it will take the next NDP government to fix northern roads. Thank you.

Neighbourhood Watch

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): On September 18, 110 people attended a Neighbourhood Watch meeting at Centennial Community Centre, and on September 23, approximately 100 people attended a Neighbourhood Watch meeting at St. John's Lutheran Church. Everyone who attended is to be congratulated for making the effort and showing that they care about the safety of their neighbours and their neighbours' property.

I would like to thank especially Julia Segal and her volunteers for canvassing the Old Ex neighbourhood and also thank Michael and Barbara Mechsner for canvassing College Avenue and McKenzie Street. Neighbourhood Watch has been proven effective in reducing crime and increasing crime is a major issue in the north end and in Burrows constituency. Hopefully, when people co-operate with their neighbours there will be a reduction in the rate of crime in these two neighbourhoods and in many more in the future. Thank you.

Committee Changes

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, with committee changes.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) for Selkirk (Mr. Greg Dewar); The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk); Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson).

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Minister of Labour's Statements

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), that under Rule 31.1, ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the recent statements made by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews).

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member for Inkster, I believe I should remind all members that under our subrule 31.2, the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other party in the House is allowed not more than five minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in Beaudesne's Citation 390: Urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

* (1430)

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): On a point of order, I heard you, Madam Speaker, distinctly read the motion of the member for Inkster which says, a matter of urgent public importance about recent statements by the Minister of Labour, period.

Madam Speaker, what statements? The Minister of Labour makes statements of all kinds. I would think that the motion itself is out of order based on the fact that it is not definitive, does not deal with any specific issue, and says only, certain statements by the Minister of Labour. It does not refer to anything specific and, quite frankly, it ought to be ruled out of order.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Maples, on the same point of order?

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Yes.

Madam Speaker: On the same point of order.

Mr. Kowalski: In regard to the government House leader speaking on this point of order, I believe that is what the five minutes are allocated for, and by standing up on a point of order he is subverting the process where the mover has five minutes to explain the urgency of the motion and explain the motion. So I believe it is inappropriate for the government House leader to be

standing up on a point of order until the mover has a chance to explain the motion.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, on the same point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order.

My understanding is that the government House leader is questioning the validity of the motion in two respects. I believe the minister is perhaps confusing our rulings in terms of Oral Questions, which do prohibit raising questions, certainly, matters raised outside of the House. In fact, Beausnesne Citation 409 (10) does do that, Madam Speaker.

In terms of matters of urgent public importance, we have had a very broad application of definition to this matter, and I would remind the government House leader that essentially all the matter of urgent public importance does is put aside the normal business of the day to debate a certain matter. We are not dealing with a motion that is voted upon at the end of the day. It is not the situation we have currently under the new rules with Opposition Days.

I would therefore suggest that this particular wording is certainly no less vague than many of the wordings of similar resolutions in the past, and I would suggest that we do deal with it and deal with it as we normally do under the new rules, which is provide you with advice and you will then make a ruling which can no longer be challenged.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable government House leader, he does not have a point of order with relation to his comments relating to the specific matter identified in the motion. The process is for each member to explain the urgency prior to the Speaker making a decision based on the motion and the relevant urgency of the matter.

Point of Order

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, on a new point of order.

In dealing with an issue before the House, particularly a substantive motion to set aside all of the business of the day in order to deal with a specific issue, the issue must

be somewhat defined. The issue in the motion is not defined. The issue simply says certain statements of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews). Now, if it had said related to the casino workers strike, which I assume is what it is about, then I would not have had objection, but the fact of the matter is it does not say that. It simply says certain statements of the Minister of Labour. Now the Minister of Labour might have said good morning to the security guard when he walked in the door. That is a statement of the Minister of Labour. Is that what we are going to debate? Let the motion be specific. If it is not specific or at least provide some general parameters around it, Madam Speaker, it is out of order.

Madam Speaker: On the new point of order raised by the honourable government House leader, indeed there is no point of order. There is nothing contained in our rules that states explicitly what must be cited in order for the matter of urgent public importance to be debated.

The issue is for the member moving the motion to indeed prove that it is a matter that merits setting aside the regular business of the day, and the two House leaders, in this instance to the member proposing the motion, have the same opportunity to present their case as to why or why not the motion should proceed.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Maples, on a new point of order?

Mr. Kowalski: Madam Speaker, on a new point of order, my point of order is the use of points of order. Twice the government House leader stood up on the same point of order. After you gave a ruling, he used the vehicle of a point of order so—[interjection]

Yes, it is order, the order of debate. I am asking him to be called to order, not to use points of order repeatedly when he knows obviously there was already a ruling and he stood up for a second time.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order by the honourable member for The Maples, I have already ruled on both points of order raised by the government House leader and indicated that he did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, maybe I will attempt to enlighten the government House leader as to why it is that we felt that it was necessary from our side to suggest that the time be set aside today so that we can debate the remarks, statements made from the minister, somewhat surprised in the sense that the government House leader would not necessarily know what type of statements I am referring to, but I will elaborate on those so that he will be fully in tune with respect to it.

Madam Speaker, with respect to the urgency, two conditions in Beauchesne's: first, that the public interest would be best served by debating it today. The government is a major employer in the province of Manitoba, if not the largest employer in Manitoba, and the government has a responsibility in terms of negotiations and contracts and it also has responsibilities in terms of private sector negotiations when it comes to issues such as mediators, conciliators. It is absolutely critical and crucial that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) be perceived as being neutral with respect to these strikes.

Madam Speaker, ultimately one would argue that it is in the public's best interest to seek clarification from the Minister of Labour as to the comments that he has made over the last 24 hours. There is no ordinary opportunity which will allow this matter to be brought on early enough in the sense that what we are seeking is clarification. Even though there might be labour legislation, one could in fact be ruled as being irrelevant to the specific bill because you have to be talking about the principle of the bill in itself.

What we want to talk about or we want to hear from the Minister of Labour is the Minister of Labour's response to concerns that were brought first yesterday and then it was reaffirmed through the media outlets, and therefore, this being our first real opportunity to try to seek that clarification from the minister responsible. Madam Speaker, there were a couple of documents that were tabled yesterday and in those documents—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Inkster, he is not to speak to the issue that he wishes raised as a MUPI but to the reason for the urgency of debate.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the reason for the urgency of the debate, as what the government House

leader was requesting, was namely the recent statements made by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews). The government House leader needs to know those statements and those statements are documents that were tabled yesterday where, in essence, we had one individual who indicated and signed a letter indicating that the minister had said, every day you are in front of my house, I am adding seven days to your strike. Then there was a conversation that took place between the minister and the workers, thereby, in the eyes of many, putting the Minister of Labour in a position in which he might have compromised himself as the Minister of Labour who is responsible for administering The Labour Relations Act which would include the appointment of a mediator. That is the reason why we need to have clarification on those statements so that in fact Manitobans will be in a better position to be able to determine whether or not the minister is in a conflict, because if he is in a conflict, then there is a responsibility of the minister to step down and that is the urgency—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. One more time. The honourable member has approximately 45 seconds remaining, but I would remind the honourable member once again that you should be speaking to the urgency, not the principle of the issue you wish to have debated.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, many Manitobans would believe that this government is driven philosophically in order to resolve this particular strike, and the urgency is that there are future negotiations, ongoing negotiations with many other unions that are out there. It is absolutely critical and essential that the Minister of Labour be perceived as being neutral, that he cannot be taking sides. The statements that he made over the last 24 hours clearly demonstrate that he is or at least has given the impression or the perception that he has taken sides. That is why we want the debate so that the Minister of Labour, and others, can clarify exactly what the government's actual intentions are. Thank you.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I wish to add a few comments to this. I appreciate your ruling. I think it was certainly reflective of the fact of the types of matters we do have here, although I think the government House leader, notwithstanding the ruling that this is in order, does have a point in a sense that I do believe there was omission.

What we are clearly talking about are statements made by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) outside of this House and, in fact, I would suggest inside this House, that suggest that the Minister of Labour has a clear bias. It is something we have raised. I would submit to you that it is urgent in the sense that every day that we have the Minister of Labour making these kinds of statements, these biased statements, we are not only extending work stoppages in this province—and particularly the casino strike which is in excess of 90 days now—we are not only surpassing the record of days lost, but we are affecting everyone in this province. We are affecting the economic fabric of this province and the social fabric. There is no other mechanism, I think, to provide the kind of comment that we certainly feel should be made on this particular issue.

I found it interesting earlier today that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) seems to see no difficulty and tried to use an example from the 1980s, which had very little relevance to this, to suggest that it is okay to have bias.

I would submit that we need to have this debate because it is not acceptable for the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) in this province to not only be acting supposedly as the person who is in charge of such services as conciliation and mediation, but on the other hand, doing various things, as he did in the home care strike and he has in this particular case in the casino strike, commenting on the strike itself. I think that is absolutely inappropriate, in effect negotiating for the government, which is absolutely inappropriate for someone who at the same time is responsible for conciliation and mediation, and on top of that, giving us Clint Eastwood-type statements, go ahead, make my day, when people picket—as is their legal right; I do not necessarily agree with it—at his home, and we are stuck with this situation indeed where it is urgent. This province is seeing the social and economic fabric that binds us together destroyed by the personal agendas of ministers and in this case the Minister of Labour.

Madam Speaker, if we were in Estimates we could deal with this matter more directly. We cannot. There is no bill that deals with the bias or lack thereof of ministers. The only mechanism available to us, I would suggest, is the matter of urgent public importance.

* (1440)

I want to stress again to the government that it is absolutely unacceptable to see personal agendas come ahead of the public good of Manitoba. The public good demands that we resolve disputes such as the casino dispute. It demands that we have a Minister of Labour who is not negotiating for the government or acting out on some personal agenda involving individuals in any party, whether it be a president of a union or individual picketers.

Madam Speaker, the Minister of Labour in this province should be absolutely neutral in terms of labour disputes. That has been the practice in this province, and if the government does not see anything wrong with having that bias expressed, this Clint Eastwood style of labour relations, let us debate it in this House. Let us make sure that all Manitobans have a say, because I know that the people of Manitoba want this government to stop putting its personal and political agendas at the front and put the public good of this province—which requires a nonbiased Minister of Labour that can sit down and have the trust and credibility of all sides in the labour dispute, whether it be the casino workers, whether it be the steelworkers in Thompson, in my own community, who have already expressed their own distrust of the Minister of Labour based on comments that he has made to them.

Madam Speaker, we need an unbiased Minister of Labour that can deal with disputes in this province. That is something we do not have. That is why we support this motion and we want the debate and would urge you to approve it.

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, if I knew what the motion was, I would speak to the urgency of the debate with respect to the motion. But because the motion does not define anything, and it does not speak about the bias of the minister and does not speak about statements made with regard to the casino workers strike, and it does not speak to anything else—it simply says, certain statements by the minister—I cannot see any reason for urgency or for debate or the fact that we should break down the business of the House today to talk about whether the minister said good morning to the security guard, or whether he said good morning to his secretary, or whether he said when he went for lunch that, I will have a turkey sandwich on brown, but those are all statements by the Minister of Labour.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the government House leader stood up on two occasions to talk about his point of order in terms of, from his perspective, there was not enough detailed information that was provided. Then when he stands up to talk about the urgency of the debate, had he been listening not only to me but to the other member, he would have found that what he is currently talking about, which is irrelevant in essence to the urgency factor, he would know what it is that we are actually attempting to debate.

I am not convinced that he knows what it is that we are attempting to debate today.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster clearly does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, again, we are talking about urgency of debate and urgency of debate based on the motion submitted by the member for Inkster. That is what I am talking about, and that motion, as I tried to explain earlier, is so general that it does not talk about anything in particular, so we do not know what we are supposed to be debating. Now we have a perception by the member for Inkster about what he thinks his motion means, and we have a perception by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) about what he thinks the motion means, but the fact of the matter is that the motion does not say anything, and that I hardly see would qualify as a question of urgency at all.

If the perceptions of the member for Thompson or the member for Inkster are correct and that is what he really means and should have said in his motion in the first place, if he wanted to talk about the bias or alleged bias of the Minister of Labour, then he should have said that in his motion, but he did not. If he wants to talk about issues related to certain statements made about the casino workers strike, then he should have said that in his motion, but he did not. His motion does not say anything. There is no urgency with respect to that motion at all. Now, again it is the question of whether certain

statements made or alleged to be made by a member in this House, outside of the House particularly, are biased or not. That is in the eye of the beholder. I do not happen to think so, but perhaps other members do. That is their privilege. They can think whatever they wish.

While not directly relevant but certainly relevant to the procedures of our Chamber, Beauchesne Citation 409, particularly sub (10) "A question ought not to refer to a statement made outside the House by a Minister." Now, I agree that deals with Question Period, but while it deals with Question Period it also refers to procedures in this House, so that if a minister or anyone else makes a statement outside the House, the question ought not to be brought back into the House, either an oral statement or a statement written or quoted in a particular newspaper. As well, the fact that Beauchesne Citation—oh, I lost my spot—481, sub (f), refers to the question of—Sorry, Madam Speaker, I lost my spot—but refers directly to personal attacks or personal references to a particular individual. Again, clearly not in order, should not be—yes, 481(f) "make a personal charge against a Member." That is something else that ought not to be permitted in this House.

But certainly on the basis of relevancy based on the motion the member brought—and he can say what he wants in debate, the motion is the motion that is voted on. We are not voting on what he said after the motion, either whether he was speaking to urgency or not, we are simply speaking to the question of the motion, and there is no urgency, quite frankly, to speak about that particular motion because the motion refers to gobbledegook.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster has complied with the notice requirement for a matter of urgent public importance. Our provisional Rule 31(5)(f) states that "the discussion under the motion may not raise any question that, according to the Rules, may be debated only on a distinct motion under notice." Beauchesne Citation 394(2) states that a motion for a matter of urgent importance should not essentially be a censure or no-confidence motion, and Citation 395 states that the conduct of a member ought not to be the subject of debate as a matter of urgent public importance. If a member's conduct is to be examined, it should be done on the basis of a substantive motion, of which notice is required,

drawn in terms which clearly state a charge of wrongdoing.

Speaker Rocan ruled in a similar matter on June 11, 1992, that a matter of urgent public importance is not the correct procedural vehicle to debate the conduct of a member.

Therefore, I must rule the motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) out of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you call Bills 31, 30, 49, 66 and 67 in that order, please.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 31—The Livestock Industry Diversification and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading, Bill 31, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), The Livestock Industry Diversification and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur la diversification de l'industrie du bétail et apportant des modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: No. Leave has been denied. Also standing in the name of the honourable member for Dauphin who has five minutes remaining.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I am glad to be able to rise today and finish off my comments on a bill which I think is essentially wrong and should be reconsidered by this provincial government. Yesterday, I outlined a lot of different reasons why, and just before private members' hour yesterday I was indicating to the House that I was willing to make a prediction. I had made the comment that my grandchildren down the line can look back in the words in Hansard at some point and say that at least somebody in this House had the foresight

and the courage to predict that if we continue down the road we are with the way we treat Manitoba's resources as the private playthings of this government, if we go down the road of elk ranching, eventually only two results will happen: No. 1, we will make the animal extinct; or, No. 2, we will domesticate the animal.

I challenge anybody in this House, anybody at all, to think of any animal at all that man has taken and attached a dollar figure to, that has not eventually become domesticated or extinct. There are a lot of examples out there, obvious ones such as the buffalo where we are now going into game ranching trying to bring back in numbers. This is something that I believe this government has to consider. I do not think this government wants to be known as the government who 60, 70, 100 years down the road is then fingered as the government that spelled the domestication or the extinction of a proud, free, wild animal. I think that is something this government has to take very seriously.

Madam Speaker, yesterday, a couple of points that I made that I want to make sure that I reiterate today deal with two of the main reasons why we should be opposing this legislation. The one reason was poaching and my contention, along with the contention of many others in this area who know about elk ranching and the domestication of animals, many people who believe that the amount of poaching will in fact increase as we legalize what is today an illegal act in the selling of elk antlers and other parts of this animal. That is again something that this government seems to be glossing over which is something that I think it should start to take more seriously.

There are cases which have been relayed to me of poaching in other jurisdictions. Again, other jurisdictions have had all kinds of problems implementing their enforcement of the poaching of elk in jurisdictions where the elk are now being ranched. There is no 100 percent guarantee today or after the bill passes that we are ever going to catch every single poacher, but the experience in other jurisdictions has taught us—at least some of us have learned—that the problems with poaching will in fact increase. That is something this government has to consider before we move on any further in this whole elk ranching concept.

* (1500)

Madam Speaker, the last few minutes of my remarks, I want to draw attention again of all honourable members to the grave prospect of introducing yet more diseases to our animal herd here in Manitoba by allowing elk to be brought in from jurisdictions where the disease has already been detected. I also want to strongly reiterate the statement that I made yesterday that there is no 100 percent proof test that tells us when these animals are crossing our border. There is no 100 percent way of knowing whether or not we are bringing in such diseases as mad cow disease, such diseases as tuberculosis, such diseases as brucellosis, diseases as blue tongue, the diseases already that have been recorded in other jurisdictions that we know about that this government is now on the verge of introducing in our province.

It may be that these diseases are here already. We do not know because the tests that we use on some of those diseases such as the elk version of mad cow disease can only be detected through an autopsy.

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

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I would like to also put a few comments on the record with respect to this bill. I have to say that when we looked at this bill and gave it very serious consideration, we were concerned with the intent of the bill and the consequences of the bill.

I want to look back a little bit at the history of how this whole idea of elk ranching was proposed in Manitoba; in fact, it was proposed under the NDP. In 1986, a decision was made by cabinet that commercial elk ranching would not be allowed in this province. When we look back during that debate, there were many members of the Conservative caucus at that time who spoke out strongly against elk ranching. There were many heated debates, and some of those strongest debates took place in my constituency in the Swan River area where people were very opposed to the idea of elk ranching, and they were concerned for very good reasons.

Some of those reasons, I look back at a document that was presented in '86, and their recommendations were from the people of the area—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask the House if the honourable member for Swan River

has leave to speak to the motion because it was standing in her name initially and leave was denied.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Yes, on the advice of the honourable member for Swan River to be precise.

Does the honourable member for Swan River have leave to speak to the bill?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I believe, if I may just clarify, that the member is continuing her speech she had before.

Madam Speaker: No, it was standing with five minutes remaining in the honourable member for Dauphin's (Mr. Struthers) name, and he completed his five minutes remaining. I asked the question at the very beginning if there was leave to have the bill stand in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), and I was directed by that side of the House, no, leave was denied. So, procedurally, the honourable member for Swan River now to speak to the bill needs leave. All I am asking is, is there leave of the House to have her speak to the bill?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, just to clarify so we understand what is happening, from my perspective here and your comment, I would understand that after the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), who had the floor, who completed his remarks, that other members then have the opportunity to address the bill and the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) is doing so, and we would be—

Madam Speaker: The bill was standing initially in the honourable member for Swan River's name and the leave to remain standing was denied. That is the issue at stake.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Wowchuk: I appreciate that. It was my error then because I assumed that, when it was standing in the member for Dauphin's (Mr. Struthers) name, I would be able to speak after him.

Madam Speaker, when we look back at the history of this, we see that there was a lot of concern. This government told us before they proceeded with elk ranching that they would seek public input, there would be an opportunity for public hearings, and in fact that did not happen. There were no public hearings. The government decided to proceed with their position to proceed with elk ranching. But I also want to say that the government did not fulfill their responsibilities when they took over as government, because a decision was made in 1986 that there would be no elk ranching but, in fact, under this government's administration, additional licences have been issued for people to hold elk in captivity, and the number of elk in Manitoba has increased.

One of the concerns at the time, why the NDP government decided not to proceed with elk ranching, was that there were strong and sincere arguments presented and there were great fears about increased poaching and loss of wildlife, the gene pool and of the wildlife characteristics.

The government has not proved that these concerns will be addressed with this legislation. The government in the last eight years has not proceeded to end, to carry out the responsibility of eliminating all of those elk that were in captivity that were supposed to be disposed of.

Madam Speaker, when the original attempt to elk ranch was put forward the people put forward many concerns. The people said, if the government elects to approve the elk ranching, the following points must be considered. One was the possibility of eradication of wild herds. What conditions will be placed on owners of escaped elk if trapped elk should happen to break out of fences? They also recommended that The Wildlife Act should be opened up to permit all elk to fall under the municipal husbandry act.

A recommendation that was made was, if there is going to be elk ranching, the total mountain, and they are referring to the Duck Mountain, should have been fenced with a 10-foot fence to prevent interbreeding between wild elk and domestic elk. They also recommended that 100-percent depredation be paid to farmers. Those are things that the government has not addressed.

The question was, will the government approve the shooting of elk by damaged landowners or landowners

wanting to protect their children? When all these points are considered, it will cost government more to proceed than stop.

Madam Speaker, these are recommendations that are put forward by people that the government members will know very well: Ken Fulford from Swan River; George Bullock from Swan River; Al Campbell, people who were very adamantly opposed to elk ranching and for some very good reasons, but the government, rather than listening to what the people have to say, has proceeded and now has brought forward a piece of legislation that will result in elk being held in captivity without many of the issues that have been raised before being addressed.

Madam Speaker, at that time there was put in place an Elk Management Board, and that Elk Management Board has made recommendations to government. They have said to increase the amount of hunting in the area. They have suggested to the government to set up new herds and move some of the problem elk. They have asked the government to set up some feeding programs. They have, to the credit of the government, set up some feeding programs, but they have not listened to the recommendations of their own Elk Management Board that said do not start elk ranching. There is a great risk here of disease, of increased poaching, and many other problems, but the government decided to proceed.

* (1510)

The reason they decided to proceed, Madam Speaker, is because there is a huge problem with elk depredation. Again that problem came to a head in the Swan River area last year when the number of elk was so high that farmers were losing their hay supplies and their crops. There were options for the government to address this and bring forward a compensation package, a wildlife compensation package, which recommends 100 percent compensation, but the government chose not to take that route.

So it is strange that a government that was so opposed to elk ranching at one time, and members who opposed it in 1986-87 should now change their mind, and rather than listening to the board that was put in place to make recommendations of how to deal with the problems should now just proceed and bring in legislation without public hearings. I remember inviting the minister to

come up to the Swan River area and have a good discussion on whether or not to proceed with this. But this government has a majority. They have decided that they will proceed with this. I am afraid that they have not looked at the full consequences of what they are bringing forward here, and what the implications will be on Manitobans and our natural species.

Madam Speaker, it does not make sense that we have to domesticate every animal that there is. There are animals that we should enjoy for the sheer pleasure of having animals. The member across the way talks about other animals. Certainly, we have domesticated other animals.

When we look at this legislation, there are so many weaknesses in this legislation. There are so many questions that are unanswered as to whether disease will spread, as to whether this is economically viable that at this time this is not the time to proceed with this legislation. This is not the time. Madam Speaker, the government sees this as an opportunity to make money. They are going to take wild animals and sell them and, I believe, exploit a resource, a very beautiful animal that we have. I think that they are wrong. I want to say that there are things within the legislation that are weak as well.

This legislation is to deal with elk ranching. When we look at the definitions, the definitions tell us that game production animals will be defined in regulation. Why, if a government is only going to have a few species taken from the wild, if it is only elk that they are talking about, why will they not define in the act which animals it is that they are proposing to capture and sell? Unfortunately, the way the act is written, there is no guarantee whatsoever that species like the European red deer could not be defined as a game production animal. In the case of the European red deer, this would be an ecological disaster. This species easily crosses with natural elk, thereby completely confounding the genetics. Where both species were introduced in New Zealand, the wild animals are now neither red deer nor elk. They have crossbred, and these are the risks that we face, Madam Speaker.

There is a risk that with no restriction of what animal can be—or the ability of the minister to decide which animals will be domesticated, no clear guidelines, that we

will not see some species like the red deer brought in, that we stand the risk of putting our wild herds at risk and contaminating the genetic pool that we have. We have some of the best elk here in Manitoba. People across the world want our elk, but we have to ensure that we protect that species for our people to enjoy and that the genetic pool be protected here in Manitoba. The minister has a lot of discretionary power, and that causes us concern.

Under Section 9(1), it appears that this is an attempt to restrict imports from the United States and other countries. However, it is again left wide open by indicating that this may be modified by regulation. Again, it can be modified by regulation, so there is not going to be any restriction about animals brought in from the other country. Further there is absolutely nothing stopping movement of elk or another species from the United States or New Zealand or wherever, through another province and then into Manitoba. There should be absolutely no movement of species native to Manitoba into this province. We have a good species, a very important quality species here in Manitoba, Madam Speaker. We should not risk the chance of degrading our genetic pool here. Further, this only opens the door for inevitable imports of disease and parasites. There is absolutely no reason to allow importation of animals into Manitoba.

So, Madam Speaker, there is a risk, and in this act the way things are covered off there is no protection to ensure that our species, our gene pool here will be protected. Although the government would have us believe that there is protection from importation of other species, that is not the case, and there are loopholes in this legislation that will allow that to happen.

We are also told that there is going to be a registration and identification system, and we know that if we look at the record of the department there has been a very poor job of keeping track of game animals here in the province. Madam Speaker, again we cannot risk that. Looking at some records that we have seen over what has been happening over the last six or seven years, there has been a tremendous amount of movement of elk in this province at a time when there is no legislation and a time when we are not supposed to be having elk held in captivity or other animals.

We also have a concern that this legislation will allow for the sale of animal parts, parts of carcass, including velvet, and we want the government to spell out clearer what it is they are proposing. We want to know, are they talking just about velvet, or are they talking about other things? Milk from these wild animals, gall bile from bears, semen from elk, is this what this minister is proposing, because, again, Madam Speaker, that is not spelled out clearly in the legislation?

We are concerned, as the people were in 1986. They were concerned about increased poaching. That has not been addressed. We feel that there is the opportunity for a black market and sale of other animal parts and the destruction of wild animals. As I say, we have had discussion on this, and at this time, when we look at this bill, this is not something that we can support.

Certainly, one of the issues that was raised was that aboriginal people are interested in elk ranching, and that is a very controversial issue in the aboriginal community. My colleague, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), raised a very important point yesterday when he said, just be careful on this one. They tell us aboriginal people will benefit, but you do not always believe what government says. He raised the issue of Louisiana-Pacific, where aboriginal people were promised jobs and opportunities for economic development, and, as it so happens, very few aboriginal people at the present time have jobs. So I can understand why the aboriginal people are doubtful right now.

Yes, there are some bands that are lobbying. There are bands that are lobbying, and one of them is the Pine Creek Band, very close to my constituency, but my understanding is that they have not worked out an agreement. So my colleague from The Pas, words ring through with this one as well. Although the Pine Creek Band is interested, I understand, in being part of the capture, they have no written guarantees, and they have not any assurances that they are going to be part of this.

By the same token, there are bands, such as the Indian Birch River Band and Shoal River Band, who have said they are very much interested in establishing wild herds in their area that they can manage. They do not want to domesticate these herds; they want to manage the herds. But we have a similar situation in The Pas, where there is a moose management agreement where they are not

domesticated. These people want to manage their herds for their own use; they would be hunted. They do not want to put these animals into captivity.

* (1520)

Now there is a difference here. There is a clear difference what these people have said they want to do and what this government is proposing to do. This government is proposing to exploit the elk in this province and sell them for profit, the people who have said they would like to see herds established.

In fact, there was a plan that this government had worked out to establish an elk herd in the Cranberry-Portage area. I understand that the fences were up to get these herds established in the area and then let them go. The government backed down on that agreement.

The member asks, why was the licence given to John Eisner? There is no doubt about it. If you were listening, in my early comments, I said the NDP started the experiment and recognized—and they listened to the people. At that time, the NDP listened to the people. They listened to the people. They were going to expand it, and you, my dear friend, opposed it. The member opposed it. At that time he opposed it. Now the shoe is on the other foot, and he is supporting it. Is that not interesting? You can tell very clearly that government members are not all in sync on this bill because they themselves admit that they are not all happy with this.

In listening to the people of Swan River, and I can tell you I have listened to many of them, the people of Swan River have said that this is not a good move. What the government should be doing is addressing the problems that the people of the valley and in other areas have raised. There are serious problems with the number of elk, but in southern Manitoba, where there is a large deer population, the government there issues two permits per person. They allow it there, but for the people of Swan River, when there is double, more elk, they put the elk on a draw system. Why? Because they purposely wanted to raise the number of elk so that then they could say, we have so many elk, now we have to start elk ranching. That was the purpose of this.

They will not accept the solution that has been put forward by their own board, the Elk Management Board,

and that recommendation was to increase the number of licences, to increase the compensation—[interjection] The minister now says he does not approve of shooting animals. He does not, but they will increase the number of licences for deer. Now for deer you can—[interjection]

It is okay to shoot the deer in southern Manitoba where they are causing problems for southern farmers, but it is not okay to control the number of elk in the Swan River Valley where they are causing problems. The government has turned a blind eye on the people of the valley.

Madam Speaker, there are other problems. I guess I am very concerned with the starting of elk ranching. Is this going to mean that we are going to now have trophy hunting on these elk ranches? There are many problems that this government has not addressed. They have moved the captured elk into an area where we know that there is a disease in the soil that could affect the species.

An Honourable Member: What is the name of the disease?

Ms. Wowchuk: In fact, the member wants to know the name of the disease. My understanding is the name of the disease is brain worm. If the member—

An Honourable Member: I have never heard of that.

Ms. Wowchuk: If the member for Emerson says he has not heard of it, I would encourage him to educate himself, because if this legislation is going to go forward and we are going to see elk ranching in all parts of the province, there is a serious risk. This government should consider seriously where these ranches are going to be established. They should also consider an exclusion zone to a minimum of—this government should consider an exclusion zone around the mountains to ensure that elk ranches are not established in areas where there is a risk of interbreeding between—

Madam Speaker, I wonder if you might call the member for Pembina to order. He seems to have a lot to say on this bill and since none of their members have been speaking on this bill—[interjection] I am sorry, it is the member for Emerson. Would you advise him that he will also have the opportunity to speak on this bill and put all his comments—because he seems to be so well informed on the subject.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would ask that all honourable members give the honourable member for Swan River the common courtesy of allowing her to put her remarks on the record whether they agree or disagree, because every individual member has that same right to put his or her comments on the record.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, again I want to emphasize that we do not believe game farming production farms should occur in the southeast part. First of all, we do not agree that there should be game farming. I want to set the record straight on that. But, since this government is pursuing this idea—I do hope that they will reconsider their decision to pursue this legislation—if they are going to have it, they must consider where they are establishing game farms. Game production farms should not occur in the southeast part of Manitoba due to the potential to move localized species of parasites into other areas of the province.

For example, 60 percent of the white-tailed deer in the southeast carry brain worm, a parasite which does not affect white-tailed deer but can kill elk, moose and caribou. Importantly, elk sometimes do not exhibit the pathological characteristics of an infection of this parasite. Unrestricted transfer of members of the deer family is almost certain to lead to transfer of the parasite to areas where it does not presently occur in the wild population. Among other impacts, this could ultimately lead to infection of woodland caribou in other areas of the province, Madam Speaker. So there is a serious concern. If the government is going to proceed with this, they must consider these risks that they are putting on our wild animals in this province. These are the things; not everything can be based on economics.

The government also has to consider that it has not resolved the issue of the outstanding elk that were supposed to be disposed of. I want to ask them, how are they going to deal with those people who have elk, in comparison to those who are now going to have to buy them? There is a real issue here. We have asked this before. The government has not answered it. The government has not told us either how they are going to distribute the permits. Who is going to get the elk? Is it

going to be their friends that get the elk? Is it going to be people that have more money? Is it going to be done on a draw, and only certain names are going to go into a hat? How is the government going to do these things?

Madam Speaker, the government has brought forward legislation. They have not listened to the public. They promised us that they would hold public hearings. Instead, they are pushing forward with something that is not in the best interest of Manitobans.

I have to say that back in 1986 there was also a large concern by cattle producers. Cattle producers were concerned about disease being spread. The beef industry at the time was concerned about the impact of elk meat on the market. I do not see that as the big concern, but I do share their concern about the possibility of disease being spread and that there is not the ability for the government to do the testing. There is also a concern about compensation. When there is a diseased herd, what price is government going to pay to put down herds that are diseased? So there are many issues.

* (1530)

Madam Speaker, I also want to say that in all of this we have to look at how this impacts on aboriginal rights. Is there any infringement on those people's right to hunt? Is there going to be any impact of this legislation on aboriginal self-government and all other issues and regulations? All of these things have not been addressed. I would urge the government to recognize that they have made a mistake here. They have moved forward. Last year they began capturing elk at the strong opposition of the people of Manitoba. The government should consider very carefully what happened in the Swan River Valley because there were serious risks there, and we are very lucky that someone was not seriously hurt. There was a fire in one of the entrapments, and that should send a clear message to the government that the public was not in support of what they were doing.

So I urge the government to take a cooling-off period. It is not necessary to pass this legislation in this session. Put it back, go to the public, get more information, research the things that have been brought forward, look at the risk of disease that we are facing of contaminating our wild herds by moving animals from one part of the province to another and look at what the implications are

going to be rather than just think, oh, we are going to sell these elk and make lots of money and not worry about the other things. Look at all of this, put this legislation on the back burner and consult with Manitobans, because, Madam Speaker, this is very important legislation that they are bringing forward, that is going to have a negative impact, so I urge the government not to proceed with it at this time, rather listen to Manitobans.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, I am certainly going to take up the challenge from the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and put my comments on record as she has suggested I might do, I was—

An Honourable Member: I will not interfere with that.

Mr. Penner: She is telling me that she will not interfere or intervene, and I appreciate that very much. I would think that some of the things that she has put on record will be of interest to her constituents in her own riding and the area.

I was also interested in the comments put on record by the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) in recognizing that, when the honourable member for Swan River indicated that we should consult with Manitobans on this issue prior to the implementation of this initiative is of interest to me because, if she recalls, or if she would dare to recall, that in 1988, when their government was defeated and we took office, their government was into an experiment using enclosures to confine elk. For what reason? To try and find out, No. 1, whether the general public would be up in arms if they did it—

Point of Order

Ms. Wowchuk: On a point of order, I wonder, Madam Speaker, if you would allow me to correct the member? He has said that when they took office, the NDP was in the process of phasing out. In fact, it was in—

An Honourable Member: I did not say “phasing out.” I said “phasing in.”

Ms. Wowchuk: Phasing in. In 1986, the NDP cabinet concluded that there was not evidence to offset concerns that were raised, and they ended elk ranching in 1986.

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

* * *

Mr. Penner: Madam Speaker, I am interested in what the honourable member for Swan River has just put on record. It is interesting to note that the NDP, in fact, did not end elk ranching or keeping elk in enclosures, because they did a deal with one named John Eisner who today still is allowed to, under our government, keep elk in enclosures and has, since 1986, I believe, had elk in fences.

I suggest to the honourable member that she should very closely review with her friends in her caucus the reasons, No. 1, why they first of all even considered keeping elk in enclosures behind fences—[interjection] Domesticated them? I would suspect that from 1986 to 1996 is about 10 years. If those animals would have wanted to become domesticated, in 10 years time they might in fact have become domesticated. So therefore I make the case to her that we do in fact today have domesticated elk in Manitoba and have had since 1986. It was the NDP that initiated the project that demonstrated you could in fact house elk, keep them on farms, raise them as domesticated animals, yet I make the argument, Madam Speaker, that these animals still today are not domestic. Go try and catch some of them or go try and befriend some of them in those pastures as I have done.

Now the disease aspect. I would like to continue the discussion on domestication of animals, or a bit beyond this, because I think we can make the case that if we go far enough back in history, virtually every animal that is raised on the farm today at some point in its history would have been wild, including the cows and the horses and the sheep and the chickens, and maybe even we as a human species might have been considered somewhat at odds with nature from time to time, maybe even been considered somewhat wild, and maybe some of us are even a bit wild today. But I would suggest to you that the honourable member in that same period of time that they allowed for the domestication of elk under their jurisdiction in fact allowed the importation of wild animals and birds from other nations such as wild boar, such as emus, such as ostriches which are today raised on farms in Manitoba. Yet the elk, the honourable elk which

has been an animal which is at home in Manitoba, I think always has been probably since the good Lord created it, is not domesticated, is still in a wild state, yet all the other animals that have become domesticated are accepted now as the norm by the opposition members.

Now should we then do as Saskatchewan—where, by the way, the NDP government governs today—should we then, as Saskatchewan has, enter into an industry that is contributing today, I understand, some \$70 million to \$100 million annually to the farm community in Saskatchewan? The NDP, who are governing, have allowed not only the establishment of the elk ranching industry in Saskatchewan but have in fact encouraged expansion of it. Farmers in Manitoba have in fact bought elk from their cousins in Saskatchewan, from their NDP cousins in Saskatchewan, and imported them into Manitoba and are currently farming those elk in Manitoba. Was it legal? Well, maybe. The interesting thing is, though, that Saskatchewan is expanding their industry very dramatically. Same government, same mentality? [interjection] Yes, I think so, although they would now like to hide behind somebody else's issue. Alberta, same thing. Have they, have Saskatchewan in fact had over the last 10 years a huge disease problem in their elk? I think not. Have the farmers done very well with it? Yes, I think so.

Now, should we allow that same industry to be established in Manitoba? Why not? Just because the honourable members for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) have a philosophical view as to what constitutes a domestic animal or a wild animal? Just because you put an animal behind a fence or in a barn constitutes it as dangerous, nondangerous, domesticated, nondomesticated? Does it? I do not know. I am not as bright as they are.

* (1540)

However, let me say this to you, that in regards to some of the questions raised by the honourable member for Swan River in her concerns in regard to the time taken and the consultation, we have taken now eight years. We have taken eight years, as a matter of fact 10 years, since the NDP first initiated elk ranching in this province.

We will give them full credit for that; since they first initiated, we have constantly discussed. I, in my tenure as

minister, and I said at the time, and she is absolutely correct, that I would not initiate elk ranching at that time. I said this on Peter Warren. The reason I said this was that I was not satisfied that we had adequate consultations or discussions or debate in our House, with our people, on our farms and with those that would like to see the animals remain as a wild species forever and a day.

I for one am convinced that the wild elk out there will remain a wild elk as, in some areas, sheep remain wild sheep. In some areas of the world cows remain wild cows. No difference. However, I am convinced that we did ~~take~~ adequate time, and we consulted adequately with the general population in Manitoba about the issue of in fact raising elk and other species behind or in enclosures and ~~farm~~ing them. Even as late as last winter, we held 26 meetings across this province to discuss with the general farm public during the course of the task force on value-added, and at each one of them we had a major presentation on elk ranching and elk farming. [interjection] Oh, yes, we did. [interjection] Even at Swan River.

And I say to you, Madam Speaker, that even—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Penner: —and she told me that she—

Madam Speaker: I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for Emerson.

Mr. Penner: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

But we put before the people of Manitoba during those task force hearings the issue of elk ranching, and I say to you, Madam Speaker, that we had without fail support from every part of Manitoba on the initiative of elk ranching in this province. As a matter of fact, they encouraged us to proceed quickly, and we said we would take our time to ensure that proper regulations were drafted to ensure that we in fact could deal with disease and that we would ensure that we had a healthy elk population in this province, we would ensure that we would not allow the importation of diseased animals, that we would do on-farm testing on an annual basis, that we would do on-farm inspections on an annual basis and even more often, if necessary.

The fears that the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) is trying to instill in this House are simply nonvalid at this time. Therefore, I would suggest that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), in his search for new initiatives to give the farm population in this province a better chance to diversify and add value to their operations, is doing the right thing.

I would say that the consequences that we are going to see of this is the emergence very quickly of an industry that will add hundreds of millions of dollars to the economy of this province, and not by the sale of wild species to farmers but by breeding herds on farms that will be expanded and, therefore, exported to other jurisdictions—[interjection] Such products as velvet, yes, or the horns that drop off annually on these elk. Not as a cow—a cow retains its horns, but elks drop their horns annually. They will be exported and other parts such as semen, yes, why not? We do it in pigs. We do it in cows. We do it in horses. We do it in everything else. So we should eliminate elk from this process? I think not.

There is an absolute economic value-added opportunity here that will truly help agriculture diversify its economic base. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I say that the NDP are living not only 10 years in the past but they are living so far in the past that they have a difficulty to see over the hill and watch the sun rise and see a new horizon, and they should take a new approach.

After the era of the Crow benefit—that is gone—the socialistic approaches to agriculture are history in this country. All the support mechanisms that we have seen traditionally that were of a socialistic nature have disappeared over the last few years.

So, therefore, I say to the honourable members opposite: Accept the new Canada, accept the new Manitoba, accept a new direction and accept personal initiative to better themselves both on farms, off farms, and allow new initiatives of the economic scale that we need in this province to diversify our economy and drive ahead.

I congratulate the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) for taking the initiative, having the will and the desire to see the expansion of our agricultural industry

in this province, and I commend the minister for taking on and bringing this bill forward at this time.

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, after hearing all this debate for the last couple of hours previously and today in regard to this bill here, we have heard for and against and so forth. I know this bill is intended to allow Manitobans to game farm and ranch native wildlife species such as the—[interjection] I guess that is why they are in St. Boniface lately, the NDP, looking for elk ranching. I know they are wasting their time, and I think they found that out for themselves.

The act will also allow the sale of game meat through licensed sources to bring more value-added processing industry to Manitoba. The minister in his opening speech last May or July or whatever it was, June 4, indicated that seven other provinces had elk ranching, and I think if it is to help Manitoba, this bill should be brought forward and voted on, if it is going to help the economy of Manitoba, and we should not be left out if already seven provinces have it. But I think there are concerns on some of the issues. We have the letter for example from the Manitoba Wildlife Federation that was addressed to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), to the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and all members of the Legislature. My concern there, has the Minister of Agriculture responded to all these concerns or has he addressed all these concerns that they have indicated in this issue?

* (1550)

In listening to the member for Emerson—indicated that they had 26, to be exact, meetings in the last years to listen to Manitobans, but I know I have spoken to several cattle producers. Some are against, some are for it. I think we should all hear Manitobans whether it is feasible or what are their concerns and communicate to the government their concerns. I think when it goes to committee they should be advised, and if they want to make presentations, bring forward and request amendments to satisfy the Manitobans who have concerns with this bill.

This act is needed very, very badly because it has been going on for 10 years. Let us address it now before it is too late. Currently producers can raise fallow deer, wild boar, ostrich and emu in Manitoba without a licence. In

the last few years this type of nontraditional agriculture has been on the rise, driven partially by the low grain prices and the farmers' need to find out marketable products. This type of industry however is still in the early stages. Some say it is already dead—I do not believe it—and few people actually make money of the meat but rather from convincing other farmers that it can make money by selling the meat and then sell them breeding stock. Unfortunately a great many of these ventures are failures. How many emu steaks have you had this year? The animals are expensive to keep, often end up at the auction, kept in very poor condition.

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

With this act, no game animal will be allowed to be brought into Manitoba without a certificate of health. This may prevent some producers from bringing in animals that are not suited to our climate or our palate. The sale of elk for meat purposes is also another matter. No doubt animal-rights activists will deplore the game-farming of elk, but we have listened to them, let us listen to them and let us look at the act, what it does for Manitobans, and let us communicate with them and let them know to come forward and bring their concerns and express what they want with this bill. But let us do it properly once and for all, and let us bring it to committee.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to put a few comments on the record with respect to this legislation. As my honourable friend from St. Boniface indicated, it is time that this legislation was brought into place because since 1986 the production of elk has been experimented with. A fair amount of information has been accumulated, and it was not without a great deal of thought and research into this that the Manitoba government decided to go with this type of a legislative act.

I often think that when I look at this act and I look at what the provincial government is attempting to do in other areas in terms of regulations and how many regulations we have thrown out, this act is to the contrary very highly regulated and for good reason. The reasons are such that we have a responsibility to not only promote

the agricultural diversification in this province, of which elk farming or elk ranching is a part of that opportunity, but we also have a responsibility to maintain that the wildlife species remains. That is the purpose of this highly regulated act.

Just to clarify some of the areas under this act, we have to remember that the game production animals must originate from approved sources in Manitoba or in Canada. They will not come in from the United States. All animals will be registered and identified. Standards will be established for health and genetic requirements, and there will be tremendous—[interjection] DNA tested. There will be record keeping, and reports will be an important component of game farming. This criteria will safeguard and protect the native species.

The slaughter of these animals can only occur from licensed plants, and carcasses that are for sale as meat have to be identified. In fact, the entire animal has to be tracked right through the entire system, so that that animal could be identified at any place along the system so that it can be traced back to where it came from. So there is that kind of a protection in this system. Should anything happen, that animal can be traced back to a source. That is very important, and this is being carefully planned for in this legislation.

The harvesting and the processing of the antlers in the velvet stage would be allowed. There was a lot of foofaraw from the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) saying that—in terms of the pain and the way it is going to be done to the animal. The removal of the velvet antlers has to be done under the supervision of a veterinarian. Therefore, it will be done with the application of an anesthetic, so the pain is not there. We have to remember that my honourable friend from Emerson indicated that in the process of elk, throughout their life, these antlers do drop off normally and it is not without some bleeding and some pain at that time as well, but at the same time, it is a natural process that takes place with the elk.

Another important thing underneath this act is the fact that there will be inspectors appointed to enforce the act, so all the criteria of the act, the intent of the act is carried out by all those producers that are involved in the act. All farms are going to be subject to an inspection prior to them being issued a licence for elk farming. They are

going to have to follow criteria established by regulation under the act as to how they can establish their farm, and then after that, they will be inspected on an annual basis. So there is always continual updating in terms of adherence to the act.

* (1600)

Failure to conform to the standards of the act or contravention of the act: Producers could lose their licence; there could be fines; they can be imprisoned; or they could lose or forfeit their animals or possessions. Now, if we are talking about the forfeiture of animals, we are talking about a breeding herd that has very expensive animals. So there is a lot to lose if they do not follow the intent of the act.

The other area that my honourable friend from St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) indicated was the fact that there is elk production in seven provinces in Canada right now, and it is just a matter of time that, if we do not get into the regulated production of elk in this province, sooner or later it will come in anyway, and then we will be forced to try to clean it up in an attempt to save the industry and to save the elk in Manitoba. This way we can be proactive and start out by establishing a sound framework upon which elk farming can take place.

One of the important aspects, too, is the fact that since 1986 producers have been able to capture and sell elk. If you look at many of the wildlife magazines that are published and distributed throughout Canada and the North American continent, many of the breeding animals that are listed in those magazines are sourced out of Manitoba. We have probably the highest quality elk in North America right here in Manitoba. If they keep leaving the province, then virtually we will have an elk herd that is far below the standard of the North American herd.

One other area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that when we did do our rural task force this past winter we had 26 meetings, and at almost half of those meetings we had presentations on elk farming to the public that were present at those meetings. At that point in time the public had a chance to say: We do not like this idea of elk farming; we do not like it. But that never came out at those meetings. The questions that arose from the floor were, if I got into the industry, what would I have to do? There was that kind of interest.

There will be those people that do not want to get into the industry, do not want to have anything to do with elk, would like to see it as a wild animal, but there are others who would like to see this as a diversification opportunity because it was pointed out that we are without the Crow subsidy right now. If we are without that subsidy, we are going to have a lot of cheap grain. We are going to have producers taking crop land out of grain production, attempting to have pasture production, and elk are a natural for that type of an environment.

I would also like to point out that throughout this past spring the Department of Agriculture with their staff had a number of farm meetings throughout the province discussing things such as elk ranching, emus, ostriches, et cetera. They had discussions with the general public at that point about elk ranching, but they were very careful to also explain that elk ranching is probably not for everybody that comes along. You have to have a large commitment to the industry. You have to be willing to invest the dollars in the industry, and you have to be willing to follow all the regulations as spelled out under the act.

So, with those few comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to see the opposition support this legislation and carry it through to committee and eventually passing it. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading Bill 31. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed.

Bill 30—The Dairy Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), Bill 30 The Dairy Act, Loi sur les produits laitiers, standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to put a few words on the record with regard to this bill. It is a bill that we support and one that has to be forward.

When we look at the bill, the main thrust of the bill, as I understand it, is to adapt a Canada-wide system of inspection and subsidization which will conform with the rules of the World Trade Organization which has ruled that, in the past—Canada does not conform with the current practices. The bill will allow western provinces to pool their product, a concept, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we support for other products as well. Pooling and sharing of resources, as we have under the Wheat Board, is something that we support, and we support it also for the dairy industry.

So this bill will allow western provinces to pool their product and allow them to move more efficiently inter-provincially and internationally, as well. Simply put, the pooling just enables the milk product to be marketed as if the pool producers were one.

The new inspection systems of the bill are important because they will head off any attempt by other countries to claim that Canada's product is not safe or is not up to world standards. This has happened lately, as we know, with raw cheese in Europe and can greatly affect the markets.

Subsidies are in place and will always be inherent in the system in Canada because the system is controlled by the amount of production. These subsidies will remain, but the old levy of special class pooling for products, such as surplus milk powders which was exported to developing countries, has to be replaced under the WTO rules. The new pooling system which is developed through this bill will be considered fair under the WTO. It is our understanding from Manitoba milk producers that this will allow for markets to be maintained or expanded at least until 1999, until the next round of GATT.

So, certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I say, we have had lots of discussion on pooling, and we support the concept of pooling as we have under the Canadian Wheat Board. We support the concept of pooling for producers because producers benefit when they have the opportunity to pool their resources.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that I do have some concerns with what is happening with the dairy industry in Manitoba. Many creameries have closed down in rural Manitoba. We have very little processing of our product. Most of the cheese and yogurts is produced in Saskatchewan, I believe, and we have very little of that in Manitoba. I think, along with improving the pooling system, the amendments in this act, this government has the responsibility to also look at how we can keep jobs here in Manitoba.

We just had a discussion on elk, and the members talk about diversification. We also have milk producers, and we have people in this province who were producing cream. There was a creamery industry in Manitoba. There was cheese making that has just about disappeared in this province. I would urge the government to recognize that these are important industries, and we should be getting the value-added jobs from these products as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading, Bill 30. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 49—The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), Bill 49, The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi concernant les offices régionaux de la santé et apportant des modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), with 20 minutes remaining, and also standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

Is there leave that this matter remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East? [agreed]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I am pleased to take a few minutes today to discuss portions of this bill that I was unable to get to the other day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill has got mixed reviews so far, and I guess the reason it does is, it provides a framework for action. It provides for decentralization of the health care system, and that, the element of decentralization, is something that we in our party have supported over the years.

So, on the surface of it, it is something that we should not really have a problem with, but the problem here is not necessarily with the framework but the group that is to implement the framework.

When you have a government such as we have right now, a right-wing government whose design is to privatize as much in the way of public service as possible, then this framework can be seen as ideal for allowing them to go about achieving their goals.

It is interesting to see that what they are proposing here corresponds very closely to what is currently in effect in New Zealand, and we can look ahead two or three years to see what the logical extension of this legislation will be. If this legislation is more or less a carbon copy of New Zealand, and this government has sent people to New Zealand to study their system, it is certainly possible that when it is fleshed out, when the health care system is fully fleshed out under this government, what we will see is what is happening in New Zealand right now.

Now, what is happening in New Zealand? At the end of the day what has happened is, the government is guaranteeing core services as defined by the government, and all other services are contracted out to the hospitals, who bid on the services. That is essentially what will happen here under this particular structure that the government is proposing. What we will see, as in New Zealand, we will see a situation, a tendering situation, where hospitals will be bidding against one another for hip replacements and other types of procedures. In fact, there may be sale days on certain procedures, and it will be a deliberate attempt on the part of this government to deinsure services that are currently insured and make the system, essentially turn the system into a private system.

Now, there is a whole bunch or whole series of different elements to this system that will develop over the next couple of years. One of them, and I should deal with that now, is the whole area of deinsuring core services and what that means to the economy as a whole.

What it means is the public, when services are de-insured, will have to buy private insurance, and what we see is a huge area here developing for companies like Great-West Life who are great friends of the government opposite. I can see Great-West Life licking their chops on a bill such as this when they see the potential for very, very limited core services to be covered by the public system and a huge area to be developed for insurance by the private sector. That is a huge area that is being developed. Already we have seen the de-insurance of, on the part of this government, the eye examinations for people between the ages of 18 and 65 years old. That has already been done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have seen in effect the Pharmacare deductibles, which are now income related, we have seen them raised as high as \$2,000 in some cases. So we see a whole area here of deinsured services and deductibles for services which open an area for private insurance, friends of the company, to get their selves involved with.

* (1610)

Another major part of the ideological drive here is to fuel the balanced budget legislation. I mean, we are into this balanced budget legislation, there is no turning back now, and a formula has been set up for the pay-down of the debt. In the short run, the government can, in effect, sell off Crown corporations in order to meet those obligations. So this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government will be selling the Manitoba Telephone System, and that will get them by the first year. The next year the government will be privatizing something else and that will get them by another year, but at some point they will run out of things to sell.

That is where the privatization, if you will, of the health care system comes in. In an effort to make certain that those budgets remain in a balanced and surplus position, millions of dollars will be squeezed out, forced out of the health care system. That is what this government is up to. Using the conventional methods, the government was finding it extremely difficult to obtain savings because of past experiences. For example, in the Pharmacare—or in the home care service back in 1994, the government got a rude awakening in a couple of by-elections that it almost lost. It replaced the Health minister, put a new face on the department and managed to hold itself together until it got to another election.

What it knows is that it is weak in the health care field. They understand that, and all the political advertising that they have done and so on, they know, can only take them so far. So the brain trust over there, if you can call it that, has come up with a system that basically flattens the administration and allows them, through a process which really is tantamount to smoke and mirrors, to put the responsibility for the cuts on these regional-appointed health boards and deflect attention away from the cuts. They know what happened to them the last time. Every time they have gone after health cuts, they have managed to shoot themselves in the foot, and it has been a rather painful experience. So the media people over there have decided, well, we have to go with a different approach, and the most sure-fire approach is to—[interjection] Exactly, go around and check and find out where a model like this has worked.

So they have looked at New Zealand and they said, well, this is the system; we can buy ourselves some time here. We can set up a decentralized system, and then we can pick and choose how we want to bring out the cuts. If things go right, then we will take credit for them; but, if things go bad, we will simply blame the boards. We will hide behind these boards as long as possible. We can regulate the system and adjust it to move it along a little faster, get us by elections, if we have to, by slowing it down a little bit. So on paper it looks like it is an ideal system for a government that is, in some ways, unsure of how to proceed and where to go, but I would say that once the system is in place—by the way, the system will be in place effective March 31 or April 1 next year, so only a few months from now. What we will see when that system kicks in is there will be a constant demand, because of the balanced budget legislation, to develop the fuel, to develop the money to pay down the debt. So there will be extreme pressure on the system to provide those funds, and those funds will be provided through massive cuts to jobs in the system, which once again they will turn around and blame the boards. So it may take some time.

It is difficult for us in this House to be able to explain the issue to the public, because it is not that clear how it will work, you know, in the context of an 83-page bill, particularly when the government is deliberately using the casino strike to divert the public's attention away from the real issues before the House.

I mean, we have major issues here that we are dealing with, the privatization of the telephone system, we have got the health boards, we have a whole number of very serious issues and bills that will fundamentally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, change the way this government is operating. There are fundamental changes here, and what they are doing is, because they know that strikes are not popular with the public, they are deliberately—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am having a terrible time hearing this speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I tend to agree with the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe). I am having a hard time hearing as well. I would ask those members who want to carry on their conversations to do so in the loge. I do not need yelling back and forth across the way. The member for Elmwood has the floor at this time. I would ask us to show a little respect.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I guess the point here is, the government sees an opportunity, it is taking the opportunity by extending the strike, and the public do not like strikes. By extending the strike, I say deliberately, what it is hoping to do is create a diversion and take people's attention away from the major, major bills that are being discussed and being passed in this session of the Legislature.

I mean, we are not only dealing with The Regional Health Authorities Act that we are discussing today. We are dealing with a whole range of issues here, the privatization of the Manitoba Telephone System and other very serious legislation that is not going to get the attention that it deserves because it is being crammed together into a very compressed time frame with an overriding issue like a strike that this government is promoting and prolonging by its refusal to appoint a mediator.

Now, my colleague the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) has discussed the devastating effect that this bill will have on the rural health system. I mean, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we already have health care cuts or hospital emergency cuts in a number of rural hospitals right now. In fact, in Stonewall, emergency services have been cut back. Emergency services are closed on weekends in

Ashern, in Eriksdale and other towns, and I am not sure just when the emergency wards are in the highest use, but it would make sense to me that the highest use for emergency wards should logically be on the weekends. That is when the traffic is on the road and people are more active and I would think there would be more use, in fact, of the emergency wards during the weekend. But this is the type of activity we are seeing now, and this is the type of activity we are seeing before this legislation is even passed. So one only can imagine what will happen after the legislation is passed.

* (1620)

I feel that we are going to have an acceleration that once this legislation is through the government will have carte blanche, will feel obligated no more to be prudent, to be careful, to be consultative, and it will move ahead hiding itself under that veil of the Tory-appointed boards, and it will move along at an accelerating rate. What we are going to see is an attempt to catch up to the New Zealand system. I can tell you that once you pull the supports away, once you start to slide, the ball goes downhill at an increasing rate that once it starts and it spills over into the education system, it spills over into labour.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am being motioned that my time is almost nigh, and I have a motion to present in a very short period of time. There were a whole bunch of issues that I wanted to deal with under this bill, user fees and others, being just among a few of them.

I would like to make a motion, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen),

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "THAT" and the following be substituted:

This bill be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

Obviously written by a lawyer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and well done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Kildonan, seconded by the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen),

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "THAT" and the following be substituted:

This bill be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

Debatable and in order.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak to the question of dealing with this particular issue. You know, it is very cute for the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) to introduce the six-month hoist motion, and the fact, of course, that that six-month hoist motion is in order and part of the rules of this House, very seldom used, in fact, I do not think I have ever seen it used since I have been in the House, but nonetheless, within the rights of the member to introduce that motion for consideration by the members of the House.

The fact of the matter, though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that in introducing a motion such as this, an attempt to frustrate the business of government and the business of health care reform in this province, I do not think goes very far to assisting the people of Manitoba. There is enough uncertainty, enough concern amongst the public as it is, as we go through the process of health care reform, to suggest that now we put a six-month hoist on this particular bill. This bill, of course, is to create regional health authorities throughout the province of Manitoba, and one that I think is of some concern to an awful lot of people.

Many of these health authorities are, in fact, in the process of forming. People are getting together. They are looking at the regional issues in the province of Manitoba, particularly in many of the rural districts, where many of the people either are being appointed or already have been appointed and are beginning to do work in advance of having full authority come from the passage of this bill. So these people are out there in good faith, Mr. Deputy Speaker, trying to deal with very serious, significant issues for the provision of health care, for the construction of facilities, and for dealing with a myriad of issues that face these jurisdictions throughout our province. To suggest for a moment now that this

should be put on hold for six months so that it will be dealt with in a subsequent session is not in the best interest of the public at all.

There is enough concern and uncertainty out there. There is enough work for these regional health authorities to do to try and pull together some of the big questions that remain out there. I know that many of my colleagues, and I am sure many members across the way, have, for instance, facilities—hospitals, nursing homes, personal care homes and things of that nature—that are kind of on hold as a result of this until these authorities can come together and sort them out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to do that, to adopt a motion such as this, would simply carry the entire issue on for another six to 12 months and would cause further uncertainty and further concern, and delay again the process of looking at those kinds of facilities and rationalizing which belong where, so that we can get on with the job of dealing with them. I do not think that is very fair to the public of Manitoba either. These people have been expecting facilities and new hospitals and things of that nature for several months—in some cases, several years. Now, to suggest for a moment that because the members opposite are unhappy with the question being put to the House, that is, Bill 49—they want to put a six-month hoist on the second reading of this bill.

So this issue needs to be dealt with, and it needs to be dealt with now by members of the House. If the members opposite are not in favour, they have every right to stand up and vote against it. They can vote against this particular bill, and I have every confidence they will, given the tone of speeches that have been dealt with over the past number of times. They have had quite a number of speakers dealing with this particular issue, and it is important. It is a very important issue for the people of Manitoba. To suggest for a moment that we should simply delay it for a period of six months creates far too much uncertainty, compounded on top of the uncertainty that already exists and the concerns that already exist with respect to the issue of health care reform.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact that there are hospitals, personal care homes and other facilities throughout Manitoba that are on hold as a result of this initiative coming forward simply delays those issues again. I can

tell you that I know a number of my colleagues in our caucus, and as I said earlier, I am sure a number of members opposite, I am sure the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) does not want to see—

* (1630)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the minister will have 24 minutes remaining.

The hour being 4:30, it is now private members' hour.

Before we proceed I wanted to correct an error that I had made when I read the motion. I had introduced it as the member for Kildonan, it was moved by the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 10—Federal Disaster Assistance Funding

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), that

WHEREAS traditionally the federal government has reimbursed municipalities up to 90 percent for all work that was required to be done after a disaster under the federal government Emergency Preparedness program; and

WHEREAS the federal government has shifted its policy without first consulting with any of the municipalities in the province and thus leaving these municipalities ill prepared to deal with the additional costs that will be incurred; and

WHEREAS the new federal policy has shifted the federal government's responsibility to providing compensation during times of disaster to only 16 percent for repair work undertaken using municipal equipment and employees, while still providing for 90 percent compensation if the repairs are contracted out; and

WHEREAS in most instances it is more practical and cost-effective for municipalities to utilize their own

equipment and employees, especially during times of disaster when it is important to repair infrastructure as quickly as possible.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Province of Manitoba to consider soliciting the federal government to reconsider its position and to abide by its commitment to assume 90 percent of all work required after a disaster; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Province of Manitoba to attempt to persuade the federal government to make a commitment to municipal employees that the federal government will not attempt to pressure or convince municipalities to contract out disaster assistance work that can be accomplished by municipal workers.

Motion presented.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Deputy Speaker, today in the House I am doing the NDP's part in trying to push a log jam open that has been created by not just the federal government but the provincial government in the area of disaster assistance. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people in Manitoba who from time to time find themselves up to their eyeballs in water or any of the other disasters that are covered by the federal and provincial governments can almost live with the fact that mother nature throws them a curve ball every now and then.

What the people of Manitoba cannot live with is when this curve ball is exaggerated and made worse through man-made means, through federal and provincial governments scrapping and squabbling over who pays what while municipalities across our province are left high and dry. In some cases, they would want to be high and dry with the amount of water that they have put up with recently, but they are left out on a limb by both the federal and provincial governments.

We are doing our part today in this House with this private member's resolution to try to get the ball rolling on behalf of municipalities across our province. This is a situation that I think is very serious. This is a situation that I think both the feds and the province have to get serious about, get down to work and come through for the people who are left in tough positions in Manitoba.

We have heard this spring, this summer particularly, from the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pallister) in Manitoba as he put forth his government's position on what the federal government has been doing in the areas of disaster assistance. While, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can empathize somewhat with the minister across the way, I believe that what he is doing in his attempt to strictly blame the federal government is play politics with an issue that is too important, I feel, to be partisan upon.

This is a time for the federal government and the Manitoba government to work together to help our municipalities out. That is not what has happened this spring. It is not what is foreseeable in the future if the two governments have themselves dug in to the point at which they do now. It is time for both governments, I believe, to step forward and try to solve this issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard in questioning in this House where the Minister of Government Services has tried to provide a distinction between his government's approach to helping people who need the help, a distinction between him and the federal government and its approach to this problem that we have in our province.

I want to quote though from a document from Emergency Preparedness Canada. It is entitled Disaster Financial Assistance, The Manual to Assist in the Interpretation of Federal Guidelines. This is obviously put out by the federal government and provides the guidelines under which they operate in providing disaster assistance.

It is Chapter 5 that I am quoting from, entitled Interpretation, Public Sector, Page 17, and it reads: Number 1. Most costs related to the restoration of public works other than normal ongoing or operating costs are eligible for assistance under the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements. This includes all pre-emptive action such as evacuation, building of temporary dikes, relocation of material or resources, sandbagging, incremental costs associated with the use of national defence troops or vehicles, and rental of equipment.

What is not included is the purchase of special or additional equipment to fight the disaster, salaries other than overtime of permanent employees or any expenditures related to preventive measures. The arrangements do not compensate for equipment, purchase

or measures taken that would or should be a normal part of preparations to avoid or mitigate the effects of a future disaster.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is exactly what it says in the Disaster Financial Assistance, the manual that the federal government is supposed to live by. I read that into the record so that we can compare that to what the provincial government has in its own manual. This is entitled Province of Manitoba Disaster Financial Assistance Policy and Guidelines and Interpretations. It is put out by Manitoba Government Services.

In Section 10.1, under the title of Public Sector, it says this: In responding to a disaster, almost all public-sector costs, other than those related to normal ongoing or operating costs of a municipal government, shall be considered eligible for compensation under the Disaster Financial Assistance policy. This includes all pre-emptive action such as evacuation, building of temporary dikes, sandbagging, moving of livestock or dropping feed to stranded livestock and rental of equipment. What is not included is the purchase by a municipality of special or additional equipment to fight the disaster; salaries, other than overtime, of permanent employees; or any expenditures which are considered the responsibility of the public sector to incur as a preventative measure. That is, there is to be no compensation for equipment or measures which would normally be purchased or taken by a municipality to prepare itself for the eventuality of a major natural disaster.

* (1640)

That was from the provincial guidelines that the provincial government follows in providing assistance to municipalities when there is an emergency to compensate for. The point that I am making is that it seems to me that it is quite evident that there is not a whole lot of difference between what the provincial approach to disaster assistance consists of and what the federal approach is, which leads me to believe, why all the bluster from the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pallister), why all the whining on radio, why all the finger pointing, why all the name calling of nameless, faceless bureaucrats from Ottawa when their policies are pretty much the same? As a matter of fact, they are more than just pretty much the same; they are almost completely the same.

My worst fear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the provincial government is just playing politics on this matter and that the people who are being left out are those municipalities right now who keep contacting my office asking why the holdup, asking why are we not getting the amount of money that we deserve, asking me if I would be approaching the appropriate people concerned—the appropriate people within the Department of Government Services, the appropriate people in the Manitoba Disaster Assistance Board—to try to sort out their problems. I really do sympathize with those municipalities out there who have to sit back and put up with the kind of foot-dragging that we see from both levels of government.

Over and over and over again I have come across cases where the municipality does not know what it is to expect. It would like to have some kind of a schedule that says exactly how much money they can count on for what work has been done. The municipalities would love to be able to say, with some kind of surety, to their own people living in their municipalities that, when they put a claim forward, they can plan on getting whatever X number of dollars it is that they deserve to help them out during these kinds of emergency situations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my fundamental belief that all 57 members of this Legislature are absolutely, genuinely concerned with helping people out when they are faced with an emergency, and I include all 57 of us when I say that. If there is another reason as to why some municipalities are being left out and some are kind of floating around adrift in a sea of confusion, I think it is incumbent upon both this Minister of Government Services and the federal minister and the federal department to be absolutely forthright with these municipalities. I think they owe it to the municipalities to be a lot more clear in the guidelines, a lot more clear in the messages that are being sent from both governments.

This is not an issue that has just been fabricated. This is not an issue that is a small one being exaggerated. It is an issue that people living in municipalities are really being affected by. I think we as politicians, as elected representatives, owe it to all those people living in R.M.s and town councils affected across Manitoba, I think we owe it to them to give them some straight answers in terms of the squabble that is taking place between the

federal government and the province of Manitoba having to do with disaster assistance.

In many cases since I have become an MLA, we have had to deal with a problem that affects both the federal and the provincial government. What we have seen happen is the provincial government pointing at the feds and the federal government just returning the finger back to the province, pointing at each other and getting absolutely nowhere in terms of solving the problem, in terms of providing the relief that is necessary for people who find themselves in a very tough situation from time to time.

I think of several issues, especially in northern and rural Manitoba, particularly in northern Manitoba, dealing with aboriginal communities who will also have some concerns with the squabble that is taking place between the federal government and the province. I have some concerns that have been brought to me by aboriginal communities where they find themselves in the middle. They want some answers and all they are getting is the runaround back and forth from one level of government to the next.

I am sure that this is a problem that all members would like to solve. I do not understand why it continues to be such a problem except that maybe neither level of government wants to live up to its responsibility in providing some kind of relief assistance for people when they are in emergencies or maybe in the case of northern communities where money is owing, that neither the provincial nor federal government simply has the courage of their convictions to live up to their responsibilities in providing that kind of money for those communities. I am worried that each level of government is simply going to be content with sitting back and pointing fingers at each other trying to score political points in this whole melee that has been happening since the spring.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that the speakers across the way stand today and very earnestly attempt to address the situation, because I do think it is a very important one that needs to be solved. Thank you.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too would like to make some comments on the resolution that has been put forward. I would also like to congratulate the member for Dauphin for presenting the

federal Liberal point of view in regard to this discussion. I would like to just make note where he starts out with his first WHEREAS, where it says, "WHEREAS traditionally the federal government has reimbursed municipalities up to 90 percent for all work that was required to be done after a disaster," I think that speaks very straightforward in the fact that it has been history that has shown that that is what the federal government has been doing, and in the past that is what they have done for all municipalities suffering or in need of disaster assistance.

He also goes on to state the fact that the history of it is the fact that they have been doing this, and it has been presumed to be the policy of the government regardless of how you interpret the manuals that he has read from both being federal and provincial. The history of it is that they have paid the 90 percent and he agrees to that because he has made that part of his statement.

He also goes on to mention that "WHEREAS the federal government has shifted its policy without first consulting," and again I would agree with him on that point. Whenever you have an agreement, be it in writing or be by a handshake or by verbal, if that is how the business of the day has been conducted for the last 10 years, you do not just change that policy overnight without any consultation, without any direct input from all the parties affected. Again the member for Dauphin suggests that what he wants to do is resolve the situation. In my mind it sounds like he wants to give up the right on behalf of Manitobans that are suffering and are in need of this disaster assistance, take the federal Liberal point of view, reduce the amount of payments that go to the people that need the disaster assistance and therefore resolve the problem, and he can wash his hands of it and go home and have a nice quiet evening.

I think that is what really has happened is that the federal government, and I am not disputing what the manual says, I am disputing the fact of the way it was done and the way it was interpreted and the way it was presented to the people of Manitoba that need this assistance, and it was not done at a time when we were not faced with a crisis, with a disaster. It was done during it. There was no previous discussion, and he talks about water and flooding and fire. Definitely, when we have a flood we need immediate response to it. We need the municipalities to react to the situation which they

know better than anyone else as to how it is to be dealt with. Now, if they have to wait in order to qualify for the funding to go out and private contract this, what benefit, I ask, is it to the people of Manitoba that need it at the time?

* (1650)

I think it is easy to stand back and say that these are the guidelines, but they are not the guidelines that the federal government were using and working within and they were not the guidelines that the provincial government were working within or the municipalities. There was a presumed guideline there that they all worked for. He states it very clearly in his first statement that they had paid 90 percent for the last 10 years. He also says, you know, and again he talks about the shift without consultation. Obviously people will be ill-prepared when that happens, when someone comes up, changes the rules of the game or the way the game is being played overnight or during a situation where people are suffering the most, there is going to be a reaction.

I think we have seen the reaction of the federal government as they force the municipalities to go to private contractors, they force the municipalities to delay the necessary work that has to be done to satisfy the constituents of rural Manitoba, and all of Manitoba I would suggest. I think what has happened is that they have made a decision arbitrarily that has affected a lot of people. I think rather than turning it into a provincial-federal debate, which I think the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) wants to do, and the debate being that he takes the side of the federal Liberal position—I take issue with. I think there are a lot of things in his motion that I could support and I would support, but I think his approach to it is the fact that the Manitoba government should lie down and let the federal government walk all over it, and I am not prepared to see that happen.

He also talks about setting out the dollar amounts before the issue happens. When has that ever happened? Do we know what a catastrophe is going to cost us before it happens? Sometimes we do not know for years after what the effects are and what they will be and how much it is going to cost us. I suggest to you that the honourable member should look at the issues that are on the table as far as the concerns of the people of Manitoba. They want the best deal for the constituents

but are unprepared to fight for those best deals for the constituents that they represent. I would suggest that, if the member for Dauphin is prepared to strike a deal with the federal government on how much he is willing to accept, then that should be his prerogative.

What I am saying is that I have people that have suffered and have anticipated a certain amount of funding from the federal government, and this has been denied them based on an interpretation of a rule. Something that has changed overnight that has been in practice for the past 10 years, and again I refer to the honourable member for Dauphin's statements. These are his statements, not mine. It has occurred over the last 10 years that 90 percent of all the work has been paid for by the federal government. How much clearer can that be? Whether it is an interpretation of the guidelines or not, this has been done.

The facts are that the Province of Manitoba has produced documents to convince and to show the federal government where they have made this commitment. I think when that is presented to them in light of the fact that we are in a disaster assistance—and they are denying people this at the time of need, not so much now when everything is said and done, they do it in the middle of the transaction. I think that is what upsets most Manitobans.

I think we have to approach the federal government and ask them to come clean on this. I mean, if we do have to change the guidelines or adapt to the guidelines that are already there, not what has been practised in the past, then let us say so. Let us put it in writing. Let us make the deal on the table. I have no problem with that, but you do not change the game when it is in process. What has happened is that Manitobans have been left out of the process.

To hear the honourable member for Dauphin, to have him stand, rise before the House and speak on behalf of the 57 members of this House who are trying to do the best for the province of Manitoba, accept the federal point of view that this is the way it is going to be, it galls me. It really does.

The time when people are in most need are the times that the honourable member seems to be deserting them and saying, well, this is what the federals have said to me, so this is what I am going to accept.

I would also like to suggest too that the support of the Manitoba government in its position with the federal government does not come directly from the caucus of the government. It comes from all areas of the province. It comes from the municipalities. It comes from the town councils. It comes from the representation, the UMM. It is not something that we woke up one morning and said, hey, we have to settle for this. We are saying to the people of Manitoba that we are prepared to fight. We are prepared to represent your best interests at your worst time of need to say what is right for you, not what somebody interprets the guidelines to be. We are going based on what history has shown us and what the facts are. They have paid in the past, and we feel that they have deserted the province and the people of Manitoba. Definitely, as the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) says, it is my interpretation. My interpretation of what you said today was presenting the federal Liberal position on the document.

I think that the federal government, based on the information that I have seen and has been presented before them, has acted irresponsibly and, I think, impulsively. I think that, as much as I said earlier on, there are some things that I could support in the honourable member's statement.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

I believe that his attack upon the province of Manitoba and the government of Manitoba is unjust. I think it is unfair. I think that perhaps shortly there will be a federal election called, and I am sure that the Liberals will be looking for someone to run in that particular riding. I would certainly be happy to put forward the honourable member for Dauphin's (Mr. Struthers) name.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will close out and thank you for the opportunity.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us this afternoon, Mr. Grant Hill, federal member of Parliament for the constituency of Macleod in Alberta.

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

* * *

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on this bill brought forward for the member for Dauphin and especially when he is supporting the federal Liberals, like the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) said this afternoon.

I have a copy of a letter that was addressed to the member for Portage la Prairie, the Honourable Brian Pallister, MLA, Minister of Government Services, dated September 17.

Dear Mr. Pallister: Your letter to my colleague the Honourable Marcel Massé concerning the application of federal disaster acceptance to Manitoba in recent years has been referred to me for response as it relates to my responsibilities as the federal Minister responsible for Emergency Preparedness.

I think the federal Liberals, when they took over from the Tory government, there was already a liability by the federal government in regard to emergency services, so it is not just the federal Liberals that should be blamed at this stage today.

Continuing the letter: I had hoped that my responses to your letters of enquiry over the past few months adequately explain the federal government's position with respect to the eligibility for cost sharing of municipal staff and equipment employed in disaster response and recovery operations. The remarks you made in your letter to Mr. Massé seem to indicate that such is not the case. Therefore, let me take this opportunity to again explain the situation.

When it comes to the question of whether or not the nonincremental expenditures incurred by the municipalities in flood response and recovery constitute an expense eligible for cost-sharing under the disaster financial assessments arrangements, neither the guidelines, as you first indicated, nor the interpretation of the guidelines by Emergency Preparedness Canada, as you have subsequently suggested, nor the interpretation of the guidelines by Consulting and Audit Canada, as you

claim in your letter to Mr. Massé, has changed in the 26-year history of the DFAA.

Only those disaster-related expenditures on the part of the municipalities which are incremental and compensated by the subsequently—be eligible for cost sharing under the DFAA.

Madam Speaker, your letter also refers to the evidence you have provided to support your position that there has been some change in the application of the guidelines in the case of Manitoba.

* (1700)

The documentation you sent to me would appear to show that the government of Manitoba has compensated municipalities for their nonincremental expenditures, as well as their incremental expenditures incurred in responding to the disasters. This, of course, poses no difficulty to the federal government as it is Manitoba which has the responsibility to design and deliver its program of disaster financial assistance including to the municipalities.

However, the documentation you have provided is not what is required by Consulting and Audit Canada to research your allegation that the guidelines or the interpretation of the guidelines have somehow changed over the years in this regard.

The documentation required is held by your officials and until they make it available, as Manitoba agreed to do in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by your predecessor and mine, it is simply not possible to make any determination in the matter.

Madam Speaker, turning now to the recent disastrous flooding in the province of Quebec, I would like to ensure that you have not been misled by media reports into thinking that the DFAA will not be applied in an even-handed manner in this situation. In fact, notwithstanding the devastating scope of this disaster, the DFAA will be applied according to the guidelines as they are in Manitoba or any other jurisdiction.

Indeed, the remarkable feature of the direct federal assistance to the victims of the disaster and the government of Quebec's response efforts has been the excellent

co-operation between the two orders of government resulting in what most observers have described as a rapid, effective and sympathetic response effort.

You mentioned in your letter that you valued the disaster financial assistance provisions that have been designed to spread the cost of these occurrences amongst all Canadians rather than place that burden on those already impacted.

We in the federal government also value the DFAA, which is why we are careful to apply them constantly across Canada to preserve their integrity in other ways as well. It is vital that each order of government involved fulfill its responsibilities in connection with disaster financial assistance. Each province must accept responsibility for the decision it makes about the extent and type of compensation for disaster-related expenditures made at the municipal level.

Attempts to portray decisions made by the provincial government as somehow being attributable to the federal government can only serve to weaken and perhaps ultimately destroy the DFAA.

I trust that the foregoing information will clarify the federal government's position in this matter. The Honourable D. M. Collenette. Thank you.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) for bringing this important issue forward, because it seems that we have a federal and a provincial government who cannot agree on who should be paying the bills or at what percentage they should be paying the bills, and municipalities are being caught in the middle, caught holding the bag and paying the expenses much unanticipated.

Madam Speaker, when a disaster strikes a municipality or a town, whether it be flood or fire or tornado, councillors do not think about what the expense is going to be. What they do is move forward and react quickly and ensure that what they are doing is in the best interest of the residents of that area. Whether it means evacuating people or whether it means opening up ditches to allow water to flow, municipalities work quickly to do this. It is unfortunate that the federal and provincial

government are now squabbling about who should pay the bills.

This is a very important issue, and I would urge the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pallister), the minister responsible for disaster assistance, to deal with this in a very quick fashion. We heard a letter that was just read by the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), where he indicates that the federal government is requesting documentation to clarify this. I would urge the minister to take the steps that are necessary so that municipalities and the councillors in rural areas are not caught in the middle, as they have been in this case. We saw it this spring when there was the flooding in southern Manitoba. I saw it in my constituency a few years ago when I happened to be a councillor. There was a fire, and we had to evacuate people very quickly. We had to get equipment in to fireguard the community. As in southern Manitoba, there had to be work done to dike the water.

Municipal councillors do not have the time to say, well, no, we should be contracting this work out, we should not be using our own people, because it does not fall within the guidelines. Those are the kinds of things that have to be cleared up to ensure that municipalities, when the next fire or flood strikes, they do not say, well, we cannot do the work right now because we cannot afford it, we have not the tax base to cover this off, so they would be tempted or feel that because they cannot afford it, they would not do as good a job or they would hesitate to do what was in the best interest of the residents of the area.

I believe that there is stalling on both parts here. The provincial government should be working harder to resolve this, and the federal government should be holding up to their responsibility and reimbursing municipalities at the rate they were before. That is what the guidelines say. The federal government should be doing that, and we have to ensure that they do, but we also have to ensure that the province is fulfilling their responsibility. I just think it is completely unfair that municipalities should be caught in the middle of the squabble.

We have a very similar example that occurred a few years ago. It is still ongoing, and that is the one with compensation for leaf-cutting bees. It was decided that the leaf-cutting bees that were lost in the flood would be

compensated. A few people were compensated. I remember the member for Lac du Bonnet, the Minister of Energy and Mines, saying, well, we got the forms out to our people. That is why they were compensated. The rest of the leaf-cutting bee people did not get compensated, and that is still an outstanding issue.

We have raised it with disaster assistance, and we have raised it with the federal government. It is a very similar situation, where the people cannot decide who is responsible. As it is, a certain number of people in the province got their compensation and another group of people have not, and this is going on for close to four or five years now. It is not fair. It is not fair to treat people that way. If you are compensating for one, why cannot you compensate for the rest? I would challenge the minister of disaster assistance to look back at those records and perhaps have a look at how the compensation was paid for those few people who had leaf-cutting bees, whether it was totally paid by the Province of Manitoba and there was no coverage by the federal government. That is what the argument is there. Why is it that people only in the southern part of the province—or as the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) told us then, it was because they got out to get the message to their people that there was such a thing as coverage for leaf-cutter bees.

So I use this as an example where people get caught in a squabble, and it is completely unfair. I would urge the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pallister) to bring forward the information that the federal government is looking for, take the necessary steps to ensure that this is worked out and that the federal government continues to offer the compensation that they have the responsibility for, and that is 90 percent of all the work that is required to be done after a disaster. That is the responsibility, but because there is a problem here, municipalities are being caught. This government, this minister has the responsibility to ensure that this is worked out and that the Manitoba taxpayers, Manitoba municipalities who put forward their best effort to ensure that their residents are not put at risk during a disaster are not then left holding the bag. That is not fair to them, and this government has a responsibility to deal with that and work out whatever the problems are, but do not use it as an excuse, that the federal government has a responsibility so the provincial government is not going to pay.

Surely, with the responsibility that this person has been given as a portfolio, to look after disaster assistance and the people of the province—and the federal minister has a responsibility to the people of Canada—surely, we should be able to work it out. It should not come down that we do not want to pay a few dollars because in reality, it is, in the whole scheme of things, not a very big budget we are talking about, but for municipalities who are left holding the bag, it is a big burden on them and with it, we run the risk that municipalities will not do the job that they are supposed to.

* (1710)

I urge the minister responsible to look at the other issues that I have raised and, in particular, the issue with leaf-cutter bees, which we have raised several times with this government and have not been able to get an answer to. In that issue, again, we have been told back and forth that it is the federal government that is not doing their part, and then the federal government says, well, it is the provincial government that is not doing their part. We cannot afford that. We have to have governments working together and we have to have governments fulfilling their responsibility, and by no means should the federal government get off the hook with their responsibility that is outlined within the guidelines. There are guidelines. They have been working for years.

I can remember, as I say, when I was in council, there was never a worry about what—after a certain level, we knew that the federal government was going to kick in with the expenses. This has to be worked out, and I again urge the minister responsible for disaster assistance to arrange whatever meetings are necessary or provide whatever documentation the federal government is requesting and work through this so that when the next disaster strikes this province, and I hope that does not happen for a long time, but when it does, that municipal people know what kind of guidelines they are working under. They should not be left in the uncertainty that they are now. It makes a big difference to a municipality at a time of disaster if there is flooding, and it makes no sense to have to start contracting out when there are people who are trained, people who know the equipment. At a time of emergency, this is what should be able to be done.

So, with those few words, Madam Speaker, I want to again say that I commend my colleague for bringing this

resolution forward because it is a very important issue in all parts of the province. This year, it was the Red River Valley and the southern part of the province that was struck by flooding where the problem has arisen. Other years, it has been fire. We do not know which part of the province is going to be struck next. As I say, we hope that it is none, but just recently we had a tornado right in my constituency. It struck a very small group of people, but one community was very much affected, and when it is affected, the people who are on council have to take the lead and take action. That is the security we have to give the people who are working at that level of government, that when they are addressing a disaster that they will not have to worry, that the federal and provincial government are not going to try to pass the buck and avoid upholding their responsibilities.

I urge the minister to move forward, clear up this problem and ensure that the federal government is not off the hook on their responsibilities but, at the same time, that the province fulfills its responsibility to the people of Manitoba who are unfortunate enough to be struck by a disaster.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Swan River for her comments. They show a depth of understanding of certain aspects of this frustrating issue that was not revealed in the comments of the other members who spoke on the other side of the House.

Frankly, I believe the comments from the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) are an example of a lack of communication among that caucus that I think spells disaster for that caucus if they do not get their act together. Frankly, the member for Dauphin, in his WHEREASes, contradicts his own WHEREASes in his comments. He says that traditionally the federal government reimbursed municipalities up to 90 percent for all work, and in his comments he defends the guidelines. Well, the issue has never been the guidelines. The issue is not the guidelines. It is the interpretation of the guidelines. The guidelines do not spell out that compensation should be cost-shared with municipalities when they use staff.

Yet, the member for Swan River, if she would communicate to the member for Dauphin, would be able to explain to him that though the guidelines do not spell out

compensation be paid to the municipalities for municipal staff, she knows full well that such compensation was paid during her tenure on a municipal council. She knows that to be a fact, and so too do many other municipal officials across this province.

The member for Dauphin needs to do a fair bit more research to come to grips with the reality of this issue. It is unfortunate that his comments stray so far from the spirit of what I believe is not a badly worded resolution, because they detract from it, and his attempts to achieve some type of partisan gain from his comments are frustrating to me because they reveal a lack of understanding of the importance of this issue to local governments in this province.

When the members opposite talk about a dispute which is one between the federal and provincial governments, they reveal the fact that they do not understand the essence or the background of this issue. This is not a dispute which isolates the provincial government from involvement with the municipalities. As a matter of fact, we are on side. We are together hand in hand on this issue in this province. The Union of Manitoba Municipalities, the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities and, in fact, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities have all passed unanimously resolutions in support of our position. So we are together on this. We are united on this issue.

We understand this issue fully and the municipal officials of this province are concerned and need the support of members opposite who must do more homework on this issue so they understand what they say about it.

When the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) stands in this House, and I have a great admiration and respect for the member for St. Boniface, frankly, but when he stands in this House and he reads comments, transcripts of letters mailed by federal members and he does not make his own comments, he does himself an injustice, because what he is doing is, he is simply replicating the misleading and half-understood arguments of a federal bureaucrat who writes that correspondence for the minister, Mr. David Collenette. Mr. Collenette is far too busy with other issues of concern to him to concern himself, unfortunately, with the research that he needs to do about this issue in this province. It is clear

he has not taken the time to inform himself of the history of this issue.

Here is the issue in a nutshell, for the members opposite. We have well-established precedents in this province for cost-sharing with municipalities where we have put into our claim to Ottawa for cost-sharing when amounts have exceeded the thresholds which require Ottawa to be involved for municipal use of staff, for municipal use of equipment and machinery. Ottawa has shared and allowed cost-sharing on a framework basis on those claims for decades.

Arbitrarily and unilaterally last year the Emergency Preparedness Canada auditors chose to interpret the guidelines differently without notification to us as a province, without a single piece of correspondence, without the courtesy of a phone call to any municipal level of government in this province. Without any advance notification being forwarded to our province or to any of our localities they arbitrarily made that interpretive change.

What we are arguing is that without such advance notice they are bound to abide by precedent. For how else can municipal leaders function if not by precedent in these circumstances? They should not be expected to understand, to read the minds of federal bureaucrats who choose arbitrarily to change policy. That is not what municipal leaders are elected to do. Municipal leaders are elected to lead locally, and they have done a tremendous job of doing that in the case of the disaster management services they provide to the people of this province.

* (1720)

So when the members opposite make these comments, what they do not understand is the background of this issue, and they need to do some homework. When you blindly accept in a partisan way as a Liberal member the positions of your Liberal colleagues in Ottawa without first consulting the people of this province you do a disservice to the very people who elected you, and you should examine your position, the position you have taken in the House today, and so should the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), who blindly accepts the fact that he has stated that the guidelines have always been abided by. They have not been abided by. We have had

a broad interpretation of the guidelines in most provinces in this country that have experienced disasters over many years.

It is only now that the Liberal government in Ottawa has chosen to narrow the parameters of interpretation. They have done it without consultation. They have done it in a pigheaded and arrogant manner.

You should stand up for Manitobans in this House and you should recognize that fact rather than blindly following some failed bureaucratic ideologue who does not understand the impact this has at the local government level. It is a major impact.

This is not an issue about guidelines, this is an issue about loyalty. This is a dispute about who is responsive to the people who elected them.

My dad used to say that it is very unfortunate that we elect people to go to Ottawa to represent us and so quickly they become representatives of Ottawa to us. This issue has shown me and has shown us on the government side how true that is and how unfortunate that is.

When I see Manitoba members of Parliament, Liberal members of Parliament taking photocopied letters prepared by Emergency Preparedness Canada bureaucrats and putting them in their local paper that say that there has never been a change in the interpretation of the guidelines, I am amazed.

When the position of the federal Liberal government on this issue was read at the Union of Manitoba Municipalities meeting last year in Brandon, the position being, there was no change, there has been no change in the guidelines, in other words, the federal government's initial position was that they had never shared in municipal expenses for staff or equipment or machinery, which members who have served on rural councils know to be false—they know it because they remitted those expense claims. The member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) is one who knows that to be true because she was a rural councillor who had her expenses cost-shared by the federal government when she served on her rural council. There is one example. There are hundreds. We have forwarded them. We have been diligent in this issue. We will not give up on this issue because we

know we have the full support of all of the municipalities of this province on this issue. When that position was read out to the Union of Manitoba Municipalities meeting, there was laughter because municipal officials—accountable, democratically elected, responsible fiscal managers—know what the reality is, and you cannot just deny the truth to them and expect to be hailed as anything but a ridiculous person. That is exactly how the position of the federal government should be described. It is ridiculous.

We believe, and I have tried diligently to work with co-operative spirit on the DFAA disputes that we have currently with Ottawa. When we forwarded our notification to them—and we immediately brought in municipal officials to make them aware of these changes—when we forwarded information to them initially to help them understand they were departing from these guidelines, they then came back and requested more information, which we provided, asking for a decision, asking for them to assure our municipal governments that they would not be ignored in this process. We forwarded more information, and they came back to us and asked for more. We forwarded hundreds of examples to them and encouraged them to please come up with one example in the last decade where they have not shared with municipalities for the use of their staff or equipment or machinery. One example we asked them to come up with, and their response was to come back to us and ask for more information.

We have asked them and continually ask them to make a decision on this matter, and, of course, we expect a favourable decision, unlike the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) who suggested today in the House we should give up on the issue or that we are keeping this going as a partisan issue. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is an issue of integrity and of loyalty and, I believe, of co-operation. We have invited repeatedly the members of Parliament to stand with us and to stand with the people who elected them rather than to stand up for Ottawa to those same people. We have given them that opportunity repeatedly.

For the members opposite, for the edification particularly of Liberal members whom I would encourage to assist us in this, there have been now—this is an issue of credibility because for the federal Liberals there have been three changes in position. I want you to listen

carefully to these because the issue of credibility—our position has not changed—is key to this issue. There have been three positions taken by the federal Liberal bureaucrats and the members of Parliament on this issue. Number one, they said that the federal government has never cost-shared on municipal incremental expenses. They said that; that position was read out at the Union of Manitoba Municipalities meeting. As I told you, there was laughter because everyone knew that was not true. So their second position was—they changed positions some weeks later. They said, well, if we did cost-share, we did not know about it, so let us blame our auditors. We could blame our auditors and then we would not be responsible. That was their second position. Their third position was that, if they did cost-share, it was actually an error and, therefore, our municipalities should pay them back. Now that is the position they have today, so now we have three positions, each a major departure from the previous one. There is no credibility on the part of the federal government on this issue, none whatsoever.

This is an issue also about fairness. The member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) talked about how even-handed—he quoted from a document which cited how even-handed, David Collenette is saying, his department has been in the handling of disaster guidelines and disaster assistance in this country. Yet we just had today a visitor, a member of Parliament for Alberta, who knows full well that Alberta has struck a different deal for more generous compensation with the federal government. That was made public in the Winnipeg Free Press some months ago. There is no even-handedness; that is a false statement. We also have seen, in contrast to the threats made by the Minister of National Defence or at least by his bureaucratic representatives in this province—they have threatened, of course, to go back and reaudit all claims and charge our municipalities who have been cost-shared with.

Furthermore, they have said that they do not believe that they want to cost-share with our province until this issue has been resolved on any disaster claims that we have submitted since. Now, we are talking about millions of dollars of claims here. That is arrogance. That is despicable conduct, especially in view of the fact that it has come to public attention this Monday that the federal government has done the unprecedented and advanced over \$50 million to another province in our Confederation.

On the one hand saying that you are withholding money from Manitoba, on the other hand advancing millions of dollars to another province does not speak to me of evenhandedness or fairness. It speaks to me of something altogether different. It does not speak well for those who are managing this program if they want it to last as I do and as the people of Manitoba do.

In closing, I want to say that the people of our municipalities and the people of our province who have been impacted by disaster deserve to be treated fairly. They deserve to be treated evenhandedly, but they also deserve representation and that is what they get from the members on this side of the House and that is what they will continue to get. Thank you very much.

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I have a few items of House business, and I wonder if there might be agreement not to see the clock until we can conclude that House business.

Madam Speaker: Is there agreement for the Speaker not to see the clock until the House business has been concluded? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, I want to announce that the Public Utilities and Natural Resources committee will meet tonight at 7 p.m. to consider bills previously referred to the Committee on Municipal Affairs.

The Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will consider Bills 16, 19, 34, 44 and 56. Bills 2, 3 and 43 will remain in the Committee on Municipal Affairs which will also meet tonight at 7 p.m.

Madam Speaker: This evening, previously referred bills in the Committee on Public Utilities will sit concurrently with the Committee on Municipal Affairs. To be considered in the Committee on Public Utilities, Room 254, will be Bills 16, 19, 34, 44 and 56; and in Municipal Affairs, as previously scheduled in Room 255,

will give consideration to Bills 2, 3 and 43. Agreed? [agreed]

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hicke (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: Wellington (Ms. Barrett) for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), for Wednesday, September 25, 1996, at 7 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) that the composition of the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs be amended as follows: the member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) for the member for Ste. Rose du Lac (Mr. Cummings); the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) for the member for Morris (Mr. Pitura); the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) for the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer); and the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) for the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson) (for Wednesday, September 25, 1996, at 7 p.m.).

I move, seconded by the member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson) for the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render); the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) for the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) (for Wednesday, September 25, 1996, at 7 p.m.).

Motions agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, September 25, 1996

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