



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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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	Ind.
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.
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McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
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NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
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TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
Vacant	Portage la Prairie	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 12, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Wayne Clarkson, Margaret Corson, Lawrence Lowe and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

Obstetrics Closure—Grace General Hospital

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of V.E. Sawand, Pat Peters, Ross C. Mantin and others praying that the Legislative Assembly request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) consider stopping the closure of the obstetrics program at Winnipeg's Grace Hospital.

Licensed Practical Nurses

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of J. Jaz, Jan Lau and Stella Lau and others praying that the Legislative Assembly request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) consider stopping the elimination of LPNs from the staffing complement in our health care facilities and recognize the value and dedicated service of LPNs across the province.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Obstetrics Closure—Grace General Hospital

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? Dispense.

THAT the obstetrics program has always been an important part of the Grace Hospital's mandate; and

THAT both people in the community and a number of government studies have recommended against the further closure of community hospitals' obstetrics programs; and

THAT as a result of federal and provincial cuts in the health budget, hospitals are being forced to eliminate programs in order to balance their own budgets; and

THAT the closure of the Grace Hospital obstetrics ward will mean laying off 54 health care professionals, many of whom have years of experience and dedicated service in obstetrics; and

THAT moving to a model where more and more births are centred in the tertiary care hospitals will be more costly and decreases the choices for women about where they can give birth.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLYPRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) consider stopping the closure of the obstetrics program at Winnipeg's Grace Hospital.

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), and 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 medical authorities have stated that breast cancer in Manitoba has reached almost epidemic proportions; and

WHEREAS yearly mammograms are recommended for women over 50, and perhaps younger if a woman feels she is at risk; and

WHEREAS while improved surgical procedures and better post-operative care do improve a woman's chances if she is diagnosed, early detection plays a vital role; and

WHEREAS Manitoba currently has only three centres where mammograms can be performed, those being Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson; and

WHEREAS a trip to and from these centres for a mammogram can cost a woman upwards of \$500 which is a prohibitive cost for some women; and

WHEREAS a number of other provinces have dealt with this problem by establishing mobile screening units; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has promised to take action on this serious issue.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

Licensed Practical Nurses

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). 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 many LPNs have been eliminated from most acute care facilities in Manitoba, including the St. Boniface, Health Sciences Centre, Seven Oaks, Concordia, and Victoria hospitals; and

THAT the LPNs of this province are valuable members of the health care system, providing professional, competent, skilled and cost-effective services; and

THAT staffing cuts will only result in declining quality of health care and potentially tragic outcomes; and

THAT it will not be long before the negative results of this shortcut effort are realized, just as they were in Alberta; and

THAT the elimination of LPNs in Manitoba's health care facilities will lead to higher costs and poorer patient care.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) consider stopping the elimination of LPNs from the staffing complement in our health care facilities and recognize the value and dedicated service of LPNs across the province.

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 this afternoon a delegation of 44 doctors visiting the Victoria General Hospital in Fort Garry. They are from the Health Systems Research Institute in Thailand.

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

Also seated in the public gallery we have fourteen Grade 7 students from Holland Elementary School under the direction of Mr. Alex Northam. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan).

Also, thirty-seven Grade 9 students from Edmund Partridge Junior High School under the direction of Mr. Rick Kraychuk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Louisiana-Pacific Air Emission Controls

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

The Clean Environment Commission recommended, for Louisiana-Pacific, E-tubes and RTO technology be used to control the toxic emissions from the plant. It has been reported that on 84 occasions last year, the RTO technology did not work.

I would like to ask the government whether in fact they have investigated this matter and can he confirm that on 84 occasions the RTO technology did not work on behalf of the people of the valley?

* (1335)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, the honourable member—[interjection] Pardon me, I was consulting with his colleague the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton). He asks about air emissions at Louisiana-Pacific in the Swan River area. The concerned citizens of the valley were consulted on the draft licence prior to its being issued. That includes the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). A clause-by-clause review and discussion of the licence, including the clause that allows Louisiana-Pacific to operate while by-passing the RTOs, was done at the Community Liaison Committee. As well, the by-passes are routinely discussed at the committee meetings. The municipal offices are advised of all by-passes. At the last committee meeting, Louisiana-Pacific's environmental manager reported that they average 250 by-pass minutes per month, with the best month having 50 minutes, and as I say, that meeting was April 21, and the honourable member for Swan River was present at that meeting.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. The Clean Environment Commission recommends that both technologies be put in place to control toxins and emissions from the plant. I asked the minister whether there were 84 occasions last year, in 1996, in terms of the RTO technology not working.

I would like to ask the government: (a) can they answer the first question I asked, and (b) will the government please inform this Chamber and the people what is their analysis, not the L-P manager's or people's analysis, but what is the government's analysis as the body responsible for the quality of air? What is the

government's response in terms of the impact of these alleged 84 occasions on human health in the Swan River Valley area?

Mr. McCrae: The air emissions issue is dealt with at Louisiana-Pacific through two systems, one being the E-tube system and the other being the RTO system. The use of the E-tube system all by itself would bring emissions within limits that would not be harmful to health and thereby is acceptable to the Environment department, but when I say that, we also know that the RTO system is there to enhance the quality of the emissions, and it would be of course preferable for those RTOs to be active at all times. That is why our government supports bringing natural gas to that area, which allows the RTOs to operate in the winter months all the time without having to be shut down, but even when they do get shut down—and the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), as I say, has been part of these discussions and is aware, at least since April 21, of this matter—even when those RTOs are not activated, the emissions are within the levels that are acceptable.

Mr. Doer: I asked the minister what was the impact on human health of people in the valley. I asked him whether there were indeed 84 occasions. Those were the first two questions.

Madam Speaker, the Clean Environment Commission does not recommend E-tubes and/or the RTO. It recommends both. They obviously had a reason for doing so. It was based on a public hearing process that took place in the Swan River Valley area, and it was based on recommendations they made that both these controls were necessary to control the toxins in the area.

What action is the government going to take to ensure the Clean Environment Commission's recommendations—[interjection] Well, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) can answer this question, perhaps. What action is he going to take to ensure that both technologies are in place on behalf of the people living and residing in the Swan River Valley area, as recommended by the Clean Environment Commission?

* (1340)

Mr. McCrae: Because we agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the highest and best level of treatment is the most desirable and if it is achievable, then we should work to that goal. That is exactly why the Province of Manitoba has its money on the table with respect to getting on with transmission of gas services to the Louisiana-Pacific plant. I do not know that all the parties are fully committed to this point, but we work in that direction. Louisiana-Pacific and others and the government urge all partners to make sure that their commitments are in place and that we get that service so that we can bring this to the highest possible level of protection for the air in the area.

Louisiana-Pacific Air Emission Controls

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, when the announcement was made by the Clean Environment Commission that the RTOs would be installed in the Louisiana-Pacific plant, everybody was very pleased that we were going to have the best possible controls, but I want to ask the government did they know that, even though the RTOs were being installed, they could not operate properly under propane or without natural gas, and were the people in the valley misled to think that they were getting the best possible controls without natural gas being there?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I think everyone knew that the gas-fuelled RTO system was superior to the propane-fuelled RTO system, but in any event, the E-tube system is satisfactory to everyone, knowing that we can do better and will do better once we are able to keep those RTOs going 100 percent of the time.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister explain why, when it is during the cold weather that the RTOs are not working and that is when there would be an emission problem, his department did not do the monitoring of those emissions during shut-down times in the cold weather to see what the emissions were, instead of waiting until spring, in April, to do the checking on the emissions out of the RTOs, when it should have been done in cold weather when we would have accurate readings of what was really coming out of that plant?

Mr. McCrae: That is a question on which I would supply further information to the honourable member

with respect to the ability to monitor in the colder temperatures. But I am advised that these emissions are—they are called volatile organic compounds. They are called VOCs for short, and the patented E-tube system does take care of the problem to within acceptable levels. However, we can enhance the level of protection through the use of the RTOs, as I have explained. To make sure the RTOs are running at their maximum capacity, natural gas fuel is the best. That is the proposal that is on the table now, and we look forward to having that brought to fruition at an early date.

Ms. Wowchuk: We all look forward to that natural gas coming.

Given that the Deputy Minister of Environment said, should testing and evaluations indicate that control performances of the scrubbers, in conjunction with the RTOs, are not satisfactory, then steps will be taken to require the installation of alternate control technology to ensure that the highest level of controls of emissions from the plant are in place, is this something the minister is considering now since the RTOs are not working properly? Since there is no natural gas, are you looking at other alternatives?

Mr. McCrae: Technology tells us the best option is to get the E-tube system working and the RTO system working on a full-time basis. In order for that to happen, natural gas is needed. We are on record, we have our money on the table to ensure that natural gas comes to the plant so that the highest and best option is the one that can be activated.

Student Transportation Safety Standards

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): My question is to the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh). Concerns about the government's policy changes in regard to school buses and student transportation have resulted in eroded safety standards. I raised the issue on December 13, 1995; May 16, 1996; March 10, 1997; and again on April 14, 1997. Not only was it this side of the House, but it was also the trustees at the MAST convention. Now the judge presiding over the inquest has raised concerns about the lax requirements and the funding levels for school buses.

* (1345)

I ask the minister: Was the minister aware and did she approve of the now changed standard procedure of a 10 percent random check, moving away from the each-unit, each-year procedure of the past? Did she know about it at the same time she was cutting funding and lifting the life expectancy of buses?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, I want to correct what the member has put on the record here. She talks about lax inspection standards. There are not lax inspection standards. Every school division is required to test every bus every six months. That is the regulation. It has been that way for some period of time. In addition to the twice-a-year inspection that they are required to do at a certified inspection station either in the school division or elsewhere, there is 10 percent of an audit done by my department to be sure that the every-six-month inspections were done appropriately. She did not put the right information on the record.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. James, with a supplementary question.

Ms. Mihychuk: My question to the Minister of Education: Will she confirm that it was her government that decided to do the 10 percent random check in '95; in '95 to extend the life expectancy of buses from 12 to 15.5 years; in '96 to cut the operating supports by \$5 per pupil; in '96 to cut the gas-loaded kilometre rate by 2 cents; in '97 to abandon the province's responsibility to replace buses; in '97 to formulate a new financial agreement which underfunds the replacement of school buses?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): There were many, many questions there, and I know I am allowed one minute to answer, which is an impossible situation. I should indicate first of all to the member that we have not cut funding for bus purchases this year. It has actually increased by almost half-a-million dollars. We have increased the transportation grants to urban school divisions.

Madam Speaker, we have not decreased the amount of money we are spending on buses. The difference is

that, instead of now purchasing the bus for the school division, we now give the school division the amount of money that is required to purchase a bus. It is now up to the school division—and this was something divisions have asked for—to either contract out or purchase or arrange for transportation in a way that they deem best for their students. Many divisions had indicated that they did not want the department buying a bus or giving it to them; they would rather get the money, which has not decreased in any way, shape or form, and they can decide on whether to purchase or lease or find some other way of transporting.

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

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, when will this minister take responsibility for the fact that we have seen an increase in the number of incidents in the decrease of safety standards, and when will this government take responsibility and ensure that our bus fleet is up to standard, as it was in the past?

Mrs. McIntosh: The member has, in the past, been on a school board and knows, therefore, the rules. The rules are that the province will set legislation and does, works in co-operation through two departments actually, Highways and Transportation which licenses drivers, et cetera, and the province which provides money. School divisions then have the responsibility for obeying the law and seeing that the rules are put into place, Madam Speaker, and she knows that. So, as she pushed for local autonomy when she was school board chair and asks for it when it seems convenient to ask for it, she wishes to take away from school divisions the local autonomy for which they fought so long and hard on issues such as this.

So, Madam Speaker, the responsibility for obeying the rules and regulations and implementing them rests with school boards, as it has in the past.

* (1350)

Student Transportation Safety Standards

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Highways. My

question is concerning the tragic school bus death last year and the need to ensure that such incidents are not repeated. Without doubt, there is general concern that the reduction of school bus inspections has made school buses less safe. As well, there are many more older buses on the road. Given that the bus involved in the tragic accident failed 12 out of 83 inspection points, how many so-called drivable defects can a school bus accumulate before it is pulled off the road?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, the incident the member is referring to is exceptionally hard for us to accept; the loss of a seven-year-old is a serious, serious situation. Naturally, the inquest that is going on right now will come up with some recommendations for future action by Education and Highways and Transportation, and I want to assure the member that we are watching the inquest very carefully and will very definitely be proactive on the recommendations coming out of that inquest, but I want to stress that it is premature to comment on anything that is going on in the inquest. We will definitely be looking at the results of that inquest, and we extend our sympathy to all involved in the process. It is very tragic.

Mr. Jennissen: Despite the minister's answers, it is true, though, that one of the minister's own inspectors has said that he has never seen a bus pulled off the road regardless of the number of drivable defects. So how does the minister plan to change this?

Mr. Findlay: Well, Madam Speaker, again I want to review with the member the regulation, the requirements of inspection. Every six months, every school bus must be inspected. It can either be done by the school division or by another certified inspection station. My staff certify those inspection stations. In addition, we audit, doing a reinspection of about 10 percent of the buses, to be sure the school divisions or the inspection stations are doing the appropriate audit. In addition, every driver is required to do a pretrip inspection of the major points of that bus and report them for correction immediately.

Those are the regulations, Madam Speaker, that the divisions and the school bus drivers are to live with.

MAST Resolution

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): My final supplementary to the same minister: What is the minister's response to the resolution passed at the last annual MAST convention which calls on the provincial government to remain responsible for the capital cost of purchasing school buses in order to ensure safety, consistency and competitive pricing?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I believe I indicated in my answer to the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) that the Manitoba Department of Education and Training provides money to school divisions to purchase buses. The amount of money that the bus costs is the amount of money they are granted. They can purchase a bus with that, should they choose to, but it gives them the flexibility, should they choose not to, to contract out or use that money for some other purpose. In the past, the department would purchase the bus, and the school divisions had no other choice in terms of deciding how to use money available for the purchase of buses.

So, Madam Speaker, the commitment to providing buses is still there. What is also there, though, is the right for school divisions to be able to have more autonomy and flexibility in how they choose to exercise that commitment.

Tender Process MERX System

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Every year millions of dollars are tendered through the many different government departments and agencies, and the government last year moved toward a system known as OBS in order to try to get more people involved and open up the system so that people will be aware of what contracts are in fact being tendered. As of June 1, we worked toward a transition into MERX, which again is an online computer program.

My question to the Premier is that—OBS, from this government's perspective in terms of getting the departments to comply and having their contracts, was a complete, absolute failure. What is this government

going to do to ensure that, with respect to MERX, contracts are in fact going to be listed so Manitobans and Canadians will be well aware of what this government is putting out for tenders?

* (1355)

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, some time ago, the Manitoba government did enter into an OBS system for an online bidding system, and the results of that system were that many companies in Manitoba, as a result of the provincial government going on that system, were able to have competitive bids on contracts with the Manitoba government. As a result, many companies that did not have contracts prior were able to enter into some contracts, as well as having online service with the rest of Canada. I think the system bodes well for itself. The transition over to the MERX system really just enhances that capability for companies in Manitoba to be able to bid on contracts right across the country, as well as bidding on contracts with their provincial government.

So I think it is a very positive system and ultimately will prove to be very beneficial to many businesses in Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Given the minister acknowledges that it is a positive system, one has to question why this government failed in terms of delivering it.

My question is to the minister or the Premier (Mr. Filmon): Why would the Department of Education—through Freedom of Information we have found out—not even apply to be put on to that particular system, did not put any contracts on OBS. What is this minister and what is this government going to do to ensure that the same sorts of occurrences do not happen under the MERX system?

Mr. Pitura: In any type of system, when you start with a system and get it up and going, there is a period of time which you have to get departments online, but you also have to remember, too, Madam Speaker, that many of the departments, with many of the contracts that they put on the system, may indeed be putting them under another departmental contract number so that this does

not show up in, say, a specific department, but it forms part of the overall process.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask the Premier to read through and ask him to put into the Treasury Board directives that a commitment towards MERX and the tendering of contracts will, in fact, be something that this government will take quick action on so that there will be some integrity to the system, so that all departments will be participating in it, not just departments that choose to decide that they want to participate. We need a Treasury directive. Will the Premier give that?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will assure the member for Inkster that there will be integrity to the process, that we will do our utmost to ensure that we get competitive bids, unlike his leader who received a \$1.7-million contract for her company without tender from the federal government.

Cancer Treatment Waiting Lists

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, for the past several weeks we have been raising situations of terrible waiting lists in our health care and hospital sector which clearly indicate bad management and cuts and poor planning on the side of this government. Tragically, today, if an individual requires cancer treatment in Manitoba and they go on a waiting list, they will be No. 250 on a waiting list for cancer treatment. That is a tragedy. How does the Minister of Health explain the weeks and months waiting list for cancer treatment in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): We would certainly agree with the member that that current waiting list is not acceptable. In this year's particular budget, we had some dollars allotted, as I have discussed, to deal with a variety of these areas. We have discussed bone density, which we are working on. I am pleased to indicate today that we have approved an additional \$380,000 for the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation which will purchase a further additional 7,000 treatments.

* (1400)

Mr. Chomiak: For once I would like to thank the minister for actually delivering on something.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister—unfortunately, those 250 people who are on the waiting list today, who are going to have to wait months and weeks, are waiting despite the fact there is a machine unused sitting at the cancer treatment institute because the government did not approve the funding the last six weeks, the last two months. How does that happen in Manitoba, that people wait on a list for months and months and a machine sits unused? How does this government so badly manage health care that that happens?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the reason why we get into these issues, and it does happen, the area of dialysis is another one, is because, as we fund various hospitals in terms of their facility budgets or organizations like the Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, we try to predict the use that will be required. In the case of cancer, there has been an increased demand. We try to keep up with that. We approve budgets; no government provides an open-ended budget to any facility, and we have to make adjustments from time to time, as the member knows. I am pleased to indicate, with this additional money, that will allow that machine he refers to to go into operation. I believe it allows for 5.6 additional staff years for radiation therapists, and it will allow for the treatment of an additional 330 people.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, in so far as this has been an issue for actually years and several months, but specifically this very long waiting list, can the minister indicate to the 250 people who are waiting today when that money will flow—and their families—when that machine will be operational and when they will be able to get the very severe and very necessary treatment they require?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that very important question, because anyone who is waiting for treatment, that is the most critical matter. I understand the approvals have been in place, the notifications are going out, and now with that approval, the host facility, the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, will be able to immediately swing into gear to schedule those patients. That is an

administrative matter that they will have to deal with. So, as soon as they can gear up that machine with the people, it is ready now to go, dependent on their ability to make it happen. So I thank the member for his very timely question.

Canadian Corrosion Control Stop-Work Order

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that there is some degree of variance in Workplace Safety and Health's usual procedures when a fatality occurs at a workplace. The police are contacted, as are representatives from Workplace Safety and Health, and once all measures at preserving life and reducing injury are pursued, the worksite is left frozen and left undisturbed. Investigations do not always commence immediately, although stop-work orders can be issued immediately.

I want to ask the Minister of Labour why it took the Workplace Safety and Health Branch three days to seal the worksite at the Canadian Corrosion Control where there was a death as a result of a workplace accident and why it took an additional three days beyond those first three days, in fact a total of six days, for a stop-work order to be issued for that particular worksite where the fatality occurred.

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I would say that the department by and large has worked well with companies across Manitoba in terms of workplace safety and health issues in the establishment of committees and providing education to employers and employees and developing a partnership with government, employees and employer groups to provide safe workplaces. On the specifics of that question, I will take that as notice and provide that detail for the member.

Workplace Safety and Health Investigations—Family Contact

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Perhaps the Minister of Labour can also explain—because it is my understanding that survivors of the deceased are to be kept updated on the progress of the investigations—why, after the initial meeting with the Andrew Kuryk family in June of '94, the Workplace Safety and Health Branch had no further

contact with the family until the staying of the charges in June of '95. Why did no further contact take place from the department of Workplace Safety and Health that should have been a normal process in this investigation?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, since I have come into the department, I have discussed issues such as this with the department and encouraged them to be on the job as quickly as possible and to give the families as much information as possible. I think that you will find that that is the direction that they have taken at this time.

Investigations

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Perhaps the minister can explain, then, why nothing was done after the initial investigation of Workplace Safety and Health. In fact, no inquest was called until the family wrote a lengthy letter to both the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Labour requesting that further action be taken in the death of Andrew Kuryk. Why did no further action take place until the family had to contact your departments?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour): These accidents are very sensitive ones. The department does a fairly high degree of investigation on it. It does take some time to compile that information and send that to the appropriate authorities.

Student Financial Assistance Debt Load

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, earlier this week in Question Period the Minister of Education argued that while student debt had increased, so had graduates' incomes, and there was no problem of accessibility in Manitoba. What is so appalling is that Manitoba seems to be alone in having a Minister of Education who appears to have no understanding of the most significant crisis facing students.

I want to ask the minister to explain why it is that she rejects the numbers compiled and confirmed by every major national education organization from the Canadian Federation of Students to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations and the Canadian

Association of University Teachers whose numbers say that over the last eight years student debt has tripled from \$8,000 to \$25,000 and that graduate incomes in fact have remained stable.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): The member may be talking about national statistics here in Manitoba. The debt upon graduation is not \$20,000; it is in the order of \$11,000 to \$12,000, substantially less than the member has put on the record, implying that that is Manitoba's stat. Manitoba's stat, as I say, is considerably less than that, in between \$11,000 and \$12,000, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Friesen: The minister might want to consult a recent survey at the University of Winnipeg, which has quite different numbers and much higher numbers than the minister's.

Debt Load Remission Program

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I would like to ask the minister to explain why Manitoba, almost alone of Canadian provinces, has refused to have a debt remission program that would provide some relief for students after they graduate and some hope for those students who now see it impossible to continue.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): The member again—I need to reiterate to her, and these are figures compiled by my department this month, the average debt load of Manitoba students is \$11,088. That was last year. This year it appears that it will have risen to \$11,981, far, far from the \$20,000 that she quotes and alleges to be the figure for Manitoba.

In Manitoba as well, the member might be interested to know, only 21 percent of university and college students access student financial assistance. So when she talks about these vast numbers of students in the dire straits she describes, she is not correct according to what our own figures show us here.

We have a learning tax credit that I have spoken about before here, the only one in Canada. That is \$17.5 million students get back at income tax time.

I see my time is up, Madam Speaker. I will continue with the next question.

* (1410)

Ms. Friesen: Well, we have a Minister of Education who simply wants to throw away 20 percent of students and who is not prepared to talk about debt remission. That is appalling.

Royal Bank Agreement

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, to pose a supplementary question.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Will the minister table the agreement that she signed with the Royal Bank this week, and would she tell us whether that agreement was made in anticipation of the withdrawal of the CIBC from student loans in Manitoba?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): The conclusions the member consistently comes to are interesting. Other words may be used; I will say interesting for now because I do not wish to be unparliamentary.

I have to indicate that we still have the third-lowest tuitions in Canada. I have to indicate that when I say the average debt load is around \$11,900—

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I believe that the minister is answering the question of two questions ago. I wonder if she could focus her attention upon the question I asked her, which was: Will she table the Royal Bank study and explain whether it was done in anticipation of the withdrawal of CIBC as they have in Nova Scotia?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Education, on the same point of order.

Mrs. McIntosh: When members opposite, as they so frequently do, have a lengthy preamble that addresses several points, which is followed then by two or three different questions, how is the member answering to know which of the points being put forward requires the answer? Now she has specified the one point she does want answered, I will be happy to do it.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Wolseley, the honourable member for Wolseley indeed did have a point of order. I would remind the honourable Minister of Education to respond to the question asked.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, and I did not rise on a point of order to say there is no preamble on second and third questions. I will from now on. I will from this point on.

Madam Speaker, the member asked the question—

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A point of order was raised by the member for Wolseley. The minister gave her comments. You ruled that it was a legitimate point of order. The only thing that would be in order for this minister to do now would be actually to try and answer the question. It is not in order for her to either give editorial comment on this matter or to question the ruling. If she wishes to question the ruling, she can challenge it, but she is once again abusing the time of Question Period. I would like to ask you to bring her to order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would remind the honourable Minister of Education she was recognized to respond to the question asked.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I appreciate your caution. There are to be no preambles or postambles, so I will go straight to the question.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I would wonder again if you would remind the minister, in this case, her role in Question Period is to give answers to questions not to continually—actually she does give these kinds of irrelevant and out-of-order

editorial comments. You made two rulings against the minister. Will she not accept those rulings, Madam Speaker, instead of showing contempt for Question Period on a continuing basis?

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education, on the same point of order.

Mrs. McIntosh: I realize the members are sensitive because they are taking the criticism against them. All I am saying, Madam Speaker, is that I acknowledge your ruling. I acknowledge your ruling, and that is what I said. I acknowledge your ruling on not talking about anything other than the point we are supposed to be up for. If they have interpreted it as applying to them, I cannot help that. I am acknowledging your ruling, and I do not think that is out of order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, the last point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, indeed the honourable Minister of Education should not be adding editorial comment, but I appreciate the fact that she was acknowledging that indeed she was out of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education and Training, to quickly respond to the question asked.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that clarification, and I would like to—the member had asked a question. She asked, did we have an agreement with the Royal Bank because we were anticipating the CIBC would back out? No, we had an agreement with the Royal Bank, as I indicated to the member last year, when CIBC signed on, that it was the sole—the member was concerned that it was the sole bank. We said other banks are interested and will be coming on to agreements before the year is out. This is an indication that that has come true, as I had indicated it would.

Physical Education Curriculum

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I also have a question for the Minister of Education.

In January 1996, the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association had an article in their newsletter entitled physical education threatened again, and they were expressing their concern about this government's proposals to withdraw a required course in phys ed at the high school and, then subsequent to that, to eliminate some portion of physical education in order to teach health. The minister, at that time, wrote to the High Schools Athletic Association somewhat chastising them and asking them to print her letter which said that they were premature.

I want to ask her now if she could tell the House: What will the new curriculum be in terms of the amount of time for physical education and health education, both K to 8 and in our high schools?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I do not recall asking people to print my letter, but I may have asked to have a correction made if there was an error in anything that went out. I do recall the physical education teachers offering to print a letter, which I appreciate very much. I know that is part of the preamble I am addressing, but I do not know how we can avoid addressing the preamble. Maybe I should take that as the question. I have only answered one, so there we go.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, this is truly unbelievable. The minister said in her letter: I would request that you publish this response in your next issue as a letter to the editor.

I want her to tell the House now on this very important issue: What has her curriculum review determined in terms of physical education and health education? What time allotments are going to be prescribed for the province, since recently we had a student from Transcona complaining that they do not have enough time in phys ed class?

* (1420)

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member would be good enough to table the letter from which she is reading, because it seems to be a letter to the editor as opposed to—[interjection] She was reading from it, and I wonder if she could table it because I think she said it was a letter—

An Honourable Member: Do not let them push you around, Linda.

Mrs. McIntosh: No, no, do not worry.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member tabling the letter, the letter to an editor that I wrote, which I think was different from the letter that I thought she was referencing in the first one when she said high school teachers.

However, we have indicated for some time—and I believe the member is aware of this—that, ultimately, physical education will be approximately 75 percent activity, 25 percent health. Health and physical activity go together in terms of wellness, in terms of being—the member mentioned in her rather lengthy preamble that students were worried about having too much health and not enough physical activity. If we take the picture of fitness and wellness and well-being, we know that we also have to teach students why the physical activity is important so that they can then go onto a life-long physical fitness regime understanding foods, nutrition, health, et cetera, to be a healthier, more well-fit Canadian citizen.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Co-operative Education Employer Appreciation Banquet—Winkler

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Pembina have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Dyck: Last evening I had the pleasure to be part of the Co-operative Education Employer Appreciation Banquet held in the community of Winkler. While there, I was able to pay tribute to this innovative program and its participants. I recently read the mission statement for Garden Valley Collegiate which described the school as, and I quote, an educational community which allows intellectual challenge, lifelong

learning and self-discipline within a respectful, supportive environment.

This job training program, which matches students with employers in their field of interest, has met with rousing success. It clearly has met all the conditions set out by the school's mission statement. Since 1990, approximately 35 students a year have participated, finding temporary work in areas such as secretarial, law enforcement, Canada Customs and working in veterinary offices.

Students have the opportunity to test drive a potential career while earning—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Pembina.

Mr. Dyck: Students have the opportunity to test drive a potential career while earning necessary high school credits. Employers have the opportunity to be active community members and have access to an enthusiastic and talented work pool.

This is a win-win situation, and everyone at the banquet deserves applause for their efforts in making this program an ongoing success. By changing the educational setting for our students, by adapting to meet their needs and concerns, we all benefit.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of all members, I congratulate the students on an excellent job; as well, a special thank you to the staff, including Mr. Giesbrecht and Mr. Vanstone, and thank you to the parents and businesses involved, who without their active involvement the program would not have achieved so much. Thank you very much.

Westman Seniors Day Picnic Celebration

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Turtle Mountain have leave for a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Tweed: Madam Speaker, I rise today with the honour of recognizing the many seniors in the Westman

area of Manitoba as they take the time to enjoy some of Manitoba's fine sunshine during the Westman Seniors Day picnic celebration.

Last year I had the privilege of hosting both the Westman Seniors Day, as well as the MSOS 55 Plus Summer Games, and I can assure you that these events do not happen on their own. Therefore, I speak from first-hand experience when I say thank you to the volunteers in Minnedosa for hosting this year's event. The popularity of these events has continued to increase since the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Reimer) first decided to hold these events outside the Legislature. As a result of this decision, seniors events are now held in various regions throughout the province.

Seniors Day in Westman is always a special treat because the organizing committees are so enthusiastic and energetic. Each year, the host community plans an interesting and fun-filled day, and the Minnedosa organizing committee has certainly followed this tradition. Therefore, on behalf of the many seniors in Turtle Mountain and all of southwestern Manitoba, I would like to say thank you to everyone involved for their contribution toward the success of today's event in Minnedosa.

Tim Horton's—Camp Day Fundraiser

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, may I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

* (1430)

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for La Verendrye have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Sveinson: Madam Speaker, I rise today that I may thank on behalf of all members a true corporate citizen. Every year, Tim Horton's holds a camp day fundraiser. These funds are traditionally donated to the Tim Horton's Children's Foundation which sends monetarily underprivileged children to camp.

This year, however, the proceeds are being shared equally by the Children's Foundation and the Manitoba Flood Relief. The result of the hard work by all Tim

Horton's staff across Canada was the raising of \$1.7 million. Yesterday, Mr. Ron Joyce, co-founder of the Tim Horton's chain, presented Blair Graham, chair of the Manitoba Flood Appeal Advisory Committee a cheque in the amount of \$850,000. This tremendous donation by Tim Horton's on behalf of their store owners and customers will make a significant impact on the current phase of the flood relief efforts. I was proud to represent our government at this cheque presentation, and I want to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to Tim Horton's for their generosity. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Burrows (Mr. Martindale) for Thompson (Mr. Ashton); Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen); Osborne (Ms. McGifford) for Broadway (Mr. Santos); St James (Ms. Mihychuk) for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), for Thursday, June 12, 1997, for 7 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for Thursday, June 12, at 7 p.m. be amended as follows: the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) for the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck); the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) for the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae); the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) for the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed); the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) for the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe).

I move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for Friday, June 13, at 10 a.m. be amended as follows: the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) for the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

I move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), that the composition of the Standing

Committee on Economic Development for Friday, June 13, 1997, at 10 a.m. be amended as follows: the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) for the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer); the member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) for the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render); the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) for the member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan); the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) for the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson); and the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) for the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

Motions agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I have some matters of House Business. I would like to advise honourable members and the table that the government does not propose to proceed with Bill 22, The Law Reform Commission Repeal Act, and instead will be working with Bill 58. I am saying this because I expect Bill 22 to basically die on the Order Paper, and I think that the table may want to use this information to let potential presenters know that that is the intention so that we can avoid any inconvenience in that regard.

There have been some discussions, and out of respect for the memory of the late Honourable Stanley Knowles, for whom there will be a funeral service on Monday at two in the afternoon, we have agreed that the House would not sit on Monday until 3:30, that we would forgo private members' hour, that we would sit until six on Monday, resume sitting at 7:30 till the normal hour of adjournment of ten o'clock. That is what we would need leave—I am sorry, Madam Speaker, if I said private members' hour, what I meant to say is we would forgo Question Period on Monday, beginning with, I guess it is called, government orders at 3:30 in the afternoon.

Madam Speaker: For information purposes, Bill 22 will not proceed but will die on the Order Paper.

Is there leave for Monday, June 16, to not sit, to forgo Question Period where the House commences at 1:30

p.m. and not sit until 3:30 p.m., commencing with Orders of the Day, until 6 p.m., recessing, then sitting from 7:30 p.m. until 10 p.m. Monday evening?

Mr. McCrae: A minor adjustment before we put that question: When I say "commencing with Orders of the Day," it may be that we should be commencing with Routine Proceedings, omitting Question Period, and then going to Orders of the Day at 3:30 on Monday.

Madam Speaker: So the House not sit till 3:30 p.m. on Monday, the 16th, commencing with Routine Proceedings but omitting Question Period, until 6 p.m., and then recessing and commencing at 7:30 p.m. until 10 p.m. Monday evening. Is there leave? [agreed]

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, thank you for that. I appreciate your having to put all that to the House. The arrangements were just very recently arrived at, and we were unable to prepare something in writing for you with respect to that.

Madam Speaker, again, on Monday at 7:30, and this would require the leave of the House because the House will be sitting at 7:30. At 7:30 Monday evening, the Standing Committee on Agriculture will sit to consider bills referred to it. The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and I are, well, mostly the honourable member for Thompson, but we are working on which bills will be referred to that committee.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to permit at 7:30 p.m. on Monday evening the Standing Committee on Agriculture to sit for bills referred? [agreed]

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, and the leave is being sought because the House is sitting at the same time.

Would you call Bill 31, please.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 31—The Livestock and Livestock Products and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), second reading of Bill 31 (The Livestock and Livestock Products and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur

les animaux de ferme et leurs produits et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? No? Leave has been denied.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, The Livestock and Livestock Products and Consequential Amendments Act is a bill that was introduced to allow for changes to The Livestock and Livestock Products Act which was amended last session and is a result of changes to The Animal Care Act dealing with the proper treatment of animals. The bill deals with changes to the current act regarding aspects of identification, transportation, registration, production and processing of livestock.

One of the main issues that the bill is addressing is the issue of quality control of livestock and livestock products, and we are a major exporter of livestock products. In a changing world that we are facing these days, the standards that people are wanting in other countries are very high, and I do not blame them for wanting high-quality meat. They are paying a good price for it, and they want good quality. We have had incidents where there have been contaminated products getting into other countries, and I believe that in Japan a few years ago there was an incident where there was a needle in some meat, and that hurts our reputation as a country when we go to export.

Certainly, at the level we are farming these days, farmers use supplements and antibiotics when they are feeding their livestock, and it is important that, when they use these products for the safety of their animals and the health of their animals, the product be residue-free before it goes to market. In most cases, farmers do want to ensure that their product is safe, but there are incidents when it does happen that there could be residues in the meat, and this hurts our reputation as a trader.

So we have to work to bring our standards in line with international standards, and governments are working very hard to do this. We have the hazardous-analysis critical control point where we are looking at ensuring that all products are safely handled, and governments, as I understand it, are spending large

amounts of money to ensure that safety standards are lived up to.

So what this legislation does is—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I hesitate, Madam Speaker, to interrupt the honourable member for Swan River, but I believe earlier I asked you to call Bills 31 and others—but 31, 54, 27, 29. I would like to add No. 19 to that list.

* * *

Ms. Wowchuk: So part of this legislation deals with the application of identification to animals. There is new technology with respect to identifying animals, and this legislation will bring that in line so that we can take advantage, so producers can take advantage, and one of the things that—want to be done is the modern technology will allow for the placement of quality control products, and the animal can be traced back to its point of origin should there be problems with some of the quality in the product. This is something that is happening in other provinces, and this legislation will be similar to what other provinces are bringing in place so that we have standards across the province and equal treatment and a better ability to trace and keep track of animals that are being shipped to market.

* (1440)

The other area of this bill that is being addressed is to deal with inspections. I understand that, in discussions with Manitoba cattle producers in previous years, they were very much insisting, wanting to see inspectors at auction mart sites to be able to track what was going on and be able to investigate where whose animals were being sold. That has not been in place in Manitoba. Other provinces do have these inspectors in place. In Saskatchewan, they are done by the Saskatchewan government.

From what I can tell from this legislation, there is the ability for these inspectors to be set up in Manitoba, but it will not be by the government. There will be the

ability for the private sector to be doing the inspection. I have to say that in that sense I would hope that the government would play a role in these inspections and ensure that there is a role for government to play in these types of things. I am not quite sure why the government continues to pull back. There are things— [interjection]

House Business

Mr. McCrae: I know that my honourable colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) will find my behaviour quite outrageous this afternoon. [interjection] See, that is what I mean. I know how he feels about this, so I will therefore be very brief out of respect for my colleague and the honourable member for Swan River.

Madam Speaker, will you add Bill 21 to the list of bills to be called this afternoon? Thank you.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hicke (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans); Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk); Wellington (Ms. Barrett) for Transcona (Mr. Reid); Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), for Friday, June 13, 1997, for 10 a.m.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: I just want to reassure the honourable member for Swan River that I will add the time that these interruptions are taking to her speaking time.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I have one committee change. I move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for Thursday, 7 p.m., June 12, be amended as follows: the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) for the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

Motion agreed to.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, the legislation also allows for the ability to have inspectors at auction marts. That was, as I said, an issue that was raised by Manitoba cattle producers a few ago. That does not seem to be as big a concern for them right now, and they are looking to have standards brought in across the province. When I talked to them, they were not quite as concerned about this section.

There is also a section that deals with people who lose their licence, who will now have the ability to appeal; an appeal board will be put in place. But basically some of the highlights are an appeal board setting up licensing disputes, a new designation of inspectors which are deemed as analysts or auditors, but their duties are not clearly defined. There will also be an increase in penalties for infractions, and the minister can set up a registry for animals which are being monitored by outside interests, likely producer organizations rather than by government, which currently operates one.

The end result of this legislation, Madam Speaker, is that there will be more producer and industry responsibility to ensure proper practices and the treatment of livestock are carried out and less government involvement.

I have to say that these are moves that are being carried out across the country, looking for better standards and better tracing of healthy animals, and those are good recommendations. Animals can be traced now from farm gate to the processor on the line, and the quality of the animals and the presence of residues or antibiotics can be known from their place of origin and this can only enhance the quality and accountability.

So, Madam Speaker, we are prepared to send this bill to committee and hear what presenters have to say. The only concern we have is, again, in this bill, it appears that the government is pulling away from its responsibility just as the federal government has pulled away in many cases of inspection. They are turning it over to the private sector. I want to say to the minister that there is a role for government to play to ensure that we have standards, and we will look for further

discussion at committee to ensure that all of this will enhance our quality, but there also still will be government controls to ensure that the standards that are very important to the livestock industry and to the export industry and to the health of Canadians as well will be met.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I too would just like to say a few words with respect to Bill 31. There are 24,383 farms in Manitoba, encompassing 7.73 million acres of Manitoba farmland. The scope of this legislation involves much of what takes place on these Manitoba farms. I am particularly pleased to see that this bill gives inspectors more power to enter and inspect livestock operations that might be in violation of The Livestock Act. The move toward allowing greater diversity in livestock identification, considering that technology has made tremendous leaps in the area, will also be of increasing importance.

This bill also deals with the ownership of livestock. This might seem unimportant to those who live in the city, but Manitoba has 1.35 million cattle and calves, not to mention the 1.77 million hogs. Knowing who these cattle and pigs belong to is of tremendous importance. It should be noted that all of the western provinces and Ontario have already introduced similar legislation. Many of the amendments in this act simply harmonize regulations with similar legislation being passed across Canada.

Our discussions with farmers have indicated support for the amendments. They are generally pleased to see the new developments in technology advance quite quickly in their industry. They are the ones who are driving our gains in agriculture. When it comes to spending money on capital improvements like new identification systems, Manitoba farmers are among the leaders in Canada. They spend about \$49,000 a year on improvements to their farming operations as an average, from what I understand.

This legislation is really just an attempt to keep up with them. I am pleased that these amendments have been brought forward. The Liberal caucus is happy to agree with the agriculture producers of Manitoba.

* (1450)

I had come across an interesting article, Madam Speaker, that was in the Free Press. It illustrated some of the sizes of farms and how we have seen a decrease in the province of Manitoba. Just to quote from that Free Press article, I guess it would have been in May of this year, where it says that Manitoba's farm count alone dropped by more than 1,300 between '91 and '96 to just more than 24,000. You know, there are a lot of Manitobans that are out there that want to do what they can in terms of preserving a way of life, and that being the smaller farms in trying to allow for individuals to continue on the farm. I just thought it was somewhat of an interesting point that we should be aware of. Wherever we might be able to take actions that would facilitate, especially the small producers, I think that we should take steps towards it. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading Bill 31, The Livestock and Livestock Products and Consequential Amendments Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 54—The Animal Husbandry Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: To resume second reading debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), Bill 54, The Animal Husbandry Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant le Loi sur l'élevage et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the—[interjection]

Order, please. I believe the honourable member for Point Douglas would like to have committee changes.

Committee Change

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Agriculture be amended as follows: Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) for Monday, June 16, 1997, for 7:30 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading Bill 54, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: No, leave has been denied.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, The Animal Husbandry Act, Bill 54, is a very short bill and I am not going to take very much time to speak on it. The bill is repealing a few sections that are now being covered off under other bills. For example, the regulations of branding and identification of animals now falls under The Livestock and Livestock Products Act that we just talked about, and the transportation of livestock is carried under The Animal Care Act, and another section of the bill, Parts V to VII, are repealed because they are now redundant because the government has discontinued to provide those services.

At one time, the government played an important role in building up the livestock herds in this province. The government was involved in an artificial insemination program. The government was involved in the breeding program that provided breeding stock to enable farmers to build up their herds. It was a very good program, and it helped to diversify and build up the quality of animals that are throughout rural Manitoba right now, but the government has decided that this program was no longer necessary. Although we do not agree with them, we think that there still was a role for government to play in providing these services to both the beef and the dairy industry. The government chose not to provide them. So this legislation is now redundant, so it is being removed.

When we look back at what happened to the dairy industry and to the beef industry in Manitoba and the improvement of the genetic pool of livestock, because of these programs, we have to recognize the importance of them and what they have done to build up Manitoba's beef and dairy herds and build up Manitoba's reputation. We still have a long way to go. In particular, when we look at what is happening here

in Manitoba, again, I will refer to the changes that we have seen to the Crow and the increased costs of shipping grain, we are going to have to diversify more and more. It is very expensive to get started in the cattle industry.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), a cattle producer himself, knows that this is an expensive venture to get started in. I think the program that we had in place to help producers improve their stocks and the genetic lines of their animals was very helpful and would be very helpful for the producers today. There could be a role for government to play with other livestock besides cattle to help to diversify, but as I say, the government has chosen to withdraw that service so the legislation is quite redundant.

My understanding is there will be further legislation that will be brought in, not this session but very soon, probably in the next session, that will eliminate even further—make this act even more redundant and will probably be completely removed from the books. So, as I say, this is a bill that is dealing with removing sections of The Animal Husbandry Act that are no longer valid. We recognize that this has to be done.

The other issue deals with animal injuries and transportation. Again, that section is being repealed because it is being covered under another act. With those two comments, we are prepared to let this bill go to committee.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading, Bill 54, The Animal Husbandry Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Agreed. Agreed and so ordered.

Point of Order

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, a point of order or a point of a clarification, I just want to check back. This morning we were dealing also with Bill 30. We were also prepared to pass that bill to committee. I think we

were stopped by the clock and never got to it and that would be under the—

Madam Speaker: Just for clarification for the member for Swan River, Bill 30, we had leave to sit about another five minutes this morning, so that the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) could put his comments on record. Bill 30 has indeed been passed to committee. Okay.

* * *

Bill 27—The Public Schools Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume second reading debate on Bill 27, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh), The Public Schools Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques), in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Leave. Leave has been granted.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on Bill 27, The Public Schools Amendment Act. This is a bill which has a number of unrelated changes that are being proposed in one act, one set of amendments rather. It does underline the necessity for the full redrafting and full reconsideration of The Public Schools Act.

It needs to be maintained in modern language. I think there is much of it that does need a plain language version, although many of the amendments certainly are being written in as clear a manner as possible. I do know at election time, certainly there has been discussion of the wholesale amendment of The Public Schools Act. I believe all parties have expressed themselves on this.

I also believe that there is a necessity for a guide to the act. I know that some jurisdictions, not in Canada, but some jurisdictions do compile these, and they are very useful in some parts of the world. A guide to the act, particularly for parents who are becoming increasingly interested and concerned about the actual

legal basis of some of the provisions or in many cases, as it is today, the absence of provisions for public schools.

* (1500)

I think, also, as we see Freedom of Information laws applied to school divisions and to private schools as well perhaps, that the requirement for a guide to the act, a public guide to the act that will enable people to understand the legal bases of the provisions of Manitoba's public schools, I think, would be very helpful. I offer this to the government as a constructive idea, one that might be a very useful endeavour, but it really should, of course, come accompanying, I think, the revising of The Public Schools Act generally.

So what we have here is a series of changes proposed for public schools in Manitoba, and they cover a wide range of areas. We are going to discuss them each in turn and to indicate some of our ideas and some of our reflections upon each of these, and I know that a number of my other colleagues also have concerns that they want to express.

The first part of Bill 27 aims to vary the term of public school trustees on application to the minister. It argues, and the minister argues, that this will give more flexibility to municipal governments, sorry, to local governments; that it will enable trustees' terms perhaps to be adjusted so that they are aligned with municipal elections and that may be useful in ensuring that there is a wider electorate interested and active in school affairs. I think, if that is the case, that is a useful purpose because certainly there have been some school divisions where the turnout has been very low for school division elections. I believe there are many positions on school divisions, certainly in one or two divisions that continue to be by acclamation rather than by election; and, while this may indicate satisfaction with the existing trustees, it may also indicate difficulties in local democracy, the fact that there is not the kind of active participation perhaps that we would want to see in local divisions.

So, if there is as a result of this, an increase in activity of the electorate in school divisions and local elections, increasing numbers of people willing to run for school divisions to take on the tremendous responsibilities, in

fact, that are offered to them, I think that would be a good thing. I think it also gives the opportunity for the kind of flexibility that might be required if school divisions are to begin a process of voluntary amalgamation. Now it could have been in place several years ago. The government might have thought of doing this before it went into its fiasco of the Boundaries Commission, but it did not. Now it is offering this kind of flexibility. It seems to me perhaps backward, a government which had some concern about local democracy and which might have approached school divisions for ways in which voluntary amalgamation could have been considered, might have come up with this particular aspect.

There are some concerns that it might be too flexible. Some people have expressed to me the possibility that it might be used too loosely by school divisions or school trustees. My own sense is that this is not likely to be the case. It is to enable transition to take place, and it probably would be used quite infrequently. But I do think it would have been a useful piece to have had in place before the boundary commission went ahead and spent a million dollars and created the kinds of very, very difficult situations in many local areas where meetings were held of the boundary commission. It is one of the missing pieces, I think, that could have helped, and the government as usual, when it looked at the boundary commission, wanted to go in with its great centralizing mission, wanted to go in with a big stick, never thought of the carrot first, and essentially created a great upset, particularly in rural Manitoba. And it tried to brazen it out for a while. There is no doubt about that. It tried round two of hearings and round two of a report, a report which, I think, did not express the letters and the opinions that it had received from rural Manitoba.

I went to the trouble of reading all the material that was sent in from school divisions as their response to the first boundary commission report, and I read the report which combined those, and it seemed to me that the two did not match. There was a great deal that was left out of the second report, and so no wonder people responded badly to that. They responded in a sense that said no, you have not heard what we have said. At the end of it, a million dollars had been spent, no amalgamations had taken place, the resistance of people

to amalgamation was more deeply entrenched than it need have been.

The government, of course, lost a piece of one of Mr. Manness's, the former Education minister, one of his major thrusts in education because, of course, as we look at education today, what we see is from the government's perspective, there is one piece of their overall policy which is missing, and that was the major upheaval of boundary amalgamation, of the changes in numerous contracts across the province as well as changes in elections, changes in jurisdictions. All of that was part of Manness's master plan, and it was a master plan. It was a long-term strategy, well, actually I should say a short-term strategy, really, a short-term strategy for the transformation of education in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, those people who now look at the changes, the rapid change in curriculum, the rapid changes in jurisdiction such as brought about by school choice, the intense difficulties that are being felt by school divisions as a result of the continuous reduction of funding to schools and, of course, the anxieties and the disputes that are being aroused by the standards assessment tests at all levels from Grades 3 to 12, when people look at those and say, look, there is too much change here, there is too much that is happening too quickly over which we have control, they should look back at that master plan of Manness and understand that the one piece that is missing here is, of course, the boundary change.

What Manness had intended was that all of that should happen together. What he was really doing was following the instructions of Roger Douglas, a man whom this government delights in bringing in and taking him to various meetings to give his speech. It is a speech which has been heard and understood by Klein and certainly by Harris, in Alberta and Ontario, and it was one which Manness took to heart as well. What he wanted to do in education in Manitoba was to destabilize, just as Roger Douglas did in the economic system in New Zealand: "Hit 'em hard, hit 'em fast." But that is certainly the route that he wanted to take, so that bringing about rapid change, centrally directed over funding and over jurisdictions is certainly part of his important plan.

The minister herself wants to take some credit for slowing this down. She spoke at length in Estimates about this, that they had heard, they had listened to the field. The field had said, slow things down. That is certainly true; they were saying that. Teachers, parents, students, and trustees were having to cope with enormous change with continually reduced resources. It was change which they had not initiated, change which, for the most part, they had not consented to and yet, nevertheless, it is at the field level that they had to deal with it. They did say over and over again for a number of years, we repeated it in Question Period, we repeated it here in Estimates, and finally the minister acknowledged that indeed she had heard that the field wanted her to slow down.

The minister wants some credit for that slowing down—glad to give her that credit. She listened and after several years she did slow it down. She did in fact take the advice that we had offered so often on this side of the House, that you cannot expect the continued co-operation and enthusiasm of teachers, parents, and trustees in the classrooms of Manitoba if you are continually imposing upon them the kinds of rapid change that you have done for the past few years and at the same time reduce their resources and their ability to deal with it.

So the minister, I think, should have the credit that she wants and that she deserves, but she must also expect the debt that goes along with that. The debt, I think, that is owed in rural Manitoba, in particular, is a dismay at a government which chose that centralized route and the distrust of a centralized government's edicts in education. I think there is a long-term debt or long-term difficulties that the government is going to face outside of Winnipeg and perhaps in Winnipeg as well with the implications of the kind of rapid change that they tried to bring to education in Manitoba.

* (1510)

Each, on their own, of the changes that they had decided to bring may well have merited consideration. They may well have merited discussion with trustees and with teachers across the province, but this government is an authoritarian government, I believe, at heart and in principle, and it is certainly in principle

a government which centralizes while speaking in press releases and in bureaucratic language of decentralization. One of the principles, I think, one should always have in looking at both the actions and the words of this government is always look behind the lines and between the lines, because what the government says is not always, in fact, very infrequently what the government means to do.

Bill 27 then offers the option of some flexibility to trustees. I think trustees are pleased with this and will use it in probably very careful ways. Secondly, the bill creates an amendment to allow the South Winnipeg Technical Centre to have a superintendent or rather to designate as a principal. This makes it not unique amongst institutions, but it adds South Winnipeg Tech to a list of institutions which are specifically named in The Public Schools Act. It, I think, is something which has some difficulties attached to it. Certainly, there will be concerns expressed, I believe, by the Manitoba Teachers' Society because it is part of a context whereby the government is increasingly becoming much more directive, a much more centralized approach to the role of principal and here I think there are some difficulties from the perspective of the Teachers' Society on what is being added here to a very small list.

On the other hand, it is also possible, a mitigating factor, I think, that South Winnipeg Technical institution is named specifically. This is not an open-ended regulation allowing the minister—as happens in some other acts—to name specific schools where this anomaly could take place. Nor does it leave it to regulation, as is the common practice of this government and, indeed, it is one of the standard practices of governments which are authoritarian and which are centralizers is that they do continue to transform legislation into regulations; that is, they take the power out of the hands of the people in the Legislature and they put it into the hands of regulators, essentially of the cabinet, where every Wednesday morning the regulations could be changed and for a long time no one would be any the wiser. Yet substantial shifts have taken place. So I am glad to see that the minister has not done that. I think that is a mitigating factor. I am glad to see that this particular bill does not follow that unfortunate tendency.

The third element that this bill looks at is the removal of the special levy, and members who have been in this House some—removal, I should say, of the cap on the special levy that was introduced by Mr. Manness some years ago. If you will remember, this was a bill which was very heatedly debated in this House. Those members who were here at the time will, perhaps, remember it. It was, again, I believe part of the destabilizing purpose, intent, of Manness's various bills. It was an attempt to limit the power of local divisions to raise money for education. In itself, I think this poses difficulties for democracy.

I remember myself arguing very strongly against it at the time because if you have local bodies, if you have city councils, rural councils, if you have school divisions who are empowered, delegated the authority to raise certain taxes, it seems to me that that is their job, that is what they should do and they should be accountable for that. What Manness did was to limit the ability of school divisions to do that, to essentially say from the central government that we are going to put a limit upon the amount that you can raise. It seemed to me a conflict between two levels of government, one which did not bode well for a healthy local government, which I think we all want to see.

So now in removing it, one would think that there would be universal rejoicing. But what has happened in the meantime, I think, has a significant impact on how we should regard the removal of this cap. It is, as it is inserted into this bill, a double-edged sword because what has happened in the interim is that the government has gone a long way on its path to creating a free market in education. What it has done is, first of all, to establish choice in schools. Frankly, I do not think it is going to work in the same way that the government anticipates it, but this is their purpose, is to establish choice and consequently competition for a student population across school boundaries. When you then reinstate, under those conditions, the ability of school divisions now to tax as they can see fit or as their local taxation base enables them, you then have a growing inability to distribute education equally across Manitoba. When Manness introduced the cap, we did not have school choice; we did not have all of the other elements of marketization of education that the government has since introduced.

We have a second area that, I think, bears on this, and this is the enormous increases to private schools that have taken place since Manness introduced these caps. It is another aspect of creating a free market in education, and at the same time what the government has done is to consistently and deliberately reduce the monies available to public schools. So what they have done is to use the power of the central government to create what they would believe is a "level playing field" between public and private schools, and they have also used the power of the central government to create a competitive system between school divisions. Now what they are doing is removing the cap on the ability of divisions to tax, and, of course, those school divisions which have greater ability will, in the competitive situation which they were not in before, have a much greater ability to attract students, to have a wider range of facilities. Of course, this is on top of all those government grants that go into south Winnipeg schools and into rural Manitoba schools, all those \$40,000 grants for technology, all the grants from Sustainable Development for renovations to curriculum, or from Community Places. There are many ways which the government has found, I think, to fund schools in a rather specialized way.

So we do have, I think, market principles beginning to apply, at least insofar as the government is able to make them, to education. We believe on this side of the House that that is fundamentally wrong. Just as the government is trying to create a market system in health care, it is trying to do the same thing in education. We believe that, whereas the market can distribute some consumer goods efficiently, it does not deliver the public goods of health and education in a fair and equitable manner. That is what the government is trying to do, and it is trying to do it rather quickly in Manitoba. It also seems unable to speak about it in abstract terms, but that is exactly what it is doing because the government essentially believes that the free market will distribute efficiently. But it will not distribute fairly, and that, to me, is the higher principle in terms of the distribution of public goods.

So we have seen, over the last number of years, cuts of minus 2, minus 2, zero, minus 2 again, zero to public schools. We have seen that at the same time as the cost of instructional materials has been rising, and so school divisions have been placed in a terrible vise, a vise grip

of declining ability to meet the needs of students. You do not have to go very far outside this building to find teachers and parents, trustees and students who will give you example after example of that. Indeed, we had hearings last year in the Legislature, hearings on Bill 72 and on other education bills where the public came out in large numbers to speak to us about the impact of education cuts on their school divisions.

Madam Speaker, I thought that many of those hearings, and they often went late into the night, were very instructive. I very much value the way in which the public comes to speak on those bills, often comes at very short notice, comes with a great deal of expertise, waits in turn for many hours sometimes to speak, sometimes has to go home again and then come back again, sometimes after midnight.

So those public hearings told us time after time of the inability of schools, particularly in French immersion schools, to find textbooks. We heard of College Jean Beliveau where their—no, it is not Jean Beliveau, it is College Beliveau. Mixing my metaphors, Madam Speaker, College Beliveau—perhaps it was College Jeanne Sauve too. It was one of the French immersion high schools which had serious difficulties in geography text and in maps. I believe that it was using wall maps from the 1960s where of course the world looked very different, particularly in Africa and Asia, than it does today, and some very striking examples that were given of classes of over 50 I believe in one of the Interlake school divisions, of adult classes that were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain through the lack of funding, example after example of the difficulties being faced in the public school system, difficulties that were intensifying as a result of the increasing cuts to public schools and an enormous resentment of the way in which the government has, by decree, changed the allocation of funding to private schools.

* (1520)

So what we find is public schools which are charging what might be called user fees, sometimes of \$20, sometimes much more, \$200 and \$300. As we look at the shift in transportation policy over the last few years, we are also going to see user fees of even higher amounts being charged to families who have been long

in immersion programs and whose children must not only take transport but must stay over lunch at school. Those families, some of whom I have talked to, are simply not going to be able to afford to continue their children in the educational programs that they have chosen. These same parents know very clearly that private schools have had their funds increased, sometimes by 10 percent, sometimes by 13 percent, sometimes by 12 percent, in ways in which the government would rather not talk about, ways in which they do not publicize, ways in which they choose to hide.

It is very odd that a government which wants to stand and live and die by the principles of the free market is simply afraid to talk to Manitobans about the changing allocation of public goods for education and the increasing transformation of Manitoba schools into a market system and one whereby those who have will be able to purchase, those who have not will simply fall by the wayside.

We heard that kind of discussion and that kind of I think very genuine and understandable resentment from many of the people who came to speak to the public hearings, many of whom might support the existence of public schools but who saw an intense unfairness and a deeply felt unfairness at the increases, the vast increases to private schools, at the very same time that the public schools were being decreased, and that is where the government I think has lost the confidence and lost the trust of many Manitobans. It is that intense sense of fair play which I think exists throughout all parts of Manitoba that led to those kinds of assumptions.

I was disappointed that the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) did not have the same sense of—I am looking for the word, Madam Speaker—concern about the kinds of discussion which can be brought forward in public meetings. The other day in discussion with the minister over the special needs review and my concern that there not be public meetings there, the minister said that she really did not want—and I am quoting from Hansard on June 4. The minister said, “I do not want this review” this special needs review “to degenerate into what some of the other public reviews have degenerated into where the opposition member gets choices . . . and the typical NDP rents a crowd and

brings them out to repeat endlessly the same presentation over and over . . . — all calculated to appeal to the cameras and the press and the people they can hopefully turn against the government or whatever they can do—as they always do, Madam Speaker, as we know . . .” It “is too important to me . . . to play politics with it.”

That is what the Minister of Education thinks about public meetings. That is what the Minister of Education thinks about hearings on bills. That is the Minister of Education's view of all of those hundreds of teachers and trustees and parents and in some cases students who came to speak to her last year or any other time about the impact of government policy upon their lives. It is simply what she says, it is a degeneration into something that the opposition has to say.

That is quite a damning comment, I would say, upon the role of democracy and the role of the public in public affairs and, particularly, the role of the public in education, because education is something on which all Manitobans have an opinion. Whether they have children in school, whether they are grandparents or whether they have no children at all, it is something which everyone wants to express themselves on. Well, I think they should be very careful in expressing their opinion to the Minister of Education. It does not appear to be from those comments something which is accepted in the way in which members of the public might intend. The minister regards anything that is critical as simply not part of a normal public discussion.

Madam Speaker, the proposal to remove the special levy then, I think, is a double-edged sword. It has some elements that are welcome and some, given the changed conditions of Manitoba education, I think it may indeed lead to increased inequalities in the funding of public schools across the province.

A further element of this bill enables school divisions to dispose of buses. Now, this is an innocuous sentence in itself. I read with a smile of the way in which the minister introduced this as introducing greater flexibility into school divisions' options about transport and buses, and indeed it does. This is why you always have to be careful with this government's press releases. The words belie the intent. Read between the lies. Never believe anything a government press release

says. Always find the evidence. Always look behind it and, particularly, when the government gets off onto its little rants about progress and change, or as the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) did the other day, we are moving forward, he said. It was sort of an appeal to a language of the future which belies the kind of regressive and really destructive aspects of government policy.

Buses, certainly, the school divisions, now that they are—as a result of other government policies—required to take on the purchase and the management of buses, are certainly going to look at this ability to dispose of buses in a different way than the minister does. They will look at it, as they certainly have at changed government policy, as another attempt to offload costs on to school divisions, to cut costs for the provincial government so that it can show what it believes to be a healthy balance sheet, while at the local level, whether it is municipal governments, school divisions or other elements of local government, the increasing difficulties of keeping together the kind of public infrastructure that generations of Manitobans had built, that becomes increasingly difficult. The government appears to want to turn a blind eye to that, certainly to turn its deaf ear and to continue with the kind of pompous and self-inflated language of change in the future that it continues with day after day in Question Period.

The issue of the offloading of buses, although it is not specifically in this bill, it is made reference to by the ability to dispose of buses as the school division sees fit. I do not want to get into the details of what has happened in recent days over the death of a child as a result of some considerations about the safety of school buses—certainly something the coroner will be dealing with. There will be a lengthy report, but I think the government has to rethink this. The government has to look very, very seriously about the kinds of regulations it has in place. It has to look very carefully at the inspections that are required. I think it should be a warning to the government in all of this offloading on to local authorities.

Local authorities are essentially taking the burden from this government of maintaining a public infrastructure which is vital to all Manitobans, and this should be a warning sign to them and one that they should take very, very seriously.

Madam Speaker, this bill also removes a number of definitions from The Public Schools Act. I look forward to discussing this with the minister in committee. It removes, for example, the definition of what is a full-time equivalent student. We have looked elsewhere in legislation in this and The Education Administration Act and looked for other definitions of that and have been unable to find anything which defines it so precisely as this particular section. That does give cause for some concern because, of course, it is one of the bases, not the only base, but one of the bases for the funding of education. It is something, I think, which needs to be explored with the minister so that at least we have some legislative reflection on what the implications of that will be.

* (1530)

Finally, Madam Speaker, and most importantly for this bill, is that it aims, as the minister said, to clarify the language over the ages during which a child has the right to attend school. Yes, it is true, the bill actually is much clearer. It uses specific months and dates, and it makes something which has been applied in different manners in different school divisions much more systematic. But, again, always read between the lines, always ask the minister for evidence. Never believe a government press release. It certainly does clarify, but it also has the potential to diminish the rights of students to attend school in the manner in which they do now. This is, I think, where our most serious concern is.

The bill argues that students will have the right to attend school from the age of six to the age of 21, or a diploma is achieved, whichever comes sooner. That is the crucial phrase, "whichever comes sooner," because what has been possible in the past for school divisions is some flexibility, particularly at those ages between, say, 17 and 21, when students may well have achieved a version of a diploma but may want to come back. They may then take a few months in the job market and find that the qualifications that they had or the direction they had taken in high school was not the one that they wanted. It was not the one that was going to benefit them. They may find other skills which they then want to develop. So they have in places, for example, we could name R.B. Russell, we might name the high schools in Transcona—I would imagine the high school

in Sturgeon Creek very much has a population like this of students who are going back to achieve different qualifications or additional qualifications often up to four or five or more credits. There has been a great deal of flexibility for school divisions in this.

The second group who may be affected—and, of course, the consequences of this bill are that that may not be able to continue. The minister now is going to define, as according to this bill, the regulations for a diploma. Given the context of this government where education is being reduced to a basic minimum, core subjects—this is their essential goal in education—the government may indeed—we cannot tell from this bill, and I do not trust this government—define a basic minimum of diploma beyond which students may not return to high school unless fees are paid. Again, coming back to the market system.

So, Madam Speaker, this act has the potential to diminish the possibility of continued learning, and that, I think, again, should remind honourable members, always start with a position of disbelief on government speeches. The throne speech, I think, not just this one but earlier ones, has talked endlessly about the importance of lifelong learning, and yet here we have a bill which opens the door to the reduction, to the diminution of lifelong learning.

I think this bill may also have some consequences for special needs students. Special needs students, particularly the older ones, have benefited, have been able to return to school or to be maintained in schools by the public school trustees certainly until the age of 21 or, as it used to be, the age of majority plus three years. It has been very flexibly interpreted by many school divisions. It is possible that now this option is going to be closed off, and, of course, this comes at a time when the government is also reducing the options for special needs students elsewhere. We know that there are continuing concerns about the St. Amant Centre and its future as an educational institution. We know that the government has a special needs review in place which may also be altering the conditions of education for special needs.

Anyone who talks to the family of a special needs student knows that one of the most serious problems that they face is when the child has to leave school,

because there are so few options for young adults after that. So any diminution of those options for young adults with special needs should concern us and does concern us as a result of this bill.

This particular section also contradicts the advice that the minister received from her Advisory Committee on Education Finance. I have quoted from this document a number of times, because it really does not in many ways seem to have penetrated the government's policy-making secretariat or that in the Department of Education, because in many areas, for example, in the funding of private schools, the government goes in a diametrically opposed direction to the advice it receives from this committee. This committee is composed of all the significant, the major stakeholders as they are called, in public education.

The committee advised on adults in public schools that it supports the provision of funding and the payment of residual fees in support of K to Senior 4 education up to a maximum of a diploma plus four credits. The four credits could be any mix of vocational and academic courses. That is straightforward advice. I think it is also very sensible advice. It keeps the flexibility that school divisions have had. It keeps some element, the beginnings element, perhaps, of lifelong learning. I would not want to claim, by any means, that that is any definition of lifelong learning, but at least it is a start, but instead of which the government moves in exactly the opposite direction.

It is going to enable the minister to define the diploma. There is no guarantee in this act. The minister may want to clarify that at committee there is no guarantee in this act that advice is going to be followed. That is very, I would suppose for members of the committee, very disappointing, but it is also I think an indication of the priorities of this government that education is being directed by the bottom line. It is being directed by an ideology of the marketization, the free-market economy in education, and it is being directed to a policy which will lead to increasing inequality across Manitoba.

I have some very, very serious concerns about aspects of this bill. Some of it I think will be useful, but I know that many of my colleagues want to speak

on this, and so we will take some more time to discuss this bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I, too, was wanting to put some comments on the record with respect to Bill 27 this afternoon. It is an interesting bill, to say the very least. I am somewhat disappointed in it in the sense that I think what we could have seen, or what we should be seeing from this government, is a more serious approach of trying to deal with the whole issue of governance within our public educational system.

The first part of the bill talks about the schools trustees and how long they should be serving, one year, two years, three years, and so forth. I can recall, and this would be going back somewhere around 1988, when the government talked about the need to review the numbers of school divisions, the numbers of school trustees. In fact, it was even an election issue for us back then. It was not until, I believe, the 1990 election where the government indicated that, yes, they were committed, actually doing something with this particular issue.

Shortly after that election, I can recall questioning the government in terms of: When can we anticipate that the government was going to take this issue off of the back burner and put it onto the front burner? It took them a while until they finally realized that the status quo was not good enough, and what they did was they commissioned the former mayor, Bill Norrie, along with other individuals, to sit around a table, canvass Manitobans, and come up with some recommendations in terms of what it is that they should be doing with the school divisions.

A great deal of effort, resources, in particular, dollars, and add to that just the sheer number of people—and we are not just talking provincial dollars, because I attended some of those meetings that went to the public. The presentations were very extensive and, you could tell, well thought out in the sense that we had documents that had all sorts of statistical information. One that comes to mind right offhand was Winnipeg School Division No. 1, to some of the smaller school divisions in rural Manitoba that put a lot of effort into trying to put forward presentations. We saw not only from school divisions; we also had from teachers. We

had from the Manitoba Teachers' Society. I can recall its presentation. A great deal of thought and effort went into that. We had average Manitobans come before—Manitobans that were just concerned about the way in which we were administering the public education through the school divisions.

* (1540)

There was a phenomenal amount of effort that was put into a cause, and that cause being trying to better define the way in which we should be delivering public education. When they came out with the recommendations, they were fairly significant. We saw a sizable reduction in the number of school divisions; a number of the inequities that are there today were, in fact, taken out, at least in part—not in entirety, but at least in part—to try to have more equity throughout the province. And the government took absolutely no action. Nothing was done after that particular report. In fact, worse, the government says, well, we do not want to suffer any sort of a political wrath that might be out there. We are not prepared to lose any votes over this particular issue. They did not think about what was necessarily in the best interests of Manitobans in the governance of education. Instead, they took the cowardly act of not taking any sort of action, of trying to resolve a problem that has been there and has been there for years, Madam Speaker. I find that is unfortunate.

I have spoken to private members' resolutions dealing with this issue in the past. We have pointed out some of the inequities that are there. Even if you look at the city of Winnipeg, and I made presentation myself representing the party when the commission was going out seeking public input, I said, look at the city of Winnipeg. How do you justify a school division the size of Winnipeg No. 1 compared to a school division the size of Norwood? How do we allocate resources in terms of fairness for those with special needs? Compare a school division like Winnipeg No. 1 in its requirements compared to a school division such as St. James. Look at the tax base. Look at the disproportional amount of dollars that people who have to pay property tax in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and compare it to other areas.

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would have liked to have seen, in fact, the commission even go further. There are other injustices that need to be resolved in education today, in the financing of education, and I have raised this particular issue in Question Period. The Minister of Education is too easy or passes the blame on to the federal cuts from transfer payments. She does not understand who has the responsibility here for K to S4, or K to Grade 12. What we have seen is that growing reliance of financing education on the property tax over general revenues, and this government, as the government prior, in fairness, has done absolutely nothing to address that issue. Quite frankly, I find that is one of the biggest mistakes that this government has accomplished. If the government wanted to do something for public education, it needs to look at how we govern it because the current status quo system, I believe, is not right, and the government should not just be sitting back accepting virtually nothing in terms of the change in the way in which the school divisions operate today. We have resistance from even within our own party in terms of the numbers of school divisions, the numbers of school trustees, and what it is that they should be doing. Yet, we are prepared to take a position on this, the issue of the funding of public education, the lack of appropriate funds going to public education from this government—a huge disappointment.

So when I look at the first part of this bill, you know, I say here is a minister who is tinkering around with one aspect and not dealing with the broader issue, and that broader issue needs to be addressed. I really believe, had this government not been successful in acquiring the majorities after the '88 election, that in fact this government would have been forced to take some sort of action. It would never have been able to get away with the mistreatment of our public educational system today—and the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh) gives a big sigh—

An Honourable Member: Yawn.

Mr. Lamoureux: Or yawn. The Minister of Education needs to wake up and see and hear what she is being told, and it is not good enough just to try to pass the blame. You cannot blame, if there is anyone to blame, Madam Minister, with respect, with all due

respect, with respect to the financing of education, the abuse or the lack of action in dealing with the governance issue, it is this minister and this government over the last nine-and-a-half, coming close to nine-and-a-half years, on taking no action. No doubt I will get other opportunities, because it is an issue in which that no doubt I will get future opportunities.

It was unfortunate in the sense that I would have liked to have had more of a presence in one department, or a presence in one department, but because of other departments being debated in the Estimates, I was unable to actually pose any questions to the minister in this educational Estimates, series of educational Estimates, but I look forward to being able to not only next year but even in the interim to attempt to try to influence this Minister of Education to be more assertive in her cabinet as she attempts to be assertive inside the Estimates. I did get a chance to listen at least in part and watch this minister and the critic from the New Democrats. As I say, I did not participate, unfortunately, but I am sure I will get many other opportunities.

Having said that, I will say she is somewhat aggressive in her thoughts. What she needs to do, Mr. Acting Speaker, is to look at what public education needs today and to take those thoughts and be as persistent and as aggressive as she is in the Chamber in trying to defend what the Conservative cabinet has told her to defend and take those issues and be just as aggressive inside her caucus. Many would argue that she is somewhat frustrating sometimes inside the Chamber in the way in which she attempts to deal with issues or go around the issues, but what we want to see is a Minister of Education that is, in essence, going to be able to get its fair share in terms of finances. We want to see a Minister of Education that is going to have the will to seek change in some of the basic levels of governance, on the whole issue of the school divisions. You know, I made reference to Winnipeg 1 and St. James. I am sure the Minister of Education is well aware of St. James because she was a school trustee from St. James—[interjection] All school divisions in the province of Manitoba are very important and are very special in their own way, but the minister is not doing them a favour by completely ignoring the needs.

* (1550)

Let me give you an example, and this is something that I said when I made a presentation to the Norrie commission, and that was that if you want to argue that school divisions should be based on communities, then I would advocate that what you should be doing is breaking up School Division No. 1. Why should you allow for some school divisions to be strictly community based and other school divisions not to be community based? Winnipeg 1 compared to Norwood is a great example of that. So there has do be some consistency in policy and there is none. [interjection]

Well, the Minister of Education says: It is coming. [interjection] I will hold my breath, and she suggests that it is coming voluntarily. I should not say I will hold my breath because I will end up passing out. I do not believe, unless the government is prepared to directly get involved, that we are not going to be able to see the types of results that are necessary today. The Minister of Education will say, oh, the member for Inkster wants the heavy hand of the provincial government to come down on the school divisions. Well, no doubt, in time, if you wait and are prepared to be apathetic or completely disregard the best interests of delivering public education, maybe in time it will happen as more school divisions themselves start to recognize the benefits and start working together. But is that going to be three years, five years, 10 years? We have already been here for nine years under this administration. The government has to be able to look at the broader picture, and that is why when I first read Bill 27, and there is not too much to reading Bill 27, I was disappointed because I would have expected more from a government that has been in office over nine years than a little bit of tinkering.

There are some aspects that are somewhat encouraging, you know, the right to attend school, that is better defined and I think that can be a positive thing. I do not know if I will get the opportunity per se to be in the committee, once it is in the committee stage, but I would look to the Minister of Education, in essence, maybe if she could take as some form of notice, if she could indicate to me why it is that you would not say age five by the time December 31 comes rolling around as being the age for your right to be able to attend public school. I would have thought because I know a

lot of five-year-olds today start school at that age, and what the arguments would have been for six, let us say, over five. I would be interested in getting some detail from the Department of Education with respect to that or at least an explanation for that one.

The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) pointed out the either/or in terms of once you hit 21, if you are 22, you can no longer attend the public schools, or once you have received that graduation diploma. Well, I guess the question mark that I would put would be that, as we see that there is change that is occurring, not necessarily from this government, but because that change has to occur, in the way in which in particular S1 to S4 is evolving where it is not just strictly academics, what is important is that we provide other opportunities with the idea of providing still those basic academic skills, but how that might fit into future graduation-type diplomas. So, for example, if someone is going through some sort of a work co-operative and they take some sort of a minimal course which in essence gives them their basics and they graduate and they are 19 years old, then all of a sudden they feel, well, geez, maybe I should have taken this or maybe I should have taken that, they can go back, even though they would have received some sort of a diploma.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): They can go back for an additional four credits over and above their graduation wherever they stand.

Mr. Lamoureux: The minister says that they can go for an additional up to four credits after they have had their diploma.

As I say, there are some things within the bill in which it is just a straightforward explanation and which the minister just provided. I think that sort of dialogue is important so that individuals are very much aware of what it is that the government is doing in areas in which it is looking for change. You know, I do not even know after talking about the finances and the school boards, there have been some areas in which the government has moved towards change. The standard exams are a great example of it. I do not have too much of a problem, depending on how those results are actually

used for the latter years, the six, nine and 12. I have some concerns in terms of the weight that might be assigned them, in particular the Grade 12, but there have been some movements towards change in which the government has done a reasonably decent job, but then there is always that little extra in which maybe they go a little bit too far, such as the Grade 3, which I made reference to again in Question Period.

Having said those few words, Mr. Acting Speaker, we are prepared to see this bill go to committee.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I take this opportunity to say a few words on Bill 27. We see The Public Schools Amendment Act before us which makes seven major changes. I will be speaking to only several components of this act that particularly concern me. We see that item (1), which changes the terms of office for trustees, is a matter that will ease and make things more efficient. I am supportive of that. Item (3) the age of entrance into school is clarified; however, I would challenge the minister that this was indeed an opportunity to perhaps look at more flexibility, actually look at what the trends in education are proposing, actually look at implementing their rhetoric when they talk about lifelong learning.

As we look at the educational process, we know it does not begin at the age of seven. For many children the time to enter a structured, learning environment may be earlier or it may be later, and I am challenging the minister to go beyond what has been a traditional school model, something that was established back in the '40s and '50s where we were looking at a factory model. All children started at a particular time, all children were going through the system in the same way, in the same schedule and were to sprout out exactly the same model at the end of the program. That is not the model that works. We know that, and we know that children, as adults, have different aptitudes and abilities, and this bill does not take the opportunity to look at that flexibility and actually provide the opportunity for children and families to experience learning and to be challenged in a learning environment. That is indeed unfortunate, and instead of greater flexibility, we look for great entrenchment of what is allowed and what is not allowed in our schools.

* (1600)

The item that particularly concerns me is the clause which discusses the right to attend school from the age of six until the age of 21 or once a diploma is received. This indeed should be a flag to anyone who is concerned about learning. That includes all citizens of Manitoba. There are many times in our lives when we choose to go back to upgrade, and so-called this government preaches that that is what they want to encourage. This bill goes against that fundamental principle of lifelong learning. There should be no limit. Students should not be kicked out after they receive a diploma plus four credits.

If they choose to come back and receive—perhaps a student has gone through the system and taken a general degree program and then comes back and they wish to take, to supplement to a greater degree, a university entrance program, I would say there should be no limitations. This government has the opportunity right here to prove their commitment to young people, to adults, and open up the door of the public school system. Today's world is so radically different that many of the jobs that were available for students that had what was then called a nonuniversity entrance degree were still able to find employment. When I graduated back in the '70s, students that did not even graduate from high school were able to find work. That is not the case now. In fact most students, most young people are going on to community colleges or university entrance. Many will need to return to high school to receive the courses that they need to supplement. That is the reality of today. That is the situation we should be dealing with, and if this government had a commitment to young people, they would not limit their ability to come back for high school credits.

So I would say to the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), the rhetoric sounds wonderful. Flexibility, lifelong learning, but in reality when you look at the bill, it talks about age limits, it talks about “or when they receive a diploma,” as defined by the Minister of Education. She likes to define a lot of things. I am suggesting to her, open up, be more flexible, allow young people to go back as her throne speech indicated. This bill, actually, I would say, limits what we are driving for which is an open secondary education system. We do not know—our family fosters an adult autistic individual who is attending our high school

system until the age of 21. Let us say that in a theoretical situation a certain division or the minister decides that after 12 years in the system that person will receive a diploma. Is that the best thing for that young adult? No. The best thing for that adult is actually to stay in that learning environment where he is proceeding in learning independent skills, proceeding to become a productive member of our society. In fact, why should he not be able, on an individual case, to stay until he is 22? This system, he cannot. Twenty-one or a diploma, you are out. Your opportunity now, this government's opportunity is to lift that, and they chose not to. They chose not to. That is the facts.

Not only am I concerned about rhetoric and reality, but I am extremely concerned about the minister's so-called flexibility to school divisions in terms of school buses. This government has a deplorable record of reducing the safety standards, the policies that ensure the safety of our children over the years, and here we talk about a minister providing greater flexibility. Any member in this House who was a trustee knows that, in this case, greater flexibility means offloading more costs for the school division, less in terms of safety standards, and we have seen, unfortunately, the death of a young student in the Seine River School Division. Why? Why, Mr. Acting Speaker, because of this government's financial policies of underfunding public schools, this government's policies of extending the lifespan of school buses well beyond what is reasonable, well beyond what this minister herself said that would never happen. It should not go beyond 15 years, she said.

What has happened? In this year alone, she has now decided that school buses can remain on the road forever. There is no limit. There is no limit anymore and, in addition, why was that necessary? Because her funding level did not provide sufficient funds for the replacement of those buses that need to be replaced. Mr. Acting Speaker, let me go back to 1992. [interjection]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. The honourable member for St. James has been recognized to speak on this, and I would ask the indulgence of the balance of the members in the Chamber to please owe the respect to the honourable member for St. James to put her remarks on the record.

Ms. Mihychuk: Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker. In 1992, the southeastern region of MAST presented a resolution that said be it resolved that MAST request the Minister of Education and Training to reduce the maximum number of years to 13 years for determining the useful life of a school bus. It goes on to say that in 1992 the minister's own department, the Department of Education, released a report called *The Steering Committee on Pupil Transportation Issues, Trends, Options and Costs: A Look at the Transportation of Pupils in Manitoba's School Divisions*. In that report, the committee recommended that the regulated limit of 14 years for determining the useful life of a school bus, recently increased in 1992 from 13 years, be changed back and not be extended further. Already in 1992, the trustees were speaking out, calling out to the Minister of Education: do not do it. Do not make these changes. What did she do? She ignored the trustees, ignored parents, and went ahead by extending the age of the life expectancy of school buses not once, not twice, but three times to the point now where there are no limits in Manitoba. You can have the oldest bus on the road, and we are probably the only jurisdiction to have such an incredibly lax provision from this government.

* (1610)

Not only that, Mr. Acting Speaker, but this report recommended that all school buses utilized in pupil transportation will have to meet full inspection standards. Imagine that. And what did this government do? They went from a policy of inspecting school buses annually for every single school bus to one that is at 10 percent of the fleet at random. What does that mean? That many of the transportation outfits that utilize those buses which are too old have high maintenance costs and school divisions which are looking at the lowest tender because they do not have the money for operating school buses are looking and saying they are going to roll the dice. Should I have to repair that mirror or do I wait until I get called in by inspection?

In fact we now learn that even when they are caught with infractions to the very rules that they are supposed to comply with, they are still allowed to drive those buses on the road, and this government has the audacity to say that they have not been lessening the

requirements or the rules on pupil transportation. Hardly. Look at their record.

From 1992, we have resolutions and requests for this government to look back at their standards and tighten things up because the concern was raised then. They have not done anything then. They have actually made things a thousand times worse. In fact, here we have a very positive suggestion from MAST. It suggests that no vehicle more than 14 years old, or that has travelled more than 400,000 kilometres for diesel buses and 300,000 for gas buses, shall be used as a school bus, and the age of the vehicle shall be determined on the model year. Did the minister consider that? No. She did not consider that, in fact, went in the complete opposite direction.

Let us move up to 1997 from what MAST has in front of their convention: Be it resolved that the capital cost of purchasing school buses remain the responsibility of the provincial government in order to ensure safety, consistency and competitive pricing. What is happening? What she is doing is moving the responsibility of replacing those buses to school divisions, and you know what? [interjection] The Minister of Justice says that she has transferred the money. The Winnipeg School Division gets \$100,000 a year, and they require \$2 million. You figure out the mathematics. Does that seem equitable? Does that seem fair? Are those buses going to have to remain on the road? I think so. Is that justice? Is that ensuring safety standards? No. [interjection]

Mr. Acting Speaker, if the Minister of Justice wants it put on the record, I would be glad to put it on the record. I have been raising this issue since I got elected. Since I got elected, I have raised this issue, and this government has chosen to make little of the issue, not deal with the issue, in fact, do exactly the opposite. I raised in this House these concerns on December 13, 1995, May 16, 1996, March 10, 1997, and, again, April 14, 1997. The record speaks for itself. Not only am I raising concerns about the policy changes on student transportation, but MAST is raising them for many years.

Not only is MAST and this side of the House concerned but so is the judge presiding over the inquest of the unfortunate death of the young boy in Seine

River School Division. What did he say? He said he is concerned about the policy direction of this government. He is concerned about the funding policies, the financial commitment of this government in terms of school buses. That is a sorry state of affairs, Mr. Acting Speaker, and, why? Because it is our children who are being sacrificed in this case, and it is our children who are in those school buses.

Not only that. In terms of logic, I am going to argue financially that an older vehicle has greater maintenance costs, and we have seen in school divisions across Manitoba maintenance costs soar from between 20 and 40 percent. Those maintenance costs were not supported by the government or the minister. It was transferred, downloaded, to the school divisions which had to cover those costs. What her change in policy has done was ensured even more of the cost will be carried by school divisions. More of the cost will have to be transferred to property taxes. So what her government's policies have done is ensured older buses, less safe buses and higher taxes for the people of Manitoba. That is unacceptable, Mr. Acting Speaker.

We are all concerned about the efficient use of our bus fleet. We are all concerned about where our tax dollar goes. In fact, what the minister's policy has done is force school divisions that have to replace a considerable number of buses in their fleet, because they are disproportionately aged—it is going to force those school divisions into taking a lease program which, if you talk to the school divisions, will actually mean that they will be paying almost twice as much, twice as much, for that school bus under a lease program than had they had the opportunity to purchase the bus outright.

Does that make sense for the taxpayers of Manitoba? I do not think so. If the government was going to be honest and was not playing this game of, who pays, the right pocket or the left pocket, they would say it does not make sense to lease school buses, because it is going to cost the taxpayer twice as much than if we would buy them outright. Why does the government not want to buy them outright? Because there is a large bump of aged buses in the Manitoba bus fleet, and they do not want to put out the capital expenditure to replace them. So what they do is justify this whole program under the guise of flexibility, more discretion for school

divisions. What it really means is that they are downloading, not taking on the responsibility of replacement of buses.

Although this may seem unimportant to the government, I would suggest, to the parents of those children who ride the buses, it is critical, and I urge the government to listen to the recommendations of the inquest. I think it is extremely unfortunate that we had to go to these measures before this government was prepared to listen, and what we have seen is, in fact, the erosion of safety standards, which is totally, totally unacceptable.

The policy changes that the government has actually implemented are a long litany, a long litany of policy changes which have meant more trouble or more erosion to safety standards. Back in '95 the Department of Highways and Transportation, which does these checks, moved to the 10 percent random check from a comprehensive each-unit-inspection program. In 1995, the minister extended the expected road life of these buses all the way up to fifteen and a half years. In 1996, this government cut the operating supports by \$5 per pupil. In 1996, this government cut 2 cents per loaded kilometre for transportation supports. In 1997, this government announced it is abandoning its provincial responsibility for bus replacement, Mr. Acting Speaker. In 1997, they announced a new financial formula, which basically we know does not provide sufficient funds for the replacement of those buses that is a reasonable tenure for their life expectancy.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, the premise which the government chooses to put all of their policy changes under is more flexibility, and, unfortunately, we have seen the results of their program and their policies.

* (1620)

The repeal on the special levy, on the cap on the special levy, legislated a limit on the ability of school divisions to tax, I believe was fundamentally unfair. They had no right to impose that type of legislation on a local autonomy that has duly elected and have the ability to tax. The reason for the concern, of course, was that school divisions were forced to look at property taxes to support the fundamental programs for

children because this government refused to provide sufficient funding, and the history of those underfunding decisions are for the record. Indeed, it is timely that the special levy be removed; however, the pressures on school divisions have not. This government continues to underfund school divisions drastically.

Mr. Acting Speaker, just as an example of how drastically they have underfunded is the point that they invested approximately \$23 million this year on capital expenditures on school buildings in Manitoba—in the whole province, \$23 million. The NDP government, for example, spent over \$40 million on buildings and enhancing buildings, and we have seen that cut to approximately half. In fact, this year we have seen an increase, and the minister boasts that it has gone up from \$20 million to \$23 million. Big deal, I say, big deal. That nowhere near covers the requirements of school divisions which have seen their buildings deteriorate as this government sits by and feels that it is okay for our children to be in buildings that require improvement and remodelling.

They have decided that it is okay to spend \$77 million on casinos in four years. Is that not a staggering amount of money? How many carpet replacements can you do for \$77 million? That is just incredible. Today in committee, in the Lotteries committee—the casinos were built in 1993 for \$15 million each. Do you realize that since that time renovations have exceeded the original cost of the whole building? What is it? Are they painting the walls with gold?

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

How is this possible to spend—and where is the priority of this government that it feels that it can justify spending \$77 million on two casinos when they only spent \$20 million on—how many schools, 800?—650 school buildings in the province, and they have decided \$20 million is enough. But for two casinos, they can spend \$77 million. Those are priorities, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) told me.

An Honourable Member: Tory priorities.

Ms. Mihychuk: Those are Tory priorities, and those are the priorities that the people of Manitoba will have

an opportunity to discuss and debate in the next general election which cannot be called too soon for me. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 29—The Education Administration Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume second reading debate, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), Bill 29, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire), standing in the name of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? No? Leave has been denied.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I am glad to put a few remarks on the record about Bill 29. It is a short bill, and I hope my remarks will be short as well.

The bill has two sections. Its first purpose is to, I believe, deal with issues arising from the new federal legislation dealing with copyright and provides ways in which the provincial government will, on behalf of educational institutions in Manitoba, negotiate a single contract for copyright and a single set of regulations, I assume, and enable people across Manitoba to have some security that they are not violating the Copyright Act when they purchase books in a particular manner, when they use a video, when they use music issues in the classroom, for example, or whether they tape programs from television for a classroom use, whether they xerox materials for instructional matter that these are in fact being done in accordance with a set of commonly understood principles paid for and acknowledged by everyone across Manitoba.

Manitoba, like other provinces, has done this in the past for the earlier federal legislation on copyright issues, and I think it has been generally satisfactory. At least the aspect of having a provincially negotiated contract is generally satisfactory. What is new, I believe, in this bill is the charge back to divisions which

will be taken out of divisional grants. Whereas I believe in the past there has been charge back, I do not believe it has been taken out of divisional grants in this way. So both the method and intent is something we would like to discuss with the minister at committee.

I know that for the minister, as well as for us and for school divisions across Manitoba, the new federal legislation on copyright is really new territory. There is a great deal of ambiguity that has been left in the federal legislation. That is why I think that it certainly is a good idea to have one provincial set of regulations and accommodations to this federal legislation. The copyright legislation really pits two groups against each other. It should not, but I think the way in which the federal government mishandled the whole copyright issue in the last federal Parliament certainly led to that situation, where producers and consumers were set at loggerheads one with the other.

What happened, Madam Speaker, was that there was new federal legislation on copyright, which was introduced with many high-minded, well-intended principles that attempted to bridge the gap to join the interests of both producers and consumers in all forms of the arts and all forms of—well, not all forms of intellectual property, I guess, but certainly those which apply to written materials and to visual materials.

When the federal government introduced this, I think people were much pleased that they were introducing this Phase 2 of the Copyright Act and they did intend to balance the right of creators and users in user institutions, but subsequent to the introduction of that legislation, there was a very well-organized lobby which began the process of dismantling the federal principles on copyright. This resulted, Madam Speaker, over this last spring in a very hastily pulled together but very active coalition of a variety of educational institutions, in particular, but also some other “consumer” institutions—I guess consumer should be in quotes in this way, but libraries, archives, museums and also individuals, particularly the blind, who had special needs and were concerned about copyright issues.

They were very concerned about the effect of a very concerted lobby by the producers on the federal government. A number of amendments were in process

and indeed passed the federal House, which negated the original federal intent of trying to bridge the gap between producers and users of this aspect of intellectual property. Particularly in video and music and some aspects of what is called the parallel purchasing of textbooks, there were some amendments made which really set back, I think, the whole cause of copyright legislation in Canada.

It then went very hastily through the Senate, became law, and I think many of the groups who were involved in trying to keep the Liberals on the straight and narrow on this one will be re-energizing their efforts to try and get a federal copyright legislation that satisfied both groups. It is not easy; I recognize that, but certainly what we are dealing with now is an area that is untested, which I do not believe has the full support of producers and consumers, and I know that the minister and the government, all governments across the country, will have difficulty in dealing with the impact of this legislation, and, of course, nowhere is it more important than in educational institutions. Really what we are pitting one against the other here, and it is not an issue that is going to go away, is the right of a producer to some fruits of his or her labour and the rights of the broader public to access to information and particularly for the purposes of learning.

* (1630)

So I think that this is an area which is in flux. I am glad to see that the government, like other governments, is continuing the practice of collective negotiation of these rights and that there will be a set of principles which we can adhere to and agree to across Manitoba, because this is an issue which affects every teacher in the classroom. It affects every user of a public library. It affects anybody who uses a xerox machine and, more particularly, those who are responsible for the use of that xerox machine. So clear directions are very important, and the regulations stemming from this aspect of the bill will be very, very important.

Now, the other aspect of this I think that is important to school divisions—and, again, we would like to discuss this with the minister at committee—is the cost of this because the minister is proposing in this very act to charge the cost back to school divisions. The problem is, of course, I do not think anyone at this stage knows

what the cost is going to be. Are we looking at a few hundred dollars transmitted back to school divisions? My sense is that the new federal legislation has gone much deeper and has laid many more traps for those on the educational side of the spectrum and that the costs are likely to be much higher, something which we may not know perhaps for a couple of years, but, certainly, I believe that this will have a considerable and continuing cost for school divisions.

So, Madam Speaker, I think this is a difficult one to deal with, and I do support the collective negotiation that this bill proposes. I know that the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has dealt with copyright issues through the Council of Ministers of Education, and the Council of Ministers did make suggestions to the federal government in the spring of this year, laying out some principles that they were concerned about. They, too, and the minister, on behalf of the government of Manitoba, signed this, and she did table it during Estimates. Anyone who is interested in the copyright issue, I think, will find the very carefully worded letter of the Council of Ministers on this of significance.

I am particularly concerned, and I know that school divisions and school libraries will be concerned about this, and this is the parallel importation of books, or that is the way in which the issue is known. The federal legislation set out at one point, I believe, to prevent libraries, individuals, individual teachers, from purchasing materials from any source other than a Canadian source or at least to assume that the Canadian source be the first one used. This, of course, really poses difficulty for many people who must and should be using sources outside of Canada. This covers not only just the social sciences, but the sciences, mathematics, as well as languages, of course. Those people, for example, who would use Braille or audio tapes would also be affected by this. There are publishers in Canada, as elsewhere, but in Canada, in this case the significant one, that cannot always meet the deadlines that are required by an educational institution or indeed the numbers that are often required. So there are serious concerns that will arise from this, and I think it is not going to be an easy task for librarians, information technology specialists, to interpret the implications of that bill.

The Council of Ministers drew the attention of the federal government to another area of concern, and that, of course, is the use of videos in the classroom and the taping of material from television production, and much of that, I think, still remains a pretty murky area in the federal legislation. It may be that it will be clarified in federal regulation, and we will have to wait for that.

So the cost, Madam Speaker, is difficult to ascertain at this point, and I think that is what is causing concern for school divisions. I would anticipate it also causes concern to the minister and to the government, as well. We do not know what it will be. We do not know how it will escalate. We do not know how the federal regulations will have an impact at the actual level of the classroom.

Of course, in an education system, here as elsewhere, which is increasingly and desirably based upon materials beyond the text, I think this is very, very significant. Particularly in areas of the curriculum where the whole purpose of the curriculum is to encourage investigation by students, to encourage wide use of materials and libraries on the Internet as well as visual materials, we are going to see, and we should be seeing, a much greater use by students of a wide range of materials, not simply a textbook.

There are subjects for which the dedicated use of particular textbooks is important, but increasingly and more and more the goal of teachers should be to encourage the curiosity of students to enable them to know how to find out, to satisfy that curiosity and to bring together the wide body of opinion that they would find in a variety of sources. The ability to discern, the ability to be critical of a wide variety of sources is really what we want from our students.

People often talk about the Internet as sort of the saviour of areas without libraries, the ability to bring so much material into a person's home or into a particular school library, and that is really I think a very superficial view of the uses of the Internet. What the Internet really requires more than anything is a critical mind, somebody who can understand what is rubbish and what is not, who can understand bias and who can understand when an article or information is drawn from a variety of sources. The ability to evaluate

sources, the ability to evaluate evidence, the ability to create an argument from a wide variety of sources is what we should be looking for.

I know that is what most Manitoba teachers are attempting to do, and it will depend increasingly upon the use of a wide range of resource material. They are, of course, as a result of this government's cuts, finding it increasingly difficult to pull together those wide ranges of sources, and that is why copyright, the use of a collective instrument for that I think will be widely used and will have implications for every school library and every schoolteacher in Manitoba.

The second part of this bill, Madam Speaker, deals with the liability of government, of minister and civil servants in the creation of classifications for teachers. It desires to protect from liability government servants, and it particularly makes reference to the drawing up of information which would lead to the classification of a particular teacher and preserves from liability from being sued, I expect, particular civil servants. This one is quite a puzzle to me, and I do look forward to talking to the minister about this in Estimates. I have talked to a number of people who are active as trustees or as teachers, who have been also lawyers, and there is a puzzlement, I guess, is really the basic word I would come up with. People are puzzled as to why this has been inserted in the bill.

I come at this from two angles. I could not find specific cases that had led to this in the recent past. There has not been a plethora, there has not been a flurry of cases of the suing of ministers or of civil servants. I do not believe that there has even been cases over which there has been widespread debate or even small-scale debate over particular cases where there might have been mistakes made for one reason or another. So from a Manitoba perspective, there is some concern as to why the government is doing this, what is behind it all. It does not seem to derive from the Manitoba experience.

Secondly, it seemed to me that when I was a federal civil servant, one of the basic principles we operated from was that the Crown could not be sued. I remember when I worked for the National Museum that it always seemed amazing to us that most of our material was not insured. I mean, how do you insure

Sir John A. Macdonald's desk? How do you insure Lord Selkirk's desk material? How do you insure an enormous Haida canoe? How do you insure all the treasures of the Canadian National Museum? Well, it could not be done, and the argument was used that it should not be done because the Crown could not be sued unless the Crown gave permission to be sued. We know in a number of cases, for example, the Nisga'a case in British Columbia, although the Nisga'a won that case on a minority decision, in fact, they actually lost because of the technicality that they had not received the permission of the Crown to sue.

* (1640)

So from a number of directions, I am puzzled by this one as to why the minister feels it important now to put this in. There may well be legitimate reasons. Someone has suggested to me that it may in fact derive from the minister's reading of American situations whereby civil servants and others have been sued for or have assumed liability, have been taken to task for liability, for making errors in certain aspects of their job. The minister's reference points are always American. I am quite interested by that. The education reform seems to take very little account of education in Europe, whether it is Denmark or the Netherlands or Australia, the places that seem to score very highly in the minister's much beloved assessment tests. The reference is always to the United States, and, as we look at the United States' results in assessment tests, they are not perhaps the ones one would like to emulate. So it is possible that the minister is taking on here something from American jurisprudence, that she is taking on something which has been an issue in the United States. There is no doubt about that. She may be taking precautionary measures.

I have made a phone call, Madam Speaker, to Legislative Counsel to ask for advice on this as to what the role is of the Crown in this as to whether in fact that liability can be made. It should be noted for the purposes of the record here that the liability or the protection being proposed in this bill extends not just to the Education Act but to The Public Schools Act as well. So it is a very wide net that it is casting, and from the Manitoba experience it seems somewhat of a puzzle.

So I look forward at committee, Madam Speaker, to discussing this with the minister, to looking at the cost to school divisions of the copyright provisions, as well as, to looking at the actual implementation of those Can Copy regulations and the schedule which the minister is proposing for that. With those words we are prepared to move this to committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, very briefly, we appreciate the fact that the legislation is in essence there to protect the employees that have not been negligent, general indemnity from the liability for officials who administer the classification to teachers with respect to professional certification. In addition, we recognize that the bill deals with the issues of copyright, as the member for Wolseley went over quite extensively—even though I do not necessarily agree with everything that she said, in particular, with respect to its obligations. But having said that, I understand it is in essence a move that will allow—I understand that this is currently needed in order to provide a sense of consistency with respect to the broader picture on a national scene, the Can Copy act. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading, Bill 29, The Education Administration Amendment Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 19—The Human Rights Code Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume second reading debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), Bill 19, (The Human Rights Code Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne), standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), who has 31 minutes remaining.

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: No? Leave has been denied.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House are disappointed in the introduction of this bill, and we certainly do not support it. This bill seeks to eliminate three members of the Human Rights Commission and reduce the number of commissioners from 13 down to 10. Is that not interesting? Because after budget cuts to the Human Rights Commission, we asked the then Attorney General, the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), to explain why the government was cutting the resources available to the Human Rights Commission, and at that time the government had targeted the education function of the commission. In fact, it had gutted the dedicated staff positions for education. In defence of the government's obnoxious cuts, the minister at the time said that, and I quote: "The member I am sure will realize that what was preserved was the Human Rights commissioners, those people who actually deal with the issues of human rights complaints. We believe that was a very important area to preserve."

That was in April of last year. Why is it that in the course of one year the government would move from recognizing the importance of preserving Human Rights commissioners to now eliminating three of them? Well, the number of commissioners was, I understand, decided on in order to represent as many of the different diverse perspectives that Manitobans hold. This is a very diverse province. We are proud of that diversity, and it was recognized that we have to incorporate that diversity and decision making when it comes to the area of antidiscrimination legislation.

What makes this amendment so regrettable, in our view, is that it was done in order to cut costs to the government. The government thinks it is important to cut costs of fighting hatred and fighting discrimination in this province. We know that in the last three years the Manitoba Human Rights Commission has suffered in each year cuts to its resources. The commission has gone from resources of \$1.461 million in 1994-95 down to \$1.344 million in 1997-98, a reduction of 8 percent. By cutting the number of commissioners, the government will save, I understand, \$30,000. I find it objectionable that the government would make that cut and not at least allow the Manitoba Human Rights Commission to use that amount to dedicate to where it

sees fit. The government is, in fact, saying that the Human Rights Commission of Manitoba does not need these resources and does not need additional resources.

Well, Madam Speaker, the commission appears to have a great need for resources. I do not think anyone in this province can say that we have been successful to any measurable degree in combatting the evil of discrimination. The earlier government brought in an overhaul of the antidiscrimination law in this province, and it was an act that I think Manitobans could be proud of. The legislation was brought in because we recognized that we had to have greater tools, more effective legislation, that we had to have protection for more individuals in our community who were subject to the prejudices which result in discriminatory practices, whether in employment or housing or in social services.

Since that legislation has been brought in, Madam Speaker, we have seen consistently with this government a lack of commitment to the anti-discrimination cause. That bothers me deeply. I, for one, have spent a great deal of time, spent a lot of career time, volunteer time, to help ensure that the difficult challenge of hatred and discrimination be more effectively countered, and, yet, and I can say this as a former human rights officer with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission and a former employee of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, that the human rights codes of this country and of this province and the administration of that code gives us great opportunity to counter the evils of discrimination and hatred.

* (1650)

Last year, when we saw this government emasculate the education function of the commission, the government was overruling what the commission itself identified as a key component of the antidiscrimination movement in Manitoba. The commission itself noted with delight some of the educational endeavours that were being undertaken in this province to prevent discriminatory practices, particularly by businesses. Of course, Madam Speaker, it is much better or more effective to prevent the harm to dignity, the pain that follows from discrimination, than to try and deal with it after it has already inflicted its harm.

No, the Human Rights Commission, Madam Speaker, is not a body that can withstand the kinds of cuts that we are seeing from this government. We are aware, and I have raised this in Estimates, of one case, actually it is not one case but several cases of complaints of systemic discrimination filed against universities in this province that are now seven years old and still under investigation. I am aware of a case that is still under investigation that was filed in October of 1992. It is therefore roughly five years old. The commission, unfortunately, as a result of these kinds of instances has developed somewhat of a reputation as a black hole where complaints go in and no response is forthcoming for lengthy periods of time. That threatens the integrity and the usefulness of the commission.

I am heartened to see that the commission is looking at innovative ways and organizational change to deal with that challenge. but, Madam Speaker, those hardworking individuals at the Human Rights Commission need the help of this government. They need to know that this government stands behind the antidiscrimination policy that this province has promoted in the past. and they need to know that it is prepared to back up that policy with the necessary resources without cuts year after year after year.

So, Madam Speaker, with those remarks, we are prepared to put our position on the record.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I just stand to express our disappointment in terms of what the government is doing in Bill 19.

In fact, Madam Speaker, over the years, I have had plenty of opportunities to rise and talk about the importance of human rights issues. The member makes reference to discrimination, and there is a great deal of discrimination that is out there today. A lot of it could, in fact, be addressed and needs to be addressed.

There are, for example, systemic barriers that are put into place. There are other forms of discrimination that are equally, if not in some cases even more disgusting in their nature, and when we see the government's priorities in trying to be able to resolve some of these issues, one has to question—you know, I can recall talking about the, I believe it was the Multiculturalism Act, and we were establishing this Multiculturalism

Secretariat's office, and on paper it looked wonderful. It was a great concept, Madam Speaker, and I think there has been disappointment in the sense of ultimately what took place at that particular office.

One has to start questioning in terms of the government's priorities in dealing with human rights violations and if in fact they are misplacing money from within. Even that whole multicultural spectrum is an area in which one would like to believe the government would have had a higher priority. I even think it was the Manitoba Intercultural Council who had come up with a number of recommendations in the past, talking about the importance of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, and I do not believe—and again, I could have gone through some of the Estimates, no doubt, and try to find out exactly what sort of recommendations they might have acted on or what sort of supports they would have been putting in place.

But having said that, I do not believe that the government has dealt with this particular commission in a fair fashion. Because of that, we have very serious concerns with respect to this bill and find it very, very difficult to support because of the government's own track record dealing with human rights issues. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 19, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: No?

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it. The honourable member for St. Johns, on division.

Bill 21—The Jury Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume second reading debate, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), Bill 21 (The Jury Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jurés), standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? No? Leave has been denied.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, this is another bill that causes us great concern, and it is certainly not legislation that I think any Manitoban should either propose or support. I notice that my time is basically up right now, but I will continue on our reasons for our strong opposition to this bill next time it is called.

Madam Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Johns will have 39 minutes remaining.

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would like to advise the House that Bill 18, The Emergency 911 Public Safety Answering Point Act; and Bill 57, The Highway Traffic Amendment, Summary Convictions Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act, previously referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Development, will be moved to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, which is meeting on Monday, June 16, at 7:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: For the knowledge of the members, Bill 18 and Bill 57, previously referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Development, will be moved to the Standing Committee on Agriculture for Monday, June 16, 7:30 p.m.

Mr. McCrae: I further wish to advise the House of the list of bills which will be considered by the Standing Committee on Economic Development tomorrow,

Friday, the 13th day of June, at 10 a.m., those being Bills 2, 19, 20, 25, 28, 29, 34, 35 and 40.

Madam Speaker, we are about to embark on private members' hour, and I think I should ask that we deal with the matters in the following order: First, Bill 206, then Bill 204, then Bill 205, and then Resolution 15, standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer).

* (1700)

Madam Speaker: For the information of the House, first that the following bills will be considered at the Standing Committee on Economic Development, Friday, June 13, at 10 a.m., Bills 2, 19, 20, 25, 28, 29, 34, 35 and 40.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: The hour being after 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I understand that Private Members' Business is normally conducted in the order in which you see it in the Order Paper. I think what I have said reflects the consensus of honourable members, and you might want to check that out.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave then to divert from the normal practice of dealing with the business in private members' hour as listed on the Order Paper? [agreed]

If I understand correctly, we are moving to second reading of public bills and the honourable member for St. Johns' Bill 206 first, The Minors Intoxicating Substances Control Amendment Act; second reading, Bill 206.

Point of Order

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I wonder if I could have the motion?

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 206—The Minors Intoxicating Substances Control Amendment Act

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that Bill 206, The Minors Intoxicating Substances Control Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur le contrôle des substances intoxicantes et les mineurs), be now a read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to move second reading of this legislation which I think will go some way to dealing with what is a very difficult challenge for Manitobans, and that is the tragedy of the abuse of inhalants, also known as sniff, and following, I suppose I could say, in the steps of the former member for St. Johns who worked very tirelessly in promoting legislation to deal with solvent abuse, and, as well, I have looked to other members of my caucus such as the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hicke), the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). Those are three individuals who come to mind who have brought the issue of solvent abuse to the public and to our caucus on a regular basis.

It hurts me, Madam Speaker, particularly, I think, as a resident of the inner city where there is a disproportionate use or abuse, I should say, of solvents, to see particularly young adults and youth sniffing on the streets of this city and knowing the despair that those individuals are suffering and knowing that that despair can only worsen as a result of their sniffing.

One of the North American experts on solvent abuse is Dr. Tenenbien at Children's Hospital. I went to the grand rounds a number of months ago where Dr. Tenenbien spoke about the dynamics of solvent abuse. Afterwards, he said to me, you know, Gord, we are dissolving the brains of our youth.

Solvent abuse has been called Manitoba's silent epidemic by the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association, and a federal report has found Manitoba to be Canada's

solvent abuse hot spot. Reserves in Manitoba, of all provinces, report the highest incidence of solvent abuse as a community-wide problem. We are told that young sniffers on 41 Manitoba reserves have reported, in a study, 44 percent, experimental use; 37 percent, social use; 19 percent, chronic use.

It is dismaying to see it estimated that 15 to 20 percent of Winnipeg and northern Manitoba youth in schools are sniffers. Manitoba is facing disproportionately this challenge of solvent abuse, and we say and we ask others to join with us, because it is time to rise to that challenge, no matter how great.

It is interesting and sad that, of all the addictions, it appears that solvent abuse is the most destructive, and yet it appears to be the most neglected, particularly by government.

Now, we know some of the difficulties in regulating the sniffable products. There are 1,400, roughly, abusable products out there that are available in the stores, that are readily available to individuals, but, with this legislation, which, we think, is the toughest and perhaps the most innovative legislation in the country, perhaps on the continent, that we can go some way toward dealing with this, recognizing, of course, that legislation is but a small, although important, part of the solution.

We know that prevention and treatment, hand in hand with enforcement, are required. So we have introduced, as a caucus, our strategy against sniffing, which includes the establishment of a school substance abuse prevention co-ordinator to expand the ability of schools to provide effective prevention through linking schools with community resources, developing class programs and materials, professional development for teachers, and partnership with aboriginal education agencies.

We want to see, and we are committed to establishing, a community outreach team pilot project for education and intervention in northern communities and Winnipeg's inner city as a partnership initiative with aboriginal governments, the national native alcohol and drug abuse program and Main Street Project.

For treatment we recognize that there are serious shortcomings and gaps, and we think it is important to establish in Manitoba a centre on solvent abuse. We are committed to spearheading the establishment of such a centre to co-ordinate existing treatment services, to fund treatment of existing facilities without funding sources, and to fund leading-edge research on effective treatments.

We have got to start now. We hope by introducing our strategy on sniff the government will pay attention to this issue in a more meaningful way. All solvents cause permanent brain damage. They dissolve the brain tissue. Solvent abuse can also cause what is now recognized as fetal solvent syndrome.

Sniffing kills. Deaths due to sniffing result from what is recognized as sudden sniffing death, or SSD, aspiration or suffocation and dangerous behaviour.

The government's record has been disappointing, to say the least. Salvation Army Captain Neil Lewis recently commented that no one is doing anything. This is a big problem, and nothing is happening. The existing legislation has been described by the police as basically unenforceable. It has been described to me as virtually useless. Going beyond the legislation, of course, and looking at prevention and treatment, there has been no development of a solvent abuse prevention program either through schools or through communities by the government. Addiction treatment programs are underfunded, so beds sit empty while people await treatment. We are told, for example, by the St. Norbert Foundation that their youth beds are full but they have 60 vacant adult beds and over 100 on the waiting list. Something is wrong with that picture.

* (1710)

So this legislation, Madam Speaker, seeks to do two main things. First, it provides for a real crackdown on the merchants of misery, that is, those who knowingly sell sniffable products for abuse. In the second area this legislation allows for court-ordered assessments of known solvent abusers and voluntary treatment. With regard to the crackdown on the merchants of misery, the existing legislation is overhauled by this bill to prohibit knowingly selling sniff to adults. The main problem with the current legislation is it only prohibits

the knowing sale of sniffable products to minors, but we are told over and over again that this is no longer simply a youth problem. Young adults now are sniffing in unprecedented numbers. People are growing up with a sniff addiction.

The bill also seeks to significantly increase penalties and add personal liability for corporate sellers. The fines are changed so that there are now minimum fines, and the amount of the fines is enhanced to provide what we hope will be a deterrent. The bill seeks to give the courts the ability to limit the sale of sniff products and, where there is not compliance with such an order, to close businesses for repeat offences. The bill provides clear search-and-seizure powers for police investigations—something that the police tell us they need. The legislation, furthermore, seeks to regulate and deal with instances where there might be the manufacturing of sniff products and its repackaging. With regard to repackaging, we will be proposing an amendment in that regard, and I will deal with where the additional ideas are coming from on this. As well, it seeks to deal with paraphernalia that may be used for sniffing.

In the second area, that is, allowing the court to deal with sniffers, we are responding to people like the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association, which has been asking for the legislation to provide some exposure to rehabilitation treatment programs. This legislation is attempting to use the law in a positive way to provide help and support to those who are suffering from a sniff addiction. We also will look to adding a section to allow the court to order a sniffer to refrain from the use of an intoxicating substance under the act.

Madam Speaker, I have been assisted greatly in the development of this legislation by what is known as the nonpotable alcohol committee of the Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association, which is a coalition of organizations that are concerned and deal with the challenge of sniff, for example, the Point Douglas Residents Association, the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre, Main Street Project, the Winnipeg Police Service, the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, the RCMP and the Pharmaceutical Association itself. This bill has been reviewed by that committee in detail, clause by clause, and the two areas of change that we will be seeking at committee, that is, regarding

repackaging and refraining from use of inhalants, were proposed as a further improvement to this legislation in the last number of days.

We are asking the government, which we understand has full knowledge of the extent of this problem and the need to enhance the legislation, to support us and work with us to ensure that this legislation passes before the end of this session. We are asking for support from this government, with or without amendment. If the government has ideas on this bill, we certainly look forward to seeing what those ideas are. We hope that we can work co-operatively over the next days and weeks in order to come up with what can be at least one tool in the difficult struggle against the tragedy of solvent abuse.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Committee Change

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I move, seconded by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: the member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh) for the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay).

Motion agreed to.

Bill 204—The Rural Development Bonds Amendment Act

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), that Bill 204, The Rural Development Bonds Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les obligations de développement rural, now be read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Sale: The purpose of this bill is extremely simple, and the amendments contained in it may seem more complex than the intent. Quite simply, Madam

Speaker, the intent here is to support the Grow Bonds Program, a program which, I believe, all members of the House believe is a useful mechanism for encouraging citizens in rural Manitoba to become involved in the economic development of their communities, to support the integrity of this program and to support the ministry in which responsibility is vested for this program by ensuring that the mechanisms of approval of the technical aspects of any offering are done through the Manitoba Securities Commission, which has the expertise and the mandate to examine any financial instrument that is offered in Manitoba for sale, with the one exception at the present time of Grow Bonds.

In the initial stages of this program, Grow Bonds were quite small often and perhaps were relatively straightforward, but in recent years the bonds offered under the act have grown in size and complexity. It has become clear through two separate reports by the Provincial Auditor and through the unfortunate circumstances of one company in particular, Woodstone Technologies, that the ability of the Rural Development ministry to have the technical expertise to review thoroughly and ensure that prospectuses offered to Manitobans are frank and full in their disclosure and free of any errors, and that all material facts are disclosed, Madam Speaker. It has been clear from that particular unfortunate situation that this was not the case.

Further, Madam Speaker, it is a concern of ours that individuals under the current Grow Bond legislation have very limited responsibilities for full disclosure. The penalties for failing to disclose are relatively light, and yet they can have enormous consequences. In the case of Woodstone, for example, the losses to Manitobans, particularly the citizens of Portage la Prairie and the citizens of the province as a whole exceeded \$6 million. But the losses were not limited simply to the dollars that were lost by many investors, large and small, and by many Manitoba companies. What was also lost in that situation was a lot of credibility for Manitoba's ability to develop innovative products and to market them worldwide.

* (1720)

Madam Speaker, in that particular company's case, companies like the Weston corporation, a major

Japanese company, Scottish companies, companies in Holland all had very, very sorry experiences with the Woodstone company. Those experiences, I believe, would have been completely avoided if the Securities Commission had been responsible for the prospectus, because the commission would simply have not allowed a prospectus to go forward with the kind of information and with the material facts missing. It was allowed to go forward perhaps through the inexperience—I presume it was through the inexperience of the Rural Development Bond corporation office.

So the purpose of the legislation is simple and clear: Replace the technical procedures now carried out by the civil service under the direction of the minister with the arm's-length function of the Manitoba Securities Commission. The final approval still is retained in the hands of the minister and the cabinet. The political right to initiate and to be supportive of activities in any given community is not changed by this act, but the competence of the Securities Commission is brought to bear on the technical issues of the prospectus. I hope all members will be supportive of this legislation which is intended to strengthen a valuable program that all members of the House support, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): I move that debate be adjourned.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources, seconded by the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), that debate be now adjourned. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 205—The Dutch Elm Disease Amendment Act

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I have introduced this bill before, and I am very pleased to introduce it again. I commend it to all members of the House.

Madam Speaker, many of my colleagues think that I am here speaking on behalf of the Wolseley elm—

Madam Speaker: You have to move the motion first.

Ms. Friesen: Oh, sorry, move the motion, okay.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), that (Bill 205), The Dutch Elm Disease Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la thylose parasitaire de l'orme, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I was introducing this bill by saying some of my colleagues think I speak only on behalf of the Wolseley elm, and that is not quite true. There are elms throughout Manitoba; there are elms in Concordia; elms in Wellington; elms across the city; elms in Elmwood; elms in Transcona; elms along the rivers of Manitoba, many of them outside the Perimeter, but the Wolseley elm is special, we are very proud of it. Turn off any main street in Winnipeg as you come along Portage Avenue, or you come along Maryland, and you turn off into the very old community of Wolseley and you find yourself under a great green canopy of leaves.

Madam Speaker, it is one of the nicest ways of returning home, and you feel it every time, I think, that you leave the city and come back to that very special inner city community. It is hard sometimes to believe that you are in the city. The great lungs of the city, such as the elms are, give us a cooling atmosphere. They give us a green canopy, and they are very much one of the defining features of our community.

It is, well, it is almost poetry, Madam Speaker. Home thoughts from abroad: Oh, to be in Wolseley now that spring is here and the great canopy of the elms, and we do indeed have many poets in Wolseley, and I am sure many of them have found inspiration in the elms. I, too, as you can see, and I can hear from the great enthusiasm around this Chamber that I do have a romantic passion, I think, for my community, as many people do.

We in Wolseley also, I think, have seen the elm as a symbol of community. If you go to the Robert A. Steen Community centre and you look outside the club, you will see a historic plaque. In the true Wolseley manner, Madam Speaker, that plaque is a plaque about

resistance, and it is about the work of women, also perhaps a Wolseley characteristic, as well. In the 1960s, early 1960s, when Wolseley people found that the road was going to go right past one of the elms and in fact destroy a very significant elm in the middle of Wolseley street itself, those Wolseley women, those women did not weep, they organized, and that is a characteristic of that community, whether it is about a new school, whether it is about traffic patterns, whether it is about Dutch elm disease. This is a community which does not weep. It organizes.

My community organized a Coalition to Save the Elms. Christine Common-Singh, along with Judy Werier and others, put together that coalition which has had, I think, a tremendous impact on the way in which we walk, the way in which we look at our community, and it has mobilized many citizens.

That, too, I think is a very important characteristic of my community, the mobilization of citizens and the tremendous dedication to public infrastructure and that combination in the Coalition to Save the Elms of city employees, CUPE 500 members, who are there year by year with us instructing us on how to identify Dutch elm disease and the citizen elm guards who take a small portion of the riding every year and inspect and take upon themselves the responsibility for ensuring the health of those trees. It is a community, Madam Speaker, which values its environment and which works to protect it.

So, Madam Speaker, it is with some great concern that I introduce this bill again and urge the government to join us in passing it. What I propose is something which arises from the comments made by at least two judges in recent years, where they have said that the fines that they are able to impose under the existing Dutch elm disease law, which I would submit to you was also introduced by a New Democratic government, that the fines were now, as a result of the passing of time, far too low to be a deterrent, and so I propose to give the judges the ability to exercise judgment in increasing those fines up to a maximum and to enable the citizens of Wolseley, the citizens of Manitoba, to have greater confidence that there will be a deterrent in law to the breaking of The Dutch Elm Disease Act, particularly in the area of the transportation of possibly diseased elms.

Madam Speaker, I want to close by reminding members of the House that Dutch elm disease is a disease which spreads very quickly. It began in Manitoba in the 1970s, and it spread very, very quickly over the last 20 or 30 years, and it is often, I think, spread inadvertently. Education is an enormous part of the responsibility, I think, of government in preventing Dutch elm disease, but so is the deterrent of a fine.

So the purpose of this bill, Madam Speaker, is to enable our communities, to enable individuals, to enable the public service to have confidence that the spread of the disease, which I think is particularly of concern after the flood, can be maintained at the rate of less than the 2 percent per year that we have been able to maintain it at in the past. So this is to increase the fines, the possibility of the increase of fines, and to enable people to have the confidence that the spread of the disease can be limited. Thank you.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): I move, seconded by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: Debate on second readings, public bills, Bill 200 (The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk).

* (1730)

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Madam Speaker: And also standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), who has 14 minutes remaining.

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Bill 202—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading, Bill 202, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille), standing in the name of the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave. Leave has been granted.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 15—Education Funding

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Yes, I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen),

“WHEREAS high quality public education is an essential investment in our children's future, and the future of our province; and

“WHEREAS recent evidence indicates that, as a result of systematic cutbacks to public education over the last number of years, teachers are being forced to pay out-of-pocket for materials to give children a quality education; and

“WHEREAS due to cuts in public education, school divisions have experienced the loss of programs such as industrial arts and home economics, Canadian history and health education to name a few; and

“WHEREAS there has been a substantial loss of teaching positions, creating larger classroom sizes, and making it more difficult for teachers to spend their time with every student; and

“WHEREAS there are a growing number of students requiring special attention who are not receiving that

attention due to the loss of teacher aides and the constraints on teachers' time; and

"WHEREAS this situation cannot be allowed to continue if we are to create a hopeful and positive future for ourselves and our children.

"THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to consider ensuring that public school funding will return to a stable and predictable level, by funding public education at a minimum level consistent with growth in the provincial economy."

Motion presented.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on this resolution here today. It is very unfortunate that a resolution of this nature is necessary in 1997 here in the province of Manitoba. It is very, very crucial, though, that members opposite listen to the people of this province, listen to the people on the front lines of education, listen to the questions we have been raising in this House and speak up and speak out for public education and stable funding for public education. Day in and day out, we raise questions that are the symptoms of a public education system that is heading in the wrong direction because of a lack of backbone on behalf of the government and resources on behalf of the people.

This is a government that has over \$500 million in a so-called rainy day fund, and when the roofs of all of our schools are leaking because of the inadequate funding from the provincial government, do we see anybody over there building a roof and protecting our children? No, we do not. We see a Minister of Education that is out of her league in terms of dealing with these issues and, regrettably, it is the students and children of our province in our public education system who are going to suffer the greatest because of the absolute neglect of this government.

Today it was school buses, questions we have raised four or five times in the past. Yesterday it was the user fees and tollgates that this government is putting on our gyms, and again today we raised those issues. The week before it was Canadian history. The week before that it was home economics. The week before that it

was the whole curriculum for industrial arts. There are questions every day about the impact of the cutbacks on public education, and we have a Minister of Education and a government that does not care about the future of our children and by definition does not care about the future of our province. It only cares about slippery little statistics that they think they can use to justify the unjustifiable in terms of public education here in Manitoba.

Five hundred million dollars in a rainy day fund and cutbacks of minus 2, minus 2, a pre-election zero, minus 2 and zero—that is mean, I say to the member for Ste. Rose and the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings). That is truly mean, because it affects the people whose futures are being impacted by those decisions.

Now what justification is there for these cutbacks when there is money in a so-called rainy day fund? What weakness do we see on the ministries' benches, the cabinet benches where they cannot fight for children? How inadequate we have, in terms of a Minister of Education that cannot go to the minister responsible for the Treasury Board and the minister responsible for finances who has hacked and slashed public education and cannot fight. You know, we kind of enjoy the fact that she cannot fight in this Chamber, but it is really terrible when she cannot fight for children in the cabinet room, because it really does affect people in a very, very negative way. I think that is tragic, and I think it is very, very regrettable.

Madam Speaker, the resolution we put forward was consistent with our election promise. Two elections ago the government said, well, we are going to fund public education at the rate of inflation. Well, did they do that? Minus 2 percent. Another broken promise. The word of this government, when it comes to anything, is not worth the paper it is written on, but in public education, again, it is absolutely worth nothing.

Okay, so they broke that promise by minus 2 and minus 2. In the last election, they said they would treat public education in a very fair way. They would be very reasonable in public education funding. Then what they did six months later—minus 2 at the same time they were giving private education plus 13 or 14 percent. In fact, they did not even have the guts to

announce the funding for private schools until a couple of weeks after the provincial election, and then they brought in the special new deal.

If you had the courage of your convictions, just go out and campaign on the truth. What are you afraid of? Why are you afraid to campaign on your real priorities? Why are you afraid to campaign on the truth?

Now in the election campaign, we campaigned on—[interjection] No, we understand that we should not have unreasonable expectations of public education funding, so we came up with a reasonable suggestion. We will reinvest in public education the same increase in the level of growth in the economy, and you know, we did not know at the time when we came up with this reasonable idea and this idea of investing in our children the same amount of money that is invested in our communities, how logical it was until we read the pathetic paper that was released by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) in January of 1996, the so-called—and I do not even think the Minister of Education wrote it. I think it came out of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), the minister responsible for the Treasury Board, and his henchman Jules Benson, Mr. Jules Benson who gives himself superannuated pensions, 12 percent pension funds and of course cut the kids' physical education programs.

We do not even believe the Minister of Education wrote this document. It came out of the golden two, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Finance, who then dumped this stuff onto the Minister of Education, who has to defend this pathetic paper that says that Manitoba's economy—in one part of the paper—is doing so well, and then we are in ninth place when it comes to funding public education at another level.

You know, it is such an amateur job that no wonder every trustee and every teacher saw right through it, Madam Speaker. But you know, the Minister of Education stands up in the morning, goes to the Chamber of Commerce, the Premier goes to the Chamber of Commerce and does the hallelujah chorus and says we are the greatest province in Canada, we are doing so well, we are doing so wonderfully that he picks some minor little statistic and they say, look at how great we are doing. Then they come to public

education, they say, oh, oh, our cupboards are bare, we have no more money. They do a kind of—[interjection] Well, Mother Hubbard is one example, or one recalls Oliver Twist in terms of kids in education, wanting just a decent amount of funding from that famous Dickens novel that we all recall so well and had given to us so well in our public education in the past. [interjection] And I had to work on the switchboard, too, I might add. I digress.

* (1740)

The public education, the proposal we are making makes a lot of sense. Of course the government cannot support it because making sense in public education is not their strong suit. They are going in the opposite direction. The idea that if the economy grows by 3 percent or 2.5 percent, that obviously produces extra revenue for the province. Personal income tax is the largest growing revenue item outside of lotteries in the province. It produces corporate revenues; it produces sales tax revenues, including the spread in sales tax. It is not really a tax increase, right? And it produces all kinds of other revenues for the province. That in turn can be reinvested in our public education system at a reasonable rate. What a difference between a plus 2 versus a minus 2. What a difference it would make to the children in our school system who are being starved for funding by this particular Conservative government.

What a difference it would make even to the taxes if this government feigns interest for taxes. Look at the property tax increases that have taken place in all the school divisions, save a few, across Manitoba in the last sets of budgets that were produced by school divisions. Why should we have programs such as nutrition programs cut back?

What is the answer for the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) by his silence? Oh, we want our school divisions to go out and recruit immigrant high school students at \$2,000 a person, an enrollee, \$10,000 an enrollee, to deal with the funding shortages for nutrition programs in the Winnipeg School Division No. 1. Again, we have a government that does not know where they are going and does not know how to get there in terms of funding for public education.

An Honourable Member: Not true. We are supporting our children in Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: Well, if they are in Ravenscourt, you are, and if they are in the public education system, they are not. Madam Speaker, I know the government is pretty animated right now and has thin skin. I guess they are getting the thin skin from their Premier (Mr. Filmon), who is having a bad week. He is all panicking about the Reform Party and everything else, but you know, they should just relax and they should recognize that in the last five years the record is pretty clear. Minus 2, minus 2, a pre-election zero, a postelection minus 2, and now a zero for 1997-98. Where I come from, that is a massive cut in support for public education.

Now, I know the government will go back over the statistics and try to get some of the NDP years in to make it look better, and I know quite frankly some of the years were better in the minority years. There is no question in the minority-government years, because we had some accountability of these people opposite, the funding increases were much more acceptable in the NDP years and the minority years. The Minister of Education is going to wrap these numbers into her statistical story and try to subvert what really has happened here in Manitoba.

I was at a forum last year when a young woman stated that she had to take her physics courses backwards because of lack of support for curriculum support and lack of textbooks. I was at another forum where a person from a high school in Winnipeg stated that many courses had been stopped and closed down because of the public-funding cuts from this government. And the student said to me and said to the group assembled, every time the government cuts funding and my school closes courses, you shut another door to my future.

What this resolution is attempting to do is to have a reasonable way of funding public education. It is unreasonable to have tens of millions of dollars in a rainy day pre-election slush fund and have our children have massive user fees so they can participate in an equal way with their fellow students in our public education system. So I am very, very serious about this resolution, and we are very serious about this resolution.

The members opposite do not understand the basic facts. You cannot have an economic strategy without an education strategy. We say, stop your political manipulation of the public education system. Start investing in our future. Invest in our children and support a resolution forwarded by the NDP to put our children first instead of putting political maneuvering first. Let us vote for children. Let us vote for this resolution. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I stand here as someone whose passion in life is education, whose whole life has been devoted to public school education. The member opposite talks a lot about education and makes reference to public school education in particular, which is a critical component of the education in Manitoba because it is the largest, available to all, part of education that is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: As a government, of course, we are responsible for all education in Manitoba. As a person whose background and career and volunteer work has been devoted exclusively to public school education, that does not mean that we do not believe in supporting choice for parents who seek alternative education, because we that do as well.

This resolution speaks specifically to public school funding. The member does a very great disservice by implying, in any way, shape or form, that members on this side of the House are not devoted to and committed to public school education. In terms of dollars, we have provided this year some \$746.5 million specifically for public schools, compared to \$745 million last year. Indeed, Madam Speaker, over this length of time that we have been in office, that is a \$115-million increase to public school education since we took office, and that is not the only extra money. That is \$115 million more according to the formula with which we fund schools, but we have put extra money in over and above that in a myriad of ways that have been well identified in this House.

The member made reference to the fact that in our early years of government we were able to fund

education well above inflation and, Madam Speaker, that is true. In those days, we were not faced with the incredible impact of federal transfer cuts, the federal transfer cuts this year coming to \$224 million or roughly the equivalent of the entire operating budget of the University of Manitoba.

We were not faced with those in our first few years of government, and we were able to disperse more to our liking rather than having to frantically try to backfill cuts of that magnitude, which are horrific and cannot be denied, were in fact the subject of much debate during the recent federal election. Anyone doubting the impact of those cuts or pretending they are irrelevant is either very uninformed or playing games of some sort, because the effect of those transfer cuts has been very, very real, very devastating.

* (1750)

Having said that, we still have managed to achieve a \$115-million overall increase to education, to public schools specifically, since we took office. We have also been able to indicate that next year, barring any further unforeseen cuts in federal funding, we will at least be able to match this year's level. We do not know how much we will be able to give. We know that it will not be less than this year, and we are able to guarantee that to school divisions, as I say, provided the federal government does not come through with some unexpected cuts they have not told us about, so I think our commitment has been very clear in that regard. We have also given increased flexibility for the way in which dollars are spent.

We have devoted a lot of time and energy to a plan for education. We have a plan, a very clearly laid-out plan, perhaps the first clearly laid-out plan for education in the history of this province. We have the blueprints put out by Mr. Manness when he was minister that clearly identified our goals, that clearly laid out a plan of action to achieve those goals. We have consulted extensively with parents, formal consultations with parents unprecedented in this province, something never tried with other governments before us to the extent to which we have done that. We have said that we want our students to have four key essential skills. We have identified those in our booklet, Foundation for Excellence, in our plan called

New Directions, upon which we fought an election and for which we were elected. This was very much a part of our election platform, presented in detail to the public, accepted by the public and placed in office so that we could implement. I know the members opposite do not like this blueprint. They do not like this Foundation for Excellence, and so they then try to say it is not a plan. But indeed it is a very well-laid-out, well-researched plan.

We have identified in that four areas of essential skills and foundation skills: problem solving, literacy and communication, human relations, and technology. Those four foundation skills are required from kindergarten to Senior 4, and they are fundamental to both teaching and learning. These incidentally are not skills that pertain just to Manitoba. These are skills that other provinces are also implementing, so Canadians are moving in this direction, a direction for which my predecessor took the lead. One of the things we have discovered as we were implementing Mr. Manness's blueprint, as other provinces opt in, including two NDP provinces, we are slowing our timetable down to allow them a chance to catch up with us, and I think that that is a testament to some of the things we are doing. I am working in collaboration with Mr. Minister Mitchell next door to us in Saskatchewan, a very fine gentleman, whose ideas on post-secondary education are very similar to mine and we are working together for the good of our post-secondary students in both provinces. I look forward to continue work in that regard.

In the interests of protecting important learning like health and history we have focused on curriculum integration with a greater emphasis on these subjects at all grade levels. The new curriculum that will come out when it is ready will reflect more accurately some of the things that have not always been in. Our curricula in history, for example, will be talking about pre-European Canadian history, far more relevant than the current curriculum which has been in place for a long time and certainly was never changed when the New Democrats were in power, never given the kind of thorough, thorough examination that it is currently being given.

That commitment was part of our commitment to take that outdated curriculum that was under our previous government before us and to make it more

relevant and updated. That takes a long time, especially when you work in collaboration with other provinces which we are delighted to be able to do because that will give a standard that is needed.

We also, Madam Speaker—I indicated that the \$224-million federal transfer payment cut has been very hard to us, but we have cushioned the effects in total by committing over \$1 billion this year towards education, one of our government's highest spending priorities, second only, in fact, to health. If you take a look at our priorities, funding for education in Manitoba was 18 percent of our total provincial budget, and it is now 19.2 percent. When we came to office, it was 17 percent of a \$4-billion budget. Last year it was 18 percent of a \$5-billion budget. It is now 19.2 percent, so we continue to put the majority of our emphasis of spending in percentage terms on education. In dollar terms, we start with the base \$115-million increase and add in the other things that we have added on top of that \$115 million, and it is therefore wrong to say that there has not been attention paid to education. Remember, at the same time, we have had an overall slight decline in the number of students.

Investing in our children, in our schools and the future of Manitoba to ensure that they have solid skills when they graduate and leave our public school system, Madam Speaker, requires a lot more than just money. We have put the money in, but we also indicate that we have done a lot to improve the system itself in ways that do not cost money. The member mentioned in his whereas that there are larger classroom sizes. I challenge that, because we know that Manitoba's class size is the third best in Canada, and we know, as well, that that class size, depending on whether or not you count the support teaching staff, is 14.5 percent if you include the support staff such as principals or resource teachers and is 19 students to one teacher if you count only classroom teachers without the support staff. That means the average class size is 19, and not all classes

are 19. Some are 30 but some are also 10, and that is the third best in Canada.

It is not much different than it was last year or the year before. It is certainly far, far improved over the average class size of 34 that I experienced in the early '60s when I started teaching, and you may recall that yourself, Madam Speaker. I think I never had a class smaller than 34 and I never had prep time, and I never had some of the other things that are very important and good that we have now in the system that I always wished we had, and I am glad they are there now. Those came in, of course, with the schools boards, the school trustees that were in place at the time, and I appreciate some of the decisions they made. [interjection]

The member opposite has made some comments that are incorrect. If they are on the record, I would like to correct them. She has indicated—just to correct what she said, I think it is quite clear that school boards have not had to raise special levies nearly as much under this government as they did under the New Democrats. Under the New Democrats, they were having to raise special levies by very large amounts, and under our jurisdiction they have not had to raise special levies by very large amounts. So, clearly, the funding they are getting from the province is not having to pass on to the people in the same way they did, say, for example, when Mr. Pawley was Premier.

We have started the Children and Youth Secretariat, Madam Speaker. That has done a tremendous amount of good in terms of finally integrating the services that were needed.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Education will have two minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 3:30 p.m. on Monday next.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 12, 1997

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