



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. |
| DOWNEY, James, Hon. | Arthur-Virden | P.C. |
| DRIEDGER, Albert | Steinbach | P.C. |
| DYCK, Peter | Pembina | P.C. |
| ENNS, Harry, Hon. | Lakeside | P.C. |
| ERNST, Jim | Charleswood | P.C. |
| EVANS, Clif | Interlake | N.D.P. |
| EVANS, Leonard S. | Brandon East | N.D.P. |
| FILMON, Gary, Hon. | Tuxedo | P.C. |
| FINDLAY, Glen, Hon. | Springfield | P.C. |
| FRIESEN, Jean | Wolseley | N.D.P. |
| GAUDRY, Neil | St. Boniface | Lib. |
| GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon. | Minnedosa | P.C. |
| HELWER, Edward | Gimli | P.C. |
| HICKES, George | Point Douglas | N.D.P. |
| JENNISSEN, Gerard | Flin Flon | N.D.P. |
| KOWALSKI, Gary | The Maples | 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. |
| MARTINDALE, Doug | Burrows | N.D.P. |
| McALPINE, Gerry | Sturgeon Creek | P.C. |
| McCRAE, James, Hon. | Brandon West | P.C. |
| McGIFFORD, Diane | Osborne | N.D.P. |
| McINTOSH, Linda, Hon. | Assiniboia | P.C. |
| MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn | St. James | N.D.P. |
| MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon. | River East | P.C. |
| NEWMAN, David, 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. |
| RENDER, Shirley | St. Vital | P.C. |
| ROBINSON, Eric | Rupert'sland | N.D.P. |
| ROCAN, Denis | Gladstone | P.C. |
| SALE, Tim | Crescentwood | N.D.P. |
| SANTOS, Conrad | Broadway | N.D.P. |
| STEFANSON, Eric, Hon. | Kirkfield Park | P.C. |
| STRUTHERS, Stan | Dauphin | N.D.P. |
| SVEINSON, Ben | La Verendrye | P.C. |
| TOEWS, Vic, Hon. | Rossmere | P.C. |
| TWEED, Mervin | Turtle Mountain | P.C. |
| VODREY, Rosemary, Hon. | Fort Garry | P.C. |
| WOWCHUK, Rosann | Swan River | N.D.P. |
| Vacant | Portage la Prairie | |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, June 27, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Licensed Practical Nurses

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Theresa Deyholos, Manda Wirch, Caroline Bonner and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba 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.

Obstetrics Closure—Grace General Hospital

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Vern Laggo, Laura Sellers and Bonnie Cameron and others praying 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.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Doreen McKay, Leanne Nault, Kevin Carrey and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health consider stopping the closure of the obstetrics program at Winnipeg's Grace Hospital.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Maureen Evachewski, Lorenia Luhowy, Dominique Ostermann and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health consider stopping the closure of the obstetrics program at Winnipeg's Grace Hospital.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Laura Buss, Kathy Duke, Margaret Klatt and others praying 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.

Obstetrics Closure—Grace General Hospital

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of John A. Wells, Tamara Wells, John Harvard and others praying 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.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

CRTC Presentation

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

THAT contrary to promises made in 1996 by the provincial government, the majority of shares of the privatized MTS are controlled outside the province of Manitoba; and

THAT on June 16, 1997, MTS requested from the CRTC a \$5 increase per month for 1998, one of the highest increases in the country; and

THAT this follows previous increases ordered by the provincial government in 1995, 1996 and 1997; and

THAT these increases mean that for some communities in the Parklands will have almost doubled since 1995, with Dauphin alone having an increase of 87 percent when the rate for Yorkton, Saskatchewan, under the publicly owned Saskatchewan Telephone System is \$5 per month less; and

THAT MTS is requesting a rate of return of 13 percent per year from CRTC and to do this wants to raise local rates further above the rate cap in the 1998 going-in rates; and

THAT, contrary to promises made by the provincial government, MTS under private ownership is moving rapidly to raise local rates in rural and northern Manitoba.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the minister of telecommunications make presentations before the CRTC opposing such hikes in local rates.

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?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: 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 HUMBLY PRAY 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.

* (1335)

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), 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

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 HUMBLY PRAY 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.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the 1996 Annual Report for the Residential Tenancies Commission, and I would also like to table the 1996 Annual Report for the Residential Tenancies Branch.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Physician Resources Recruitment Strategy—Rural Manitoba

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon). The Minister of Health has been stating for the last number of months that he expects there will be a solution to the situation with doctors in rural Manitoba in some 30 or 40 communities dealing with emergency services. Yesterday he obviously stated to the media that he felt a cure was in place for the end of the month, and he stated that this model was developed in conjunction with the MMA.

I would like to ask the Premier: Is there in fact an agreement between the MMA and the government dealing with the doctors in the 30 or 40 communities in Manitoba?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, as I briefed the Leader of the Opposition's critic, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the other day, we went into the process of over 90 days with the various stakeholders, including the regional health authorities, the MMA, the College of Physicians and Surgeons and others. We have attempted to

develop a new model. We, of course, would like the concurrence and support of those various stakeholders in that model. I can tell the member today that I think we are at the stage of a few final touches on the details that are being completed, and we have staff who have been working with the Manitoba Medical Association to ensure their co-operation and endorsement. As we speak now, discussions, I think in the final stages, are currently underway.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, then the answer to the question is: There is no agreement at this point, you are still working on an agreement at this point, you feel you are close to an agreement at this point, but you do not have an agreement at this point.

I would like to ask the First Minister, in light of the fact that the 270 physicians affect some 30 or 40 communities, does the government have a contingency plan. Can he inform the people of Manitoba that will be vitally concerned or have already been concerned about disruptions and lack of service from the disagreement with the rural and northern doctors with the government, is there a contingency plan in place? Can the people of these communities be assured that they will get medical services from doctors when they need it?

* (1340)

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me say that the member, who has had great experience in negotiations, should appreciate that at this particular stage of the game I am very limited, somewhat limited in what I can say. What I can say to him today is the kinds of discussions that we are having are not about substantive matters; they are about the form of an endorsement and the form of the material that will go out to the regional health authorities who will have the responsibility of putting in practice arrangements with the physicians in their areas.

So I can assure him that his discomfort over whether or not there is an agreement is probably not warranted. I must be, as he appreciates, a little bit cautious, because we are completing these arrangements. But I think his assessment of not having support for the principles of the model, I would tell him we are not into a collective agreement situation here. We are in a

model that we will authorize the regional health authorities. They will have that authority before the end of this month to negotiate and set up their arrangements with their individual physicians and what we wanted, of course, was the endorsement of the Manitoba Medical Association, and we are currently working on the form of how that will come.

Physician Resources Recruitment Strategy—Rural Manitoba

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, after Question Period on Wednesday when the minister approached me and advised me about his negotiations with respect to this matter, he indicated that he thought an agreement would be in place, would be acceptable by all parties, including the MMA, the 270-so-odd doctors, the community and the like. I have been given to understand that, at this point, the MMA is recommending rejection of the particular agreement, and I wonder if the minister might outline for me exactly what the status is as of right now.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): I am not sure where the member is getting his information, and I do not know what would have changed since our last communications last evening, but throughout the course of this day—and I have seen the exchange of correspondence between the MMA—and please appreciate, we are not looking here for an agreement with the Manitoba Medical Association. We are looking for their support of the model. I have seen the exchange of documents. We have had discussions. I think on the principles of it, from my understanding, I would be surprised if one were to say there was not support. The fact of the matter is how that is communicated to the regional health authorities. The documents that go out from our office are very critical, so there is no misunderstanding between the MMA or practitioners, because the MMA obviously has to work with their physicians, and we want to make sure that the documentation that goes out on the model is acceptable and agreeable to all concerned. We are in the process of fine tuning that kind of documentation.

Mr. Chomiak: Should this all collapse, and we are facing an emergency walkout or strike or some other form of service delay or problem in the next few days,

will the minister assure the House that he will live up to the promise made by his Deputy Minister of Health on March 30 that the province will pay the block funding to ensure that doctors can keep working at the previous rates in order to try to resolve this matter should it arrive at a walkout or strike situation and ensure that we can continue negotiations and solve this matter? Will he live up to the assurances of the deputy minister?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure what the member is getting at in his specifics with reference to block funding, because there are only a very few instances in the provinces where there is in fact a block funding arrangement. Currently, most of the emergency services provided in rural and northern Manitoba are handled on a fee-for-service basis. Quite frankly, if that option is still there, in fact is part of the model for smaller facilities, that is paid by the Ministry of Health.

What I will have and what I hope to be able to put out more formally later in the day is a new model. We have had some discussion about that which will be provided to the RHAs as a tool in which to provide emergency services. I am not so naive as to expect that any model we do develop is going to be a hundred percent accepted by everyone, but I would think that it is so reasonable that it will solve the issues for the vast majority of physicians in the province and working with their RHAs because it is complicated, with a fair amount of detail. Within a very short period of time, they will be able to work out their arrangements to provide emergency services across the province.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, again, if the deal should fail, or fail to be ratified, or not approved, and we are facing a serious situation next week, will the minister give assurances to this House that the province is prepared to put forward a position and funding to ensure the doctors can stay working until some other subsequent agreement can be worked out?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I am not sure what the member is asking for—a block fund to keep doctors working. Doctors are free to keep working now. The current status quo arrangement in most facilities is a fee-for-service model. There are some facilities, Brandon being one, where there are some additional arrangements and support being made. To suggest that

we are going to take some block fund of money with some unknown quantity or amount aside and say, please keep working if we throw money at you, is only a New Democratic Party solution. It is not one that I think is realistic.

We have spent a great deal of time working at a very reasonable model. I think when the member sees the numbers attached to it—and the member for Kildonan knows those numbers—I think the public of Manitoba and most of the physicians will think it is very fair and reasonable, and we hope to be able to give that authority to the RHAs very, very shortly.

* (1345)

Disaster Assistance Deductible—Information Release

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, this government has been all over the map on compensation for flood victims. First, they kept the maximum at \$30,000 which we forced them to raise to \$100,000. Then we have the Premier (Mr. Filmon) contradicting the Minister of Government Services as to whether the deductible should be waived or not. Now we learn that, on Wednesday, cabinet made a decision to waive the deductible for homeowners who are having their homes condemned.

My question to the Minister of Government Services is: Why has this minister continued to refuse to provide us with that information in the House, and why did he not tell flood victims yesterday that only those people who had their homes totally lost would be having their deductible waived?

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, in response to the member's question, one of the things that we go through with regard to a disaster of this magnitude, of course, is it is a moving type of target and things are changing constantly as you go along. But one of the things that we did have, our claims inspectors, when they first started taking a look at some of the homes, did some flagging on homes that had the potential of having what they thought might be structural faults. So, at that point in time, we had to make a decision as to how to get these homes inspected. So we made some contacts

with the Central Mortgage and Housing inspectors to come in, who were structural engineers who had the expertise, and at the same time allowed us under the disaster assistance policy to have the necessary auditing process so that it would be eligible for coverage.

Yesterday afternoon, late afternoon, I was informed that there were now 40 structures that were write-offs and that the Land Management Services of our department was moving forward for appraisal. So, at that point in time then, the decision that was made by cabinet was a decision that we could go ahead with and announce to people that we could waive the claim on those homes that were uninhabitable.

Ms. Wowchuk: But you did not make the announcement last night.

Will the minister admit that the reason he did not make the announcement last night was because he knew that many people who have not had total loss are in worse condition than those who have had total loss of their home, and this government does not care about the 2,000 families who are in a very desperate situation right now? This is just a heartless government that is thinking more about bottom line than about the lives of people and about children who have no homes to live in right now.

Mr. Pitura: Madam Speaker, when this disaster occurred, it occurred in and around my home community which affected many of my friends, some of my relatives and many of my friends in the Morris area and throughout the entire Morris constituency. So it was a major trauma to be able to face that kind of a disaster. As Minister of Government Services, the main objective of our department is to ensure that the people who have been affected by the disaster had the help, had the assistance, and were able to develop a reconstructive process. So we have done numerous things to be able to speed up that process so that people can re-enter their homes.

The 1979 flood took in excess of 10 months for all the awards to be made. The 1993 flood took almost 12 months for all the awards to be made. The 1997 flood, we are going to do that in two months, so that people will get their awards and be able to start the reconstruction process. The victims of the flood in this

are very important to this government, and we want to ensure that as much is done as possible to get them back into their homes.

Housing—First Nations Government Action

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, today, Manitoba First Nations have declared this day to be First Nations Housing Day to show nonaboriginals how First Nations people are being forced to live in and—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Excuse me. Order, please. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for Rupertsland, who has been recognized to pose a question.

* (1350)

Mr. Robinson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, if I can begin again. This is a very important issue. Manitoba First Nations people have declared today as being First Nations Housing Day to show nonaboriginal people how First Nations people are being forced to live in their communities. In fact, the MKO has challenged the new Indian Affairs minister, Jane Stewart, to come for a few days to one of the reserves in Manitoba and see first-hand the conditions that people live under.

I would like to table that proclamation of this event signed by all the chiefs of this province. Given the seriousness of this issue, the housing crisis faced by First Nations people in this province, I would like to ask the Premier at this time what action this government is prepared to take to address this very serious issue.

Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Madam Speaker, this is a very important issue to this government, and it is a very important issue to the aboriginal people. I think it is very important and very useful to have this day declared as it is, to focus national attention on the issue.

The approach of this government to dealing with special needs issues like housing, even when it is a

federal government responsibility, as it is in the case suggested by my honourable friend, this government will work in collaborative ways in good faith with the federal government on dealing with the special needs of the aboriginal people. In some cases, and in too many cases, the federal government has situations where there are Status Indian people who are not on reserves who are not receiving support from the federal government with respect to their housing, and that is why we have an urban aboriginal strategy. That is why we are focusing on housing as a part of the development of that strategy.

By working together, federally, provincially and with the city governments and municipal governments and the Indian populations in all regions of the province, we are going to beat this problem.

First Ministers' Conference

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, I would like to again bring to the attention of this government the seriousness that exists in the First Nations communities of this province, illnesses like tuberculosis, all attributed to the overcrowded housing conditions that Indian people have to live with.

My question to the Premier is simply this: I know that at a given point in the near future the First Ministers of this country will again meet with the Government of Canada. I would like to ask the Premier whether he can commit his government in making the shortage and condition of houses on reserves a priority in any upcoming discussions with the federal government and also the other provincial governments in this country.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, it has been the practice of the Premiers at their annual conference to include issues to do with First Nations in Canada as part of their agenda. On a number of occasions, the agenda has also called for special meetings, such as last year there was a follow-up to discussions on some of the First Nations issues with a full day in Calgary, and I was one of a few of our Premiers who were able to attend that meeting. They certainly were not, by any stretch, all there, but they all had representatives.

We spent a whole day with representatives of all of the major aboriginal organizations in Canada in following up on the many, many issues that are of concern to our aboriginal people. We certainly have on numerous occasions—and I have personally raised the issue of the disproportionate impact of many of the major requirements for support of our aboriginal brothers and sisters on Manitoba, because of the fact that they represent almost 10 percent of our population, by far the highest of any province in Canada. Saskatchewan is almost as high, and beyond that I do not think any other province is above 4 percent.

So it has been an issue that I have raised in the past. It is an issue that I know will be discussed again at our annual Premiers' conference as part of the agenda items. I certainly will very strongly put forward the concerns that our aboriginal people have with respect to the lack of support that they get on certain issues, notably adequate housing and clean water supply.

Education System Financing—Property Taxes

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for either the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) or the Minister of Finance. With the end of June, once again comes the end of yet another school year, and time in and time out we always have been posing questions to the government with respect to that continuing reliance of the financing of education on property tax.

My question to either minister is—give a straightforward answer: Does this government have any intentions, either now or in the future, of stopping the reliance of having to finance more and more public education through our property taxes?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): The member for Inkster has raised this issue on many previous occasions. Certainly, as a provincial government, we look at the issues of taxation on an ongoing basis. We look at the impact of our decisions on other levels of government, but there have been some changes in this area in some other jurisdictions. I ask the member for Inkster, if he is proposing that education funding be reduced from the property tax, where is he suggesting that be made up? I would

certainly welcome any input that he might have, any suggestions that he might have relative to that issue, because some of the provinces and some of the jurisdictions that have tried to address that issue have found that there really has just been a shift, and there has been a shift of some responsibilities to municipal levels of government, some responsibilities that should not necessarily end up at municipal levels of government. So, again, I challenge him and encourage him to provide his suggestions and his vision of how you would deal with that issue.

*(1355)

Mr. Lamoureux: I would ask the Minister of Finance: If he is sincere with what he just finished saying, will he then agree that between now and the beginning of the new session he will in fact convene a meeting where we will have input from different school boards? I would be more than happy to share my opinions at such a meeting with the Minister of Finance in a sense of co-operation, but will he give that commitment that he will in fact, over the summer, meet with some people to try to resolve this issue once and for all?

Mr. Stefanson: I am bewildered why the member for Inkster feels he needs a meeting with other organizations or individuals represented to provide any information that he might have on this issue, whether he is proposing to increase the provincial sales tax, whether he is proposing to shift responsibilities to all of our municipal levels of government, whether he is proposing to increase the personal income tax. What is he proposing? You need a certain amount of money to provide the services in education for the provincial government, for the municipal government, and clearly that money has to come from somewhere. So, again, I encourage him, if he has specific research, if he has specific suggestions, he should be providing those in advance, and we would certainly be prepared to look at those, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Lamoureux: Ultimately what we are looking for is a more equitable way of doing it—financing education.

My question to the Minister of Finance: The one-time Minister of Education—and I would ask the Minister of Finance to reflect on the one Minister of

Education, while he was in opposition, Mr. Manness, when he was a part of the cabinet, talked about financing up to 80 percent through general revenues. Has this government ruled out any sort of ongoing increases in general revenue?

Mr. Stefanson: It is easy for the member to stand up and say he is looking for a more equitable solution, but again he does not provide any suggestion what his definition of a more equitable solution is. Is it to increase the provincial sales tax in Manitoba? Is it to increase other taxes. Is it to shift health care responsibilities to municipalities? What is his so-called equitable solution? Today the amount of money generated from the property tax system is required to provide a quality education here in Manitoba. That is the single most important aspect and focus of spending our dollars, is to provide a quality education for all of the young people here in Manitoba. So, again, I challenge him, and I welcome any specific suggestions that he might have in this area.

There is no easy solution, because a certain amount of money is required by all levels of government to provide the services that are expected and are needed here in Manitoba. So, again, if he has research, if he has specific recommendations rather than generalities, I welcome them, and I challenge him to provide them to us.

Dene Land Claims Government Position

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Premier.

At the MKO conference in Norway House yesterday, delegates endorsed the fight of the Northlands Dene Nation and the Sayisi Dene Nation in their fight for Denesuline claims north of 60.

I want to ask the Premier where he stands on the Dene land claim issue, and is this government prepared to take this issue to the next federal-provincial meeting?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will confess very openly that I have not had a briefing on the land claim issue, and so I could not comment on it at this time.

Repap Manitoba Road Construction

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): My second question to the Premier is: Since the Repap operations have now reached 25 miles south of Pukatawagan, is the Premier and this government prepared to support the construction of an all-weather road to Pukatawagan in order to reduce living costs and also to reduce the costs of medivac and air charters of patients needing treatment in Flin Flon or The Pas?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice.

Provincial Parks Camping Reservations

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): My question is for the minister in charge of tourism. The decision that the Department of Natural Resources made to contract out the reservation of parks and camping fees in this province is an absolute disaster. Madam Speaker, there are so many complaints being logged with the Department of Natural Resources that people now are being forced to go outside of our province in order to camp.

Is the minister of tourism aware that a person in Swan River had so much hassle, so much trouble trying to book a spot in the Swan River Valley at a park that the person ended up booking a campsite within five minutes in a park in Saskatchewan?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, let me, first of all, say that I know the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) has been working very aggressively to make sure that all bookings for the parks in Manitoba are carried out very efficiently and effectively at its lowest cost possible, and that is being done as it relates to that particular issue.

I also want to remind the member for Dauphin, I believe that he is from—is probably going to have one of the record numbers of people participate in one of the biggest tourism festivals out there. It just keeps growing and growing. If he would only look in his backyard to see the evidence of how positive tourism is

in the province, he may have a little different attitude towards it.

* (1400)

Mr. Struthers: I would invite the minister of tourism to phone to Dauphin to book his site at—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Dauphin was recognized for a supplementary question.

Mr. Struthers: Can the minister of tourism confirm that, amongst the many complaints that have been logged already by somebody who is designated within the Natural Resources department to take these complaints, can he confirm that these complaints include having to book more than once for campsites, which means you pay the reservation fee more often? Can he confirm that people on the other end of the phone in California cannot even spell the province of Manitoba? Can he confirm that these sites that are being reserved in California, that the people on the other end of the phone do not even know that Manitoba is not a state, that it is a province in the country of Canada? It is not the 52nd state, as some of these people on the other end of the phone tend to think.

Mr. Downey: No, Madam Speaker, I cannot confirm that, but what I can confirm is when the NDP were in government, they went to the campsites with sledge hammers and broke the barbecues; broke the campsites down. Tore them up; literally destroyed them. That was the policy of the NDP government.

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

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Beauchesne Citation 417 is very clear that: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Madam Speaker, I realize that the Tories would rather be back in the 1980s when they were opposition. They should not worry; pretty soon they will be back in opposition and can raise those kinds of concerns.

Madam Speaker: The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, probably a point of order well taken by all members of this House, not only with respect to the way we answer our questions but also the way we ask them. We were doing very well up until just a couple of moments ago, so maybe it is the chemistry between the minister and the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) that went a little strange here today, but I am sure that can be rectified very quickly if all honourable members just maintain some decorum for the next few minutes.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, indeed he did have a point of order. The honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism replied to his question, but at the end, regrettably, he was starting to debate.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

An Honourable Member: I am sorry.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry. I am not certain why the honourable Minister of Natural Resources was on his feet. If he was on, I recognized him because he was on his feet to ascertain why he was on his feet.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I was to assist completing the answer on the earlier question.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: We know that the Deputy Premier needs help, but it is not in order. We do not have tag-team answers in the Legislature in Question Period.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point raised by the honourable member for Thompson, once I had ascertained why the honourable minister was on his

feet, I did not recognize the honourable minister to reply to or add to the response to the question.

Manitoba Telecom Services Rate Increase

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): On a question. Opposition is—[interjection] By the way, I do not need any help to ask the question, but the Premier may need some help answering this one because it is on MTS.

Madam Speaker, opposition is growing in Manitoba to the applied \$3-a-month rate increase that the privatized MTS is seeking, and we do not even know yet what additional increases will be on top of that. The Manitoba Society of Seniors has stated: We are certainly going to oppose that increase. They are currently meeting with their lawyer to look at intervening at the CRTC.

I want to ask the Premier: Will he follow the lead of provinces such as Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia and intervene at the CRTC hearings on behalf of Manitoba seniors and other Manitobans and say no to the \$3 increase?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Yes, Madam Speaker, I intend to look into the matter with my colleagues from across Canada and will certainly report back in the not too distant future.

CRTC Hearing—Government Presentation

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I am not sure. The answer sounded good, but I do not think it was a response to my question. I want to clarify with the Premier: Is he going to intervene at the CRTC hearings in September, like three other provinces do on a regular basis? Will he join with the many Manitobans who are saying no to the \$3 increase being brought in by the newly privatized MTS?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I want to say that, as I have in the past, the rate increases that are being applied for are exactly as they would be whether the company were in public or private ownership. The basis for intervention has to be one of logic and reason, and I want to look into the rationale that other provinces are using.

Canadian Corrosion Control Workplace Safety—Prosecution

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, for some time we have been asking questions about the government's lack of action in prosecuting the owners of Canadian Corrosion Control. There is a long history of Workplace Safety and Health violations by this company and by its owners.

Considering the long history of the Workplace Safety and Health violations—seven in three years for Canadian Corrosion Control, can the Minister of Justice explain why it was not in the public interest to prosecute the owners of this company to prevent them from harming someone else's father, brother or son?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I do not know whether it was or was not in the public interest. What I can indicate is that when prosecutors—and it is not the government. It is not for the government to interfere in a prosecution, as I know the member for Transcona would want us to interfere, but there are two factors that prosecutors look at, and the first factor is, is there a reasonable likelihood of conviction? Secondly, and this comes from the NDP report in Saskatchewan, the other thing that a prosecutor must look at before a charge is laid is whether it is in the public interest to lay that charge. Those are two requirements that prosecutors must look at. That is the determination that the Prosecutions office makes, and that is the basis upon which they proceed.

I know that it is a very difficult job for prosecutors, it is a difficult job for inspectors, but I know each and every one of these public servants has the public interest at heart in any of the decisions they make.

* (1410)

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. He just repeated the question back to me.

I want to ask the Minister of Justice to explain how it is fair and just for the owners of Canadian Corrosion Control to pay more in fines for littering and yet escape prosecution when one of their workers is killed on the

job due to negligence. How is it fair to the families and to the other workers of our province that the company pays more in fines for littering than for the time when they kill one of their workers?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, one of the things that the NDP prided themselves in when they brought in The Workplace Safety and Health Act—it is an act that I support, and I think it is a very good act—but the entire philosophy of that act when it was brought in by the chief architect Victor Rabinovitch and the NDP government was that the emphasis be education. When one looks at—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice, to complete his response.

Mr. Toews: And I know when one looks at the statistics, when one looks at the deaths that occurred during the NDP years and when one compares the success in a relative term when looking at the years in which we have taken that act and in fact brought that issue to a fore so that workers are protected in a more real and substantive way, we can see that it was this government that cares about workers and ensuring that they are safe. I know the member for Minnedosa, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), has brought in information in respect of prosecutions and that is something, as well, that is important.

Public Housing Property Sale

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, we have been asking questions about this government's plans to sell Manitoba Housing Authority properties. In the last year reported, they sold 89 properties, and we keep hearing about other properties they plan to sell, but they will not give us a complete list. These include single-family homes which may be turned into rooming houses.

I want to ask the Minister of Housing, in honour of aboriginal housing day—and if they are going to insist on continuing to sell single-family units in particular, will the minister commit to consulting with organizations like STOP, Solutions to Overcome

Poverty, a group of Indian and Metis women who want to provide seven homes for seven moms and to ensure that these Manitoba Housing Authority properties will continue to provide housing for low-income Manitobans.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): Yes.

Ms. Cerilli: Well, can the minister explain to the House if he has had any other strategies to involve aboriginal groups, particularly in off-reserve aboriginal groups, for aboriginal people coming to Winnipeg? Since there are no new construction programs, there are no longer any renovation housing programs, are there any strategies to involve these groups to fill the vacancies in Manitoba Housing Authority's properties?

Mr. Reimer: The member is pointing to a situation in the housing where there is from time to time surplus properties that are declared surplus and the units are then disposed of. If there is a better utilization through working with community groups for the takeover of these homes and the responsibility of the maintenance of these homes within the community and the objectives of Manitoba Housing can be achieved, we are willing to work with any type of group that has this type of fortitude and this direction of self-involvement with our housing stock, so we are willing to work with these groups on a continual basis for the improvement of housing in Manitoba.

Pine Falls Paper Company Road Construction—Blood Lake

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, I have one question for the Minister of Environment. As the minister knows, the Pine Falls Paper Company, following upon the plans of its predecessor, Abitibi-Price, is attempting to build a road up the east side of Lake Winnipeg. I would like to ask the minister to tell the House what the department has recommended to him concerning the proposal to build a road to Bloodvein.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, the discussion I have had with the department respecting this matter has been about any developments like that being done with full consultation and full respect for the environmental

requirements that are in place, so that due process is something that we want to see followed in any of these types of developments.

Desktop Management Services SHL Systemhouse Contract

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Government Services. Outside the Chamber the minister today admitted that the total cost of the computer contract could be as much as \$50 million. I want to ask the minister what his position is on companies donating funds to the Progressive Conservative Party while they are negotiating contracts with his department and other government departments.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): If the member is referring to the questions earlier about desktop management, I am not sure where he is getting his numbers from. The current cost of providing desktop management services is about \$12 million. We are in the process of hopefully concluding a contract with Systemhouse that has not happened yet, so those are the figures.

In terms of donations from private sector companies, the reality is it happens on an ongoing basis to all of our political parties, and for anybody to even suggest that would in any way influence the awarding of any contract is absolutely, totally ridiculous. The fact that kind of question is coming from members opposite proves that they are the only kind of people likely to do that kind of thing.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Political Contributions Government Contracts

Madam Speaker: Quickly, please. The honourable member for Elmwood, with a very short question.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My supplementary to the Minister of Government Services is this. I would like to ask the minister whether he can tell the House that the large number of donations to his party from

companies doing business with the government is any cause for concern about potential kickbacks or tollgating.

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, when government does business they go through very strict guidelines in regard to making requests for proposals to be placed for contracts. That is a process that has been in place for years within the government, and so each project as it comes up goes through a regular regulated process that has no direct connection at all with anything else, but in terms of the objective of the project and the cost of the project and who can do the project the best.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

J.M. Schneider's Plant

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): I wonder if I can indulge and beg leave of the House for a very brief ministerial statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Agriculture have leave to make a ministerial statement? [agreed]

Mr. Enns: Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) and myself, I am very pleased that we were able to take part in the opening of J.M. Schneider's 50 million pork processing facility in Manitoba. The facility, which was opened today, is one of the most modern of its kind in the world and will more than double Schneider's capacity in the province. This is truly a world-class facility and our government—and I would like to think all members of the House congratulate J.M. Schneider on the opening of this plant.

The Schneider's corporation chose Manitoba for a variety of reasons. Our progressive hog producers are committed to high quality and the expansion that is necessary to meet the demand of the world and Schneider's needs. As well, I am pleased to say that we have some of the best genetics in the pork industry in the world.

Madam Speaker, several years ago our government recognized the potential of Manitoba's pork industry and today's opening is testament to the progressive policies introduced by this government. These policies are making all jurisdictions in North America stand up and take notice of us. Our producers, our processors and indeed all involved in Manitoba's pork industry are committed to this dynamic part of the agri-food sector.

* (1420)

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): It is a good day for Manitoba pork in the province of Manitoba. I want to congratulate the Schneider's plant on its first stage of development today. It is good news for the workers that will be working at the plant and the many other workers that will be joining the facility. I know there is a very well-negotiated transition plan from the old plant that is outdated to the new plant with the existing workforce. We are pleased to see the union management co-operation to achieve that long-term agreement in that plant.

I would note today with this good news with the Schneider's plant that we have some challenging news on the economic front. I note that the Molson's plant that has been closed down in Manitoba, we now see an expansion of the Regina Molson's plant operation. I think it is regrettable that we have lost so many brewery jobs in terms of Manitoba, and I think we have to redouble our efforts to find a way to compete in the brewing industry and keep those jobs here in Manitoba.

I also want to say, Madam Speaker, that this good news also represents a real challenge in this Chamber. I say to the members opposite we pass sustainable development acts and we talk about the success of these jobs—and all of those things are worthy of praise—but there is a considerable amount of concern in many of our communities about the sustainability of this industry. We just saw a decision made in a local community dealing with a plant in western Manitoba, and I can say, for example, in the Interlake area—and I know the minister is aware of this—that people who are in the tourism industry, people who are in the service industry, people who are in the fishing industry, want to live in harmony with people who are producing the pork that will be going to this plant.

We do not believe these issues should be just solved community by community and zoning law by zoning law. We believe that, when we look at an area like the Interlake or other areas of Manitoba, we should determine what is sustainable and what will live in harmony with other important industries in our province. So, as we applaud the announcement of these employees and this development here in Manitoba—and we are all, first and foremost, Canadians and Manitobans, and we are proud to see good news in our community for ourselves and for our children—we also have to take a look at the long-term balance that we must achieve in this growing industry but this challenging industry. Thank you, very, very much.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Ukrainian Labor Temple

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

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

Mr. Martindale: I rise to recognize the designation by the Manitoba Heritage Council of the Ukrainian Labor Temple as a provincial historic site. A plaque unveiled on October 25, 1995, says constructed in 1918-19; this is the first and largest Ukrainian Labor Temple in Canada built primarily by volunteer labour and financed by donations. Built to a neoclassic design prepared by Robert E. Davies of Winnipeg, the temple contained an auditorium and balcony to seat a thousand people, as well as classrooms, library and print shop. A 1926 addition provided space for a new, larger print shop and offices for the Ukrainian Labor Farmer Temple Association. It remains the national headquarters for the Workers Benevolent Association established at the temple in 1922.

The temple was a focus for Ukrainian culture and worker and farmer political activism. As a rallying centre for the trade union movement, it was raided by the police during the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. The temple remains the only surviving labour hall associated with the turbulent events of the strike. The Ukrainian Labor News and other Ukrainian language

publications were prepared and distributed from here. The unity of working people is symbolized over the entrance by two clasping hands reaching across the globe underscored with "Workers of the World, Unite!"

I want to congratulate the progressive people who support the Ukrainian Labor Temple for wanting to preserve their building in perpetuity for the people of Manitoba. Also, a thank-you is in order to the Manitoba Heritage Council for agreeing to designate the Labor Temple as a historic site. It is my hope that this stately building will grace the corner of Pritchard and McGregor in the north end for many more years, and its doors will be open for numerous and many concerts and community events.

J.M. Schneider's Plant

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): May I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for St. Boniface have leave? [agreed]

Mr. Gaudry: I wanted to join the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) in regard to the opening of the Schneider plant in St. Boniface this morning. I think St. Boniface has been blessed today with many things.

Prior to attending the official opening of the Schneider plant, I attended the sod-turning ceremony for the archives building at the cultural centre with the Minister of Culture and Heritage, Mrs. Vodrey, where there were 125 people attending the sod-turning ceremony. It was a long-awaited innovation in the community of St. Boniface to preserve the archives of a community that has a long history of Francophone and Metis people. It has been 15 years working, and it has been in co-operation with the Minister of Culture and Heritage and the minister from Ottawa, where they have given the funds for the project. Therefore I would like to congratulate the minister for being there this morning and being part of the festivities.

Madam Speaker, again, for Schneider's, I would like to congratulate them for the opening of their new facilities. I learned, being there this morning, that St. Boniface at one time was known to have the largest

packing plants in the world. Unfortunately, with the changes in the industry, we lost many of the packing plants in St. Boniface, but today it has been turned around and we have Schneider's.

Congratulations and thank you to the people involved in the community, in the province of Manitoba, in Canada. Thank you.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, do I have leave to revert back to Reading and Receiving Petitions?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Radisson have leave to revert back to Reading and Receiving petitions? [agreed]

* (1430)

I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

CRTC Presentation

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

THAT contrary to promises made in 1996 by the provincial government, the majority of shares of the privatized MTS are controlled outside the province of Manitoba; and

THAT on June 16, 1997, MTS requested from the CRTC a \$5 increase per month for 1998, one of the highest increases in the country; and

THAT this follows previous increases ordered by the provincial government in 1996 and 1997; and

THAT these increases mean that for some communities local rates will have doubled since 1995; and

THAT MTS is requesting a rate of return of 12.75 percent per year from CRTC and to do this wants to raise local rates further above the rate cap in the 1998 going-in rates; and

THAT, contrary to promises made by the provincial government, MTS under private ownership is moving rapidly to raise local rates in Manitoba.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the minister of telecommunications make presentations before the CRTC opposing such hikes in local rates.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):

Madam Speaker, would you be so kind as to call bills in the following order: 57, 38, 21, 28, 47, 48, 11, 15, 19, 32, 40, 52, at which time we hope to move to concurrence proceedings and after that bills 50 and 51.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 57—The Highway Traffic Amendment, Summary Convictions Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that Bill 57, The Highway Traffic Amendment, Summary Convictions Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les poursuites sommaires et modifications corrélatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): It is my pleasure to once again put a few words on the record regarding Bill 57, The Highway Traffic Amendment, Summary Convictions Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act. This is also called the red light cameras act, I guess. The intent of the act is quite

obvious. Its purpose is to minimize or reduce the number of right-angle collisions at the intersections in our cities, specifically the city of Winnipeg.

In fact, what is happening is that a number of cameras will be put on some strategic intersections in Winnipeg. I believe there will be four such cameras, although there will be about 12 to 15 intersections targeted. So I guess, in a sense, one will never know when driving in Winnipeg whether or not there is a red light camera on you at that intersection. It reminds me a little bit of that American missile system they had in the southeast where you never knew whether the missile was in site a, b, c or d. It was always moving around. So maybe we are back into some kind of cold war preventative measures here; I do not know.

It certainly will reduce the number of right-angle collisions, which cost the province, I believe, \$90 million a year, and, as the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) pointed out, the lives and the injuries associated with that. So we think it certainly has some serious merit.

There are a few questions, however, Madam Speaker, regarding this bill. The question is the size of the fine, which is \$132, which is almost triple the fine right now when you run a red light.

The other concern that we have with it, apart from the size of the fine which apparently is to produce a lot of money, in this case for the City of Winnipeg, is the fact that we have called what is essentially photo radar by a different name. It is photo radar, but we have such euphemistic labels, such as, I think they call it, photo image capturing devices. It is a little puzzling why we simply cannot call it photo radar because if it is not photo radar it is certainly a second cousin. If it looks like photo radar, smells like photo radar, it has got to be photo radar. But I do believe that the reason it is not called photo radar is because Mike Harris had decided to go away from photo radar in Ontario, and this government wants to distance itself as much as possible from Mike Harris so we have got to use a different name for this baby even though it is almost the same baby.

It is, however, obvious that these devices will save money and will save lives so we cannot help but

support it. We are somewhat concerned though about the way this is being done because very often Tories introduce bills that they look good but there is always another element that is a little bit questionable. It is this second and questionable element that I am concerned about. The member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) calls it sneaking in the Trojan horse—well, perhaps. The concern is that what is the responsibility of the province essentially has been moved to the city who is now in charge of this so-called photo radar, if you like red light radar, if you like photo image capturing devices. It depends how you wish to twist your tongue. The point is that now the city will handle that, and apparently the city then is going to privatize it in the sense that the city will farm it out to a private industry. I have some concerns about that. I mean, the safety direction is, beyond doubt, useful and necessary and we support, but the privatizing out and putting the responsibility further away from the government—you know, back to the City of Winnipeg, back to the private sector—that causes us some concern. We have some concerns that private firms are now in charge of essentially monitoring safety. That is a concern of ours.

So we support the bill, we just have some concern with the shadowy or ironic aspects of the bill. Again I want to point out that that seems to be a pattern in some of these bills; good stuff up front, but if you dig a little bit there is also some negative stuff that we are not particularly keen about. But we do support the bill, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I was not going to speak at this stage of the bill, but the comments from the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) did inspire me here to put a few words. First of all he talked about his concern about the fine. I have no problem with cost recovery because I do not want for those people who are obeying the rules or driving safely that out of their tax dollars should be paid for those people who are constantly running red lights and putting other people in jeopardy. So let the offender pay for the technology needed to stop them from running red lights. I have no problem with cost recovery on the fines.

The second part is, I was anxiously waiting, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) was talking about photo radar, but he never came out and said does he support it or does he not? He raised the spectre, he

danced around it. I do not have a problem saying my position in that I fully support photo radar as a way of saving lives, reducing traffic deaths and injuries. I have no problem, so I will not dance around like the member for Flin Flon tried to do. I support this legislation and the technology and the cost recovery in the fines.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): As the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) was giving a passionate speech on the benefits of photo radar, I know the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) was nodding his head in affirmation, indicating that he, too, supports photo radar and says “absolutely” from his seat. That is really important.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I did want to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 57. It allows police to use for the first time in Manitoba photo enforcement cameras at intersections and railroad crossings—[interjection] No, in Manitoba. It is the first in Canada, so I am told. That is good. The first in Canada; it is always nice to be at the forefront at times, you know. It is a rarity with this government, but it is always nice sometimes to be in the forefront.

Running red lights or not stopping at railroad crossings is not as serious as bank robbery where cameras have long been used to target criminals, but it is a criminal offence that can have a deadly consequence. Those individuals who continuously run red lights eventually find themselves in an accident or will cause some form of an accident, and that often leads to a loss of life. We cannot underestimate the need to do what we can to enforce the traffic regulations that are out there. I think this is a positive thing.

I would comment on two other aspects. I am not convinced just targeting 12 intersections is the way to go. I think you might want to broaden that out, because if people know which intersections—or what will happen is that they go into a regular routine from point A to point B, and they find out there is no photo radar on that particular route, then if there is no spontaneous way of putting photo radar lights or these cameras at different intersections, it will have some limitations on

the ability to be able to enforce red lights actually in more than just 12 key, lighted intersections.

* (1440)

The other concern that I would want to raise is the cost of the fine. It is, it would appear to be, excessive. This is the first time that we are experiencing photo radar. I think what we could have done, quite frankly, was possibly look at not charging as much at the first go-around, and if, in fact, it is not working, then to up the fee. I find it very difficult to believe that it is just seeking cost recovery. When I sit at a red light and I watch other cars go through, and it is not to say that I might have, in the past, had occasion to have maybe gone a little bit too far into a yellow light—in fact, I would say that, yes, it has happened—but we all need to practise better driving habits. I am not convinced in terms of the size of the fine. I understand that you do not get demerits if it is through the photo radar. I also think that is a positive thing in the sense that I do not believe that it would, in fact, be appropriate.

If we do find that there is a great deal of cash that is acquired by this, hopefully, that cash will be put back into our road systems or something of that nature or some better way of ensuring that we are having better traffic flows and so forth. With those few words, it is with pleasure actually that we support this bill.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading of Bill 57, The Highway Traffic Amendment, Summary Convictions Amendment 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 38—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2)

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that Bill 38, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2)

(Loi no 2 modifiant le Code de la route), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, again, I am pleased to rise and to put a few words on record regarding Bill 38, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2). This bill deals with the consequences of drinking and driving, and specifically it deals with reducing the legal limit of the blood alcohol limit for drivers. They are reducing it from 0.08 to 0.05, and if it is at this lower limit, the possibility of suspending a licence for 24 hours. As well, two or more suspensions within three years would result in losing the licence unless the person who lost the licence would take remedial programs, treatment or educational programs.

I think this is going in the right direction, because we want to take drunk drivers off the roads. It is a gray area, though, exactly what constitutes impairment. Also, we feel that this bill does not really do very much with repeat offenders, those people who will drive regardless of whether they have a licence or not. We had suggested to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), who talked about this bill somewhat, that we could look at other jurisdictions who have gone a route that I think we need to go or at least think about going in the near future—and it may go perhaps beyond the scope of this bill right now—and one of those jurisdictions to look at will be Ontario where they have “the three strikes and you are out” legislation.

The other possibility I think we have to look at—and I am sure the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay) will consider looking at that, as well as others, the Minister of Justice—that is a graduated licence scheme for young novice drivers where we do not tolerate any blood alcohol level whatsoever in their novice period, the first year or the second year. That is certainly a direction we could go, Madam Speaker.

There is another aspect of this bill that is a little bit more problematic. In fact, the Minister of Justice at second reading did not allude to this portion of the bill; that is, the portion about seizing vehicles from johns who were involved with teenage prostitutes. This was certainly watered down considerably to the point of

being invisible or camouflaged, and this is puzzling in light of the fact that in the pre-election period—and I am holding here a fine document called *Holding Criminals Responsible: The Filmon Vision, Manitoba Strong*, which will now, I think, qualify for becoming a winner in fiction, if I could just quote a little bit from this piece of propaganda, Madam Speaker: Those soliciting sex from prostitutes will have their vehicles seized. If convicted, the owner of a vehicle used in soliciting a prostitute will permanently forfeit that vehicle.

Well, there is no provision in this bill for seizing a vehicle, so it is another election promise down the tube. I guess it is one of many that have gone down the tube. So this concerns us that not that we were against the tougher stance for drinking drivers, but that this portion had to be brought in via the backdoor and, I think, in an almost dishonest and camouflaged manner. So that concerns us.

There appears to be a lot of tough talk before elections about getting tough on criminals, holding criminals responsible, but after the election the Tories seem to be a bunch of pussycats after all. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Madam Speaker, I, too, want to put some words on the record. I understand that, with respect to this particular bill, drunk drivers will also, from what I understand in this bill, be prevented from challenging screening devices like the breathalyser, and I think the provision for the second test is a fair compromise that will protect both the pedestrian public and the rights of the driver to a fair test. After all, this legislation will not stop those members of the public who choose to drink and drive. The addition of a required educational program for individuals with a couple of 24-hour suspensions over three years that do not warrant arrest, DUI changes, is also a positive step. Safety on our roads should be our prime concern. When I vote for this legislation, I do so because I believe it will offer the people of Manitoba greater protection.

I appreciate some of the concerns that the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) has brought forward, but I guess what I would comment with respect to that is that I am inclined to agree when the member says that the Conservatives made a promise during the last

provincial election and this does not fulfill that particular promise.

But, having said that, this is at least a step—you know, it does not deny the fact that they broke a promise. For that they should be penalized in whatever way we can in terms of the knocking on doors and informing Manitobans and so forth, but, ultimately, it does make a positive step towards having some sort of, at least a tougher stand done against child prostitution or those that exploit prostitution. To that degree, I think that is positive.

This is an issue which I have followed over the years. In fact, Madam Speaker, one of the questions that I had asked my constituents in a questionnaire was: Would you support a minimum 10-year licence suspension for a driver who has been caught drinking and driving for a second time in Manitoba? I was surprised to see that 74 percent said yes compared to only 21 percent who said no, the balance obviously being no opinion or they did not answer the question.

What it demonstrates, I believe, is that there is a great deal of concern about drinking and driving. I can recall the days, and it was not that long ago, where, for many, drinking and driving, it was nothing to do it. In fact, I can recall being in high school, and there was a name, if you got caught and drinking, and it was called a 60. You got a 60. Well, it happened to be a \$60 fine at the time, and it was not even really frowned upon amongst your peers.

A lot has changed since then. The mindset towards drinking and driving has changed, and I think that is very positive. Whenever we can bring in legislation that takes it a little step further, I think that is a positive thing, because what we are doing is we are reflecting the changing attitudes in the public. One could criticize the government, as I would, in terms of not necessarily responding quickly enough to what the public is actually asking us to do with respect to drinking and driving.

* (1450)

With those few words, we are pleased to see it go. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 38, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2).

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed. Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 21—The Jury Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), that Bill 21, The Jury Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jurés), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I did not have an opportunity to speak on this bill at second reading, so I am glad to have this opportunity for a few words at third reading.

I attended the committee hearings on this bill, because I was interested by the prospects of a government that chose to remove from juries their ability to be as widely representative as possible. It seemed to me to go to the heart of what the Tory government is about: a narrowness, a meanness, a disinterest, a lack of concern for the very foundations of justice which are the opportunities for everyone to be examined and judged by a committee of their peers. What this bill does is to remove the payment for jury duties in the first days of a trial, and it does change matters which were brought in by previous governments in Manitoba. It is not that there has never been payment for jury duty in Manitoba. There certainly has, and this government chose, as it has in the area of the Human Rights Commission and so many other areas of the law, to reduce, to limit, to take away from people the right to be part or the ability to be part of juries.

I was most interested, Madam Speaker, by the kinds of comments and questions that were raised at the committee hearings. Several people on the committee,

including myself, raised the issue of whether people who were on welfare would be able to continue as members of the jury. The minister did not know. My clear impression was that the minister did not care. The minister offered to investigate it for us, but we have not heard from him.

Other questions were raised about employment insurance and other forms of transfer payment, whether those stop during jury duty and hence would affect the role of people who had previously been unable to serve on juries because their social service payments would have continued. Again, the minister promised to investigate, but we have heard nothing. But I did find that two phone calls would, in fact, have done it, and that in the case of the City of Winnipeg and in the case of the federal government that the payments do continue. So it was useful to know that.

The minister also continued to argue that Saskatchewan had done this and there were no problems. Well, Madam Speaker, it is true that Saskatchewan has done this, but whether, in fact, there are no problems or not is something which I think the minister is too glib on. In fact, I thought his whole presentation at the committee was very glib, very unpleasant, unworthy of a Minister of Justice and quite disdainful of the issues involved.

I felt very strongly about this bill. A jury is very significant and one of the basic fundamentals of the kind of justice system that we have developed. So any reduction of it, any change, any diminution in the opportunities of citizens to serve on juries strikes me as a fundamental issue that this House is dealing with.

The minister tried to tell us that in Saskatchewan there were no problems. In fact, a phone call to Saskatchewan indicates that is not the case. Saskatchewan has indeed reduced the payments, eliminated the fees in 1992 until the 16th day of the trial. But the practice, if the minister had chosen—and I will have to take his word that he did, in fact, call Saskatchewan, that he did monitor it from Saskatchewan—but the information that we got from calling Saskatchewan was that the trial judges do continue to order fees to be paid from the first day in higher profile or more complicated cases, and the court

operations branch in Saskatchewan has never appealed these requests.

Secondly, Saskatchewan has also monitored this, and as they changed the law they were aware of the conditions that might have changed for the citizens of Saskatchewan. They did choose to monitor it, and they do choose to report on it. What they found is, as one might expect, that the people who are most disadvantaged by this are the people who are self-employed and who are part-time workers.

If you know anything about the Manitoba economy today, you will know that is the fastest growing part of what is any kind of employment growth; it is part-time workers, and it is self-employed. These are the people who, when they do not receive the \$30 a day, seek to be excused from jury duty. So there is a class of distinguishable, of easily identifiable people who are penalized by this.

Had the minister phoned Saskatchewan, had he chosen to monitor in this way, he would have found that out. Saskatchewan is looking at the situation and is preparing recommendations to deal with the injustices that may well be occurring over the longer period.

Both the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) and I at that committee asked the minister to monitor this change that he was introducing into the laws of Manitoba. I asked him to monitor it on the basis that I have already expressed this afternoon, that there are people who are being disadvantaged, that we are changing possibly the composition of juries, and the very fundamental right of people to be judged by their peers in our justice system is being altered.

The minister said that he would indeed monitor it, and so I went a next step: Who was monitoring it? What questions will they be asking, and to whom will they be reporting? That was where the minister showed himself at his most arrogant, at his most disdainful and, I do not believe, served well the position of Minister of Justice. The minister refused to disclose what questions he would be asking. He refused to report on the monitoring of this, while continuing to argue that indeed he was monitoring it.

I think this is a fundamental issue. It speaks to the heart of the meanness, the narrowness of this Tory government. I think it is a shame, and I think the minister's behaviour on this was a shame.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): I, too, would like to add my remarks to Bill 21.

I would like to refer back to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and some of the conclusions that Commissioners Sinclair and Hamilton came up with. Speaking directly to Bill 21, and what we believe it does not take into consideration a huge element of society, particularly when you consider that for the most part people that do wind up in trouble are usually people from the lower income element of our society.

According to the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the work that they did, they felt that a jury should represent a cross-section of the community. I do not feel proud in saying this, but the jails in this country, in this province particularly, and in the federal penitentiary, a good number of our people that are doing time there are aboriginal people unfortunately in the provincial jails at any given time.

At The Pas correctional centre, it is not unheard of to have 80 percent minimum aboriginal representation in that jail and sometimes upwards of up to 100 percent at that correction centre. As well, we have Headingley, Brandon, Dauphin and also the other correctional centres in this province including Dauphin that have nowhere under 50 percent of the inmates being aboriginal.

What the commissioners of the AJI talked about was that the jury system in Manitoba is a glaring example of systemic discrimination against aboriginal people. Studies conducted during the inquiry confirmed that aboriginal people were underrepresented on juries in northern Manitoba and are almost completely absent from juries in the city of Winnipeg. Of all the ways that aboriginal people are underrepresented in the justice system, this is one of the most disturbing.

Jurors, after all, require no special training or skills according to the AJI commissioners. Further, they go on to say if a significant portion of that public is not properly represented on juries, it would not be

surprising to discover that a portion of the public never comes to view the justice system as anything other than a foreign or imposed system.

Further, Sinclair and Hamilton in the AJI, page 379 state: "that aboriginal people are not properly represented on juries, even on juries trying an aboriginal person accused of committing an offence against another aboriginal person in an aboriginal community."

Now, I know that there have been minor steps taken to rectify this problem, but so far we have waited and waited since 1991, when the tabling of the AJI occurred. It was widely embraced by the aboriginal community in this province, by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, by the Manitoba Metis Federation, by the Indigenous Women's Collective, by the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg.

At that time, I was involved with the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and I served on the executive for the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. We came to this government and suggested ways of how we could best deliver and implement the major recommendations of the AJI, but unfortunately this government at that time did not feel that our recommendations were appropriate and proper, but the whole subject of juries, and an aboriginal person being judged by his own peers was a very important part of the AJI. They went into great detail and spent many hours in trying to get details of this and my colleague the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) talked about what they have done in Saskatchewan.

* (1500)

The AJI commissioners with their staff went to places like Arizona to get details of how things like this were done. I would like to give you an example, an illustration of the lack of aboriginal involvement on juries was seen at the opening of the assizes in Winnipeg on September 28, 1988. There were about 120 people appearing on a jury panel from which juries for several cases were to be selected. Of these 120, only one appeared to be an aboriginal person.

A similar study was undertaken to on January 30, 1989, at the northern city of Thompson, and aboriginal

people accounted for 36 percent of the jury panel members present, which means they were representative of the number of aboriginal people in the Thompson judicial centre. But the three juries constituted from this panel contained only two aboriginal people each. So this means that aboriginal people accounted for only 17 percent of those two juries that I just talked about. The exception—and I want to move to the city of Winnipeg. According to the study of the AJI, it determined that aboriginal people were underrepresented on the Winnipeg judicial centre's jurors' roll.

I could cite further, in great detail, some of the findings of the AJI, and particularly in Winnipeg, where it is estimated that the aboriginal population is about 60,000 in the city of Winnipeg. As I say, for the most part, many people, unfortunately, that have come to trial and are eventually sentenced are aboriginal people, but this is not reflected in the way the juries are eventually selected. Rarely do you see an aboriginal person on any juries.

Of particular concern to the AJI is that in many communities aboriginal people are underrepresented on jury panels, and when aboriginal people are present on jury panels, the AJI believes that both prosecutors and defence attorneys have used their preemptory challenges and stand-asides to screen aboriginal people out of the jury system.

The other problem is that the travel costs associated with serving on juries, particularly in remote Manitoba, are not paid in advance, but reimbursed after the fact. This is another factor which, we believe, causes many aboriginal people sometimes to choose to disregard a summons or to ask the sheriff to be excused from service because it is already an added burden, a financial burden on many of these people who ordinarily would not mind serving on a jury but because of circumstances, because people work in a traditional economy. Some are commercial fishermen; some are trappers; some hunt for a living to provide for their families.

This bill flies against the notion and the recommendations contained in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, therefore. In the recommendations that the AJI concluded—that is, when a sheriff grants an exemption

from jury duty, the person who is exempted be replaced with someone from the same community. Again, we have seen evidence that this has not occurred. Every person called for jury duty who is not granted an exemption be required to attend and summons be enforced even when sufficient juries have responded.

Madam Speaker, I just want to, again, further make the point that aboriginal people—in order for aboriginal people to feel a part, like Manitobans, as they rightly are, in order for them to become involved—and we hear every day in this House that First Nations people are Manitobans as well and are equal and are treated equally under the law, et cetera. But, when it comes to participation on juries, what we find is that they have no participation on juries because simply, for the most part, they cannot afford it. This bill, again, is contributing to aboriginal people being excluded in participating in something that Manitobans should all be involved with.

So, again, it is something that I believe excludes aboriginal peoples' participation in the justice system further.

The recommendations of the AJI again reiterated that jurors be drawn from within 40 kilometres of the community in which a trial is to be held. They further went on to say that, in the event that there is a need to look elsewhere for jurors, that jurors be selected from a community as similar as possible demographically and culturally to the community where the offence took place. In urban areas, juries be drawn from specific neighbourhoods of the town or city in which victims and accused reside. So the whole notion of jury and a person being judged by his peers will take full effect if that were the case and if this government had been listening to the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

Now, the Manitoba jury act they recommended be amended to permit an aboriginal person who does not speak and understand either French or English but who speaks and understands an aboriginal language like Cree or Ojibway or Dene or Dakota and is otherwise qualified to serve as a juror in any action or proceeding that may be tried by a jury, and that, in some cases, translation services be provided. I believe that this is still workable. I believe that this is a possibility, that

aboriginal peoples' participation in matters like this has to—and it is being overlooked by this bill.

So as my colleague, the MLA for Wolseley, and I am sure will be added by my colleague, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh)—this bill simply excludes again the working poor, people on fixed incomes. Most particularly, what is troubling, Madam Speaker, is aboriginal people again are made to feel left out of the justice system even though this province takes pride in saying that it has acted on a number of the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

In the meantime, we in the opposition are still waiting, after several letters to this government asking how many of the recommendations of the AJI have been acted upon. It is 293, and a hundred of them directly relate to the provincial government. So what we feel this bill does is that it does not take into consideration a very important element of society, the aboriginal people, who, unfortunately, for the most part, are more likely to be in trouble with the law than any other element of society. Thank you.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I think, of all the justice bills that I have seen in my years in the Chamber, this is certainly one of the most disturbing. It really goes to the heart of what is a fundamental equalizer in society, and that is the jury. I have seen how this government has been prepared to stand aside as a huge and permanent underclass develops in this province; in fact, not just stand aside but exacerbate the development of that underclass. At the same time, it is prepared to introduce legislation like this, which will exclude them even more so from participation in society and the important obligation and right to be able to judge one's peers.

* (1510)

The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) spoke about Saskatchewan. I just wanted to add one other observation. The minister relishes in trying to find some jurisdiction elsewhere in Canada, preferably one that is under an NDP government, to excuse going to the bottom of the pile. He always looks for the lowest common denominator and then puts us there. Saskatchewan did not have the benefit of an Aboriginal Justice Inquiry; Manitoba did. To compare what

Saskatchewan has done to what Manitoba is doing is not right. It is one thing to go down a road in ignorance; it is quite another to go down a road knowing full well that what you are doing is wrong.

The member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) spoke eloquently about the recommendations from the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry which said we have to try to be more inclusionary. We have to try to get greater representation for aboriginal peoples on our juries. They found it really to be one of the most disturbing aspects of their inquiry, and yet the bill before us will go diametrically in the opposite direction to the recommendations of AJI. That is this government's view of the role of aboriginal peoples in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

The minister says, well, the reason we are doing this is because, well, sure, there is a cost saving—and I wonder what the actual cost of the saving is—but says that the per diem rate is only \$30 and that is not enough, so let us get rid of it. That makes me wonder: what is their view, what is their proposal to do with dealing with welfare rates, if that is their logic? This is elitist legislation. It is so wrong, and I deeply regret it.

We observed, I will say in conclusion, this fall in the jury selection process that only of 70 potential jurors two appeared to be aboriginal, numbers comparable to those from 1988 and cited by my honourable colleague from Rupertsland. This bill is immoral, and I am so sorry that this government has chosen to introduce it.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 21, The Jury Amendment Act.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: 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.

Formal Vote

Mr. Mackintosh: Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Order, please. The question before the House is third reading, Bill 21, The Jury Amendment Act.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 26, Nays 22.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

Bill 28—The Emergency Measures Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that Bill 28, The Emergency Measures Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mesures

d'urgence et modifications corrélatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, we will be voting against this bill, and there are a number of reasons why.

This government had an opportunity to accept amendments to the bill that would have allowed for claimant advocates to be instituted as part of the appeal process. This is in view of the fact and in light of the fact that as we speak we are getting over the largest flood disaster in the history of the province. We had a demonstration last night in front of the building. We have stories from a number of people indicating the troubles they have had so far in this process of getting the settlements adjusted. All we had suggested is that, in addition to the changes that the government was making to this process, they allow these claimants to have advocates working on their behalf when their appeals go before the appeal board.

It is clear to us, Madam Speaker, that by the time the people get to the point where they are in the final stages of their settlement—if that ever should happen under this government in the near future—there are certainly a number of them who are going to be faced with the appeal process. They are going to be looking at an appeal process that they do not necessarily understand; they are not familiar with, and they are going to have even more troubles.

We suggested during the committee procedures that, if this government wanted to anticipate some of the problems of the biggest flood ever, a loss that had not yet been determined in terms of size and complexity and scope, it could save itself and the people affected by this a good deal of grief if they would simply adopt this, what we thought was a good suggestion to have these claimant advisors.

I will say that while the minister was voting against this idea and this amendment, while he was voting against it, he put on the record that, in fact, it probably was a good idea, and, in fact, they might regret in the future not adopting our ideas. Anyway, with those comments, Madam Speaker, I end my comments.

* (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I too want to put some words on the record with respect to Bill 28. We did not get quite the chance to speak to it in second reading, so I chose this time to do so.

This amendment amalgamates the Disaster Financial Assistance board with the Emergency Measures Organization. As all Manitobans are aware, the Emergency Measures Organization demonstrated they were quite able to handle the flood of the century. The flood, however, is not over. There is still the small matter of financial compensation, and I say that somewhat tongue in cheek, of course. This was the responsibility of the Financial Assistance board.

As the minister has admitted, there is a backlog of these cases. I can also attest to this backlog since many of these people have phoned our caucus office demanding, if you like, information and action on their claims. Of course, I understand the problem faced by the government. I believe they are doing what they can to relieve this backlog, but I get frustrated at times when they prefer to issue press releases to gain attention in the media rather than concentrate on the job at hand. It seems that the government media machine works better than the assessment process at times. Yet I believe it is the assessment process that should work better than the media machine. I guess that gives you an idea of the priorities, this government's priorities. Still this bill before the House today attempts to streamline how Manitoba deals with disasters. It is ironic that it would appear before us today for debate just after the flood of the century. Perhaps that is good since in other years matters like this would receive very little attention.

I know from previous thoughts and questions with regard to the appeal board, there has been concern in terms of making sure that anyone who is seeking that compensation is provided an appeal mechanism that is going to be fair and they are not going to unduly have to go through some sort of a rigamarole that does not bring them quick justice in terms of being able to resolve their issues. That has been somewhat of a concern that we have had, and we have asked questions with respect to it. Having said that, we do see merits to

the bill and, therefore, will actually be voting in favour of Bill 28.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 28.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: No?

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, 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.

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Order, please. The question before the House is third reading, Bill 28, The Emergency Measures Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

Division

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

Yeas

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Filmon, Findlay, Gaudry, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Laurendeau, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Penner, Pitura, Praznik,

Radcliffe, Reimer, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Nays

Ashton, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Jennissen, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 29, Nays 19.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

Bill 47—The Adoption and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Toews), that Bill 47, The Adoption and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur l'adoption et modifications corrélatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): This bill allows for the licensing of adoption agencies and the licensing of private practitioners. We believe this is the privatization of adoption processes. We are concerned because we believe that this is going to provide certain benefits to certain people, but it is going to impose a cost on individuals who go this route.

In doing research in preparation for speaking on this bill, I found a very interesting article in Canadian Social Trends for September 1994 on adoption in Canada. We know that adoption can be a very expensive process. This survey by Statistics Canada found that private agency facilitated adoptions cost an average of \$3,610 compared with \$3,460 for independent practitioners. There are additional costs which may include administrative fees or other birth parent expenses which can increase the average cost of adoption to \$5,870 for private agencies and to \$4,530 for independent practitioners, and those figures were for 1994, so I am sure that they are higher now.

Who will this bill benefit? It will benefit organizations with social service or religious thrusts. It will benefit private individuals and professionals in the legal or medical field to have a vested interest. Primarily, I believe, it will benefit lawyers. The minister has said that this new system will be more friendly, and I think we need to ask the question, for whom? I believe the answer is for those who can afford to pay.

The most contentious part of this bill has to do with the confidentiality, disclosure and post-adoption registry. Certainly, we heard presentations from mainly one side of this issue of those who want the adoption records to be fully accessible, but the government decided to maintain the confidentiality of existing adoption records. I think probably all of us as members of the Legislature were lobbied by a group called post-adoption Links and we heard from presenters at the committee stage of the bill from people such as Darcy Lyons.

She is an adoptee who spoke eloquently about her search for her birth parents. She spoke about her losses around her birth parents, her heritage, her ethnic origin and her identity. I think that probably post-adoption Links are disappointed that the government did not go far enough and open up all records except where a disclosure veto is registered. I think we will have to wait until the next time The Adoption Act is amended, and perhaps by then the current government or the next government can assess the experience in British Columbia and see if it is overwhelmingly positive or not and make a decision at that time as to whether there should be changes which are more in keeping with the current B.C. legislation.

We are also concerned about the fee for service for adoption assessments. The government says there have been no tax increases. In fact, that is one of the themes, maybe even a mantra, of this government. We hear over and over again that there have been no tax increases. Of course, they are referring in a narrow sense to income tax increases and even then it is not true because of bracket creep. However, we see this as another example of offloading a cost from society to individuals which affects the poor and the middle class but will have no effect on the rich.

* (1540)

I think there are perhaps two items that the minister can be commended on. One is the fact that she brought in a new act, and she has said, and I agree, that the main reason for this and the main benefit of this is that it takes adoption out of the child protection realm and separates it from child protection. That is basically what a new act has done, and that is a good thing. One of the few—well, I guess there are many minor things in this bill, maybe some not so minor things in this bill that people will view positively, for example, the fully active searches I think will benefit many people.

So with those few comments, we are going to vote on this bill. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I, too, would like to put a few words on the record. The adoption of a child is one of the greatest joys but for many it is a sad time. For every mother and father that is created, another parent, in many cases, loses. I should not say "in many cases," in all cases, lose their son or their daughter. They may not see each other for another 30 years or longer. This legislation reflects that choice.

Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters under this legislation will be kept apart longer because an adopted child will not have the right to know his or her parents. Bill 47 also reduces the number of days from 10 to two regarding the waiting period for the signing of surrender of guardianship. According to the minister, this is too long for the baby to be left in a neutral position, and yet she is willing to let a child go a lifetime without letting them know who their parents are.

It is one of those bills where I have received similar correspondence, and there was one that had really somewhat caught my eye. It was brought to my attention from a couple of people; it was the same issue, but a couple of people. It was in reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in which it really calls into question in terms of why the government would not have taken action that would bring the legislation at least in part in line with something that they supposedly supported in principle back on December 13, '91, with respect to the UN

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 2, 7 and 8. I am sure that members have a copy of it, but in case they do not, Madam Speaker, I did want to read at least in part. That was Article 7(1): The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and as far as possible the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.

Article 8 states, No. 1, that parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law, without unlawful interference. There are a few others that are in here, and for those who want to read it, as I say, it comes from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Canada and Manitoba on December 13, 1991. I would strongly recommend members to read it in its entirety. Knowing who you are and getting a better understanding of your heritage is a very important aspect in life and in growing and so forth, and that is why we have a great deal of concern the government would not have taken a more positive step at trying to allow for people to become in better tune with who they are and some of their background.

With those few words, we are prepared to allow the vote.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 47.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, 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.

Formal Vote

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Order, please. The question before the House is third reading, Bill 47.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Ashton, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Jenmissen, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Madam Deputy Clerk (Bev Bosiak): Yeas 26, Nays 22.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

REPORT STAGE

Bill 48—The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): By leave, Madam Speaker, and on behalf of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), I move, seconded by the honourable

Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), that Bill 48, The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille et modifications corrélatives), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave? [agreed]

Motion agreed to.

* (1550)

THIRD READINGS

Bill 48—The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):

By leave, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that Bill 48, The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille et modifications corrélatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable government House leader have leave? [agreed]

Motion presented.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I am interested in putting a few comments on the record with respect to Bill 48, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act. I was interested to sit in on the committee hearings to hear the public presentations there on the bill, as well as to hear some of the public presentations on the consultations prior to this act being developed. I think that it is interesting to compare some of the things that the government was saying prior to the bill and some of the things coming from the public in terms of Child and Family Services legislation and now looking at the bill that we have here before us in the House.

This legislation has a number of different sections dealing with the child abuse committee for the Child Abuse Registry—the issue of payments to parents for children in care of the agency of Child and Family Services; proposed reporting of investigation results, whether or not there were findings of abuse, and I understand that has been amended and withdrawn from the bill; the issue of access to children in care by extended family members; as well as the shortening of the time required for an agency to have full particulars ready to be filed in court to seven days.

I just want to make a few comments with respect to two of these. Firstly, in terms of the payments of fees to Child and Family Services agencies by parents when their children are taken into care, the first thing I want to say is that we support this in principle. Those parents that have had their child taken into care, if they have the means, especially if there have been convictions and they have been found to be neglecting or abusing their children, are still responsible providing for the care of those children. However, we have concerns that there are lots of unanswered questions with respect to this area, that there are lots of unanswered questions about the schedule, about what is going to be defined as low income. This bill, remember, is coming from the minister who said love is all you need. This is the minister that said that children living in families below the poverty line really are not living in poverty. So we have a lot of concern about how this government is going to define low income.

I would remind the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) that I had a similar situation to this with respect to Bill 60 under The Elderly and Infirm Persons' Housing Amendment Act, and in that case, the Minister for Housing did indeed provide me with the information for what he termed the modesty standard for the square footage for seniors housing that was no longer going to be exempt from paying property school tax. In that case, we could get a better idea of what we were being asked to vote on. In this case, we are being given no opportunity to understand what this government is going to be dealing with and how they are going to assess need.

The other issue that I want to talk a little bit about is dealing with the new requirement for Child and Family

Services to have their information ready to go to court within seven days. All of the staff that commented on the bill at the committee had concerns about this area. They had concerns that there were not going to be enough resources in the agencies to deal with this, that it was going to draw resources away from dealing with emergencies because they would have to focus their attention on dealing with the necessary paperwork.

Even though it would be advantageous to have court decisions and things move to court as quickly as possible, I am concerned that the minister does not realize that this is going to require increased resources in the agency and it is actually going to have an effect where there may be reduced amount of time and reduced visits for staff with Child and Family Services available to make their assessment. What could happen, as I think often happens now in Child and Family Services agencies, is staff make their decisions with an eye to err on the side of caution. We could, in fact, then see increased recommendations for longer times for children to be taken into care.

The minister says this is not going to have an effect on the time for investigations, and I guess we will just have to see how this plays out and how it is going to affect the duties and the work of Child and Family Services staff.

* (1600)

Generally, I want to say that this minister has not seemed to really acknowledge the difficult situation that Child and Family Services staff are in, that often they feel that they are in a no-win situation. They are in a situation of, do they continue to take children away from their families into care and at the risk then of being criticized as child snatchers, or do they risk on the other hand leaving children in families and in situations where they are at risk?

In that case, there are calls for inquiry and the need for amendments to legislation. Indeed, that is why we are seeing this legislation here today, we believe, because under this government over the last 10 years, there has been such a dramatic increase in the number of children in care in the province of Manitoba where we now have the esteemed distinction of having the

most children in care of our child protection agencies per capita in the country. It is a huge problem.

The legislation was supposed to have dealt with a number of different areas that were stated prior to the legislation that are not in this bill. One of the ones that I want to speak about is in the area of implementing a consistent risk-assessment system to help workers assess children who may be at risk. This is from the Family Services blueprint for child care reform, as was outlined in the Free Press on July 26, 1996.

One of the things that we heard over and over again, whether it was in the community consultations or whether it was in the committee hearings on Bill 48, was the need to address the relationship between poverty and increased children being taken into care, increase in harm and neglect of children. That is not to say that abuse does not occur across all socioeconomic status in any type of family throughout the province, but we heard presentations tell the committee that between 80 and 90 percent of the cases of children in care have families that are on social allowance. There has to be acknowledgement that there is a relationship then between the cuts to social allowance and the increase in poverty in our province and the increases in cases due to pressure on families and the stress on families who are suffering hardship.

The Social Planning Council had a good recommendation in their brief, which the minister ended up saying in committee that she agreed with, so one of the concerns that I have is, this is not in the legislation. While the government is now having Child and Family Services staff have increased responsibilities for collecting financial information on families who are having their children taken into care, they are not going to do anything with that information other than have a decision if the parents are going to have to pay into the care. The recommendation from the Social Planning Council, which I think is a good one and should be supported, is that that financial information also be part of the assessment. The assessment that is part of the blueprint for child welfare reform should include an assessment on finances and on poverty and how poverty is a risk for children being neglected or needing the services of Child and Family Services.

What we would suggest to the minister, that if she does support this recommendation, which I want to read into the record, the Social Planning Council recommended that The Child and Family Services Act be amended to require agencies to provide or arrange financial support to families where financial stress is a factor in placing children at risk, that if you are going to collect this financial information, if you are going to find that families are suffering because of poverty, that this is contributing to their children being at risk, then there has to be an onus either for Child and Family Services to do the work or to ensure that that work is going to be referred to another agency, so that family will be able to get help in developing plans.

The minister had said there are other agencies that could help with that. There are other government programs that could help with it. She has had recommendations through her Children and Youth Secretariat reports, for example, that the shelter allowance for family renters should be utilized more. That is the kind of assistance that families may not know about that they could benefit from, and we want to see that happen. I think that given that the minister says that she supports this kind of recommendation, we would really want to see that the assessment of risk would include risk related to poverty and low income. That would become part of what Child and Family Services is responsible for, if not for themselves, because we are concerned about giving more and more responsibilities to the staff at Child and Family Services, then through government of linking to other agencies or community agencies, using the services of the Children and Youth Secretariat which I think this matter should be referred to so that it is not lost in the shuffle and we do not see it simply overstepped.

That is the main point that I wanted to make besides the other two significant parts of the so-called blueprint for child welfare reform which we are reviewing, monitoring and enforcing service standards to families and children, as well as instituting compliance audits to ensure appropriate services are delivered. Both of these the minister has said were not appropriately dealt with through legislation. We are going to again have to just be vigilant and watch that these are put in place in the agency through just policy changes and organizational changes. They are significant. They are, I think, what is at the heart of what has to be done to ensure that

Child and Family Services is able to deal with that situation, that very difficult situation I described earlier that staff in Child and Family Services face when they are trying to make the decision of bringing children into care or not.

The minister's approach over and over again has seemed to try and deal with the pressures on Child and Family Services by talking about offloading more and more responsibilities on to community agencies and on to families. We have serious concerns about that. We hope that these new policies that she is going to be bringing in will not be removing the responsibility that we all share for children from families that are not working.

The minister in her comments has said that the government does not make a good parent, but the government is representative of our collective responsibility as a society and we have to acknowledge that when families are not working that government must step in. We have to have strong provisions in Child and Family Services legislation policy to ensure that that will indeed happen.

With those comments I would just like to say that because of some of the concerns that we have, we are not going to be supporting this legislation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, there has been a great deal of concern expressed with respect to Bill 48. I think in the committee meetings it was demonstrated that there are a lot of problems with what the government is doing, and a lot of it is resource-based in the sense that if, in fact, this bill passes, the concern then becomes how are you going to expect the workers to be able to administer this particular bill and still deal with the same types of caseloads that they have today?

There is just a great deal of concern with respect to that. I know the former member for Osborne, Norma McCormick, was one of those presenters and had expressed a great deal of concern with respect to it, along with many others, and articulated as to why this particular bill should not be moving forward.

From what I understand, Madam Speaker, to illustrate the point that the formal notification of the hearing now

is being reduced, I believe, from five to two days, while a court case is, itself, from 30 days to seven days. That means there is going to have to be a lot more work done in a shorter time span, which is, in fact, going to cause a great deal of problems, according to what I have been told. I am not convinced that the minister has been listening to some of the same people from within the social services that have been expressing these concerns.

There was a great deal of concern, from what I understand, raised with respect to bill collectors. That is, in fact, what you are forcing the social worker to become under this particular legislation. On the one hand, what we are saying to the social worker is that we want you not only just to apprehend the child but, ideally, to make the atmosphere such that you can return the child to the home.

* (1610)

Madam Speaker, if you throw in that they have to also collect money at the same time, maybe not every case, but in many cases that will become an impediment in terms of them being able to create that positive atmosphere for the return of the child. That, in essence, is why it is, when we look at this legislation, that at the very best it would be extremely premature. I would suggest that it is just not practical.

I notice that there is one aspect—I think the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) is going to put a few words on the record because he does, I know, appreciate the efforts from the minister with respect to the grandparents, which is actually one aspect that I would applaud the minister on doing, but the principle of the bill is something which we have a great deal of trouble with.

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, just a few comments, like the member for Inkster has mentioned that we applaud the minister for the section on grandparents. I had proposed a private members' bill, and, if it would have passed, it would have passed unanimously, I am sure.

In listening to the grandparents over the last couple of years in requesting such a bill, it gave me pleasure in presenting the bill in the Legislature here. I wish it

would have passed, but with this bill that has come forward I think the concerns have been expressed from the official opposition and by the member for Inkster here. With these few words, I, again, applaud the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) for the work she has put in for the grandparents.

I know the members from the Grand Society were concerned with the fact the word “grandparents” was not there, but I think they were made aware of the fact that the definition of “family” was included in the act, and they were satisfied with the fact that the “family” included grandparents, uncles and so forth.

With these few words, Madam Speaker, I will end the comments.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to wind up debate on this important bill. I note that it was the last bill to come out of committee. The government wanted to begin clause by clause the same night that we heard public presentations, which would have meant at 3 a.m. Fortunately, we decided to conclude Bill 47 and not start Bill 48, and went back and did this clause by clause during the day time, a much more sensible way to deal with such an important bill.

I would like to make it clear that, although we asked a lot of questions about orders for payment of maintenance, the reason we voted against that clause is because we are concerned about the ability to pay and asked the minister for the sliding scale, but it was not available yet. We were concerned about the amount of income level and the contribution level, but that sort of information will be in the regulations. We will just have to wait and see whether it is going to be a hardship for middle income or working families or not.

Our main concerns about this bill had to do and have to do with the Child Abuse Registry process. This is certainly a tough issue for all of us, because alleged abusers have rights and children have rights and need protection from abusers. We believe that this bill gives more rights to alleged abusers but does not increase rights or protection for children.

We had a letter from Dr. Charles Ferguson who wrote to the minister and also presented a brief at the

committee stage. I think that we should listen very carefully to people like him because Dr. Charlie Ferguson is the leading expert on child abuse in the province of Manitoba. His letter was signed by all the members of the local child abuse committees in Winnipeg. I believe about 30 individuals signed the letter to the minister. He is concerned that under the new process where local child abuse committees will hear allegations, that we are going to lose the experts from those committees, that we are going to lose volunteers, and that local committees are going to be overburdened because they may have to meet as often as weekly.

Another concern that I did not mention in the committee but I will raise now are the two Child and Family Services agencies that I believe the minister identified during Estimates that have no local child abuse committee, and we certainly hope that this minister will insist that those agencies have child abuse committees. Perhaps in the past they could get away with it because they could just forward names to the provincial Child Abuse Registry committee, but now that that is gone, certainly all local Child and Family Services agencies must have a child abuse committee. So we will be following up with the minister to see that that actually happens.

We have some concerns under the child protection sections of this bill. We believe though that going to court sooner is better for children and better for families, and that was certainly the message that I got from the front-line Child and Family Services workers that I spoke to, and that is why their concerns about having to file particulars and the workload—I described as workload issues—we think that can be addressed by the minister or the agencies either being provided with more resources or reallocating existing resources so that those issues are taken care of.

We also heard from one staff person that it is conceivable that all 10 of their staff in protection could be involved in going to court or doing paperwork, I guess, and that there would be no one available to respond to emergencies. Certainly, that was a very serious concern that was raised, and the agency and the minister are going to have to make sure that when people are tied up with the court process that there is

still enough staff to make sure that someone is available to respond to emergencies.

We have been lobbied extensively by the Grand Society, all of us here. I had the pleasure of attending one of their meetings about a year ago and the stories that they told, both in committee and at the meeting that I attended, are very poignant. Certainly, it is very sad when a grandparent is denied access to a grandchild. I think that the minister was successful in reassuring them that the amended clause in this bill takes care of their right to access, and that they basically got what it was that they were lobbying for and that those who have been denied access will be given access.

I would also like to thank the minister for bringing in I think it was nine amendments. Most were technical, but a couple were substantial. It does not happen very often that a minister brings in substantial amendments, but it shows that this minister was listening to some of the presenters, certainly listening to the Manitoba Law Society, I believe it was, and so I called one of the amendments the Suche amendment after the presenter. I think that those amendments will clarify some of the issues that were raised by presenters.

We are concerned that Manitoba has the highest per capita number of children in care in Canada. I guess a question that we need to ask is: Will Bill 48 reduce the number of children coming into care? Will it have an impact? Will it have a positive impact on the extraordinarily large numbers of children coming into care?

We know from the environmental scan that was done for Winnipeg Child and Family Services that we have quoted from many times both in Question Period and in Estimates and other places, that the environmental scan identified—and I believe this was from interviews with the staff of Winnipeg Child and Family Services—three risk factors which cause children to come into care. Those are being aboriginal, being a single parent, and being poor.

I think those are all areas that this minister and this government could have a positive impact on, for example, implementing the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry; doing something about job creation for aboriginal people; improving the housing

conditions of aboriginal people, as was suggested in Question Period today by the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli). So even though people cannot do anything about their ancestry when they are born, this government, if they choose and if they want to be proactive, can do something about the living conditions of these people in a positive way so that their children do not end up in care.

Similarly with single parents, this minister talks frequently about single parents and her concern for single parents but, when she talks about examples, all we hear about is Andrews Street Family Centre and Head Start, which is a federal program, and about some other programs like FAST, but I do not think programs are enough to solve the problem, because they are helping a fairly small number of individuals.

* (1620)

I think they are significant and I think they are positive and beneficial for the people who can benefit from them, but I believe we have about 7,000 children whose parents are on social assistance in the city of Winnipeg, on city social services, and I think we need to—well, I want to encourage this government to be proactive for all children who are low income, because we have identified that poverty or the environmental scan has identified that poverty is one of the reasons or risk factors why children come into care. So I think this minister can do much, much more when it comes to single parents, including her government taking initiatives to lower the rate of adolescent pregnancy, which is also very high in the province of Manitoba.

We know that there is going to be a new child tax benefit, but all the money is being clawed back from people on social assistance, and we are waiting to see how this government is going to reallocate the money to benefit children and whether it is going to go into daycare, as the minister has indicated it might, or what other kinds of programs it is going to go into in order to lower the risk of children being taken into care.

Of course, the third one that was identified is poverty. We know that this government has cut social assistance rates. They forced the City of Winnipeg to cut the social assistance rates by standardizing welfare rates and, of the three risk factors identified, certainly the

provincial government could have the greatest impact on the distressingly high level of poverty in the province of Manitoba. So even if not all of the issues that we are concerned about were addressed in the bill, there are other ways that this government can show initiative.

We certainly hope that the provisions of this bill cut down on child abuse and cut down on the number of children coming into care, cut down the number of children living in hotels, an average of 42 in the month of February this year, but we will be watching the minister, and we will be dogging the minister to do something about some of these extremely serious social problems whereby children become victims. In many cases this has influences for the rest of their life in terms of education standards and income and health outcomes, all of which frequently end up costing the government more money.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading of Bill 48.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, 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.

Formal Vote

Mr. Martindale: A recorded vote, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

* (1630)

Order, please. The question before the House is third reading, Bill 48, The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 26, Nays 21.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

House Business

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, after we have completed deliberations on Bill 11, would you insert Bill 54 before moving to Bill 15.

REPORT STAGE

Bill 11—The Northern Affairs Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I move, on behalf of the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman), seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that Bill 11, The Northern Affairs Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les Affaires

du Nord), reported from the Standing Committee on Economic Development, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 11—The Northern Affairs Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that Bill 11, The Northern Affairs Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les Affaires du Nord), with the leave of the House, be now read a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave? [agreed]

Motion presented.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): On behalf of our critic, I want to put a few words on the record. This bill deals with some changes in the process by which Northern Affairs communities can become incorporated. We did review it. We, in particular, made sure that we consulted with the Northern Association of Community Councils, and they have no difficulty with it.

I want to just say on the record, I wish the government would do the same kind of consulting, when it brings in other types of legislation, that we have done as an opposition. On every bill, we have contacted the relevant groups, organizations and individuals who might be affected. I found it particularly unfortunate with Bill 55, for example, that we had to bring into this Legislature a request from the MKO, which represents many bands in northern Manitoba, that the government consult over Bill 55.

So when we support this bill, we support it because it is supported by northerners and the NACC, which, by the way, is the Northern Association of Community Councils, a group that dates back to the early 1970s, established by a number of people. In fact, I had a good chance to visit with Kip Thompson in Ilford, who was one of the founders of NACC; I actually got to visit on his 70th birthday. I think it is important to recognize the importance of consulting with groups like

the NACC, the MKO. We even suggested on the telephone bill that the government might want to listen to UMM and MAUM.

I find it unfortunate that this government—I do not know if I will get much of an opportunity later; I may have a few words to say, with some of the rest of us. I think there are signs of an increasingly out-of-touch and arrogant group on the other side. I say increasingly; I thought they had reached the height, but the disdain for people who do not agree with them is amazing. You know, they do not want to listen, Madam Speaker. We saw that yesterday in terms of flood victims, but they are ignoring whole groups and organizations, whole segments of society. I say to the government, just talk to some of the groups and individuals who are involved with this. Listen to them. Stop being so arrogant on so many issues. I think you will learn a lot.

In the years I have been an MLA, I have found that the most important thing—and this may come as a surprise, we can give all the great speeches in this House, but the most important thing that you can ever do as an MLA is to listen. I wish you would listen to MKO on Bill 55. We listened to the NACC on this bill, and I wish you would listen more clearly to what many northerners are talking about. This bill, I mean it is fine to talk in an abstract sense about autonomy for Northern Affairs communities, but the fact is you need an economic base, you need infrastructure.

We had an opportunity before with one community, not a Northern Affairs community, but the community of Pukatawagan, they need road access. In my own area, Thicket Portage, Repap is going to be very close, so we have an opportunity to put all-weather road access in. We have communities that still do not have complete infrastructure, and I say that should be the commitment over the next number of years to give communities the infrastructure and the economic base so that they can develop the level of autonomy, indeed, even to incorporate in the same fashion that many other communities do. I know there are communities looking at that, but what they are looking at first is an economic base.

That, by the way, is sadly lacking and, in fact, the government, instead of helping many Northern Affairs communities, I believe, has been hurting them by the lack of any kind of economic development, particularly

as we had in the '80s, the Limestone development. We have had no equivalent. They have cut programs for job creation. They have cut programs for training. I remember a few years ago they even cut the lifeguard program. You cannot keep taking things out of communities and then say, but, on the other hand, you have the perfect opportunity to have some autonomy. It is a two-way street. You have to work in co-operation, and I would suggest to the government that any approach that wants to get more autonomy from northern communities has to start from that base.

By the way, I would suggest the government dust off the Northern Manitoba Economic Development Commission \$1-million report, which, I thought, was a good blueprint for northern Manitoba, and many of us participated in it. What is interesting is it has been collecting dust. Many of the recommendations have been ignored—[interjection] The former Minister of Northern Affairs, I think he may have been actually committed to it, but he was withdrawn from that portfolio before he had a chance to implement it. Well, he is laughing. Maybe I am giving him too much credit.

You know, I talked to people who were involved in the commission, who were commissioners, and they were very disappointed in the fact that has collected dust. Madam Speaker, \$1 million worth of work, a collective vision by northerners for the future of northern Manitoba, and I think that is the route, by the way. I think you have to have northerners taking the lead role. If you give us the tools to do the job, we can do it. I say that in a collective sense because that report was supported and endorsed by all political backgrounds, by the MKO, by urban communities, and by the Northern Affairs communities. There was a real sense of working in partnership, and I really want to credit those who were part of it.

With those few words, while we do support this bill, I want to say to the government, much more needs to be done before we can have the real kind of self-sufficiency and autonomy that all northerners want for northern communities.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 11, The Northern Affairs Amendment Act.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

House Business

Mr. McCrae: Before I move Bill 54 for third reading, Madam Speaker, I wonder if the House would agree to waive private members' hour today.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to waive private members' hour? [agreed]

* (1640)

Bill 54—The Animal Husbandry Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that Bill 54, The Animal Husbandry Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'élevage et modifications corrélatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, very briefly I would like to speak for a few moments anyway on Bill 54. This bill, along with a few of the other agricultural, stems from the puppy farm tragedy that happened in Manitoba about a year and a half ago. If members of this House were like myself shocked at the conditions that these animals had to live in, I am sure all of us would have been, I do not believe that what would have happened on that farm could be described as animal husbandry. Responsible members of the livestock industry support these amendments. Bill 54 is remarkably short. Like so many members, I could use this time to bring to question the operations of the government.

Today, however, I would like to take the opportunity to actually express appreciation to the minister for the amendments to The Animal Husbandry Act and indicate that the Liberal Party does, in fact, support this,

as we all can, as I indicated earlier, visualize what had taken place with respect to the puppy mills.

With those few words, we are prepared to see it pass.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading of Bill 54.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, we just waived private members' hour, but we did not have private members' hour on the Order Paper because this is a Friday, so I am wondering if we can perhaps just correct that. I guess we were so enthusiastic on waiving things that we waived something that did not exist.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I agree with the honourable member if he agrees to strike that "leave" from his list of "leaves" that he has been keeping.

Mr. Ashton: Yes, Madam Speaker, indeed. I am reminded of the Monty Python skit where we get to rule 4 and there is no rule 4. I think that is what was on everybody's mind.

Madam Speaker: I have been advised it was not really a point of order, but it was an interesting point.

REPORT STAGE

Bill 15—The Government Essential Services Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh), that Bill 15, The Government Essential Services Amendment Act, reported from the Standing

Committee on Economic Development, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 15—The Government Essential Services Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh), that Bill 15, The Government Essential Services Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services gouvernementaux essentiels), be now read a third time and passed. This is being done with the leave of the House.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable minister have leave? [agreed]

Motion presented.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to add my comments on third reading of Bill 15, The Government Essential Services Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker, we had the opportunity to sit in committee and listen to the presentations of Manitobans who came forward to speak to this legislation. Before I start my comments, I want to table two pieces of correspondence that I have received. I had the opportunity not only to listen to the presentations but to become further aware that there was a presentation that was not accepted because there some mixup.

With the greatest respect to the Clerk's office of this Legislature, there seems to be some problem that has yet to be dealt with. When we have been in the committee, I have asked the Chair of the committees on more than one occasion whether or not all of the presenters, people that were interested in speaking to the legislation, had been contacted. What we find out now is that the Manitoba Nurses' Union was not given the opportunity to present at the committee hearings on Bill 15, and we are quite distressed and, in fact,

incensed that they were not notified of that bill going to committee hearings.

I draw it to the attention of the government House leader that we do have a problem that we need to address with respect to communication from members of the public that contact the Clerk's office and need to be informed when those committee hearings are taking place. So, with greatest respect to the Clerk's office, we need to make sure that indeed members of the public wishing to speak to bills are properly notified and are not in any way left off the list, as appears to be the case in this circumstance.

I have talked to the Clerk's office. They have informed me that they had talked to the Manitoba Nurses' Union on several occasions and that the Nurses' Union told me on more than one occasion that they had expressed their interest in speaking to Bill 15, but were not given the opportunity. Therefore, I am having to table their presentation here today to make sure that it gets on the record with respect to Bill 15.

I note, too, when we were in committee hearings on Bill 17 that were here in this Legislature last fall, during those committee hearings the former Minister of Labour just about was jumping out of his skin with anticipation for the coming presentation from the Manitoba Health Organizations. In fact, the Minister of Labour was indicating then that certain things that he was obviously privy to by way of information of that presentation. When the MHO did come and present, the minister immediately expressed his open support for the MHO position to have the health care services included under the essential services agreement. Lo and behold, six months later, what do we see? Bill 15. It is interesting to note when Bill 15 came along that the MHO did not even have the courtesy to come and present to the committee hearings. I guess they let the government do the dirty work for them, and that they were content to let it rest at that. They were obviously conspicuous by their absence during those committee hearings.

It is interesting to note that last fall in discussion or debate on Bill 15, when we were in committee hearings, that the MHO said that they were having a great deal of difficulty with the current voluntary essential services agreement that had been negotiated

between the nurses and the MHO. Yet I find in looking through the presentation from the Manitoba Nurses' Union, where it states quite clearly here that the essential services agreement was negotiated voluntarily between MNU locals and 90 Manitoba health care facilities, and it seemed to be working. Yet MHO comes along and says, no, it is not working, yet they were a signatory to the agreement. So you would think that they would go back to the LHRC committee that they have in this regard that deals with problems and have those problems resolved, as they did in 1991 during the strike between the health care facilities and the nurses.

At that time, there were 10 disputes that came up, and all of them were settled during that strike under the voluntary essential services agreement. Yet the MHO says: No, these agreements, this voluntary essential services agreement is not working. Well, the reason they think it is not working is that they lost every one of those 10 arguments when it went before the Labour Management Review Committee dealing with the health care sector working group. So that is probably why MHO is not happy with the voluntary essential services agreement, and that is why they want the government to do the dirty work for them because MHO cannot get their way during the negotiating process. So this government is intent to allow that to happen by way of Bill 15.

Now the power balance has shifted. The nurses and those working in the health care sector have had the scales tilted away from them, away from the level playing field that had been in place. Now the government says to the employers, the health care sector employers: You have the power. The power is in your hands. If you choose not to negotiate an essential services agreement within the window prior to the expiry of the collective agreement, so be it. We will impose an agreement, and it will fall under the rules that the government has set down by way of Bill 17 last year and Bill 15 now.

* (1650)

We think that tilts the playing field in favour of the employer, and it just happens to be in this case that the government itself is the employer dealing with the

MHO, since the government funds all of these health care facilities in the province of Manitoba.

The other part that I find somewhat distressing is that the government does not think that there are professionals working in the health care sector of the province. We only need to look at the code that is in place that the nurses themselves have to live with. There is a code of practice of core values contained within the Canadian Nurses Association code of ethics that safety of clients is the first concern, and yet the government does not trust those nurses and other health care professionals working in the health care field to protect the interests of the sick and the vulnerable in our communities.

So what you are saying by this legislation here today is that you do not trust the health care professionals of this province and yet, it is in their code that the sick and the vulnerable of our province are their first concern. Yet, you see fit to impose an agreement or conditions upon those working in the health care sector instead of wanting to negotiate a voluntary essential services agreement.

I come to the conclusion—there is only one conclusion I can come to as a result of looking at Bill 17 last fall and Bill 15 here before us today—that the only vulnerable Manitobans that this government is intent on protecting are the members of the Conservative government, those that were vulnerable as a result of the home care strike last fall. It is your self-interest that you are protecting by way of Bill 17 last fall and Bill 15 here today and that judging by the—looking at the comments by the former Minister of Labour where he jumped out of his skin in anticipation of the MHO presentation last fall where he was willing to trip over himself to include the health care sector under the essential services agreement.

Now, this current Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer) has chosen to include the health care sector without even going down the road of attempting to negotiate further agreements. They are not open to any kind of discussion. It is my way or the highway, and if you do not like it, hit the road, Jack, because we are not going to negotiate an agreement with any of the people, the working people in the province, that are employed in the health care sectors. We would

rather—you, government, would rather impose one instead of sitting down at the negotiating table and working out an agreement that all parties can live with.

For those reasons, Madam Speaker, seeing that the government is not intent in having a level playing field to protect those that are working in the health care sector and those other Manitobans, other than just the Conservative government interests that the government is protecting through this legislation, I cannot support the government in this regard with respect to Bill 15.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 15, The Government Essential Services Amendment Act.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: 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.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On division.

Madam Speaker: On division.

Bill 19—The Human Rights Code Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: Adjourned third reading debate, 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 St. James (Ms. Mihychuk).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: No? Leave has been denied.

Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, 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.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, 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.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On division.

REPORT STAGE

Bill 32—The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (2)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), that Bill 32, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (2) (Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail), reported from the Standing Committee on Economic Development, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 32—The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (2)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):

By leave, Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura), that Bill 32, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (2) (Loi No.2 modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail), be now read a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave? [agreed]

Motion presented.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to add my comments to Bill 32, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (2). I listened to the comments of the presenters in committee hearings here last week, a week ago as a matter of fact, and there were many, many good ideas that came out of that particular committee hearing.

I know the current Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer) has said that he is interested in looking at some of the proposals that came out of that particular committee hearing. I reference, in fact, the point where two of the presenters said that there needs to be steps taken to tighten up The Workplace Safety and Health Act that would incorporate proposals or ideas that are currently in practice in the province of British Columbia. British Columbia currently has the practice that allows their workplace safety and health field officers to go into worksites, and where they see threatening or serious violations of The Workplace Safety and Health Act, the officers are entitled to immediately ticket on the spot those company operations that are in violation of the act. We think that would go a long way towards correcting the problems that we see in the workplace these days where some employers thumb their nose at the legislation that is currently in place.

I can only point to one of the companies that I have once again here today raised in Question Period, Canadian Corrosion Control, where there, after a result of Judge Minuk's inquest report, the judge pointed out

that there were serious shortcomings on the part of the company that would be bordering on negligence as a result in providing a safe workplace for their employees. Yet this particular company folded operations just prior to the court day where they would have had to face the judge and any actions that would have been brought about as a result of that particular court action. The employers of that company escaped prosecution because this government choose not to name, through the Prosecutions branch of the Department of Justice, the employers of Canadian Corrosion Control.

Those employers today have started another company here in the city of Winnipeg, a similar type of operation. We see they were able to escape any responsibility for the death of Andrew Kuryk. In 1994, Andrew was killed as a result of a workplace accident. We know that as a result of Judge Minuk's report, there was not proper training put in place and there were not proper safety precautions and there was not proper equipment utilized in the operations of Canadian Corrosion Control's operations. We see the company should have known and should have been providing the equipment and the training to Andrew.

I listened to the presentation of Andrew's sister, Jackie Kuryk, who came before the committee. That is one of the most difficult situations that I have ever faced as a member of this Legislative Assembly, having to face a member of the public who comes before committee and tells us that their loved ones have died as a result of a workplace accident. I note the comments by Ms. Kuryk coming before the committee, and I applaud her strength in appearing before the committee. She and her family are not out for revenge against Canadian Corrosion Control. What she said was that she wants to see changes put in place to spare other families the heartache of similar tragedies in the workplace and that the numerous warnings of the past did not work in getting Canadian Corrosion Control to clean up its act.

That is the most distressing part that I find, is that we as legislators here who are supposed to be responsible for the safety of the public through the branches of government's operations, did not take the appropriate steps to ensure that people working in and around equipment and in heavy equipment operations are not

provided, as in Andrew's case, the proper training and the proper safety equipment to ensure that that young man was able to continue with his life as we would all expect.

* (1700)

I have asked for in this House that prosecutions be brought against those employers that continually flaunt or thumb their noses at the workplace safety and health laws of this province, and what I am asking is that you take the appropriate action not necessarily just under The Workplace Safety and Health Act but under the Criminal Code of Canada. You have the powers, we are told, to be able to take further steps with respect to manslaughter charges or other actions under the Criminal Code of Canada. Yet you chose through the Justice department Prosecutions branch not to take those steps. You let those who were responsible for Andrew's death escape their responsibility and today no one has been held accountable for Andrew's death.

I can only look to examples in the United States since this government chooses not to take the appropriate action. It was just drawn to my attention here this week that in the United States prosecutors are charging more businesses and bosses than ever before. In a Wall Street Journal report, a 1994 case is cited where a worker was buried alive when a 60-ton mountain of salt opened up under him like quicksand, sucking him into the bottom of the storage bin. This summer, the employer and two supervisors are expected to stand charges of manslaughter. And we see other cases where at least prosecutors in 14 states in recent years have been taking steps seeking hard time—and I am talking jail time here—for employers that thumb their noses at the workplace safety and health acts of their jurisdictions, and you as a government through the Justice department Prosecutions branch could have taken those steps.

We see other jurisdictions in North America have the intestinal fortitude and the courage to take those hard decisions, as you always say government is, and make sure that there are safe workplaces in our communities. If you had the intestinal fortitude, you would have taken similar steps with Canadian Corrosion Control to ensure that the message, the strong message was sent to the employers and those employed in this province, that we take very seriously The Workplace Safety and

Health Act of this province. Yes, if your only recourse is to increase the fines from \$15,000 first offence to \$150,000 is what you think is adequate or \$300,000 on subsequent offences, that is your decision. I think it does not go far enough. I think there needs to be tighter enforcement, and by way of that, I mean more than just the fines.

We see that education does not work. Canadian Corrosion Control had seven offences in three years and now they are back in operations, having folded that company and started up under a different name. Here we go again. I hope that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer) is listening and that his Workplace Safety and Health officers are out doing the periodic unannounced inspections that Judge Minuk called for in his inquest report, because I think that is at least one of the steps that you should be taking to ensure that these bad actors do not cost someone else their lives.

Madam Speaker, if this is all the government can do with respect to ensuring safe workplaces in the province and they think that \$150,000 fines on a first offence is adequate, that will have to be on their conscience. We think that there are more steps that can be taken to ensure safe workplaces, and if this government is not prepared to do it, I can assure you that when we are in government, we will.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 32, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (2) (Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

DEBATE ON THIRD READINGS

Bill 40—The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), Bill 40, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation

Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le Fonds de participation des travailleurs du Manitoba), standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, very briefly, Bill 40 amends the existing Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund at the request of the Crocus Fund management. The bill brings the Crocus Fund into line with the administrative requirements of the new Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act. Since the Crocus Fund management requested these changes after having reviewed the legislation through our research department, I feel fairly confident in the scope of the bill that is being placed before the House today. The details are largely administrative, from what we understand.

I only wish the government's Grow Bond fund was doing as well as the Crocus Fund. It seems that without political interference, investment funds like the Crocus Fund can do remarkably well.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, we are quite content to see Bill 40 pass. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 40, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed. Agreed and so ordered.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 52—The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1997

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable

Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that Bill 52, The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1997 (Loi de 1997 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, you just never know what you are going to find when you start reading some of the government bills. Interesting, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act contained the government scheme and breach of its election promise on dealing with prostitution. This legislation was interesting. It contained the repeal of one bill, and to their credit, the government did remove that section, but it also contained a section to do away with the ability of what was historically known as paupers to have their filing fees paid for in the court system.

This is supposed to be a housekeeping bill for grammatical and other little problems with jots and tittles. Madam Speaker, I think this is a breach of what has been the practice of this House for the use of the statute law amendment legislation. Not only are we opposed to the section dealing with The Law Fees Act, we are opposed to the government putting that kind of a section into this legislation, that the change regarding law fees is one more hit on the poor in Manitoba. It is very unfortunate that this government did not see fit to develop the certificate process for pauper status rather than do away with it entirely.

So it is for that reason that we do not support The Statute Law Amendment Act, perhaps the first time in recent history.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I would echo the concerns the member for St. Johns has put on the record. You know, in looking at the bill, one could be fairly quick to assume that it is dealing with fairly straightforward information.

At first glance, for example, the research department had seen that it was dealing with some changes with The Animal Diseases Act, The Law Fees Act, Treasury Branch Act and an amendment to The Highways and Transportation Department Act but, as it has been pointed out, this type of legislation is supposed to be

fairly straightforward, simple and not necessarily encompassing some other aspect that could, in fact, be brought before the House in an act in itself. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 52, The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1997.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members. Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: 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.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On division.

REPORT STAGE

Bill 49—The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1997

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): On behalf of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and with the leave of the House, Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), that Bill 49, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1997 (Loi de 1997 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité), reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable minister have leave? [agreed]

Motion agreed to.

* (1710)

THIRD READINGS

Bill 49—The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1997

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), that Bill 49, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1997 (Loi de 1997 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité), be now read a third time and passed, and I do that with the leave of the House.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave? [agreed]

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I move that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair for the House to go into Committee of Supply to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Madam Speaker: Who seconded the motion, please?

Mr. McCrae: Oh, I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I moved that motion, seconded by the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay).

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Supply—Capital Supply

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): The Committee of Supply will come to order, please.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Chairman, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that the Committee of Supply concur in all Supply resolutions relating to

the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998, which have been adopted at this session by all sections of the Committee of Supply sitting separately and by the full committee.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I have questions for the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), and do not be too quick over there, folks. There are some questions to be asked in concurrence.

To the Minister of Education, I have been advised by the Sherwood School parents advisory group, by a number of school parents in the Sherwood School, that because of funding cutbacks by the provincial government to the River East School Division they are losing the only counsellor they have in their school, a half-time position of some \$25,000. Apparently, the counsellor's name is a person named Gerry McNair, who is the only staff member at the school that is male. He deals, in his capacity as counsellor, with a lot of boys who are, regrettably, boys in single-parent families, in most of which the major or the caregiving parent in the domicile is the mother.

Many parents have come to me. I have met with Kim Peattie and Janet Harris, and they are trying to get the school division and the provincial government to look at the funding cuts and the funding levels, and look at the impact they have on Sherwood School on the kids. They feel that the half-time counselling position in that school is very preventative in terms of the long-term development of these kids, and their children, and that they, the parents I have met with, have testified to me that some of the children in the school have had their lives turned around totally by this one counsellor. The loss of that counsellor, they feel, will be very detrimental to the education and development of their children.

I know it is \$25,000, and it is only one school, but this is the kind of trickle-down impact of a government—and I know we can go back and talk about this number and that number, but the minister knows that there have been cuts to school divisions. In the last five years there have been a 2 percent cut, a 2 percent cut, zero, a 2 percent cut and zero again this year. I did

not think appropriate to raise this in Question Period; I thought it was appropriate to raise it in concurrence.

The parents would like the Minister of Education to investigate the situation. They would like the minister to meet with them, and I only met with them just a few days ago. They would like to meet with the Minister of Education to directly speak to her about their concerns, and they would like to find a way for all of us to practise what we preach. When we look at the Youth Secretariat reports or we look at the Postl report or we look at the education reports, they all say the same thing to all of us: Let us spend, especially in the early years of education, some effort and investment in those early years of education, and let us make sure that those kids get the proper supports.

I have been to the school. I have met with the parents. I am confident of what they are saying to us, and I would like to ask the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh)—I do not expect her to have direct comments today, but I would like the Minister of Education to investigate the situation and to meet with people, and try to find a solution for parents that have already gone to the school board. The school board has already said that their funding has been cut, so they have no choice. So they feel their only choice is to go to the government where we know that there is a major, so-called rainy day fund. They feel it will rain in the Sherwood School next year if they lose their half-time position and their counsellor. They feel that they will pay the price for behavioural problems that cannot be solved at an early stage. They are asking and crying out for help from the government, and I am crying out for help on their behalf.

Thank you very much.

* (1720)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairperson, I am not sure of the process here. Am I allowed to ask questions to get some more information on this important matter that has been raised? [interjection] Just the best I can with the limited information provided. Okay.

Mr. Chairperson, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The River East School

Division board of trustees, with whom I have met on several occasions and with whom I met just recently, and the River East schools that I have visited on several occasions, and most recently I have been visiting in River East schools last month with teachers and educators and students and special ed teachers, coordinators, and other teachers in the division of specialty subject areas. I spent a very enjoyable evening, as I say, about a month ago, having dinner with all of the parents and students and teachers at River East Collegiate and again with trustees, as well, with whom I say I have met on several occasions, I think, four or five occasions. None of them have raised that issue of this particular school to me.

They have an excellent quality of education in River East School Division; tremendous things are happening there. They have wonderful enhancements to particularly the post-secondary education system. It was from River East Collegiate that came the time links project for history and the entrepreneurship program with Adriano Magnifico out of that school, which has drawn in many, many thousands of dollars from the community, pouring in there to assist with an extremely valuable program that has provided excellent job creation for the people.

I have talked about the educational financing with the River East School trustees. They have not mentioned Sherwood School to me, nor have any parents from Sherwood School contacted me. Now, I appreciate maybe the parents from Sherwood School thought that, in order to get something accomplished for their school, the proper person to phone would be the Leader of the Opposition and not the Minister of Education, believing perhaps that somehow he could address their concerns, but I have indicated many times, and I repeat again, that I am most willing to meet with anybody who asks to meet with me.

There is no parent group that has asked to meet with me that has not received a meeting with me. Indeed, I have often invited parent groups. [interjection] Excuse me, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), did you wish to add to that question? I have often indeed contacted parent groups myself when I have heard that they had a concern and invited them in, in a proactive fashion, as I did yesterday morning, for example. So I

would be more than delighted to meet with the people from Sherwood School.

There will be a number of factors that may have influenced the board's decision. Of course, until I know what those are, I cannot comment as to whether or not they would be appropriate. The board of trustees there enjoys great faith from its public. I do not imagine they would likely take away the only male staffer from a school.

I do not know how many students are in the school. Is it a large school? Is it one class per grade? Is it split grades? Is it a small school? What other resource help do they have in the school? Is that the only staffperson that does not have a full-time classroom? Most schools have a ratio of one teacher, one person with a teacher's certificate, for every 1.5 students. If that holds true in Sherwood School, if they are on the provincial average, which is one person with an education degree for every 15 students, or one classroom teacher for every 19 students, the possibility is that they would have four extra degree-holding people in the school, and releasing one part-time person may be justified if their enrollment has gone down or other factors about which I know nothing.

So I will await their call and their request for an invitation, and I would be delighted to meet with them. I would be delighted to visit their school. That is one school in River East that I have not visited, and I would be most pleased to go out there and visit with them, see their students, talk to their teachers, and talk to their board about their own staffing because, as I say, they have not complained to me about that issue. I take the member's word on behalf of them, and I would be pleased to meet with them if they do ask me.

Mr. Doer: I will send a note to the minister and try to set up the meeting with the minister. I thank her for accepting the request by them. I think the issue of funding, all of us as MLAs in the northeast quadrant of city were given quite a bit of briefings by the River East School Division last year on the funding impacts, and as an MLA, I know members of the other side also were informed of the impacts on funding. Last year, I think we all met on separate occasions, but got a consistent presentation from members of the River East School Division.

I thank the minister. I think this development happened just recently. I was only made aware of it late last week, and that was after they felt they could not—there was no latitude in the budget from the River East School Division. So I thank the minister for agreeing to meet with them. I will send the material along, and I am sure the parents will be delighted to brief the minister directly.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chairman, I also have some questions for the Minister of Education, and the first one deals with the Royal Bank contract that the minister signed recently for student loans.

I have phoned the minister's deputy minister for post-secondary education and asked for a copy of that contract. I also asked the minister twice in Question Period for a copy of that contract, and I would like to know the minister's answer. I have not received any response from the deputy minister, and the minister did not give a clear answer in Question Period. I was able under Freedom of Information to obtain the CIBC contract, and I wonder if the minister is recommending that I take that route for the Royal Bank.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the Royal Bank agreement was sent to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) two days after she had asked me. I signed it, sealed it in the envelope myself, and asked to have it sent to her. It maybe went in interdepartmental mail, but it was two days after I put the photostatted copy in an envelope like this, interdepartmental mail, and asked to have it forwarded to the member for Wolseley, so I will check with my office to find out.

I think you should have received it by now because that was over a week ago. Now, I did have my secretary sick in the hospital with surgery, but I still think that you should have gotten it. I will double-check and find out where that is and make sure that it goes to your office Monday.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister for that. To my knowledge, I have not received it, and I will certainly check my mailbox as well.

I wanted to ask the minister about some letters that I was copied on that were sent to her from a number of school divisions. I think in particular there were a

number from the Lord Selkirk division dealing with jazz music and the curriculum in music and the desire for more jazz in the music curriculum, and I wondered what responses the minister had given to those letters and if she had any comments that she wanted to put on the record about the music curriculum and the possibility of expanding the jazz section of that.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, those letters were referred to my senior staff for exploration. We received some 20—[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the members to just draw to the sides so that we do not get in between the debaters.

The honourable minister, to continue.

* (1730)

Mrs. McIntosh: The member may know that I am a fan of the arts in the schools, music in particular, since it was music that gave my own daughter her career start, who then went on to take a degree in music performance largely because of the influence of music that she experienced in school. Certainly jazz, as a component of a music curriculum, is very important because jazz and jazz composition do a number of things in terms of freedom of expression in music along with learning, of course, another style of music.

The music curriculum has been put together by experts in music. In any given school setting, you will find some music specialists who will emphasize their own particular skill, their own particular expertise. Hence, you will find certain schools that really excel in jazz, others in the more classical, others in the martial-type music, and many are getting now into orchestral music with stringed instruments, which I am very pleased to see starting to emerge, and still others will do a heavy emphasis on vocal and choral.

So I do not have a final answer on that question for the member or for the people who wrote in. I certainly support the music curriculum. I certainly support the jazz component of it. As to whether or not they should be changing the current curriculum, that is another very large question. I would not want to see anything lost from the curriculum as it exists, but whether to remove

something to enhance something else is a question that requires a lot of study and recommendation from the experts in the area. They are looking at that now in response to those letters to come back to me with some advice. I do not have that yet. I probably will not have that till the end of the summer or into the fall.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask the minister about the Western Premiers' Conference that was held recently during the federal election and the communique which came from that which said that the western Premiers have adopted measures—all western provinces have adopted measures to reduce student debt levels, while the federal government has not and, of course, emphasizing that the, you know, largest part of student debt is federal and it is about time the federal government did something.

I think it is very good that this is on the agenda of the western provinces, and I am very glad to see that it will be on the agenda of the Premiers' Conference, as well, but I am very puzzled by that statement that all western provinces have introduced measures to reduce student debt levels, and I wonder if the minister could tell us what measures exist in Manitoba and to whom they are accessible.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairperson, one of the greatest ways to reduce student debt, of course, is to avoid the debt in the first instance, and in Manitoba we have the largest percentage of students who are able to enter university and go through their entire university career without having to borrow or loan or be gifted money.

There are several reasons for that, Mr. Chairman. One that has often been presented is simply a characteristic of Manitoba. We have a very high work ethic in our province. We have a large cultural grouping of Mennonite peoples and people from lands and faiths where they have a work ethic and a strong sense of independence and believe very strongly and firmly in paying their own way.

That is a characteristic of Manitoba that is fairly unusual compared to some of the other provinces, and I have lived in every province in Canada, and I could spot that difference when we moved here—a very independent, self-sufficient people, by and large, not everybody, but by and large. They do not like to lean

on others if they can do it themselves. That is one reason.

The other, of course, is that we have managed to keep our tuition fees amongst the lowest in the country. They are the third lowest in the country on average across the institutions. We also have, in terms of access, students who can—[interjection] Well, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) is going time out, but I thought that an answer was wanted, and I thought it was being asked here because there was not a limit on the one minute. I know that people are wanting to hear these answers or they would not be asking the questions, I am presuming.

The other reason, as I was starting to say, is that in terms of bursaries for students in real need, we have an unlimited amount, where it used to be many years ago capped at \$10,000. Now those students can take out first a Canada loan, but then that would be the only money they would have to borrow. Beyond that, their needs can be met to an unlimited degree in a nonrepayable provincial government loan.

The other thing that we have that helps reduce debt is the one of its kind in Canada, the learning tax credit where at income tax time students can get back 10 percent of their tuition, and that has been an incredible help. This I know for certain because, while most people do not write to say thank you for certain things they have, this is one where we have received a lot of thanks. It has just made all the difference to some in being able to get through that year, particularly when the money comes as it does—I will just wait till you finish your conversation so that you do not have to miss the answer—particularly when the money comes as it does in the April-May period. At about the time that students' yearly spending is being done and they are starting to stretch a bit thin, it comes at just the right moment and prevents them from having to go out and borrow more in the little gap between the end of school and the beginning of the summer work.

So there are a number of programs, as well, where students who are in co-operative education are receiving some small indemnity as they are working while they study in career-related opportunities. So I think those are some of the ways in which we can help reduce student debt. The average student debt in

Manitoba is \$11,800 upon graduation. An extremely good—you know, in most other provinces you would find \$20,000 or more. In Manitoba it is substantially lower than the other provinces.

The other thing that is happening is that the economy in Manitoba is improving. Wages are higher than they used to be, so that students coming out are being able to get jobs more quickly than they used to 10 years ago, and those jobs are higher-paying jobs than they were 10 years ago, and so they are able to pay back their loans more quickly. The Access program is a good example of that. Students coming out of Access—it is in the 90 percentile rate—they walk right into jobs that are well above the average, and they are able to pay back the Canada federal loan portion of any debt they have incurred quite rapidly because of their high incomes.

Those are some of the reasons, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I think we are probably on shaky ground in comparing the work ethic of Manitobans on the basis of particular cultural groups to the work ethic of other provinces, and I would not want to get into that.

Most of what the minister has talked about deals with the issue of costs, and I recognize that the minister has put on the record a number of areas where Manitoba, like other provinces, is attempting to reduce the cost. In terms of debt reduction, the minister really only had one answer, and that was that there were bursaries which were eligible for whom people with unlimited needs were eligible, and that was a nonrepayable government bursary. I wonder if the minister could tell us whether every Manitoban is eligible for those bursaries or not.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, for clarification, of course, I said some people have said that it is because we have a very strong work ethic that so many of our students go through university without ever asking for money from somebody else, and that is, each province does have its own personality. People like me and some others who have lived in every province in Canada can testify that each province does have its own personality. Even Quebec has a unique aspect that I think we all recognize.

In terms of who can apply for, who can receive a nonrepayable bursary, any student who demonstrates by their needs that—we have some 890 this year in the Access program who have demonstrated by their needs that they need the money over and above the loan. They are normally from disadvantaged groups, disadvantaged in that they have not had opportunity to gain access to post-secondary education in the sense, with the ease that a lot of others might. So they can apply, and if they qualify or if their needs are ascertained to be true, they can receive up to whatever amount they need over and above the Canada loan to attend post-secondary training.

* (1740)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, what I am trying to clarify is whether the nonrepayable bursaries are available to students outside of the Access program, because in every other province in Canada there are nonrepayable bursaries, i.e., debt relief, which are available to students generally, that is, open access. Manitoba has the bursaries which are nonrepayable bursaries to students in the Access program. Does it have bursaries, i.e., debt reduction, available to all other students?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I am not certain that we have nonrepayable bursaries based on things other than merit, because there are bursaries available for students who maintain a certain average and so on, not scholarship level, but proving competency and so on. I would have to obtain that information for her. The one that I am familiar with is that, for those who are in need.

Ms. Friesen: What I heard the minister say then is that all students in Manitoba may apply for a bursary, a nonrepayable government bursary on the basis of need.

Mrs. McIntosh: Through the Access program, Mr. Chairman, that is possible. I indicated to the member that I would have to check on that other component, which I will do for her, but I do not want to come down and say that definitely if there is some other area that I am not yet familiar with. That should be able to be determined through the Student Financial Assistance office by picking up the phone and asking, which I can do and then I will relay the information to her. It is

easily obtained information and should be a matter of public record.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, my concern, as I think the minister knows, is that Manitoba is the only province in Canada which does not have debt relief for students. It has, through the Access program, nonrepayable bursaries, but, in general, for all students it does not have them, and it is the only province in Canada which does not have them.

The minister has indicated a number of ways where student fees are being kept at a certain level. She has indicated another area where costs, she hopes, are being controlled, but my comparison is on a Canada-wide basis and that Manitoba is the only province which does not have debt reduction programs for students.

Since debt is projected and is now one of the major problems facing students, that is my concern, is where is the policy going. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) signed something from the western Canada Premiers' Conference that says all western provinces are addressing this. It seems to me that Manitoba is addressing it in ways that are very, very different from the general understanding of what is debt reduction.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate both the answer the member has provided to her question and the question she has subsequently asked. It will save me the trouble of phoning the university since the member has now given the answer to the question she asked.

But I do indicate that what I said at the beginning, which I think is something that has to be recognized, and it is maybe why we have been so successful here provincially as a government in containing the amount of money that is spent in Manitoba and spent wisely, in that the best way to avoid having a large debt to pay is to avoid incurring that debt in the first instance.

I started off with a known fact, and that is that there is a vast majority of Manitoba students, a much higher percentage than in other provinces, who neither borrow nor get as gifts money to fund their post-secondary education. They earn the money. That is a fact. It is not a judgmental thing. It is just a fact. That is very good because it means that then they do not incur the

debt in the first instance, and therefore the debt reduction is not the same size of problem. I just repeat that. I will not repeat it a third time.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, could the minister direct me to the evidence that compares student debt across Canada and indicates that Manitoba students take on less debt and that their outstanding debt at the moment is less than in other provinces? Where is the evidence for that and where would I look for it?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, some of that evidence was in material the member herself presented to the House not long ago when she referred to an article or series of articles referring to the fact that Manitoba students earn more of their tuition than other provinces. The member had presented that as a negative, and she got in the House and said that in Manitoba—and I do not have the stats here because, of course, with concurrence you come with no knowledge of what you are going to get asked or even if you are going to get asked something.

But the member had presented as a negative the fact that there are more students in Manitoba who pay their full way through without getting money from government or somebody else, and that, of course, was a great concern to her because she felt they should be getting more money from others rather than earning it themselves. That I think is an indication that—

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I think we are trying to conduct this discussion on a reasonable basis. The minister should refrain from saying what I said when I did not say it. I never said anything about who should be getting what from where. So please let us stick to the issue, and let us deal with it in a straightforward manner.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order. It was a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I believe Hansard will show that in Question Period the member was

extremely concerned that there were a lot of—that there was a majority of students, higher than in other provinces, much higher than in other provinces, students paying their own way through university without being able to receive or without receiving or without wanting to receive money from government, in particular, taxpayers and banks and other sources, and the member did present that very definitely as a negative in the House. So I say that we see that here. We flip it and see it rather as a positive.

(Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

There is a majority here who go through university paying their own way without requesting a loan or a gift from the taxpayers and the other people in Manitoba. That is something that is deemed I would think by those who pay the bills as a positive thing. Hence, we do not have the same requirement to provide money to people who have indicated their willingness to earn it themselves, and they have the ability to earn it themselves because we have the highest and best record for student employment in the nation, and that has been consistent now for several years—[interjection] I will wait till the member is through.

We have the best record for student employment in the nation and have for several years, so they are able to earn money in the summer. Hence, that may be another reason they are less needing to or willing to depend upon the public purse, and I think that is a healthy situation.

* (1750)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I understand then that what the member is saying is that she accepts the statistics that I offered her on that and that she does not have an alternative or another form of collection. The second part of my question was what was the source of her evidence for the levels of student debt in Manitoba. She gave a number of 11,000 something, and she compared it to other provinces. I am wondering where she would direct me to get the evidence for that.

Mrs. McIntosh: Student financial services and the Finance branch of my department were the people who provided me with the information on the 11,800, which they provided me to correct the 20,000 figure the

member had inadvertently put by mistake, I am sure, on the record when she said what the average student debt load was. So I could refer her to my student financial branch.

In fact, I have offered to put together a briefing for the member on constant dollars. I did that yesterday in the House, and I could add to that Student Financial Assistance, all components, all statistics and research basis. I would be pleased to set up that briefing for her and perhaps the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) who is also, I think, her acting critic when she is away, and go through those figures and statistics and ask for the source documents from the branch at that time. So if she would like me to, I could set that up for her at our earliest convenience. We could spend half a day going through it if she would like.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, yes, the numbers that I put on the record were very clearly, I think, stated as Canada wide, because those were the only ones that were available to me. It is interesting to get the provincial ones, and I am interested in the source of that evidence. I will take up the minister's offer of a briefing on Student Financial Assistance, as well as one on school finance, and there was a third one that was offered during Estimates which was on education information systems. Once the House is out, then we will move to look at those.

I want to ask the minister about a matter of policy that she changed, I believe it was perhaps 18 months ago now, and that was to allow the moving of monies that have been allocated to school divisions in two or three areas, to be able to shift them into different areas, the professional development, special needs and library resources. I would like to ask the minister what kind of evaluation has been done on that. Where has the money gone? How have those shifts been occurred? What does it show us about where the needs are in particular school divisions? Where has the money been moving from and to?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we did allow that at the school divisions' request at the beginning of this year, where we said that we would allow a 20 percent shift in those categories. If school divisions, for example, felt they already had enough books in their library and wanted to take 20 percent from the libraries

and shift it into special needs, they would be allowed to do that, but they could not move more than 20 percent. This was extremely well received by the field, and I was pleased with the response to it.

I am not sure, as I do not have with me, off the top of my head, how many divisions took advantage of the opportunity to utilize that 20 percent shift. I do not believe the number was overly large, but for those divisions that utilized it, it was extremely helpful. Some divisions where they did not have as many special needs children as they might have had would shift the money into computer technology. Other divisions that had a high number of computers would shift it from the library over to special needs if they had a few more special needs students move in, et cetera. They liked the flexibility very much. They would like to see it continue.

I will obtain the exact numbers, how many divisions took advantage of the opportunity and what was the predominance of categories that they shifted from to. That preliminary information is all I have without my records here.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister for that. I am interested in that shift and how it was used.

Another question which I have asked the minister in Estimates, but I want to emphasize it again here because it seems to me that the minister has the opportunity and has the legal backing to put this in place—one of the things that I hear from teachers and superintendents consistently is the lack of facilities, first of all, for students under 12 who have behavioural difficulties or particular kinds of disorders which need treatment, perhaps first, rather than education. What I am hearing from teachers and others is that these are the children who are being suspended and sometimes expelled. There is a sense in some divisions that throughout the school system there is an increasing use of suspension and expulsion. The use of expulsion, obviously, is a public issue. That is, it does have to have a trustee resolution on it.

The minister did recently or the government did recently put in, just before the last election, new bills dealing with suspension from the classroom and a greater flexibility for schools in doing that. So it seems

to me that there is a government responsibility to be tracking what is happening, and I am concerned if there are an increasing number of students who are being suspended for longer periods of time. I am interested in whether it is the same students. Are we dealing with a small group who are being more often suspended and expelled? Are we dealing with a larger number of students who are being expelled? Particularly what I am concerned about is where do they go?

That is what I am hearing from teachers, that these children are not necessarily being supervised, that they are not necessarily in any form of treatment, they are not necessarily in special schools. Different divisions will have some elements of that, but when I asked the minister in Estimates, she said that she did not keep track of that, and I believe that. I do not think you do keep track of it. What I am asking the minister to do, Mr. Chairman, is to begin to keep track of that, and to ask for that information from school divisions, because the minister now has the authority to ask for that kind of information from divisions.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member talks about a sense of and a feeling of and somebody said they thought that it might, and so it is very vague. I can tell the member that, while we do not keep track, I did go back and have them check. I talked with all the receptionists in my minister's office and the deputy minister's office and said, how many calls traditionally come into this office on suspensions and expulsions? It has not changed. It comes in about one a week.

Traditionally, over time, it has been about the same, where a parent will phone in for whatever reason and say, my child has been suspended, or my child has been expelled, and normally they will want punitive action taken against the teacher. It is generally felt when the parents phone in that it is because of the teacher's fault, which is not always the case. That is generally what the call says: My child has been suspended; it is the teacher's fault.

We get on average about one a week, and that is traditional. So that does not show a change, but it does indicate to me—and I have done some checking since I asked for that information—that if in the public schools in Manitoba on average once a week for years and years we have had students being suspended or

expelled, the question of where they go is extremely important. The question of the so-called accessible-to-everyone perception that people have is incorrect, because public schools are not accessible to everyone obviously if they are being expelled.

Traditionally, they have gone to Marymount School, Knowles School for Boys. Many of them go to the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre. Some go to the psychiatric wards in hospitals. Some are home schooled. Some are supervised with correspondence courses through the school division. Some are tutored from the school divisions, where the school divisions will make arrangement for tutors to visit the child and take the child through Distance Education techniques through the Department of Education. That is the way it has been done in the past years over time through the decades, because Marymount and those places have been around for a long time meeting that need because the public system was not meeting it.

With the new legislation that allows teachers themselves now to suspend from the classroom and not from the school, of course schools must now have a place for those students to attend. They must go someplace, and that place in most cases is the principal's office, but it could be some other place in the school. They must have a place to go.

* (1800)

I thank the member for her question. I will certainly follow up on it because it is an area of high interest to me. A lot of these kids who are expelled, I do not have the exact numbers, but I have visited some where certain independent schools will accept children expelled from the public system as a hope that perhaps they can offer either the spiritual strength or that kind of stability to get them back on course, but, then, of course, those parents end up paying a user fee to attend the independent school in those circumstances.

I will start tracing those, in terms of those who have been suspended from classrooms, not by name but by number because I do not like to have individual students, parents feel their child's name has been referred to the Minister of Education if they have been asked to leave the classroom because they have been misbehaving.

Ms. Friesen: I would appreciate the minister reporting back on that at some point. What I am interested in is the change over time. I am not interested in names. I am not even interested in reasons, although that would be, I think, very helpful, but it is actually the numbers and where they are going.

What has been spoken of to me is the lack of facilities for children under 12. The minister talks about Marymount School and the Distance Education and home schooling and the Adolescent Treatment Centre, and those do tend to be, not exclusively, but do tend to be more for the young people over 12. So if the minister would take that under advisement, that is certainly the area that has been expressed to me as one of concern, and it is one that has been expressed largely within the city of Winnipeg. This is not something I have heard from rural areas, but that does not mean that the same difficulties may not be experienced there.

I wanted to ask the minister also whether she could forward to me or give me an account of a recent paper that was presented by her deputy minister to the North American institute. I believe it was done on behalf of the Department of Education and was a public paper dealing with public policy in a NAFTA environment.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, I would be pleased to do that, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I have one last question, and that is to ask the minister to forward to us the list of grants to private schools for the 1996-97 year.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I do not have with me a school-by-school breakdown. I can tell the member the amount of money given to independent schools is \$30 million. I will take her question under advisement and return to her.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the global grant, but I was asking for specific lists, and I was not quite clear whether the minister was undertaking to send me that list.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I said I would take it under advisement, and by that I mean this: I do not have with me right now—that does not matter; you are asking me to bring it later—the school-by-school

breakdown. As I indicated in Question Period, I do not know what the department releases. I know they release the overall amount of \$30 million as the amount that is given to independent schools in Manitoba.

What I do not know is how that figure is released. What I do know is that we are currently under discussions as to the proper way to display the partial funding that we give independent schools. One must understand with independent schools—I could tell her the per-pupil grant. That would be quite easily done. On a per-pupil grant, we provide—I guess I would have to get that—it is \$2,000-some-odd, just under \$3,000 per student to independent schools. Then, with the enrollment, it could be figured out quite easily then how much each school gets.

If the member is asking for what I think she is asking for, then I am assuming you are also wanting the information about the rest of the detail on the independent schools, or do you just want to know how much per pupil we give Holy Ghost School in Burrows?

An Honourable Member: Point Douglas.

Mrs. McIntosh: In Point Douglas, I mean, because Holy Ghost School gets a grant because it is a Catholic school, and it would be so much per pupil. That will not change right across the board. If that is what you are looking for, that is maybe more easily done than trying to extrapolate our money from their budget as a separate issue from the endowment they get from some person who has died and leaves an anonymous bequest to the school and does not wish their name published, that type of thing.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, what I am looking for is the usual list that is tabled in Estimates, usually when we ask for it, and it is I believe the same amount that is eventually reported in Public Accounts, that is the amount of money which is given to each school on a per-pupil basis by the provincial government.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, that I think would be easier to do. Right now, as I indicated, we are in a process of discussions as to how to release the other information, bearing in mind that we know a lot of that

is privately donated, and not wishing to complicate things for those people, but I think I can do that for the member.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask about truancy in schools, and whether the minister had done any reports or any evaluation of truancy in Manitoba schools. I am told that many divisions no longer have a truancy officer. Many of them have changed the name, but in many divisions that function has been added to other functions and perhaps is not being pursued in the same way as it was 10 years ago, 20 years ago. So I would be interested in just hearing from the minister some reflections on that and what policy or plan or research the department is conducting on this.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the duties that have always been there for truancy problems are still there. The member is quite right that we do not have people now who are called truant officers, but we still do have people who in their job description have that as their duty. In many cases now we will have more people adding that onto their duties as one of their duties as opposed to fewer people just doing it all the time.

We still do have students who do not come to school when they should, and we still do send out people to track them down and charge the parents, and we try only to charge the parents as a last resort. We try very hard to work in a healing way and in a counselling way to (a) get the child back to school, and (b) in those cases where it is required, work with the parents, because sometimes the parents are part of the reason the student is not in school. There are a lot of stories around some of those instances which I will not go into here, but as a last resort, we will charge the parents and take them to court. We are trying not to do that as often as it used to be done. We are trying to work on other solutions that are more constructive, but we still are taking people to court where necessary.

Ms. Friesen: What mechanism does the department have for ensuring that students who are registered in a school in September are still there in February, March, when I am told the largest number of extended absences seem to begin, and certainly in some parts of the community. Does the department have a means now through its educational information system to track that?

* (1810)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the ease with which we can get that information becomes increasingly easy as days go by because of technology. The responsibility first of all belongs to the school division. The school itself has the prime responsibility to ensure the student's attendance. Where lack of attendance becomes a chronic problem, you will find then a number of other players starting to enter the picture.

There are support staff in school divisions that will check out the situation at home, find out why the student has been away. If they are not able to solve the problem at those levels, it may ultimately come to the school board, and at that point then—we are working with one case right now where we are now at the point with this one particular student where the department officials and the school board officials will be meeting jointly with the parents or probably did this week, I have not received an update—where the department people and the school division people and the key players in terms of guardianship or custodial care of the child meet and it works from there.

So it starts first from the grassroots, from the school first, but certainly it will be easier and easier to track as you can just punch machines and have numbers flash up.

One of the other problems we have, and the member is very familiar with this, is the high mobility of transient children whose parents move from home to home to home for a variety of reasons, most of them fairly unhealthy reasons.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Those students sometimes become so discouraged because it is different from school to school to school that they just do not show up. Like, they will move and just not show up at the new school. We are hoping with our numbering system, once it is up, and our tracing system that those students will be able to be tracked better. Many years ago, sometimes they would be out of school for five or six weeks before anybody even realized it, and that is, unfortunately, in some places still happening, but not nearly as much as it used

to. We still have the problem of mobility and transient children and absenteeism.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the minister to look into one particular individual case that has been brought to my attention—I think actually over about 18 months. It is a gentleman called Mark Sahan who has been involved in discussions over a long period of time both with the deputy minister for post-secondary education and with the vocational schools branch of the department and has still not received satisfaction. He has a number of complaints outstanding against one of the private vocational schools and clearly does not believe that the department has met his concerns or has dealt with the school, the course, the program as they are able to under the legislation.

So I want to leave that with the minister and to ask if she would look into it and perhaps get back to me by letter or by phone.

Mrs. McIntosh: This is not a truancy problem.

Ms. Friesen: Oh, sorry. No.

Mrs. McIntosh: That is okay. I am familiar with the case, and I will provide the member with an update, but I would prefer not to do it on the record.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Mr. Chairperson, I have some questions in regard to some of the things going on in my constituency in the school system in Seven Oaks School Division, specifically Maples Collegiate.

I attended a meeting of parents for the Maples Collegiate and looking at the schedule for next year, they have scheduled 104 hours of instructional time for Grade 12 mathematics. My understanding is that the curriculum calls for 110 hours. Considering the result that Maples Collegiate had in the standards tests, I am very concerned with the amount of instructional time being given to that subject. From the Department of Education, can they enforce the curriculum and the amount of hours that should be allotted to math in a high school in my constituency?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I should indicate, first of all, that we have a requirement, guidelines in place

for time to be spent on tasks in certain subject areas. We did indicate, for example, with language arts that we want a certain number of hours spent on language arts, but they could have a small bit of leeway in terms of flexible time if they could show that they were actually teaching language arts in another subject area, for example, geography, where they would be maybe writing essays and using that as a language arts experience, but it had to be definitely and absolutely identified as language arts. The same would apply for mathematics.

We have said—and I will check it out for the member and get back to him, because I have grave concerns in areas where poor performance has been shown, that more time on tasks is needed particularly in the identified areas of weakness for that division. If the division is doing its job properly, it will take the individual student profile and work on identifying what areas of weakness are there and then put in learning measures to improve that area of weakness. If necessary, that will mean taking more time, which many schools have done and have brought their marks up.

There may also be a concern in terms of your school division, Seven Oaks School Division, in that they are very antistandards tests in that division. They do not believe philosophically, particularly the superintendent, in testing. Testing and assessment is not high on his agenda.

So I will definitely look into that issue about the amount of time they are spending on the teaching of mathematics and encourage them to use the testing and assessment for one of the many purposes for which it has been designed, which is to analyze what areas need to be taught so that students have full understanding for life in how to apply mathematics and problem-solving techniques.

Mr. Kowalski: At this meeting, I also learned that in the upcoming school year that what they call their teacher-adviser period—it is sort of a home-room period—a credit will be offered, a high school credit for attending your home room, your teacher adviser. In addition, driver's education will now be given a credit, and I am concerned that students coming out of that high school will be given credits for a number of areas

that will not reflect the needs that they have for core subjects in many areas, and credits are being given for almost any type of attendance. A number of parents have contacted me about that concern.

Again, this is curriculum. This is something that is a high school is doing, and I imagine with the approval of the division. What should I advise these parents that they could do? Is there a role for the Department of Education to do about giving credit for attending home room or teacher-adviser room and for driver's education, while subjects such as math only get 104 hours of instruction in the Grade 12 curriculum?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we have SICs and SIPs, and the member may be familiar with them, school-initiated courses and school-initiated programs and student-initiated courses and programs. Those need to be approved, and they can be counted for credit. However, they are only allowed to credit a certain number of those. They are not allowed to fill up the whole program with those, and they also should be making sure when they are granting credit that if they are going to be using those in the schools, that they have departmental approval.

* (1820)

I certainly will look into the course topics he has identified to find out if they have been department approved and to ensure that they are keeping within the limit of the number of SICs and SIPs allowed. They are only allowed a certain number, and I believe it is four or six in their whole high school career.

They can take as many as they want, but for graduation purposes—they can graduate with 39 credits if they want to, but they have to have a minimum number of those credits being department-approved courses, and SICs and SIPs for interest on top of that, but not many of them are credited for graduation purposes.

Mr. Kowalski: At that same meeting, we were also informed by the principal, Brian O'Leary, that Maples Collegiate has a higher student-to-teacher ratio than the other high schools in the division, a large disparity in the amount of instructors given to Maples Collegiate. It is interesting to see that Maples Collegiate had a

lower result in the standards testing. Again, you know, a number of parents were very concerned about it and have contacted me that they are very concerned.

Other than going to their school division, is there any monitoring done by the Department of Education as far as the sharing of resources within a division amongst the different high schools? In Seven Oaks, we have three high schools, Garden City, West Kildonan and Maples Collegiate, and Maples Collegiate seems to be the poor cousin getting less teachers. I do not know if there is a direct correlation, but it had much lower results in the standards test. Is there any role for the Department of Education to play in that?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, staffing will normally be allocated by the school division board, and it will be based upon the number of students in the school, normally. Every division will have its own formula or its own way of assigning staff. Some divisions will have so many staff units where they will say a classroom teacher is one staff unit, a teacher's assistant would be a half unit, a principal would be a unit and a half, so they will assign so many students per unit in the school.

Then the school itself can decide—and a lot of divisions operate this way, where the principal can say, well, I have 45 units allowed to me and I think, instead of having two teachers, I will have four assistants. So the principal can make those decisions. Similarly, if they have a school advisory committee, school advisory council, the parents now have ability at the beginning of the year when the school plans are done to decide how to divide up those staff units and to decide how to spend the school budget in conjunction with the school staff—they do it as a partnership—provided they do not spend more than the school division gives them, are asked for more teachers or staffing units. The staffing units also include the clerical staff and the professional staff who are noneducators: nurses, people like that, therapists, counsellors, et cetera, which most high schools have, and I would imagine your school division would divide those on a per-student basis accordingly.

Now, it may be that there are differences in courses, too. People taking physics 300, many of those classes only have eight to 10 students in them, and yet they still require one physics 300 teacher. Conversely, band

classes may have 45. I would hope they would have at least 45. If you want a good band, you really need a big grouping and, again, just one teacher. So there you have the problem with averages. We know that most of the higher science subjects have very small classes indeed, and physical education and band not only have larger classes but require larger classes, and that will skew sometimes the staffing units.

I do not know what your average class size there is at The Maples. We have found there seems to be no correlation at this point between the size of the class and the result on the math exam. It is coming more and more and more down to the basic understanding that what is the deciding factor is the quality of the teaching and the receptiveness of the child.

The more we look at the results, the more we see this. We have seen large classes where students have done extremely well, small classes where they have failed dismally. We have seen classes of six and seven where the whole class has failed. We have seen classes of 37 where the whole class has done very well. What seems to be the common element is the receptiveness of the child and the quality of the teaching, and I am not implying anything by that because the other thing that happens, as well, is what kinds of supports are those teachers getting. Are they getting the encouragement, the professional development, the things they require to do their job well? Those are unknowns in this situation, but I will look into it.

Mr. Kowalski: The last question I have, something that I have brought forward before in previous Estimates, and that is about the ward representation in the Seven Oaks School Division; the inequity that has been longstanding in Seven Oaks School Division where in one ward that covers The Maples area there are three trustees, and if my memory serves me right, representing 17,000 eligible voters and in another ward where there is 15,000 voters there are five trustees representing it. I made it known that under the education act there is a provision allowing for a petition of 25 people to petition the school board about redistribution of representation, and I made it well known in the community that I was planning to do that. I made it known in committee that I was planning to do that.

As a result of this, someone approached a number of parents to do such a position shortly after the untimely death of one of the school trustees in Seven Oaks, Mike Sawko, and before they would have a by-election, they brought that petition forward, but as the act calls, that after a certain amount of time, if the school board has not dealt with it, the petitioners may bring that forward to the Minister of Education who will then convene a board of revision or—I am not too sure of the term.

What I am not too clear on, if the parents never make that second step, is this a way of forestalling and maintaining the status quo, which has been going on for more than a decade in the Seven Oaks School Division, or can the minister, knowing that there is a vacancy in the Seven Oaks School Division, knowing that there has been a petition there for some time, make inquiries as to the status of the representation in the Seven Oaks School Division, or does the minister have to wait until these parents contact her that did the original petition?

A follow-up question would be, if that is the case, can a second petition be brought forward by another group of parents so that we could finally correct the inequity in the Seven Oaks School Division?

Mrs. McIntosh: You do have an uneven representation there with the description of the number of people being represented. Insofar as they are able, those wards should be as equal as is reasonably possible. Sometimes it is not possible because you have a little isolated geographical area that you do not want to be left alone and so you include it—bigger but, by and large, you sound uneven there.

Normally, the way in which those changes would have been made would be either by petition from the school board or a petition by the people in the area. The school board, I gather, is not likely to bring that forward, so it would have to be the parents. The minister would not go and take arbitrary action until the minister has heard from either the parents or the board with a request to change. Given—and it could very well be a stalling tactic politically, I do not know. I am just saying in terms of the reality of things, if they wait too much longer for that petition to come to the minister, they may be entering a cycle then where it is too close to an upcoming school board election to change the boundaries.

So if they would like those boundaries changed, my strong suggestion would be that they get that request in very quickly so that there is time to make the change properly and enough time for the next school board election to be—for candidates in each of those areas to properly prepare.

I would advise you, as MLA for the area, to let those interested parties know that they should petition the minister. If they have let the first one lapse, they should do it again.

* (1830)

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Chairperson, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. I wrote to the Minister of Finance around the first week of April, and I am sorry that I do not have his response with me, otherwise I would send it over to him, but I could not find it.

I will spell out the issue. It has to do with the proceeds of Manitoba Lotteries revenue. The question that I posed to the minister was how the revenue was being received and also divvied up, I guess. I talked to staff in a couple of departments about this, and what I learned was that—well, first of all, I talked to the minister in the Chamber here in the last session, and I mentioned that in my letter as well. I asked the minister if it was accurate to say that all Lotteries revenue now goes into general revenue and the minister said yes, that is true.

Then I talked to the staff, and I found out that in spite of that, some VLT revenue is used for a number of programs in rural development and also in the city of Winnipeg. I wrote to the minister to verify this. My recollection of the answer is that, yes, all Lotteries revenue goes into general revenue but there are some programs that are funded by VLTs. That rather confused me, because I do not see how you can have it both ways. So I wonder if the minister could clarify that for me.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Chairman, the member is correct. He wrote me on the issue and I have written back to him, but what happened starting last year is all lottery revenue now does come into general revenue in the province of

Manitoba. The budget is approximately \$223 million of total lottery revenue coming into our revenue sources; that is a combination of lottery tickets, VLTs, the entertainment facilities, the casino and so on.

So that is the revenue side of it, and against that revenue some portions are dedicated to expenditures but only from VLT revenue. So the only portion of that revenue that is then dedicated to particular expenditures are some of the VLT revenues. Ten percent of the VLT revenues go on an unconditional basis back to the municipalities, both the City of Winnipeg and all municipalities in Manitoba, and 25 percent go into economic development programs.

There is a 25 percent allocation for the city of Winnipeg. That is a separate line item in the budget, and that is where we fund support for organizations like Winnipeg 2000, Tourism Winnipeg, various initiatives that have been supported in Winnipeg are funded through that account, and 25 percent goes into rural development for economic development programs, and that is where funding is provided for the REDI program, the Rural Economic Development Initiative, the Grow Bonds Program, and so on.

So the only amount of gaming revenue that is dedicated now are those two components from VLT revenues. The rest just goes into general revenue, and as a result of that is utilized for all of the priorities of the budget, 34 percent for health care; 19 percent for education, and so on.

I think the confusion is if you go back a couple of years ago we used to dedicate an awful lot of the lottery revenue and the gaming revenue to various program areas. We used to dedicate it to sport. We used to dedicate it to culture, various areas. That is no longer the case. All of the expenditures in those areas, sport and culture and so on, just stand up against all expenditures of government, and they are all assessed on the priorities each and every year in terms of the total expenditures of government.

So I think that was clarified in the letter that I did send the member, and I hope that clarifies the issue for him.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister for his response.

I now have some questions for the Minister of Family Services who I know has been patiently waiting for this. The first question has to do with the IBM contract for the new computer system for the amalgamated provincial income assistance program and City of Winnipeg social services program. Can the minister first of all verify that the contract has been let to IBM?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Yes, it has.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me how much the contract is for?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I cannot recall what the contract is for, and I do not have staff here with any detail, but I can endeavour to provide that information.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister for that answer. Can the minister verify that IBM will be paid out of the savings that accrue from the amalgamated system?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, indeed, some of the contracts will be paid out of the savings so the work will be done up front, and then, as savings are achieved, IBM will be paid. That is part of the process, but as we look to the training agreement that was signed with the federal government, with the Department of Education just a month or so back, there is a desire, and Family Services and Education and Training are working very closely together, to try to ensure that we have an integrated information system so that those that are on employment insurance and those that might be on social assistance might be integrated.

So, as well as the one-tiered system of social allowances in the city of Winnipeg, we are looking to integrate our system so that we have information on those on employment insurance also. So there will be a better ability to track, to monitor, to determine what the outcomes are and how successful we are being.

As a part of that agreement that was signed with the federal government, there is a component that is looking to a business case to see whether, in fact, the federal government might contribute some dollars to the integrated system. I do not think we had an absolute dollar commitment from the federal government until the business case was made. That is

in the process, and there may be some federal dollars available for that contract too.

Mr. Martindale: Just to clarify, is the minister saying that IBM is responsible for that integrated system with federal EI as well?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The only thing we have done with IBM at this point is the first phase, and I guess there will be second and third phases. You know, the priority for us, of course, is to get the integrated system for social allowance in the city of Winnipeg. There will be subsequent phases. We have just signed the agreement on training, and if, in fact, there is a business case made, it may well be IBM, but we do not have any clear indication at this point.

Mr. Martindale: When the minister says that IBM will be paid out of future savings, does that mean primarily administrative savings?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I think that is—and I do not have the detail of the contractual arrangements with IBM, but one of the reasons we are moving ahead with the one-tiered system, of course, is to reduce the overlap and duplication to ensure that there are less administrative costs, and we have a much more effective system to ensure that we have all of the information needed to deliver the best program possible at the lowest cost.

Mr. Martindale: Do administrative savings include staff salaries?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think my honourable friend is getting into a bit more detail than I can answer without staff here to provide some of that detail, and I endeavour to undertake to find out what the contract was and provide that information. So I will note the question and try to get the answers.

* (1840)

Mr. Martindale: If administrative savings do not accrue, does that mean that IBM will not get paid, as I understand happened in another province?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess, in essence, that would be the case. I mean, we would not be going through this

exercise unless we believed—and the business case that was presented to us, as a result of the study that was undertaken, was that indeed there would be savings, there would be administrative savings. As a result, we have moved ahead with the project.

So we are anticipating there will be savings, and certainly if there are not savings achieved, then I am sure there are some penalties in that agreement, and I will get that kind of detail.

Mr. Martindale: On a different topic, I have with me a paper called Operational Review of Winnipeg Child and Family Services Agency Briefing to Executive Management dated September 9, 1996. A very interesting document, and I have a number of questions arising out of it.

First of all, it refers to the Environmental Context Review, which is a document I am not familiar with unless it is the environmental scan that was done last year, but this briefing says that the environmental context review identified two polar approaches to service delivery. I am wondering if the minister is familiar with what those two polar approaches were.

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, at this point in time, I am not. I know there was an operational review undertaken of Winnipeg Child and Family Services. I am not sure what document my honourable friend is referring to. Back in 1996, there was a steering committee, an agreement between the government and Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency that the operational review needed to be undertaken.

There was a steering committee comprised of membership from the agency and from the department. I was not intimately involved in that process. It was staff in my department and staff from the agency. I am not sure what document my honourable friend is reading from, but it looks like it might be sort of the terms of reference and the plan or the process that was to be undertaken. Again, without staff here, it is pretty difficult to talk about what was undertaken.

Mr. Martindale: I have other questions on this, and then I will send the document over to the minister. But she has identified the correct operational review because the steering committee does have her deputy

minister and assistant deputy minister, other department staff and people from Winnipeg Child and Family Services.

Under Task 8, alternative models for service delivery, it says: This task will evaluate several service options, including—and there are about five listed. The one that interests me is redistribution of mandated services among several agencies, including Winnipeg Child and Family Services and native agencies. I am wondering if any recommendations have come forward as a result of the operational review about changing the mandate to Winnipeg Child and Family Services and maybe sharing it or giving it to an aboriginal or First Nations agency.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think I indicated in the Estimates process that the operational review and the results of that operational review would be a public document, but at this point in time I think the report has just been completed, and both the agency and government are looking at an implementation plan as a result of that. So it is an internal working document at this point. Once the direction is undertaken and agreed to by both the department and the agency, it will become a public document. At this point in time it is a document that has been presented, and they are looking at options for implementation of that document.

Can I indicate to my honourable friend—he probably read in the paper and probably has heard an announcement that Keith Cooper has retired from Winnipeg Child and Family and the board went through a search. A Canada-wide search, I believe, was undertaken by the board and they have hired a new chief executive officer who starts in August. Through this transitional period, with new leadership at the top of the agency, I suppose there will be a lot of work and a lot of, I suppose, understanding by the new person in charge as to where the agency is today and what it might look like in the future.

So this will be very much a transitional stage for the Winnipeg agency and a possibility that the operational review will help to provide some direction for what needs to happen. We have had reports. I think the Zuefle report was one, and the—I am trying to think. It was a report that was done, I think, before I became minister that talked about an aboriginal agency.

[interjection] It was the First Nations task force that was started before I became minister and completed in my first short period of time in the Department of Family Services.

There was a recommendation there that there be an aboriginal agency established in the city of Winnipeg. You know, we had indicated—that was at the time we were going through the difficult changes that were presented to us from the federal government when they withdrew hundred percent funding for aboriginal people off of reserves.

We still believe and maintain, as do all western provinces specifically who have—I think you would find Saskatchewan and us very much on the same wave length when it comes to seeking support from the federal government to reinstate the funding, because we believe they have both a moral and a financial responsibility to provide services both on and off reserves for Status Indians.

It is a point that we make every time we have an opportunity to meet with the federal government, and we certainly have a lot of support from other provinces for our position and our point of view. I think our response to that task force report was that in the absence of federal legislation, we were not prepared to implement that, that the federal government had to take a leadership role.

The Zuefle report also did indicate that we should be looking at the option of an urban aboriginal agency. There very well may be that kind of a recommendation from the operational review. We indicated when we tabled the Zuefle report that we were going to set up a committee involving aboriginal people to explore that option.

Mr. Martindale: The minister anticipated my next set of questions. According to the document that I shared with her that I would like back, it says that the final report is due November 1996. I wonder if the final report has been submitted and if so, if I could get a copy of that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The report was considerably later than November of 1996. It was Prairie Research Associates that was hired to do the operational review

as the consultant, and it took then considerably longer than anticipated to get it completed. It is now, yes, in its final stage. I indicated in one of my earlier answers that both the department and the agency are presently reviewing that report and that at the appropriate time it will become a public document.

Mr. Martindale: The minister stated that a committee will be set up of aboriginal people, I think, to look at a mandated agency in Winnipeg. I wonder if that committee has been struck yet.

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, it has not. I will indicate to my honourable friend, it has been a pretty busy spring with our legislative agenda and all of the other things going on in the Legislature. Once we get out and have a bit of breathing time, I will have time to focus on priorities for over the next year.

* (1850)

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister indicate when that committee might be struck?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would imagine that by sometime this fall. I mean, it is a matter of trying to determine who might be on that committee, approaching those people and getting their consent to be a part of the working group, so I would say sometime this fall we should have that committee struck.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to go back on the issue of children in hotels. I have with me a quote from the Minister of Family Services from Estimates in 1995, two years ago. She said: I have concerns over the issues around putting children in hotels and what kind of treatment and what kind of care they get, but I think it is an issue that we are going to have to address some time in the near future—as recorded in Hansard on June 16, 1995. Perhaps this is like the minister's comment about proclaiming, I think it was The Vulnerable Persons Act, which she said, soon. Perhaps what we need is a definition here of “sometime in the near future” because the numbers seem to be going up.

The information that I received under Freedom of Information was that there was an average of 42 children per night in hotels in Winnipeg. The date of that was for the 11 months ended February 28, 1997.

Then in Estimates we learned from the minister that there are sometimes as many as 80 children a night. The document that I received has a cost of \$168.61 a night. However, Child and Family Services staff tell me, numerous Child and Family Services staff, some of them quoting Keith Cooper, which I guess I can say now that he has retired, that the real cost is more like \$400 a day. I am not sure whether that means per suite or per child, but certainly \$400 a day is a lot more than \$168 a day. I think the reason for this figure, which I believe is probably a realistic one, is that it includes wages, groceries, clothing, diapers and outings.

So I am wondering if the \$168 a day is just the cost of the hotel suite, apartment suite, or does it include other costs, or is \$400 a day a more realistic figure.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I cannot provide that kind of detail right now, but I can indicate to you that the figures that Winnipeg Child and Family has provided to us indicate that it has cost \$2.5 million to keep children in hotels over the last year. You know, I said back in 1995 it was unacceptable, and I think I have to explain to my honourable friend how the system works. It is the responsibility of the agency to recruit, hire and train foster parents.

We provide, through the department, through our funding to Winnipeg Child and Family Services, 50 cents per day per child in care for recruitment and training of foster parents. When you look at that in the context of the budget of Winnipeg Child and Family Services, we provide over \$700,000 per year to the agency specifically for recruitment and training of foster parents. Now it is the responsibility then of the agency to undertake some sort of a recruitment process and provide some sort of ongoing training. That is a significant amount of money.

So my concern and our concerns as a department have been shared with the Winnipeg agency. I know that last year, as a result of our concerns, they did do a bit of a recruitment process, and I think they found some new foster homes. I know that, as a result of the issue and it being raised last year in the media, people were calling and saying, I would be prepared to foster. So they did receive some additional homes at that point in time. I do know that Ma Mawi had actively done some recruiting for culturally appropriate foster homes

and have found 40 homes and have trained foster parents. They have indicated to me privately in meetings just as late as a week or two ago that they honestly believe there are another 40 people that they can find, recruit and train. They need some help from the Winnipeg agency and need to be working really closely with the Winnipeg agency in order for that to happen.

I guess, short of government going out and doing a recruitment campaign on our own—I mean, it is the agency that recruits, licenses and places children in foster homes. Now I had three calls on Peter Warren the other morning from foster parents, one of them specifically in the Interlake region—and we are looking into this issue—who has been licensed as a foster home and has not been able to receive any foster children.

I guess the question for me is if we have a foster home that has been licensed just recently and it has never had a foster child placed in that home, you know, is there a reason we are putting children in hotels when we have a foster home that is sitting empty? Now, I did get the name off the air, and we are looking at that issue as we speak to see whether there is any problem or whether, in fact, the information that was provided by this person was accurate.

Those are the kinds of the things that need to be aggressively pursued. I have talked to the agency and I said, well, how do you find foster homes, and very often it is by word of mouth. They do not do any ad campaigns. I mean, with \$700,000 in support of foster homes and training for foster parents, I would think a small amount of that money could be used to do an advertising campaign. We know that the checks and balances have to be in place, but I think if Manitobans knew the need that was there, we might find some people rising to the occasion and putting their names forward to become foster parents, but if they do not know there is a need specifically and there is not any advertising done, then it is pretty difficult sometimes to recruit. So I have said to the agency, you know, do some aggressive recruitment.

I guess we have not seen any significant change in the numbers, and we are seeing more and more kids in hotels. It is a concern to me and the biggest concern

that we have as a government, because now we have information through the information system, the Child and Family Services Information Systems, that tells us that younger and younger children are being placed in hotels. I am extremely concerned about that, and we have asked the agency to try to find some solutions.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I do not particularly have a quarrel with what the minister is saying, but what we did hear foster parents saying this week, because many of them were interviewed after the front-line workers had a press conference, was that because of cutbacks to the daily foster care rate and cutbacks to the recreation allowance and the elimination of the family foster parent association and lack of training and support in the absence of that organization is that some people are saying that it is not worth it, that you end up subsidizing the foster child or that they do not want to be a foster parent anymore, and the implication is that it is harder to recruit new foster parents because of these cutbacks.

It seems to me that one way to attract more foster parents might be to either provide more money to foster parents or to take some of the huge amounts of money that are being spent on hotels and put that into augmenting the foster parent rates. For example, I have here Winnipeg Child and Family Services placements and related costs for a whole bunch of categories, including foster homes. If you look at the amounts of money, for example, the special rate, the average bed usage is 854, and the average cost per day is \$42.66 and the total cost is \$12.1 million. Then the next highest cost on this whole page—well, the next highest cost is the regular rate, 478 beds at \$21.52 a day for a cost of \$3.4 million. Then the next highest cost after that is hotels, \$42 a day average, for \$2.3 million. And the next is four beds—I am not sure what that means but maybe that is group homes or something—62 average occupancy, \$98 a day, \$2.0 million.

So I am wondering if the minister would consider putting more money into foster parent families' hands in order to encourage more people to take foster children and to truly compensate them for the costs, and as a result, save money on children in care in hotels and emergency placements, because we have emergency facilities as well as hotels, 32, average per day, at a cost of \$102, \$1.0 million.

I mean, we are talking about big sums of money here, and I am trying to find a way for the minister to either save money or to reallocate money. What is the minister's response to that suggestion?

* (1900)

Mrs. Mitchelson: When the funding was removed from the foster family association, that is when the 50 cents per day, per day's care, was put into the agency. That is when the money was put into the agency so that the agency could do the training and work with foster families, because they were the people that recruited foster families.

I hear what my honourable friend is saying about the foster family association, but I do want to indicate to you that I have a foster family in my constituency who I have met with on several occasions, and they are a foster family that moved here from British Columbia and have received a licence and have been fostering here for several years.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

One of the issues for her and for that family is the lack of support and co-ordination of foster families here as compared to British Columbia. She tells me that the foster family association in British Columbia was not funded by government, in fact, but it was the foster parents themselves and it was the agencies in certain neighbourhoods that worked very closely with foster parents, called them together to regular meetings, had awards, ceremonies every year. There was no association that was funded by government, but it was an initiative that was undertaken because foster parents felt it was beneficial for them to get together and do those kinds of things. So I have been talking to her recently and saying maybe that is something that needs to be looked at, and it is certainly something that the agency should consider with the \$700,000 or more that we provide to them for recruitment and training and support for foster parents.

It seems to me that there is very much a lack of that. We have put the money into the agency, and so I think it is something certainly that we have to explore or pursue a little further with the agency.

Can I indicate, as I have indicated before, that my honourable friend can take a very simplistic approach to saying raise the basic foster rates, because that is the only rate that government sets, is the basic minimum foster rate? Many, many of the children—I would venture to guess that almost every child that is in a hotel room is at a higher rate than the basic rate. The agency can choose to spend that \$2.5 million that they are spending on hotels and put that into rates for children in foster care above and beyond the basic rate, which they have the ability to do. So it is a choice that the agency makes.

I would very much agree with my honourable friend and say that maybe both of us need to go together to the agency and say, maybe you need to prioritize your resources. None of us believe that warehousing kids in hotels is the right way to treat those children. That \$2.5 million might go a long way into support in foster care at higher rates than the basic rate if those children have special needs. So the agency does have the ability to do that.

Mr. Martindale: I can always tell when this minister does not want to answer my questions because she starts talking about British Columbia. However, she did provide a lot of new information that I did not have before.

I think we have probably exhausted this topic, so I would like to conclude with some questions about the most recent report of the National Council of Welfare which is titled Healthy Parents, Healthy Babies, and it is dated summer 1997. Maybe rather than getting into a lot of specifics, so that I can let my colleagues ask questions, I will try and summarize some of the ideas here and maybe let the minister answer in a general way as well.

Basically, this report talks about the high cost of low birth weight babies and the health and education implications. I guess one of the problems in government is that even though you may want to save money in one department, it is very hard because the costs may accrue in another department, or it may be difficult to spend money, for example, in Family Services, in order to save money in Health because I guess you would have to convince all your colleagues that that was a worthwhile thing to do.

So, for example, most of the prenatal and postnatal programs that are talked about here have to do with nutrition and social assistance and other supports to expectant mothers and new mothers, and the savings are mostly in health but also in education and other areas.

There are many good examples of existing programs both in Canada and the United States, and some of them have been evaluated and the evaluations are in this document as well, and it shows that the savings are considerable. For example, there is the Montreal Diet Dispensary Program. There are a number of federal programs identified as well: Brighter Futures and Community Action Program for Children. There are citations about American programs. There is also Vancouver's Healthiest Babies Possible Program.

I am wondering if the minister would like to familiarize herself with these studies. Also, there is an extensive bibliography here. There are 86 items in the bibliography, and I obtained quite a few of them from the Legislative Library, so I know they are available, so I can recommend them to the minister.

But I am wondering if she can give me a general answer—maybe I will make this my last question—about whether or not she is willing to invest in programs like this in Manitoba, and I do not mean just existing programs or a pilot program but a program that would target all expectant mothers, because we know that if you spend a few hundred thousand up front or a few million up front that you are going to save multimillions at the other end, particularly in health care costs.

So is the minister willing to study this document and to consider that kind of program for expectant mothers and for new mothers because it is beneficial to babies and to families, as well as to taxpayers? I think we have to make sure that the focus is that we are concerned about these people as individuals and as a group first, and we know that they are at very high risk and many of them live in poverty. For example, this document says for single-parent mothers under 25—and that is the group that I am primarily concerned about, and this is the high-risk group—the poverty rate was an astounding 83 percent. So will the minister look into this, and what is her view on having a comprehensive program for expectant mothers and new mothers?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I hear my honourable friend, and I think we have talked about this many, many times in the Estimates processes and even in private conversations around the issue. None of us disagree that programs have to be put in place. I hear my honourable friend say we should have a province-wide program. Well, I think probably if he looked at some of the information in some of the other projects that have been undertaken that they are probably on a smaller scale.

To set up a province-wide program when you do not really focus on the issues of poverty, the high areas of concentration of poverty for children and youth, and look at the neighbourhood resources that are available and see how we identify what the needs in the neighbourhood are and develop the programs accordingly and work with the community organizations that can help to deliver those programs, you are not going to have much success.

I think just throwing money into a program and asking every neighbourhood or every community to fit into that program is the wrong way to go. I would prefer to do it neighbourhood by neighbourhood, and I think that is the kind of thing we have to do after we assess the needs. To look at it, agreeing always that those who are single parents who are living in poverty are going to have the greatest need, especially at times prenatally and postnatally, and we have to focus our programs and our energies and our efforts in that manner, but I am not necessarily a fan of a province-wide program or even a city-wide program, and then you ask everyone to fit into that program in order to get support. I believe that we need to look at neighbourhoods and we need to look at what works best in neighbourhoods.

I want to tell my honourable friend that over the next few months we will have several projects or programs that are up and running that will address this very specific issue.

* (1910)

Mr. Kowalski: I have one very short question, with possibly one even shorter supplementary question, for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe). It results from an incident that happened to

me a couple of days ago. I had a small deposit to make at my bank. My bank is in the Northgate Shopping Centre, but I have a card that allows me to deal with any Royal Bank in the city of Winnipeg.

So on the way after leaving the Legislative Building and running to my constituency office and trying to come back here, I quickly stopped by the Royal Bank at William and Sherbrook, which I had used over a number of years while I was a police officer because it was in my cruiser car area. I went into the bank and, lo and behold, I saw all the wickets covered over indicating that there was no longer any teller service in that bank. They were just available for loans and other things, and they directed me that there were other branches nearby. So I thought I would quickly drive further north and go to the Royal Bank at Selkirk and Main. Lo and behold, that Royal Bank has been closed down. So I figured I would stop at the Royal Bank at McGregor and Mountain and, guess what, that branch was closed also.

Well, by that time it was after banking hours, so I thought on the way to work this morning I would drop by the Royal Bank at Sargent and Sherbrook, figured that it would open at ten o'clock and I would be a little bit late for Question Period. So when I went running in there this morning, lo and behold, it does not open till eleven o'clock. So I came here for Question Period, and I figured that when we finished here at lunch time I would run to the bank and make my little \$60 deposit, but when I went back to that branch at Sargent and Sherbrook, I counted the number of people in line, and there were over 40 people waiting in line, waiting for service. That was finally when I decided to have a talk with the manager of the bank and tell him of my grave disappointment at the irresponsibility of the Royal Bank of Canada to abandon the core area of this city.

In the meantime, while this bank is making a sizable profit, they are closing up branches. They try to substitute it with automatic teller machines, but not everyone can do all their banking with ATMs or is not comfortable with them. Especially in the core area, many of the people who are in that situation may not have vehicles to drive to one of their suburban branches. I had a word with the manager, telling him my grave disappointment. I told him that I would be sharing my story with other MLAs about the corporate

irresponsibility that the Royal Bank of Canada has in abandoning the banking needs of the people living in the core area of the city.

To me, in spite of their high-profile charitable events, it speaks of their corporate responsibility, their not meeting it. I am wondering if the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is as concerned as I am because for the people in the core area it is not only inconvenience, sometimes it could actually result in people carrying large amounts of money, inability to cash cheques or having to go to cheque discounters.

These are some of the poorest people of our city then having large portions of their cheques taken off to cash at Money Mart or whatever cheque discounter or pawnshops or anywhere else where they can. So is the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs concerned, and can he take any action on behalf of the consumers of bank services in the core area of the city?

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I would like to thank my honourable colleague for those remarks.

In fact, I would like to put on the record that I certainly empathize and am very sympathetic with him for the experience that he has undergone. While I think we all acknowledge that banks are trying to reduce payrolls and staffing expenses and are switching over to the automated tellers, and I too, as I think are all honourable colleagues in this Chamber now, we are customers of our various banks by automatic deposit. Our payrolls are automatically deposited to our accounts rather than having the cheques delivered. I can advise my honourable colleague that I was a holdout because I like to actually see the piece of paper and take it to my bank and have the personal interaction over the top of the counter, whereas nowadays, as my honourable colleague is well aware, there is an automatic deposit and all we get is a very impersonal advice every two weeks that a deposit has been made.

So while I am mindful that there are changes, I think what my honourable colleague touches upon is that there is a withdrawal of service by many service providers from the core area of our city. While my department is not directly responsible for banks, I can undertake to my honourable colleague that I will relay

these remarks to a personal acquaintance of mine, Mrs. Dennise Leahey, who is the manager—[interjection] Yes, indeed she did. She had one of my signs on her lawn, and I will be most happy to convey these remarks and experience to her. I can put on the record that albeit while I am not responsible for banking and this is a federal matter, as my honourable colleague is well aware, I am very mindful of the issue of insurance which is something that does touch upon my department.

I have been doing some research in this matter. I have been doing some advocating and urging of a number of the insurance companies, and I have been told by a group of insurers in Manitoba, whom I asked to drop into my office, that they are voluntarily forming a council, and if there are any individual issues of red lining which come to the attention of any members of this Legislature, if they would be so kind as to refer them to me, I would be more than pleased to submit them to this council for remediation as I am advised that these individuals would attend to remediate them. I think that this is an issue that all worthy members of this Chamber should be aware, and I thank my honourable colleague for this question.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, on the same topic, I have made the same point as my colleague from Point Douglas. I think the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickey) was making the same comment about north Main and the withdrawal of banking services for a number of years. I made the same questions myself in the House this time and the absence now of any banking services from Arlington down to Kennedy Street in the area of my riding which I estimate is about 9,000 people.

I will be meeting with the branch manager of the last bank as it disappears next week, and I would also just like to say to the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), the minister, that I have met with the vice-president of the Royal Bank on this issue amongst others. While the meeting was most pleasant and cordial, I think that the answer that the minister will get will be, it is happening everywhere, there is nothing that the Royal Bank can or is going to do about it.

So I want to add my voice to the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) and say this is a very, very

serious issue for people in Winnipeg. The ATMs may be fine for parts of the population, but they do require credit—and there are many people, as the member for The Maples says—in order to get a card to use the machines. That is not always possible for people who are on a variety of transfer incomes.

* (1920)

The issues he raised are of carrying large amounts of money when cheques have to be cashed or the great increase in the use of commercial institutions such as Money Mart, which do take a cut from the cheque. Essentially, people are being funnelled into those kinds of institutions, and I do not think any of us want to see that happen in Manitoba. So this is not just one bank; it is a number of banks.

It is happening throughout the inner city, and it is happening, I think, from over the last five years. It has happened very quickly, and people have found themselves now—I know people who are, I have one particular constituent who has a great deal of rheumatism. He now has to walk, I think it is about eight or nine blocks during the winter, to find a bank at which he can cash a cheque. That is a very long way for him. He does not have a car, he cannot ride a bike, and he is not an isolated person, I think. There are many people in that situation.

So I just want to say that this is a very important issue, and I have raised it with the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer). I am glad to see the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) raising it with this minister. I hope that he will re-emphasize to the vice-president of the Royal Bank that it is not just the opposition that has concerns in this area.

Mr. Radcliffe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would also like to thank my honourable colleague for those remarks. I would add and put on the record that, in fact, the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs does have responsibility, albeit indirectly, at arm's length, for credit unions, and credit unions are a flourishing and growing branch offering banking and financial services in Manitoba. I would be more than pleased to alert the credit union movement to the fact that there, perhaps, is a business opportunity which

might be available to them in the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba, as I would my honourable colleagues around me here—

An Honourable Member: Three-letter words.

Mr. Radcliffe: That is right. But in all sincerity I am very aware of the issue, and I thank my honourable colleague for those remarks.

Mr. Kowalski: Yes, I am just wondering if the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs would be motivated to actually contact his federal counterpart in charge of banking. Just as earlier today or yesterday there was a request made for the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) to make a presentation to the CRTC in regard to phone rates, would this minister be willing to contact his federal counterpart on behalf of consumers of bank services in the core area to state in writing on the record of his concern for the lack of service provided to core area residents, or is there a need for a large number of phone calls or possibly petitions or some other form of demonstrated support for such action by the minister?

Mr. Radcliffe: I would thank my honourable colleague, Mr. Chairman, for that request. What I am prepared to do is to take advice. I will consult with members of my department and find out the most effective way of getting to the root of this problem and, in fact, following up on that. I do not know whether, in fact, any of the particular courses of action suggested by my honourable colleague are the most efficacious but, in fact, this is something that I am prepared to look at.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I have a couple of questions for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), Mr. Chairperson.

The government has been working its way into this SHL Systemhouse contract for some time now, and I believe that initially the hope was that the contract would be underway by now. I think the initial target date was earlier this year, but it has been delayed.

Could the minister indicate approximately when he actually expects that Systemhouse will be delivering the service that is anticipated?

Mr. Stefanson: I would expect that the negotiations on the contract will be concluded very shortly, in the next handful of days. Subject to that being a successful arrangement, they will then start their work. I would have to get back to the member with a specific time frame in terms of when the project would be completed, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, the minister undertook in Question Period to state that there would be no layoffs in the civil service as a direct result of this contract.

Is he prepared to indicate that the people now delivering the service will have jobs in the new arrangement, or is he telling them that they will have to apply for these jobs, and Systemhouse will hire whomever it thinks best qualified to deliver the service?

Mr. Stefanson: This whole issue of jobs is one that we have taken seriously from the very outset in terms of the people affected being potentially offered jobs by Systemhouse in many cases. Those who are not, but yet are affected by the transition, we expect that we can continue to utilize within government, Mr. Chairman.

That has been our commitment throughout. There was a letter sent that I read into the record briefly today in Question Period from the Civil Service Commission to the Manitoba Government Employees Union saying very clearly that we do not expect any layoffs as a result of this initiative, the Systemhouse initiative.

Mr. Sale: Is there any cash component to this contract, or is the contract entirely a purchase of service department by department with no core cash commitment on the part of government?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, in terms of the funding of the desktop initiative, we currently spend about \$12 million on desktop services. Depending on what the final contract is, we will be working with the individual departments that are affected to determine what capacity they have within their budgets on an ongoing basis to fund the desktop services.

What we also have, as the member knows, is a line item in our budget called Internal Reform. This year's budget has \$15 million allocated for Internal Reform. Last year, we budgeted \$4 million. The significant

increase, four times increase, is primarily to deal with the various information technology initiatives that we have before us, the year 2000 conversion, the contract with Systemhouse, the Better Methods Initiative and so on.

Obviously, we will be dealing with departments to see if they can accommodate some of their expenditures from within, but we also have the capacity to fund any incremental costs from the Internal Reform line.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I am not sure that I understood the answer. Maybe that was the goal, and if it was, it succeeded. It sounds like the minister is saying that the contract would be partly departmental purchase of service and partly core central government initiatives in line with the better services initiative, so that it might be a \$25 million-or-more-a-year contract, not a 12. I believe, in fact, the rumours are that it is over \$50 million a year.

So can the minister shed some light on the total composition of the contract?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, there is no way that we expect the contract to reach a magnitude of \$50 million a year. It is currently \$12 million a year. We do expect some incremental costs as a result of the improvements and adjustments that are being made.

But the member is basically correct that departments currently are providing the servicing of the \$12 million. We do expect an ongoing commitment from departments. We will be discussing with departments whether or not they have any additional capacity to deal with any incremental costs that they might face, but we also have this central pool of money that we can make a contribution to the desktop initiative, and we obviously will not be asking departments to put at risk any other program expenditures that are a priority of the department and of our government.

So, at the end of the process, I do expect that at least in the initial stages it will end up just as the member indicated, that there will be costs being provided by line departments, but there also will be some of the costs being funded from central government through the internal reform account.

* (1930)

Mr. Sale: On the actual staffing function, Mr. Chairperson, is it anticipated that the staff will be onsite in departments, or is it anticipated that they will do remote support from some location owned and operated by Systemhouse itself?

Mr. Stefanson: It certainly is expected, Mr. Chairman, that Systemhouse will have a centre of service and expertise in this area. In fact, that was specifically a part of the announcement when the letter of intent was entered into, that they would have that central office function here. So I would expect the majority of the services will be provided from that central office of Systemhouse, but, obviously, the nature of the contract, I am sure, will require onsite management in dealing with our employees and so on.

So I do expect it to be delivered centrally from their office here in Winnipeg, but I am sure there will be an awful lot of interaction directly with employees of government.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder how that is going to be effective for systems which are now located in Brandon and Dauphin, Thompson, Flin Flon, Beausejour. How are the system support people that are in government offices there now going to be available, from Systemhouse located somewhere in Winnipeg, to provide the services they are now providing onsite in the major government centres outside of Winnipeg?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I certainly look forward to providing the member with specifics if and when we conclude a contract with Systemhouse, but, as I indicated, I expect them to have a central office in Winnipeg, which is part of their commitment, that they will have the service centre out of Winnipeg. As I have already indicated, I would expect, because of the nature of the service, that they will have staff assigned and working within our government offices and premises on an ongoing and as required basis.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, is it the intent to have all desktop systems essentially on an Ethernet or a network of some form or other so that the staff who are located in Systemhouse can access the desktop in question or

the network in question to do upgrades or maintenance or whatever is required to keep those systems functional? So, essentially, we are networking our systems into Systemhouse centre, is that the sort of overall design?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I think in terms of the final design, I am best to wait until we have concluded a contract and provide the specifics at that time.

Mr. Sale: Just a final comment, then, Mr. Chairperson. It strikes me that the same kind of security issues are very much at stake here as they are in regard to the SmartHealth system. The government has a great deal of, both internally sensitive and personally sensitive, information now at the desktop level in many departments. If they are networked into Systemhouse, I would suggest to the minister that this is a much wider and much easier system to enter into. Having some experience in some of the departments' networks, it is not very hard to crack a network in terms of security by comparison with the larger systems that we are talking about in SmartHealth.

So I am wondering if he has any comment in regard to the degree of networking into which we are moving with Systemhouse having a central mode into virtually every department's network and staff responsible for maintaining those networks. Security surely is now a much higher priority issue than it was when departments were individually responsible and there were substantial separations between departments. That will apparently no longer be the case as Systemhouse is doing a central maintaining function.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I would not want to jump to that conclusion about Systemhouse necessarily having the central mode into all aspects of the computer services within government. As the member knows, the desktop management and services initiative is in the area of maintenance of our equipment, of our computers.

It is in the area of some training required and it is in the area of having basically a one-stop shop for troubleshooting with any problems with our computer system, so I do want to stress with him that in all of these initiatives, security is a high priority and will continue to be as we move forward in terms of not

allowing any access to information beyond what we would consider reasonable and in complying with our various legislation and so on.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I have a few questions for the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer). Earlier this year, I had written to the Minister of Labour with respect to one Steven Kemball, who is a 19-year-old who was injured in a workplace accident at the Pine Falls mill. My understanding is that Mr. Kemball, who is not that long out of school, came in contact with a sulfuric acid spill. Judging from some of the comments that have been made, that have been brought to my attention, perhaps that young man may not have had any training or the appropriate equipment to allow him to safely clean up that particular acid spill.

I want to ask the Minister of Labour what the status of this case is since it has been early January of this year since I wrote the Minister of Labour, and I have not heard of any decision coming out of his department as a result of any investigation that may have been undertaken. Can the minister advise me of what progress has been made in dealing with this matter? If it has been decided by the department, has the department made any recommendations with respect to further action in this regard?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour): I do not have any details on that case with me here tonight. I believe the case is still before the department and there are some ongoing discussions regarding it, but I would be pleased to get more detail on that and make it available to my honourable friend.

Mr. Reid: I appreciate the minister's offer. He did make that offer to me in response to my January 10 letter to him. When he responded in February, a month later, he made that offer to me, and I have called his department. They can shed no more light on this case than what the minister appears to be shedding here. So my apprehension here is that six months have now passed since this workplace accident, and since there is a statute of limitations that is involved under the legislation, I am worried about this case falling through the cracks here, and that no action will be taken to correct the situation to make sure there is not a repeat of this type of situation.

So, if the minister can provide some information with respect to what decisions his department is making under Workplace Safety and Health, I would appreciate knowing that information. Perhaps the minister may wish to correspond that information to me in the next few weeks, perhaps from his director of Workplace Safety and Health.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I will make inquiries within the department and see where this case is. As my friend can appreciate, some of these cases are a little more complicated, and for sure whenever there is a workplace accident and injury, we want to learn what we can from it and see that these things do not happen again.

Mr. Reid: I will look forward to the information that the minister may send along in the next few weeks. I want to ask the minister because we have seen a number of accidents, not only the Pine Falls accident where the young man just out of school was very seriously injured. An individual, of course, came into contact with that shell in the scrapyard here in the city of Winnipeg, when that military shell exploded.

It is my understanding that the department of Workplace Safety and Health has encountered some difficulty with regards to their investigation in that matter because the investigation also involved the Canadian military. Can the minister tell me, has the investigation in that regard concluded within his department, and are there any ongoing investigations between his department and the Canadian military to determine the facts of the case?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I can confirm that this investigation is ongoing. It was an unfortunate situation where obviously a live shell was brought in from Camp Shilo in western Manitoba, and the young person was dismantling this and there was a tragic accident at that time. But that investigation does involve the Canadian military, and at this point that investigation has not been concluded.

Mr. Reid: Well, we had a similar situation a number of years ago in the Transcona CN reclaim yards in a similar situation where a live shell exploded and killed an individual. This is another incident that we have here again. It seems to me that there is not the

appropriate safeguards or precautions put in place to make sure that the live shells are not leaving the military sites in the province. I want to make sure that the appropriate action is going on and that Workplace Safety and Health is indeed not being pushed aside by the Canadian military in the investigation of this matter, because we do have, as a civilian authority, some right and some role to be involved in the investigation.

Can the minister advise: Is his department taking a lead in the investigation of this matter or is it the Canadian military that is playing the lead role in this investigation?

* (1940)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I can assure the member that the accident happened here in the city, but for sure the Canadian military has to take a major onus for this. It is anticipated and expected when these shell casings are sent in for dismantling that live shells are not part of that—just a terrible human error. What we have to do is try to put as many safeguards in place as we can to see that an accident of this type does not repeat itself. Certainly, the onus is on the military. They are the ones that are more cognizant of these munitions, and they should be aware of the state of the shells as they are sending them in.

I can assure the member that we are not being pushed aside. We have a major interest in this. Again, a very tragic accident that absolutely should not happen, and we will work with the Canadian military to be as sure as we can be that this type of accident does not happen again.

Mr. Reid: There is another situation that occurred at the Molson's plant here in the city of Winnipeg where an individual was killed just recently as a result of a workplace accident where a forklift, I believe, pinned him to a wall. I believe a forklift was also involved, and perhaps there may be a truck involved as well. I do not have all of the details, and I know the minister's department is doing the investigation on this. I mean, we have seen a number of very serious accidents here that have involved in some cases, human error, and in some cases there is insufficient training that is involved. In other cases like the Canadian Corrosion Control there was perhaps some negligence involved as well.

I want to make a suggestion here to the Minister of Labour, and perhaps he can share his thoughts with me, because I know the department spends a little over a million and a half dollars on some 34 field officers under the Workplace Safety and Health division. It is my understanding from what the minister has indicated through the Estimates process that the Workers Compensation Board funds the better portion, I believe, it is 90 percent of the cost of the Workplace Safety and Health Branch.

Since the Workers Compensation Board is now refunding to employers of this province some \$45 million this year and they are expected to have a surplus of over \$40 million next year, would it be possible for the Department of Labour to increase the number of field officer inspectors perhaps by 20 in its complement, which would only add approximately \$900,000 to a million dollars to the cost? Since there is going to be a \$40 million surplus from that compensation fund anyway, it seems to me to be a reasonable investment to prevent future workplace injuries.

So is the minister prepared to increase the number of field officers to 20, considering that those costs could be paid for from the surplus funds of the Compensation Board?

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Gillehammer: While I am sure there is at times a correlation between the number of accidents and the location of accidents with the frequency of inspection, in the particular case that my honourable friend references at the Molson's plant, it was a case of a truck backing up to the loading dock, being given some instructions by an outside worker and being pinned between the truck and the loading dock.

I am not sure in this particular case whether more inspections would have prevented that, again a case of human error, an accident that in anybody's mind should not have happened. There have been accidents like this before where people get pinned between trucks and loading docks, but I am not sure you can extrapolate that this is a case of not enough inspectors or not enough inspections. It is just a very, very tragic and unfortunate accident.

Again, every time there is one of these accidents or loss of life, it is one too many, and we have to certainly make people aware of what happened, how it happened and, hopefully, prevent others. The member is correct that there is funding from Workers Compensation that comes to provide funds for Workplace Safety and Health officers and programs. Just earlier this week I did have a discussion with senior staff and Wally Fox-Decent from Workers Comp about whether there is overlap and duplication, as we talked about in Estimates, and have committed to taking a closer look at this.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Chairperson, I will not belabour the point, but I just want to draw to the minister's attention that without adding to the further costs of his department that would come out of the Consolidated Fund, there is a way to put in place a number of field officers under the Workplace Safety and Health Branch, and perhaps some of those officers could also be spread out into the Mines safety inspection branch, as well, and that those funds could be brought together from the surplus or be utilized out of the surplus of the compensation board that they are anticipating will occur again next year as it has this year. So, instead of giving the full \$45 million back to the employers by way of rebates, there may be an investment to be made here to prevent the 41,000 claims to the compensation system that we have in the province by putting more field officers in place both to educate and to make sure that corrective action is taken to prevent workplace accidents.

To me, it seems to be a reasonable investment to take a little less than a million dollars out of that \$40-plus million surplus anticipated so that in a way you pay a little bit in the beginning, but you recoup bigger benefits in the end by reducing the number of workplace accidents that would occur. I would hope the minister would agree that that would be an appropriate investment for us to make as legislators responsible for protecting the safety of Manitobans.

Mr. Gillehammer: Certainly I agree that Workplace Safety and Health and the folks who work in that part of my department are just a tremendously important function. In the short time that I have been in the Department of Labour, it strikes me that this is an area that is probably the most important work we do in

trying to prevent fatalities and accidents within the workplace. As I have indicated to my honourable friend before, I am pleased to look at the historical statistics from previous decades, the '70s, the '80s and '90s, and note that there has been a dramatic reduction in accidents and fatalities in the workplace. We still have sectors of our economy, mining and logging, which, by their very nature, are very difficult and dangerous work, and we do tend to concentrate our inspectors in that area. As long as there are accidents, we still have work to do, but the trend has been in the right direction.

I think the challenge before the department is to continue to use those professional staff we have to reduce accidents and fatalities to the lowest possible level. I know my honourable friend will realize that there is always going to be work to do there, and I think the partnership that exists between government and workers and employers has been a very positive one. Our safety committees have done good work, and we will commit to continuing to try and lower the number of accidents that occur in Manitoba.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I have a few questions for the Minister responsible for the Gaming Control Commission.

Mr. Chairperson: Where is he?

Ms. Mihychuk: It is actually the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe). My question is in regard to the Gaming Control Commission. Will the minister tell us if the members originally announced to be the representatives are still the ones presently active? Has there been any change in membership?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I would advise my honourable colleague that, in fact, the board of directors or the original individuals who were solicited to sit on the Gaming Commission are, in fact, the current members, and there is no anticipated change. It is anticipated that we will be looking forward to a number of years of very active and valuable service from these individuals.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Chairman, can the Minister responsible for the Gaming Control Commission tell us

when the commission will actually have its first meeting?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I must point out to my honourable colleague that I am not the chairman of the board of the Gaming Commission, and so this would more properly be something in the ambit and control of the chairman of the board to call the directors of the board together.

However, I think that what my honourable colleague would be interested in is knowing the progress that we have been able to effect with the Gaming Control Commission. In fact, one of the issues that we have been working on for several months is to define all the tasks to which the Gaming Control Commission will be put, because in order to draft a budget which we have now, I am pleased to advise, completed, we have had to define the issues that will fall under the ambit and control of the Gaming Commission and then expense those out and then source the revenue to which those tasks would be supported and resourced and so this task has all now been completed. So what we, in effect, have done is draft out the whole Gaming Commission function on paper, much as an architect would do a building, in order to anticipate what the functions and the design and the role would be.

* (1950)

Now that we have outlined the rough parameters for the tasks for the Gaming Control Commission, we are now able to turn over, to staff and to the directors and to the managers, the entire project and would look forward to a very effective operation.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, the minister implied in that answer that it was actually the chairperson of the Gaming Control Commission that decided when to call the meeting. If we recall correctly, the commission was announced in February at which time the chair of the board, who happens to be a fairly prominent Tory supporter, said publicly he anticipated to call the next meeting, to call the initial meeting in approximately a week.

Given that he has said that it is within the jurisdiction of the board to call meetings, has the minister

responsible for the commission investigated why the chair of the board has not called a meeting?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chair, in fact, I would like to share with my honourable colleague that while she does note that the chairman of the board is a very prominent Winnipegger—and I would concur with that—that he is a person known to me personally and my colleagues here, he also is known to many of our colleagues who sit between us. [interjection] Oh, there is a world of difference. There is a world of difference I would suggest to my honourable colleague. But, in any event, there has been a circulation of manuals, reports, material to the different board members, but they have had no role to perform until—and this is what I was trying to, in part, explain to my honourable colleague—we were able to draft the budget, design the tasks and outline the structure for the commission, there was nothing for the board to do until the point which we have reached at this point in time.

I now anticipate that they will be performing a much more active role and that is not to say that there has not been any activity. There has been a lot of activity going on through the course of my office and in my department and through a number of the employees of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and interacting with the Department of Finance and our honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) to set up all the parameters of this board.

But there has been nothing overt up until now for this body to do, and the tasks, which they will be assigned, have been performed in the interim by the individuals in the Lotteries Corporation where they were originally placed. As my honourable colleague will recall, it was the Desjardins report which indicated that it would be appropriate in the fullness of time to separate these two functions, and that is what we are embarking upon at this point in time.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister clarify then that it was actually his department and his decision not to allow the chair of the board to call a meeting until such time as his staff people or himself and the Minister responsible for Lotteries had developed the game plan, the budget and the support staff, that, in fact, it was the government that has been holding back the Gaming Control Commission?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I do not accept the innuendo or the implication that my honourable colleague is perhaps laying here. There is nothing intrinsically to prevent the chair from calling a meeting, but there was no function or no purpose for him to do that until the job had been described. In fact, we have had staff working very, very quickly, and I must commend staff on the work they have been doing between our two departments—

An Honourable Member: Fine public servants.

Mr. Radcliffe: Fine public servants, says the Attorney General, and I would echo his comments. In all sincerity, there has been a lot of work performed because one has to analyze—and perhaps it is very simplistic to say, ah, well, you know, we can call a meeting next week and we can sit and ponder the imponderable, but, in fact, in order to have intelligent functioning, you have to define what is going on, who is moving out of the Lotteries Corporation, what tasks are moving out of the Lotteries Corporation—[interjection] Who is on first, yes, that is right.

So in order to have effective functioning, there was not a role until we had defined the whole issue, and, as I have repeated to my honourable colleague, we are now embarking on that threshold at the present time.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, can the minister then confirm that he does not believe that the significant policy changes in terms of the serving of alcohol, the changes in dress code, the decision to close a casino, to expand gaming tables are not actually policy decisions, and would this not, for instance, be perhaps meriting the Gaming Control Commission's consideration?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I would like to perhaps try and explain to my honourable colleague at this point in time that, in fact, the Gaming Commission performs a licensing and regulatory function for the games, for the suppliers, for the machines, for the locations. The Gaming Commission will not be an operating agent for the casinos.

If my honourable colleague has not had an opportunity to read the Desjardins report, I would be more than happy to supply her with a copy, because, in fact, that is the whole essence and the root of the

Desjardins report on this issue, which is to separate the licensing, the regulatory and the policy formation for gaming generally from the operation side of Lotteries. The operation side of Lotteries will remain with Finance, and that is the efficiencies, the maximization of running the casinos, how the casinos will be run from day to day, where the casinos will be run.

That does not necessarily fall within the regulatory side. What the regulation, the commission would be doing is looking at the computer chips that drive the VLTs, licensing the individuals who will be working in the casinos, licensing the suppliers who will be supplying major gaming supplies to the casinos. That is more the function, licensing the offsite charitable people who will be asking for casino functioning.

So I would hope that my honourable colleague could see the difference between the two functions. In fact, we are not going to be telling Mr. Funk or Mr. Stefanson how to run his casino. That is not our function. Our function is to regulate and license the casinos themselves, you see.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, the minister responsible for the Gaming Control Commission has said when it was first appointed that this had regulatory and other licensing functions and also had a policy mandate. Is the minister saying that the decision to now serve alcohol is not a policy decision?

Mr. Radcliffe: I would suggest to my honourable colleague that the general subject of whether one should drink or not drink in the province of Manitoba may well be a policy within the ambit of the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey). [interjection]

No, no. That is right, but the issue of operating a casino or general department within the casino by the staff is a matter of operations which falls under the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). There will be general policy issues that will come to bear from time to time which will fall within the ambit of the Gaming Commission, but the actual operation from day to day, the shape of the tables, the configurations of the casinos, the ambiance, all those sorts of issues would be governed by operations. [interjection] I believe that the Minister of Agriculture has got it. I would hope that

that would be of some benefit or sort of enlightenment to my honourable colleague.

* (2000)

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister inform the House whether the AMC has appointed a person to the board of directors or if the government has approached the AMC for a representative?

Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): This is the honourable Minister for Northern and Native Affairs speaking in response to the question.

The fact is, a working group has been set up to examine the whole question of native gambling in the province, native gaming in the province, so the attention being focused on that whole effort to work out an arrangement which is generally acceptable amongst the aboriginal communities in the province and consistent with the province's policies is underway now. The chair of that body is Harvey Bostrom, who is the Director of the Native Affairs Secretariat in my department.

Ms. Mihychuk: Then can the minister clarify, is there a representative from AMC on the Gaming Control Commission?

Mr. Radcliffe: In response to my honourable colleague's question, no, there is not a formal representative from the AMC on the Gaming Commission. However, I can tell my honourable colleague that one of the—and I believe that she has the list of the board of directors, but if she does not I would be more than happy to supply them to her.

I can indicate that there is one individual on the board, an individual woman by the name of Susan Swan, who is of aboriginal background, a single parent and a member of the Winnipeg police force.

An Honourable Member: A very qualified woman.

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes, and somebody who I think brings a real richness to this board and a real perspective which I think will be of great service and value to the Gaming Control Commission.

Ms. Mihychuk: To the minister, because an individual's ancestry happens to be of the same background as the individuals that I am talking about on the AMC does not mean that they are automatically endorsed by the AMC. What is significant here is this is the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. They have a significant role in terms of the native gambling concerns and issues that they want to address to this government. The Gaming Control Commission is supposed to have a significant role in government policy. Will you consider the establishment of a position which reflects the appointment from the AMC?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chair, in response to my honourable colleague's suggestion, I would in response say that I would be very afraid that it could, in fact, be a conflict of interest to place somebody from the AMC on the Gaming Commission. If the AMC has an agenda or issues which they wish to advocate or express, the Gaming Control Commission will be very willing and very eager to hear representations made from them.

In fact, the members of the board of directors of the Gaming Control Commission must have unfettered independence so that they do not represent any particular political derivation or orientation. They, in fact—[interjection] I hear some verbiage sort of emanating from the other benches but—[interjection] Oh, that is what she is after. All right. So therefore the quick answer is no, I will not.

Ms. Mihychuk: My final question in terms of the Gaming Control Commission: Will the minister inform us where the offices for the Gaming Control Commission will be? Where will the boardroom be? Where will the meetings of the Gaming Control Commission be held?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members who want to carry on conversations to do so in the loge or out in the halls? I am having great difficulty distinguishing between the questions and the other remarks that are flying back and forth.

The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to advise my honourable colleague that the head offices and the boardroom and the public rooms for the Gaming Control Commission will be located within the city of Winnipeg.

Right now, we are using space which has been apportioned and dedicated by the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, because we have seconded staff from Consumer and Corporate Affairs to do the start-up chores, and so some of the initial work is being done out of their office, but the ultimate office will be found within the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): I just have a few questions for the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs, and then I do have a couple of questions also for the Minister of Environment.

This afternoon, of course, I talked about today being Manitoba First Nations Housing Day, truly an issue that should be very important to all of us in this Chamber, given the seriousness of housing in many reserves throughout this province, the 62 First Nations that we have in the province of Manitoba.

Some time ago, in November of 1996, I asked this government to strike a cabinet committee or whether or not they would strike a cabinet committee to review the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and bring forth an action plan from this government on the recommendations, which included addressing the issue of housing with the provincial government. This was, of course, one of the 440 recommendations that were contained in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. I would like to ask the minister, therefore, Mr. Chairperson, if the minister could update us on the cabinet committee that is reviewing the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

Mr. Newman: I am pleased to report that the Native Affairs Committee of Cabinet met just last week and reviewed the interdepartmental work that had been done on the royal commission and approved the good job of work that has been done as a working paper for discussion purposes. It is the kind of discussion piece that we look forward to discussing with the working

group arrangement we have with MKO and, in fact, any other aboriginal organizations, and it will be a discussion piece for discussions with the federal government as well.

So it is a good starting point, and we look forward to dialogue about the document.

* (2010)

Mr. Robinson: I appreciate the comments by the minister. I wonder if he can indicate what he envisions to be the make-up of the working group on working on this very critical issue, how he views the representation, whether we will have representation from the Manitoba Metis Federation, the IWC and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and other representative organizations.

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chair, I think that would be a—if that is the will of the aboriginal peoples, that would be probably a most desirous way to proceed because one of the things that we are interested in doing is working collaboratively with all aboriginal peoples. I think in dealing with the impact of the royal commission recommendations on Manitoba that would be a very appropriate way to proceed. I look forward to working out those kinds of arrangements if that is the expressed wish of those different groups you have referred to.

Mr. Robinson: I would like to also ask the Minister responsible for Native Affairs in this province if he could update us on the very issue that I started off my preamble with earlier, on the shortage and the conditions of housing on reserves in the province of Manitoba and whether or not he will consider this to be a priority, and how he envisions how to deal with the critical housing situation faced by First Nations people in the province of Manitoba, not only on reserves but also in off-reserve environments such as Winnipeg, Brandon, Dauphin, Thompson and other urban locations.

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chair, I am going to answer that question very specifically in the way that might engender an approach or an idea for an approach by the Status Indian peoples in the province who are on reserve and off reserve.

I had occasion to get a confirmation from the new president of the Manitoba Metis Federation, David Chartrand, who indicated that their approach to housing issues in northern communities and, in fact, anywhere in the province with respect to Metis people was to have the community members who lived in those houses treated less like tenants and have them take more responsibility for maintenance repair, in fact, even building of homes in ways that would engender an ownership sort of approach to their properties. I indicated that was the sort of approach that was consistent with the philosophy we have for building healthy, sustainable communities in the North and, in fact, engendering economic development and the respect and understanding of private property with all the beneficial attributes.

As a consequence of that, an effort to move in that direction has been begun and I have designated a member of the Native Affairs Secretariat to work with them to begin approaching that process both in relation to the province and the federal government. To the extent the Status Indian people on reserve want to develop a similar approach in relation to the federal government, I would be pleased to lend the experience and wisdom of my office to engender that kind of direction in relation to the federal government's approach to these issues and work in collaboration with them.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, I want to thank the minister for his very frank answers to the questions that I have. I need not repeat myself, there is a critical shortage of housing on reserves in Manitoba, and many will know in this Chamber that we took this issue on during the course of the winter with the previous grand chief of the MKO, George Muswagon, and his organization in Shamattawa and Tadoule Lake. We are very concerned about the health problems that are caused by overcrowding and the serious social problems that come along with that.

Of course, today I talked about this briefly, and I thank the Premier (Mr. Filmon) for his answer, as well, that because of these conditions and the deplorable housing conditions that First Nations people are faced with on a regular basis in this province and the health problems that people are experiencing including tuberculosis and diabetes, and I thank all members in

this House for supporting my colleague the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) on the resolution that he brought to this House and getting the support of all members in this House some days ago.

I would like to ask the minister—there are a number of issues that we are dealing with here, unemployment, housing, the health problems, the special status of First Nations people within Canada—to perhaps give us a detailed plan of what he has in mind to deal with such basic endeavours that the First Nations and other aboriginal people of this province would like to embark upon, including the some 293 recommendations contained in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, 100 of which relate to the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chair, given the forum and the constraints of the time available, it took the Royal Commission many, many pages to respond to that kind of question. But let me just say this in as concise a way I can that will be of maximum value to you and the way that this problem is approached, because I am going to urge the honourable member who has posed the question to become involved in the solution along with his colleagues, both urban and rural and northern.

The solution to this very complex problem that you have described is going to be long term. It is going to emerge out of the communities themselves and the individuals in those communities. It is going to cross the boundaries of all departments of our government and all departments of the federal government and across federal and provincial and municipal and aboriginal boundaries, communities, jurisdictions, and the solution is going to be multifaceted.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

An example of the different facets, the different parts of it, the Children and Youth Secretariat, embraces a whole array of approaches in the form of prevention and early intervention, whether it is stop FAS, that is, attacking the fetal alcohol syndrome effects issue; whether it is attacking the addictions issue, substance abuse issue; whether it is attacking the adolescent pregnancy issue, all of these kinds of root causes of a lot of the social and economic ills of the community;

whether it is the Partners for Careers strategy of Education and Training and the Northern and Native Affairs area, which is designed to have mentors and real job placements; whether it is a province-wide aboriginal economic strategy, which is in the process of being developed and of which the first steps have already been taken; whether it is the urban aboriginal strategy growing out of the subcommittee of the Round Table on the Environment and Economy, which has now completed its public consultation process and will be coming forward with a what-you-told-us document, which will go out province-wide.

The honourable member opposite and his colleagues will no doubt receive a copy of that as will the aboriginal people in the province that have an interest in the process.

Growing out of that will be an action plan to address housing issues and education issues and health issues. Our Department of Health has the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre in the Aboriginal Centre in downtown Winnipeg. We have a province-wide aboriginal diabetes strategy which this House indicated support for. That will be progressing. We have all of those kinds of things. In the justice area we have a partnership with the aboriginal people, Sydney Garrioch being the contact person in the aboriginal community right now that is examining the whole Awasis concept in the Red Book, their published document, and looking at that as a way of doing community-based justice more compatible with the aboriginal culture and ways.

* (2020)

We have the northern aboriginal justice strategy, a two-year program financed by this government that is underway now focused on extended family conferencing and community magistrates and all of those kinds of things. All of these are the examples. An example came yesterday. I was at two events within the last two days that are all part of this multifaceted process. One was an aboriginal child find program to deal with runaway aboriginal children, both in an educational way and in a healing way once that has happened; healing for the youngster and healing for the family.

There was also a one-window centre opened at the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg which is really, I think, a fascinating new way of doing collaborative work for the aboriginal people in the ways that we have been talking about. We have a person from Native Affairs Secretariat who has an office in that building right next door to another office shared by three departments of our government, the Department of Rural Development, Industry Trade and Tourism, and Education and Training, and all of the other offices there are occupied by federal civil servants, all focused in a multidepartmental way on aboriginal people. We have an officer-level ongoing relationship with our counterparts, the Honourable Ann McLellan still responsible for Metis matters in Ottawa and Jane Stewart responsible for Status Indian matters in Ottawa, and we continue to work on a regular basis to establish a more effective relationship.

With respect to First Nations communities, we have beginnings of a working group involving the MKO, with a mutual understanding that we will meet from time to time to discuss these kinds of issues, whether it is about Manitoba Hydro or whether it is about housing or whether it is about roads. We have a northern round table of which MKO is one of the participating members along with the NACC. That is Sonny Clynes' group representing northern communities. We have the urban and industrial communities represented by Bill Comaskey of Thompson on that as well.

All of those are examples and just a few examples of all the kinds of things that we are working on in an integrated way, co-ordinated way. It will only work as well as we hope it will work if there is a positive, constructive involvement of all the different aboriginal communities, with an example set by their leadership to work in constructive ways toward solutions.

The emphasis is going to be on special needs of the people. We want to make sure they are the beneficiaries. We want measurable outcomes of success over a long term, and we need a persistent effort. We also believe that there are substantial resources available. It is a question of having those resources focused on the kinds of issues that have been described. The aboriginal communities have resources like never before in Manitoba to focus because they have got a better land base. They have dollars under

the treaty land entitlement. They are getting monies under the Northern Flood Agreement to the extent they commit to that, and the various tribal councils have resources available through economic development agencies.

We have a focused effort right now on aboriginal mining. We want the aboriginal people to work with us on that. We have a focus on aboriginal involvement in energy. That is oil. We want the aboriginal community to be involved positively in that. Those are just some examples that I provide you with. I urge a continuing dialogue in a constructive way to work toward an improvement in an unacceptable situation.

Mr. Robinson: I do want to thank the minister for his answer. There are a number of issues that he has raised that I could probably take exception to. However, I do not want to prolong this bit of, this opportunity that we have.

I know that the province has moved on several fronts, including the hiring of Loretta Bayer, who was formerly employed with the MKO in the health areas, the aboriginal health strategists, and that is to be commended, or the government should be commended for that, because she is highly qualified for that position to bring to the attention of this government the health needs of aboriginal people in this province.

I have one final question, and that is to do with the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and the Indigenous Women's Collective and the funding sources that they receive from this government through the Native Affairs Secretariat.

In recent days we have heard that there may be a danger that the funding that these people receive or these organizations receive may be in jeopardy as this province kind of sorts out its priorities, so I wonder if the minister could respond to the question directly relating to the Indigenous Women's Collective and the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg.

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chair, all I can speak to at this time is in relation to this current year's budget, and the current year's budget has a commitment to both those organizations essentially the same as last year.

With respect to what has been communicated to both of those groups in respect to the future, in discussions with the president of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg and in a piece of correspondence that was sent to them, we indicated the content of our discussion, which was that looking at applying funding to special projects rather than the core with respect to the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg might be a more desirable approach for next year, and discussions will be taking place in the preparation for next year's budget in that connection, but that is by a mutually agreeable kind of approach at this stage, as I understand it.

With respect to the Indigenous Women's Collective, there is a similar kind of discussion process which will take place growing out of some difficulties with respect to the accounts, the Indigenous Women's Collective which at this time is being audited because of some difficulties. But that is a matter that is still under investigation and not concluded at this time.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Robinson: I do have a couple of questions for the Minister of Environment, if I may. Following Question Period this afternoon, we did not really have an opportunity to get the full answers to some questions we had.

Perhaps my questions were a little vague with respect to the questions that I directed to the Minister of Environment. I was talking earlier today about the Pine Falls Paper Company which, of course, its predecessor being Abitibi-Price has been trying to build a road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to near Bloodvein, and as I understand it there has been a recommendation made to the minister and his department that the Pine Falls Paper Company be required to file a proposal and begin an overall environmental assessment on their 1999 to 2008 forest management licence. I wonder if the minister could comment on that briefly, Mr. Chairperson.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): We do expect those who advocate or want to propose development that those developments be carried out in a sustainable fashion. We know that things like roads have a tendency to develop communities and to improve quality of life. On the other hand, there are

environmental concerns that go along with any project like that. As I said earlier to the honourable member, we as a department expect to see any plans that are being proposed meet or exceed our environmental requirements.

* (2030)

Mr. Robinson: I wonder if the minister would comment on the recommendation that is being made to him and that is the decision on phase two of the road to be withheld pending the receipt and review of the environmental assessment.

Mr. McCrae: I said to the honourable member, we want to see development in our province carried out in a sustainable fashion. If the honourable member would prefer to have a full answer that goes beyond simply a lengthy discussion, I would be very happy to set out to the honourable member the exact response or the exact feelings of the Department of Environment with respect to any development he might wish to ask about.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, through you, perhaps the question that I do have following this brief preamble—I wonder if I could ask through you to the minister that perhaps these questions that I am asking now could be answered to me and also the recommendations that have been made to the minister to be communicated to me by letter.

I would like to ask the minister one quick question, and that is his position on the consultation mechanism with First Nations. I want to simply get the—I realize what the minister is saying. We could stand here all night and go back and forth on some of these concerns I am raising.

However, I would like to ask the minister before I ask a question through you, Mr. Chairperson, and that is the position of the minister as far as the consultation mechanism with particularly the Bloodvein First Nation and later on the Berens River First Nation and then eventually Poplar River, which are communities located on the east side of Lake Winnipeg that will be impacted by a road in the event that one is built in the years ahead.

I would like to get the position of the minister on what consultation mechanism he envisions with these First Nations.

Mr. McCrae: With respect to any development proposal, I would expect and demand that an appropriate consultation mechanism is in place to ascertain the views of the people affected by such development. I will indeed respond in full measure in writing to the honourable member with respect to his first questions.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin by asking a couple of questions of the Minister of Agriculture. One of the issues that has arisen with the increased use of chemicals on farms is chemical-resistant weeds, and one of the areas where it has become quite evident is in the Swan River Valley. It has been reported by the Department of Agriculture and I am sure there are problems in other parts of the province.

Can the minister indicate whether his department is prepared to put any money into research to ensure that this problem is addressed? Because in speaking to people who work with zero-till, it is becoming quite a serious problem, and it will result in having to turn land into pastures or back into summer fallow if this problem is not addressed. For it to be addressed there has to be research done into it, and I wonder if the Minister of Agriculture is planning or whether there are any plans to address this serious problem.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Chairman, yes.

Ms. Wowchuk: I can appreciate the minister's short answer, and perhaps he can in correspondence elaborate in more detail.

I would like to ask the minister, on a completely different issue, earlier this year when the government was moving on the agenda of starting up elk ranching, the minister said that all people who were holding elk without government licences would be investigated and all of the elk would be traced as to their origin, and that would be dealt with before licences would be issued. Can the minister indicate whether this has been done and whether or not licences have been issued to all of

those people who have been holding those elk without licence or whether any of them have been rejected licences for elk ranching?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, yes and no.

Ms. Wowchuk: Perhaps the Minister of Rural Development would have a moment to answer a few questions then. The other day I raised the issue about the expansion of natural gas to the Swan River Valley. The natural gas committee feels that the people of the Swan River Valley are being treated differently than people in other parts of the province when it comes to who will pay for the capital cost of the expansion of natural gas.

I want to ask the minister whether in any other parts of the province, such as in the Souris area or other parts of southern Manitoba where there was a natural gas expansion, private corporations or private businesses were required to share in part of the cost as in the Swan River project. Along with the municipality, the provincial government and federal government sharing cost with Centra Gas, Louisiana-Pacific is being asked to pay a portion of the capital costs. Has this happened in other parts of the province or is the Swan River Valley being treated differently?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Chairman, as natural gas is expanded to various parts of the province, there are different circumstances, I guess, in each of the areas, and I use as an example the Arborg area where we have a very unique situation in extending natural gas to Arborg where there is a long distance to take the natural gas, there is a fair distance to take the natural gas to Arborg and the costs are higher. There are different partners in taking gas to a particular area. In some regions, it is the business community, the residences and the municipal groups, as well as perhaps forgoing future revenues from taxation by the various communities. In some instances, that was not necessary and communities were able to come up with their share of the money in different ways.

In the Swan River area, there was a demand for natural gas by Louisiana-Pacific who right from the very beginning indicated they really needed natural gas to get the best advantage out of the processing plant

that they could and, indeed, to reduce the costs of processing the material, and so they were willing to participate, to some extent, in having natural gas brought to that region. So, therefore, the partnerships in that region are different than they are in some other areas. There we have the inclusion of Louisiana-Pacific, the municipalities, the residents and the businesses in the area.

* (2040)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, it is my understanding that when Louisiana-Pacific agreed to using the RTOs, they did that with the understanding that the government would ensure that natural gas would be provided, brought into the area, but after they put in the RTO equipment, the formula changed and then they were required to put in a share into the capital costs and are now being required also to guarantee consumption of natural gas as well.

So what I am asking the minister is, was there a commitment made that natural gas would be provided if they put in the proper emission controls, which we are very pleased with, but we in the Swan River Valley want to ensure that RTO equipment is working properly and we have natural gas. But was the company told one story before they put in the RTOs and another story afterwards?

Mr. Derkach: No, not to our knowledge.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I would hope that the Swan River Valley is not being treated and businesses being set at a disadvantage in our area to what they are in another part of the province.

I would like to ask, perhaps, the Minister of Government Services a question about the disaster assistance funding. As I indicated earlier today, the messages that we are getting, or the people in the flood area are getting, are very mixed messages, messages about deductibles, messages about deductibles changing, caps changing, and we saw the people outside this building yesterday and the Minister of Government Services is familiar with these people.

Since he lives in the area, he must feel some compassion for these people who are suffering very

badly and are having their lives in an upheaval. To see young children holding signs saying can I sleep in your home is really heartbreaking, and it is disappointing that the government is not addressing that properly.

I want to ask the minister, we were told yesterday that the federal government has indicated that they are willing to waive the deductible, it is the province that is holding it up. Since it is the federal government that will be paying 90 percent of the costs, why is it that the province will not take up the offer of the federal government taking on the responsibility of waiving the deductible in this unusual circumstance. If the federal government is doing this, would we not be setting an example for ongoing disasters that might hit people in this province?

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): The member indicated whether I had compassion or not for everybody that is out there suffering from the disaster, and I do. I really feel for all those people that are out there. In some cases, some people, one neighbour of mine that had her basement flooded out—since my mother has passed away, my mother and her were very good friends, and she is almost like a second mother to me, and she was very lost and frustrated and not knowing which way to turn, you know, what to do. It is very difficult for a lot of people that are ravaged by these floodwaters to be able to just have somebody there available to them to talk to, to be able to take them by the hand and lead them through the process.

I guess, unfortunately, you know, we would like to, as government, be able to provide as much service as we can to help people through these terrible times, but it is often difficult to get everything co-ordinated so that it works smoothly. Certainly, you know, in past disasters that we have had in Manitoba, the mechanism that was put into place worked very efficiently. The flood of this magnitude brought on new things for us, new challenges, you know, 24,000 evacuees. So some of the things that we have tried to address are, for example, previously, evacuees had to claim through their disaster claim what they were going to get in terms of funding. This time around, all the evacuee expenses are being paid a hundred percent by emergency social services. So they do not have to put that on their claim.

So there are a number of things of that nature that we are attempting to do to help people through the transition period, and I wish that we could do it yesterday, but unfortunately we cannot.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, my question for the Minister of Government Services is, does the minister, you know, today he announced that there will be a hundred, finally, even though it was supposed to have been a Wednesday decision, we did not hear it at the rally yesterday, but he has announced that about 48 people will have their deductible removed because their home is structurally, it is condemned. But there are thousands of homes out there who just cannot bear that cost.

Now, the federal government said that they are willing to waive the deductible. What is it that is holding up the province? If I understand it right, the federal government will then be paying 90-cent dollars; the province is paying 10-cent dollars on it. Why is the government not willing to consider that and help these people out who are in a desperate situation right now?

Mr. Pitura: When you take a look at the disaster assistance and how it operates across the country, a certain amount of equity has to be brought in across Canada, and we have put our policy into line with other provinces. We have taken a close look at what we feel is a proper level of funding. We feel that the process, once it has been given a chance to work, it is the right program for probably the vast majority of people.

Other little things that we were doing—you are talking about changing—there are changes happening in the system right along as we have discussions with the federal government. Never before has structural damage been paid for by the federal government on a cost-sharing basis. This year it is, so people are going to be able to repair basements for the first time. I mentioned the evacuation costs, things like that that are a hundred percent being picked up by emergency social services. There are a number of little things like that that are being put into place now to help ease that transition in getting back into their homes.

Ms. Wowchuk: When the Premier (Mr. Filmon) spoke today, he said there were three ways you could access money. You could access through a farm claim,

\$100,000 if you were there; you could access through a business claim; and then you could access \$100,000 on a home claim. Those are three claims. When I talked to the farm organizations today, they said they have only heard of two accesses, that there was not three.

Can the minister clarify? Is it possible for a farmer who is running perhaps a seed-cleaning plant and a farm operation to have two claims, or is it going to be necessary for them to be registered as two separate businesses in order to access those two claims? When will that information be made available to the farming community, because that is not the message that is out there now? The message is that there are two channels to access money through with a cap of \$100,000 and a \$20,000 deductible on each. What the farmers said today was, if it is \$20,000 on each, it is \$60,000 deductible they are going to have to be paying. Could the minister clarify and tell us when that information is going to be available for farmers?

Mr. Pitura: The claims are paid very simply. Personal residence for \$100,000 as maximum eligibility. If you own and operate a business, it is \$100,000 maximum eligibility. If you have a farm, you have the farm itself covered as another \$100,000 eligibility. Now the question the member asks about whether they have to be distinct corporate units. I believe you are probably right that they do have to be distinct in that manner, because if you have a seed-processing plant that is part of an overall farm operation that is not split off in terms of the business, it would be classified as part of that farm business. If it was an incorporated seed business, it would probably be eligible as a business and would probably be eligible as well under the Western Diversification Program.

* (2050)

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): I would like to direct some questions to the Minister of Highways first. In the past little while we have had rail line abandonment by CN and CP within the province, as the minister is aware. We have had the Steep Rock line abandonment, and now we have been notified that the Arborg line, by the year 2000, is also under abandonment. It will either be offered to the community or whatever scenario that we will see with that line.

That is a very, very important line, extremely busy. It services many, many farming communities, elevators, grain companies. The communities are worried, and I do not know if anybody has come to the minister with this at all as yet. What I guess we are looking at is—I know the minister is aware of it—but what is the minister, if anything, planning to do about the situation with that line abandonment because that line is going to be going under abandonment, but it only has access to a certain point?

So if anybody was to take that line over for a short line, it would have to stop at a certain point on that line and to be able to access any other rail part to get into the city or to go elsewhere would have to pay a fee. What I am asking is, what, if anything, can we do to deal with the idea of the abandonment itself, and where can we go with it?

(Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): We have facilitated through legislation the establishment of short lines for railroads that the CN and CP prefer to abandon. That is the first option. The federal government has legislation that allows lines that are no longer for their use to be sold. The federal government has an option; provincial governments have an option; interested parties have an option; and municipalities have an option. We have to work with any interested group, whether it is an individual looking at a short line or municipalities that want to get together and become part of a corporation to purchase it or any other combination.

We are not going to get into the railroad business as a provincial government, but we will facilitate anybody who sees an economic opportunity and advantage to operating the line. We strongly support that, because we do believe the operation of these lines is for the good of the transportation community. We will facilitate work as much as we can with all the different lines that have been coming up for abandonment, both by CN and CP.

Mr. Clif Evans: Can the minister then indicate—and we have discussed this before; we have talked about Highway 6. Now, if we have the rail line abandonment,

the communities are concerned. I mean, we are going to be using our road structures a lot more. Can the minister indicate whether there is any transportation strategy within this province and for rural Manitoba when it comes to the areas that are going to be involved where the roads are going to be used much more with heavier trucking equipment?

I have mentioned to the minister already about Highway 6, and with the abandonment there and the Continental Lime issue where right now they are using 50 percent trucking, then they are obviously going to have to go to 100 percent if nobody takes that line over to accommodate Continental Lime. The same situation arises for Highway 7, Highway 8. Is there a strategy in place? Are the minister and the department looking at doing something about this?

Mr. Findlay: The best strategy that there is is to work, as in my previous answer, to facilitate other people who are prepared to operate the line that CN and CP deem is not economical for them to continue to operate. The member is right: 50 percent is now on Highway 6 from Steep Rock. More will come that way. But, if one remembers back over the last 20 years, there has been a continuous evolution of bulk product from rail to road; that has been going on continually, driven by price, service, reliability and a number of other factors.

It has an increasing impact on the roads; there is no question. We cannot reverse the clock, unfortunately. What the railroads are doing—and they have been facilitated by the new transportation act that was passed a year ago—is more abandonment. It is more impact on the roads. The only response we got is try to get money out of the federal government to deal with the road impacts, to upgrade them to the appropriate standard to handle the trucks which are, obviously, going to use the roads.

Mr. Clif Evans: So then is the minister indicating that he is going to, or it is in place already, to deal with the situation with our roads? Let us put the rail line abandonment aside. We now have to deal with the fact that by the year 2000 that line to Arborg is going to be up for grabs. The Steep Rock road is being used more and more and more. Highway 8 is going to be used more; Highway 7 is going to be used an awful lot.

I mean, there are many elevators there. Manitoba Pool has just put in a new elevator there. There is an enormous amount of grain transportation in and out of that area. Is the minister indicating that he will or has started any type of rural Manitoba road strategy to be able to deal with this issue? Has he gone to the feds? Is he going to to the feds?

Mr. Findlay: Yes, we have gone to the feds for the last number of years. I met last week, along with all the other Transportation ministers across Canada, with the new minister, Mr. Collette. There was a very strong message from every province of exactly the same circumstances the member refers to in the Interlake that exist right across Canada.

Mr. Collette is very much aware, is basically very sympathetic to our cause. He is going to deal with Paul Martin, and you know that may be a difficult process until there is such time as there is a balanced budget. He is aware. He realizes they have a responsibility, and we will continue to work on him. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, I just want in closing on this topic to say that this is going to be a concern. I have had people come to me from the agricultural industry and, of course, just general producers around. Since the Riverton line has been shut down, not only the main arteries, but the other provincial roads, gravel roads and that are being used much more with truck traffic, and something has to be—I have brought this to the attention of the minister many times in the past seven years—and we have to maintain.

Maintenance is an important integral part of our road system whether it be in the Interlake or in any other area of the province. We have to maintain those roads, and we have to maintain them to the point and repair them to the point where that truck traffic is going to be able to go on the roads without causing thousands and hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars of damage not only on the main roads—and not only on the main highways, but all your other connections.

Your east-west connections are a very important part of the highway system. It has been a sore spot in this member's pocket that the east-west connection in my constituency is very important—Ashern, from one side

from 6 over to 7 and to 8 is very important, as all the other roads. So the concerns that are brought to me by the communities are that they would like to see some sort of a strategy, a future strategy, put in place so that we can deal with this issue whether it be in co-operation with the federal government, but I think it would be good if we could initiate it and start some sort of a strategy to deal with all the roads.

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Chairman, the member is very much aware, by the announcements of the last two or three budgets, that in terms of east-west connections in the Interlake Highways 229 and 325 are receiving attention. It is a result of meeting with the people in the communities, hearing from municipalities and any other interest groups, and when all of them get together and focus on here is our highest priority, we can respond and do respond. But I can be very honest with the member opposite and say we will never be able to meet everybody's agenda, everybody's desire in the next five to 10 years because the costs are so horrendously high. The member is aware of 325, the section that we are going to rebuild from Highway 17 going west about 17 kilometres is \$3.2 million, and you can drive over that in a few minutes and it will be \$3.2 million. It will take some time. The costs are horrendous.

The member was present at a meeting in the Interlake a year and a half ago, I believe it was, when the wish list put on the board totalled about \$300 million just for the Interlake. It was a phenomenal number. I sympathize with the member what he would like to have done, as we deal with municipalities and the same issues there. There is not enough money to go around to do everything we need to do in the short time frame we would like to do it, but we will do the strategically important sections as fast as possible.

* (2100)

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, the minister must have somehow read my mind, because my next point was 325 from Highway 17 going west that 17 kilometres. Now the minister has said openly, and some of his department have said, yes, that road, the money is there for it. It is ready to go. However, it seems that it is still dragging, and I wonder—and I understand about the expropriation—

An Honourable Member: Well, the purchase of land.

Mr. Clif Evans: The purchase of land, and the minister has indicated, I believe he has indicated on media and to people, that expropriation is taking place. Some have been co-operative; some have not, so expropriation has to go through. I guess the question is: How much longer are the community and the area going to wait for the expropriation to get done, and when is the construction, when are they going to start seeing some equipment to go ahead with this project? It is very important.

Mr. Findlay: Again, I appreciate the frustrations the member has, but this is a very common process. You go through and designate where the road is going to be, the alignment. Then the land purchasers get out into the field and talk with the individuals involved. We are not going to want to take people's land and tear down their shelter belts and rip up their front yards without talking with them about how we can accommodate them, maybe move the road over a bit, not to go through some of these yards. That is all common-sense relations with the public.

It is a long process to deal with people. Everybody has a different idea. I have had many cases where people come and say, everybody is in favour of the road. There will be no obstacles. As soon as a land buyer goes out, issues evolve, and then we do the minimal amount of expropriation necessary after a process of due diligence in dealing with people. We will always have to operate that way, as we have over the last eight or nine years.

Mr. Clif Evans: So the minister is saying that he has been negotiating all this time, and it has been years on this. It has been longer than three years that the minister's department has had approval for a certain portion from landowners. There is a stumbling block at one end. I also do not want to see people's property being thrown about and misused because of a road, but if there is a stumbling block and the minister had indicated already that expropriation was taking place, what I am asking is, how much longer can we expect this conversation to go on when, on the other side he is saying, well, expropriation is in place but, yet, we are still talking?

So what is it? Is it expropriation and is it the time the expropriation is taking or is he still talking to these people and trying to convince them?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Chairman, the land buyers are going through their process and survey-and-design engineers do their process. An environmental licence will be obtained when all that work is done. It just cannot be done in as short a time frame as everybody would like. That is just a common process for the road. Today we have a lot of hurdles to go through to achieve a road. In this case, there is not too much utility revision, but often that is another obstacle. Cost, cost, time, it is always longer than one would like.

The important thing is, we are getting on with it, and there is approval and support from municipalities and from the local Indian reserve, Peguis. Everybody wants the road built where it is, and it has taken some time to reach that particular agreement.

Mr. Clif Evans: I know the minister is indicating that it is taking time, but I think it is the communities and the people around the other issue that ties in with getting that 325 new construction from Highway 17 west going is the fact that the communities and the R.M.s west of 233 are going to be coming to this minister, this government, to improve or upgrade the portion of 325 from 233 to Ashern.

What I am saying is, now you have both sides and the groups are pulling together saying, let us get that 10 miles, 17 kilometres, done, going as quickly as possible so that we can deal with the portion from Ashern to 233 to tie into that new road, the east-west connection. So I am just saying to the minister, the people are telling me they feel that it is just dragging a little bit too much. They would like to see equipment rolling, and they would like to see things going.

Mr. Findlay: And I agree with the member opposite.

Mr. Clif Evans: I have a few questions for the Minister of Environment.

Mr. Chairman, I just have a few points to raise with the Minister of Environment. One of the issues that I have to request, one of the issues I would like to bring to the attention of the Minister of Environment is, as

the minister may or may not know, there have been negotiations, a feasibility study done north of Riverton for potential peat moss operations that we are hoping get done.

I would like to ask the minister if he does know anything. I believe and understand that right now Gromar is into the environmental study portion of their project. I would like to know and the communities in that area would like to know where it is at with the Environment department. Can we see some movement? Is it progressing?

The minister may or may not have all the details tonight. If he does not have all the details tonight, I would certainly appreciate just a letter just to me indicating where it is all at and if the government will support the initiative of Gromar.

Mr. McCrae: I will certainly provide the honourable member with the information he is looking for.

Mr. Clif Evans: I would like to ask the minister—and first of all, I would like to thank him for a response for a problem in the Vidor dump area where there were some problems. One part of the problem were some hog carcasses that were found in the dumpsite. The minister, I know, and the previous Minister of Environment, have had many, many calls to their offices with respect to the hog operations and how they are operated, the concerns of the people. As yet, the minister in his letter indicated that investigation was being done on the dead hogs that were in the dump, where they came from. The indication to me was that they would find out where they came from. I would like, and certainly appreciate, to know from the minister's department where they did come from and why they were there.

Also, there is a potential proposal by a group that is proposing three sites in the R.M. of Fisher for three barns. There is concern from the people. The minister has received letters. I am sure his office has received phone calls, but the concern is about the basic, the land type that these hog operations and lagoons are going to be built on. I would like to know if the minister has responded, how he has responded to these concerns, and would the minister's department initiate the four—I believe four departments that had put together or had

got together to do a study as to whether operations were suitable for the proposed sites.

Mr. McCrae: In the interests of facilitating what I believe were the intentions of honourable members of this House as we entered into our discussions yesterday and today, in the interests of moving that along so that we can be finished here in a very short order from now, I asked my staff, any questions being asked of me, take careful note of everything that is being asked, and we will get right back to those honourable members with the information they are looking for, and that is what I will do in the interests of moving this House along, as the honourable government House leader and I had fully intended to do as we embarked on our discussions on behalf of our parties.

* (2110)

Mr. Robinson: Very briefly, I just want to get a couple of questions dealt with, and I want to ask the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) to respond to these. I want to, first of all, say that recently we have had complaints about an unlicensed outfitter operating out of Gods Lake Narrows.

We have had complaints, Mr. Chairperson, about an unlicensed outfitter operating out of Gods Lake Narrows. We have been told that there have been reports of fuel spillage, garbage being dumped and other infractions by this outfitter, and, of course, this is into Gods Lake. We have also been told that this individual has been operating on a band member's trapline at a place called Kanuchuan Rapids—and it is a band member's trapline—and has been operating on a cash-basis only.

We also understand, according to my conversations with the chief of the Gods Lake Narrows First Nation and the God's River First Nation, that this individual has not met certain environmental standards in order for him to operate this outfitting company that he has got.

I would like to ask the minister whether he knows about this situation and whether or not he has talked to both those First Nations that I have talked about, or any of the established lodges in the area. There are four licensed lodges on Gods Lake.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): I cannot address the specifics, although I am pretty sure that we have had a complaint that was being investigated at Gods Lake. We will be meeting very shortly with representatives of lodgers and outfitters, and we will investigate.

Mr. Robinson: Through you then, Mr. Acting Chairperson, I wonder if I could ask the minister if he could investigate these allegations, as he has taken note of my comments, and perhaps respond to me by letter at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Cummings: Yes.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I would like to ask some questions both to the Minister of Lotteries and Sport, as well as the Minister of Environment. I will start off with Lotteries and Sport, I guess.

Quickly, first of all, I am wanting to find out if the proposed expansions at the two casinos, Club Regent and McPhillips Street Station, are going to have an impact on the number of tables and facilities for paper bingo and if the minister could tell me what that impact is going to be.

Mr. Stefanson: There will be no negative impact. Any other impacts will be outlined as we move forward.

Ms. Cerilli: Can the minister tell me if they have been able to do an analysis on the paper bingo? Can you tell me if the paper bingo as it is functioning now at McPhillips Street Station and Club Regent is losing money?

Mr. Stefanson: I do not believe so, but I will take that question as notice and provide specifics at a later date.

Ms. Cerilli: I would appreciate that—[interjection] My other questions are for the Minister of Environment.

I would like to ask the Minister of Lotteries one other question then. I am wanting to find out if there has been an increase this year in the number of organizations that are qualifying for bingos.

Mr. Stefanson: I will provide that information to the member. I believe at a minimum they are maintaining their historic levels.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I do have a number of questions, and I will attempt to keep them as brief as possible.

The first one would be to the minister responsible for the Liquor Commission. I know that when the government decided it was going to move towards the privatization of some wine sales, one of the concerns that was raised to me was the fact that it would appear that no one was really notified about it in advance, so individuals who might have wanted to be able to enter into the privatization of wine sales or who could have possibly contributed to the selling of wine felt that they were somewhat left out. I guess the question to the minister is: To what degree did the ministry actually solicit individuals who would be interested in setting up wine cellars for sale or wine markets, No. 1?

Number 2, what assurances? In the future how can the minister assure this Chamber that, in fact, if something else is done over the next number of years, that the same thing would not occur, that other individuals would be provided the opportunity to be able to—[interjection] If the minister does not have the answer specific, I would be more than happy to accept something in writing with respect to it.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): Mr. Chairperson, the first selection, I would have to get some further information for the member on. In terms of the future, at the moment we are simply doing the review which I spoke about when we appeared before committee, when the MLCC appeared before committee. That was part of the plan when the first private wine stores were opened, and what may come from that review, again, is really hypothetical.

So what I will do is take the member's comments as his concern expressed, which I think is a very fair question and concern, and as we get into the next stages—and we are just not there yet—I think it would be important to integrate that concern. Again, if he has it

and would like to raise it with me further or perhaps put it on paper so that I have it, then that would also be fine.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Chairman, I would be interested in hearing from the member for Inkster what people he has heard from who claim that they were not given an opportunity to put in a proposal or bid for a wine store, because my recollection is that it was extensively publicized that we were doing this. In fact, it was the topic of fairly serious debate here. That led to a publicizing by, I believe, ads in the newspapers and other media. We initially received over a hundred indications of interest, and then there was a full-page article in one of the newspapers in which some of the people who had been expressing an interest said that they did not feel that they could possibly make a reasonable return on the basis of the financing package that MLCC was asking for. It led then to about 11 qualified bidders actually putting in a bid for one of the stores and five were selected.

So it seemed to me that if anybody is suggesting that they did not know about it or they were not given a chance to bid on it that the member is being misinformed or misled. I would like to have the names of anybody who suggests that so we could follow up specifically and the minister will check the files and get back to you on it.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, it is indeed a fairly prominent individual, and it is quite possible if there was a week or two weeks in which it was in the media that he might have been out of town.

Mr. Filmon: The name.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, the Premier wants to know the name. I do not believe that would, in fact, be appropriate. What I will do, and that is the reason why I asked—

An Honourable Member: Is it Tony De Luca?

Mr. Lamoureux: No, it is not Tony De Luca. This is the reason why I posed the question in terms of what was the process and if, in fact, she could get it back to me so I can bring it to this particular individual who is a fairly prominent individual who resides in Winnipeg,

could have been out of town, could have been out of country, so no hidden agenda here.

The concern is, of course, that if, in fact, anything else is done, I do know that he would, in fact, be interested. I told him I would raise it. We did get somewhat of an explanation, but if there is anything more that the minister can find out, I would appreciate it if she would get it back to me.

Ms. Cerilli: I have a few environmental issues in my constituency I would like to ask the Minister of Environment about. Firstly, I am concerned that another summer is passing by and that there are not going to be any decisions made or action taken to remediate the contaminated site left by Domtar in the Lakeside Meadows, West Transcona area. I will just outline my questions on the record. I can see the minister is going to get back to me on them.

First of all, I am wondering if the financing has been approved and set in place for the containment cell. I am wondering if you have determined in your department how you are going to assess the community response for the current proposal of the containment cell, if there has been an end use agreed upon by Domtar for both the site remediation and an end-use plan, if you determined what the environmental impact assessment process is going to be, and if there has been any further risk-management assessments done on the contaminated site proposal, remediation proposal.

Finally, I am wondering if there has been testing conducted on the residential properties that were found to be contaminated adjacent to the former Domtar site.

* (2120)

Mr. McCrae: I thank the honourable member for her indulgence. The concern the honourable member has about summer passing by is shared by me. I have been applying every pressure possible on all of the parties to resolve this matter so that remediation can be done this summer. The government, indeed, is party to the discussions in a very significant way, and with respect to the details of the question respecting testing, et cetera, I will get that information for the honourable member without delay.

Ms. Cerilli: Thank you, I would appreciate that, and it would be great if we could get that before the next couple of weeks into July.

The other issue I want to deal with is—I raised this in the House recently, and that is the fact that there is no agreement in place to deal with CN now that it is a private corporation and it is no longer an environment responsibility for the federal government for inspections and enforcement. I know that the minister's department has had a meeting. I would like some information about what was agreed to at that meeting and when the proper procedures are going to be in place so that CN will no longer be operating in limbo in terms of environment regulation.

Mr. McCrae: I have instructed my department to monitor these questions and provide answers without delay.

Ms. Cerilli: The other environmental issue that is affecting the area is the proposed demolition of the Canada Packers site that is on Marion just east of Archibald. I am concerned that, previously when one of the packing companies was demolished, there was not testing and removal of asbestos, and I would not want to see this same procedure followed again. I would ask the minister to ensure that all asbestos inspections are done and that appropriate action is taken to remove asbestos before the buildings are blown up.

Mr. McCrae: The specific concerns the honourable member is raising I will bring to the attention of the department. If the honourable member has any others that she did not mention, she is quite free to make them known to me, and I will ensure that those concerns are passed on and that any concerns that are raised are the subject of study and action by the department.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Broadway.

Point of Order

Mr. McCrae: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, because I had stepped out of the Chamber for a moment, and the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) had the floor, I asked the honourable

member for Inkster to allow the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) to ask a question, and it would be a courtesy to the member for Inkster, who made that accommodation, to recognize him now. I do not think he is going to be very long at all.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: I did have one other area, and that was with respect to the brew pubs. I have had opportunity to mention it with the minister both in the Estimates and during Question Period around the beginning of the session. I did make a commitment to try to once again raise the issue with the minister, given that she has had well over a month to look at the whole situation. I am wondering if she can just give some sort of an indication if, in fact, her department is involved in reviewing any sort of necessary legislative changes that might be required.

I understand that there was one individual that was, in fact—I believe it was possibly with the member for Riel (Mr. Newman)—that had talked to the Minister of Housing—he was also going through—if the minister could just respond to that for me, I would appreciate it.

Mrs. Vodrey: I understand from the MLCC that they have met with several individuals who are interested in brew pubs in Manitoba, and I understand also that, to date, to the best of my knowledge at this point, none have proceeded along in terms of anything further with the MLCC in the establishment.

As I mentioned before, people may set up a brew pub under the existing legislation and regulations, but if any are asking for a change in the food-to-liquor ratios or any change in the restrictions in hours of operation and so on, that will require some further significant study. I have said to the member in the past that any changes in that way would require some very significant thought on behalf of this government because there would be a great economic output on behalf of those wishing to set up the brew pubs as there already is for people who are currently in business. So where there would be some changes, I would be approaching it very carefully, and that is the same position that I held previously. I do want to add to what my previous answers have been in

saying that the MLCC, I understand, has spoken with some of the interested individuals and at the moment none, to my knowledge, have proceeded or put forward anything more concrete at this point.

Mr. Lamoureux: I take it from the minister's answer, then, that she would be somewhat receptive to it. I will leave it at that because I can appreciate the time concerns.

I do have some questions for the Minister responsible for MPIC, a couple of questions actually on policy. I did give the minister a letter and what specifically I was looking for is what the ministry's opinions are with respect to a vehicle-pedestrian accident in which the vehicle is not at fault at all, and why it is that they would have to pay some sort of a deductible.

Mr. McCrae: I recognize, and I think the honourable member does too, that this question does not really come under the ambit of this, but as a courtesy, let us just get it answered and we will get on with it. I certainly sympathize with the position of the person about whom the honourable member is asking this question, and in this regard Autopac is doing its best to help too, short of actually coming up with the money which is not Autopac's responsibility.

Autopac recognizes that the cyclist was the one at fault in this. The cyclist is a young person, however, probably does not have the \$200, but we have arranged to have a driver's licence created in the name of this cyclist, who is about 18 years old now, and a refuse-to-renew was placed on the licence. This means this person will not be able to obtain a Manitoba driver's licence until the debt is paid, so therefore the MPI assistance in trying to recover this is ongoing, and, as well, this claimant has inquired through the Ombudsman's office and MPI is fully co-operating with that office.

Mr. Lamoureux: The other issue, and I have had a number of people, as all of us do no doubt talk about MPIC as constituents, give us a call. One of them that I thought was fairly interesting came from a manager of customer services for one of our banks in which he had talked about problems in terms of being put off the voice mail system and expressed a lot of frustration. Is there anything that is done that monitors a corporation

such as MPIC, because it is a monopoly, to ensure that the customers or the clients are, in fact, being treated fairly and appropriately? I think it is becoming more of an issue because of the voice mail area. Is there something in which maybe the minister can just put on the record with respect to that for me?

Mr. McCrae: In addition to the systems in place at MPI, I have set up in my own office a system whereby we can help people who are looking for a last resort, or trying to get some people in authority to look at the issues. Obviously, also, the Ombudsman's office is available. So every effort is being made to try to improve public service to people. Obviously, because we are in the job of resolving disputes, it does not always come out exactly the way everybody would like, but we are certainly trying, as a monopoly, to do everything we can to be as user-friendly as we can.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I will leave it at that with this particular minister. I do have a question for the Minister of Family Services, but before I do that, the thing I would emphasize on that last one is the fact that this is someone who is responsible for customer relations, so fairly knowledgeable, and that is the reason why I had given it some credibility, and I raise the issue because I think at times it is important for us to ensure that our Crowns, in fact, have some sort of checks in place.

* (2130)

Having said that, going to the Minister of Family Services, I have consistently over the years articulated as to the reason and how important it is that through Family Services or through welfare, what we do is, we provide incentives for individuals to assist themselves in getting off of welfare. I had a letter that was sent to me and I will read right from a quote from the letter. I know someone could stand up and say that I table the letter. I trust that the minister, because it said that the minister was sent a copy and I would prefer not to, but I am going to quote because she says it quite well. She states that, I am only asking for them to pay me exactly the same amount that they are paying me now throughout the six- to eight-months course, and

providing all goes well, I will be able to get back to the job and put welfare behind me.

Ultimately, what she is arguing for is that she does not want to be on social assistance. She wants to be able to take a course. No doubt there are many different programs that are out there currently, but here is someone who maybe does not quite fit into a program but is genuine in wanting to get off of social assistance. What would the Minister of Family Services recommend for someone who is put in that sort of a situation where a specific course might not be there but genuinely wants to be able to get out of that welfare cycle? I will provide the minister herself with a copy of it.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, from my honourable friend's first comments I believe a letter was sent to me—

Mr. Lamoureux: —cc to you.

Mrs. Mitchelson: —cc to me. Is that just recently?

Mr. Lamoureux: May 28.

Mrs. Mitchelson: May 28. Because I do not recall the specific individual and I guess one of the questions—oh, a copy came to me. So it was not a letter to me, so I probably have not responded then. Okay.

Well, I do not know what to say specifically about this individual circumstance, but I do know that there are several different programs out there available for individuals, and I do not know whether this is a single parent. The one program that probably does help in a fairly significant way is the Taking Charge! program, which is a federal-provincial initiative that has several different private and public sector partnerships for training, for job placement for those kinds of activities, and it probably is the one program that I might recommend this individual contact. I do know that there are several programs through the Department of Education and Training for single parents who are working very much in co-operation with them to try to identify those on social allowances that are interested in certain areas and certain activities that the Department of Education and Training might have. So there are some options.

I certainly would recommend for this individual—and I guess I am getting a copy of the letter—maybe what I could do is follow up as a result of the question tonight and see whether any of those avenues have been looked at by this individual or whether there might be something else I could recommend specifically for her.

Mr. Lamoureux: I do have a question also for the Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Chairperson, and it is with respect to an issue when the government seems to want to expand the cross-border hunting for deer into southern Manitoba.

The concern that I have been hearing from constituents and Manitobans alike is actually, in many different areas of the province, that what is happening is that the actual cost to be able to participate in deer hunting in many, many areas of the province is, in fact, going up, and the concern, of course, is that the price that is going up is starting now to have such an impact on local residents and their being able to hunt and them wanting to know in terms of to what degree does the government decide we are going to, in essence, open up the province for deer hunting for the highest bidder, as opposed to ensuring that there are going to be opportunities for local hunters, resident hunters in the province.

This is a question that comes directly as a result of the government's decision to allow for hunting of deer, from what I understand, in the southern part of Manitoba because as has been explained, there is going to be a considerable cost hike for a lot of individuals. It is not to deny southern landholders, what it is to ensure that there are going to be opportunities for local residents also to be able to hunt deer, as opposed just to the economic elite possibly coming in from abroad to be able to hunt.

Mr. Cummings: First of all, I am not sure where the member is coming from in his concerns about licence fees. Resident archery, muzzle loader shotgun, a muzzle loader for deer is \$33. A second deer licence for a resident is a \$18, so those fees are not out of the way.

I think his question was, what direction does the government intend for licensing to go? The fact is that in comparison with other jurisdictions, Manitoba has

not been charging for the opportunity to harvest our natural resources at the same level as other jurisdictions have. It seems to me, given that we put millions of dollars, the Department of Natural Resources has a number of different responsibilities. It does have a budget of about \$90 million, plus numerous other programs to improve habitat and opportunity for wildlife to the point where we now have some of the most abundant wildlife that we have had in the last number of decades in this province.

I think the member is totally off the mark. If he is referencing out of Canadian nonresident and nonresident non-Canadian, we have reviewed these costs against other jurisdictions, and we believe that we are reasonably in line. Certainly the outfitters have not reported that they are having difficulty selling hunting opportunities, particularly for Manitoba whitetail.

Mr. Lamoureux: Maybe the minister can just take it as notice and possibly get back to me. What I am interested in knowing is that when we talk about the actual licensing and the cost of licensing, you made reference to the fact of other jurisdictions. I would trust that the government has looked at those other jurisdictions, has some numbers and if those type of numbers could be provided, I would be very much appreciative of that.

Mr. Cummings: Yes, I will provide that.

Mr. Lamoureux: Because of time, I was really hoping during the concurrence, and I understand that there is a push to try to pass it right away, I did want to emphasize that what I was hoping to be able to enter into was a bit of dialogue with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) on some issues, in particular the taxation reform, everything from the property tax and what some recommendations might have been had I had another question in Question Period today.

For example, and always wanting to give some examples to the Minister of Finance, you can, if you take a look at the inequities in the property tax, the school board level and the provincial levee that is applied to property tax, the provincial school tax levy is a much fairer tax to be applied to the property tax than the school board portion of the levy.

* (2140)

So without really impacting significantly the overall value of property tax collected, what you could do is you could ensure that there is more equity throughout the system by allowing—if you are going to have property tax increases—it to be the provincial levy or transferring some of that over to it. That is one of the things which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) could look at.

Another thing that they could be looking at is, in fact, taking less responsibility of block funding to the City of Winnipeg. In return for that, they would then get additional funding through the school tax, and the school tax portion would then be dropped. Now, again, the property tax—and this is why I would say that—the property tax that we pay should be paid for city services. I look at education and education is a social service much like health care, and I do not believe that we should be paying property tax for health care. That is the type of questioning, in part, that I would have welcomed asking the Minister of Finance, and then have given him some suggestions. That would have been on the one end.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

On the other end, maybe a little bit more controversial, would have been the issue like the GST versus the PST. I think now that we have had the federal election over, and if, in fact, the GST is going to remain in the province of Manitoba, my gut feeling now is that the government is using it possibly, maybe, to try to negotiate something else of significance or of additional power or something else that is out there. I would suggest to the Minister of Finance that there are interest groups and a lot of Manitobans that could recognize the benefit, if, in fact, we are going to have the GST remain, that there is a need for some form of harmonization.

I have received correspondence from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). I do not buy into all of the material that is within the correspondence. There are many other arguments that could counter some of the material that he put into that correspondence, but that is something which I trust and hope that over the summer that the Minister of Finance might want to

reflect on, especially when he meets with other ministers of Finance. Having said that, I just want to leave those few thoughts. There is a need for fairer taxation in the province. The Minister of Finance and this government really has not addressed that issue.

The other issue that I was hoping to be able to talk about was the whole Premiers' Conference that is going to be coming up and express some of the concerns. I noted that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) did not respond, for example, to issues such as the opting-out clause, did not give any sort of firm reaffirmation as to terms of provincial authorities and the need to have a strong national government. I do believe, in fact, that those are necessary.

The Minister of Finance does not have to feel that he needs to respond unless, of course, he would like to respond. That is all that I have to ask for questions, given that I know that there is a big push to pass along.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, it pains me not to respond in great detail to some of the incorrect rhetoric put on the record by the member for Inkster, but I will save this debate for another day, and I welcome it.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): I would like to preface my statement by saying that we as elected servants of our constituents are supposed to be very careful with our words, because out of the abundance in our hearts we speak and every word we utter here is recorded somewhere. Therefore, I am very careful about speaking; I hardly speak at all. I listen more. I have two ears, only one mouth.

If we are to make public policy, I believe that our public policy should be based on whatever we consider as the truth, because the truth is the only basis on which competing ideologies, competing parties, competing political interest groups and all vested groups around us, and we are subject to all these pressures around us, that we could be able to arrive at the right choice.

An Honourable Member: And the truth shall make you free.

Mr. Santos: The reverend quoted the scripture and saying, and the truth shall make us free. Therefore, all

my questions will be prefaced with whether it is true or not true.

First I would like to relate the background of my questions. Yesterday about 2:30 p.m., I received a fax from—and the only thing that I received is the cover of the fax. It says page 1 of three pages, but I only got the first page. So I inquired, where are the letters, and there is no letter for me. Then I understand that the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) got the complete set, the three pages, so I asked her permission that I see the letter. Then in the afternoon I got another page. It is the last page of the three pages, not the substance of the second page. I just want to relate the facts. I do not make any judgment.

The letter supposedly is written to the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), and the writer is a person named Don McIver, operator, St. James Paradise Seniors Home, and the copy will be given to the following in the bottom of the page: Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson; George Sarides, Manitoba Human Rights Commission; Mr. Cymbaliste, Filipino Seniors Home Association; Rey Pagtakhan, M.P.; Conrad Santos, MLA; Filipino Journal; Filipino Times.

I was very reluctant to get involved in this, because I did not formally get any substance of the complaint and, yet, because of my obligation as an elected member of this House not only for the constituency of Broadway but for the broader community that I represent, I had to do something about it. I intended to ask this in Question Period, but then I will be limited to two questions, and I cannot probe. So I waited until concurrence so I can, to my heart's satisfaction, probe for the truth. So let me read sentences there and then ask for the truth or the untruth of the assertion, because I do not have any information whatsoever.

The first sentence in the letter says: Dear Minister: Your letter dated June 13, 1997, was a disappointment.

I had no access to that letter. I do not know what the letter is about. Therefore, it is my task now to ask the honourable minister if the letter is not confidential in nature and he is not prohibited from divulging what it contained and it involves public policy. I ask him: What is the gist or substance or main proposition of that letter?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Mr. Chair, the member for Broadway, in his comments about truth, I just as a prelude to my answer want to say, they are some of the wisest words that I have heard in this Chamber because, so often as we debate issues, it is, in fact, the facts that determine the outcome. Many times anecdotal information or distortions of the facts do not, in fact, lead to good public policy, so his words are very wise ones that all members should heed.

I would ask the member if he could please provide me with a copy of the letter to which he is referring. If it was a letter provided to me yesterday, I admit that I have not had an opportunity to read it. I have been very tied up, as members know; I have been very, very tied up, as members know, with negotiations on rural emergency. So I would like to see the letter, and perhaps then I could give him a better idea.

Mr. Chair, I confess to the member wholeheartedly that I do not recall the initial letter that was sent. I believe it involves the policy on residential housing. I am speaking a little bit without full knowledge here to the member on the issue, but I do believe that it does involve changes in our seniors housing. I am not exactly sure of the detail. I would be more than pleased—I do not have it at my disposal today, and it is late in the evening and my staff are not available to track down the letter, but I would be more than pleased next week to provide him with that letter and to meet with him to discuss the details of this issue. I must admit, it is a policy as a new minister that has been in place for some time that I have inherited, and I am not totally familiar with all the details of the issue.

* (2150)

Mr. Santos: Since the honourable minister has a copy of the letter, he can follow me, and I do not have to read the sentence where the question relates. The second sentence there, I have a question. Is it true, or is it not true, that residential care operators have housed seniors without any assistance from Manitoba Health?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, as I have said to the member, this is an issue the detail of which I am not as well versed as I would like to be to give him a full answer. Obviously, there has been some change in policy or an application of a policy to change in this area. I have obviously

written to this individual outlining that. I do not have a copy of my letter of June 13 at hand.

As I know the member will appreciate, I send out large amounts of letters and deal with many, many issues. To give him the accurate kind of assessment of this issue that I think his question deserves, I admit to him very candidly and apologetically that I do not have that with me tonight, nor do I have at my fingertips in my office that material. I would be delighted to discuss this with him in greater detail and to share with him all of the correspondence.

Mr. Santos: I will still continue asking my questions even if I do not get anything from the honourable minister. Is it true, or is it not true, that your letter states that Health is developing a new seniors home option, and yet you and your department have not bothered to include present residential home care in your plans?

Mr. Praznik: I know there is some work going on in that area. The detail is being developed. If the member is suggesting there is a group of people who are not being involved in that process who have a contribution to make, if that is the case, then what I would be very pleased to do is to include them in that consultation and discussion if an oversight, in fact, has been made, and we could certainly do that.

Mr. Santos: Is it true, or is it not true, that Manitoba Health refused to assist operators with home care about one year ago and that operators who have worked with Home Care since that time have found Home Care to be of minimal assistance to them?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I cannot answer that one way or another. I was not minister at the time, and even if I were, this is a large department with 3,000 employees. If there are individual branches that have not been of assistance to people as they think they should be, that is an issue I would like to know about. If Home Care should have been of more assistance to these operators, then I would be delighted, with the member's assistance, to arrange a meeting with these operators and our staff who are in charge of the Home Care program. I would be delighted to arrange that with the member's help in the next couple of weeks so that we can resolve the issue, if, in fact, there is a problem here.

Mr. Santos: Honourable Chairperson, it is not my task to advocate for the interests of this operator. I am just asking for the truth. As a matter of policy, our political party is in favour of the nonprofit kind of residential system for seniors and infirm. I am speaking because this involved seniors and this involved infirm persons and it involved other minorities such as my own community looking up to me for being the mouthpiece in this august assembly of representative of the people. I am just doing my task; I am not saying if they are using me as their spokesperson, I have no desire to be used by them. I just want the truth.

Is it true, as it is said here, that it appeared to them that you deny them clients whenever possible and that you avoid assisting residential home care and that your attitude makes it clear that the goal of the Manitoba Health department was to destroy the senior residential home care industry?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I do not, for one moment, take issue with the right of the member for Broadway to bring forward questions or a particular position or case on behalf of any organization, even if it may not be one whose position or existence he or his party may support. I acknowledge to him very clearly today that of all the issues that happen in the Ministry of Health, I cannot be personally involved in every one.

If this organization feels that they are being badly treated or not properly or fairly treated by the Ministry of Health—and I do not know what his other questions are, my answer is probably going to be very similar, because I do not have a great deal of detail in front of me tonight—but I am prepared, and I make this offer, within the next few weeks, to arrange a meeting with this group that the member for Broadway can arrange. I would be delighted to do that; I would like to have him present in that meeting, and I will arrange to have the appropriate staff from my department to be there.

But I say to him, one thing very importantly, if he does bring a group of people in who are advocating a particular policy, if that policy is to have a private proprietary home, for example, to be part of our health care system, if he is coming in to advocate that position or to arrange that meeting and it is contrary to the view of his party, I think it is only fair that he inform them of such, so that if he is bringing in that group to the point

or with the intention of having us supporting a particular type of care delivery system in the private sector that his party is fundamentally opposed to, he, and as I know he would want to be, be honest and up front with them, to tell them that, if I agreed to their requests, he and his colleagues would be critical of me publicly. I think I should ask nothing less.

But as I have said, I know he has a number of questions, and my answer is probably going to be very similar because I do not have that detail, but I am making that offer to him tonight, with his help, to arrange for these people to have a meeting with us to discuss this issue in greater detail, because I do not have the kind of detail with which he is asking me tonight to answer the question.

Mr. Santos: This is a question of fact. Is it factually true or not that 90 percent of Winnipeg's senior homes are Philippine run?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, let us just think about that question for a moment that the member is asking. The member is asking me to indicate whether or not a particular service delivery or business is 90 percent owned by a particular cultural community. Well, first of all, how would I know that factually? The only way in which I could know that factually is if we, as a matter of policy, asked who the owners were.

If we did that, I think that would be a terribly discriminatory practice. We would not ask people who own any business, are you Jewish, are you Ukrainian, are you Filipino, are you Mennonite? It would be racist. [interjection] The member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) has rightly described it from her seat. That could be a very racist thing to do to ask those kind of questions.

So, Mr. Chair, if I have offended some rule of this House, I will withdraw the word, but the point I get at is how would I know that unless it was with accuracy, unless it was government policy to ask the ethnic origin of owners of these homes? This government is not engaged in that kind of activity, so I cannot answer that question with any degree of honesty because it is not the kind of information that we collect. I would hope that the member for Broadway is not suggesting that the

government of Manitoba begin to collect such information.

* (2200)

Mr. Santos: I believe it is good practice of any government to have factual basis for their decisional choice. Unless you have the factual basis for decisions, you only rely on your value or ideological base in making your decisions, so you have to have all the facts as the factual premises and you have to examine your values before you make the choice. That is the reason why I am asking all these questions.

This is not my question. It just arises out of this letter. I am now basing my question on the third paragraph, was there or was there not a departmental decision to destroy the age infirm residential home care because the writer alleged it will be discriminatory since 90 percent of that industry or sector is owned by some ethnic group?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, let us think about that question for a moment. Government should not make decisions to purchase care or not purchase care or contract with a group or not contract with a group because of who they are racially or ethnically. That is fundamentally wrong.

Mr. Chair, we on this side of the House do not operate on that basis. We do not operate on this basis. In fairness, I would not expect that most members of the New Democratic Party would operate on that basis either, so very clearly it is not. The decisions on which we make our policy, or the basis on which we make our policy are based on need, cost-effectiveness, how best to deliver a service; is it meeting need at a cost-effective and patient care manner?

If a particular service is not, and we make a public policy decision not to proceed that way, it does not matter who the owners are, whether they are Ukrainians or Mennonites or Catholics or Protestants. So we would not make them on that decision, so I very much deny the allegation that the member brings to that organization on behalf of that particular gentleman.

Mr. Santos: I am just basing my questions and allegations made by Mr. Don McIver, and I am seeking

the truth. Is it true, or is it not true, that there was no attempt to include Filipinos in the Health department's senior home plan?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I do not understand the nature of the question. With respect to what the member is saying, we did not wish to include people of Filipino origin in what? I am not sure.

Mr. Santos: Is it true, or is it not true, that the Health department's position is that Filipinos are orderlies, attendants and nurses, but incapable of managing senior homes?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair, how one could even ask that question. Absolutely not.

Mr. Santos: Is it true, or is it not true, that if you subsidize alternative seniors home without helping the industry, you are, in effect, closing the senior homes for the infirm in the residential home care industry?

Mr. Praznik: What I find absolutely fascinating about the member bringing this question, I feel like I am damned if I do, damned if I don't, because if I say that, yes, our intention is to get out of private facilities and into public facilities, then, of course, the member will advance the attack of the other. If I support that cause, then his colleagues or he with his New Democratic Party cap on will then attack me for making that choice.

I am very interested in knowing what the opinion of the New Democratic Party is on this particular issue, and I would hope that the member would provide that to the House as well. I would seek his advice.

Mr. Santos: In every society, even in the olden days—

Point of Order

Mr. Filmon: On a point of order, I believe that the rules of our House provide that the member should table the document that he—

Mr. Santos: I did.

Mr. Filmon: Oh, sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable First Minister. The honourable member already has.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Broadway, to complete his question.

Mr. Santos: In every society, whether ancient or modern, there are generally two classes of people: those who direct the affairs of society, we call them the elites; and the hewers of wood and drawers of waters, the lowly class. I am here to be the eye, the ear, the voice of those who have no opportunity to be represented. I am not speaking for any private interests, whether it is the home care industry or any industry. I just want to seek the truth and the factual basis of the policies of this government with respect for housing for the elderly and the housing for senior citizens.

Is it true, or is it not true, that the Manitoba Health is destroying the industry by sending able-bodied seniors to nursing homes?

Mr. Praznik: I have heard a lot of questions in this House, but to hear the question from a member of the New Democratic Party, a representative of that party, that this government or any other is taking able-bodied senior citizens to fill personal care home beds is just so absolutely ludicrous; it is just absolutely silly. We have waiting lists for personal care home beds. We are attempting to build more space. We are putting higher and higher level of care.

To have the New Democratic Party suggest that we have so much space in our personal care homes today that we can put able-bodied seniors into them is just absolutely ridiculous. Absolutely amazing. I have never heard such a question.

Mr. Santos: Mr. Chairperson, if the honourable minister is cautious about words, he should have just said no, and that disposes of the question.

Is it true, or is it not true, that the Health department's decision to exclude residential care homes from being part of new government assistance in your home, sponsored by his department, that the Filipino-run

residential home care industry should be compensated for closing?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am very much enjoying these questions from, I believe it is the deputy Health critic. I find this very interesting because time and time again in this House the member's colleague for Kildonan has made a very strong argument in this House that we should be moving to eliminate private or proprietary nursing homes, that nursing homes in this province should be either publicly owned or owned through community organizations or not-for-profit organizations. There is a history behind having them. There is a legitimate debate to be had, and what I find interesting is we continue to have proprietary homes in this province providing levels of care that we need. We have changes going on in the levels of care. That may be the root of the issue that the member has raised with us.

What I find interesting is the member's colleague for Kildonan has continually advocated to me in this House that we should, I gather over time—I do not mean to put words in his mouth, but over time—be moving out of that system, and today I have his deputy critic here making the comments to us totally opposite, advocating a position in this House that we should be preserving those facilities. What I am detecting here today is a real lack of leadership in the New Democratic Party where we have on one hand, let us do this and the critic says this, and then the deputy critic says do something else, and we are not quite sure where the New Democrats stand.

* (2210)

Mr. Santos: Mr. Chairperson, I am not debating anything. I am just asking the question for the truth. As a matter of consistency, I would like to ask the honourable Minister of Health: When the government ordered the closing of Oddfellows personal care home, does the sponsor of this, the Kiwanis, I believe, do they get any compensation?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I think that the crux of the matter here has been the—[interjection] Well, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) wants me to answer the question. I am answering the question. The crux of this matter is that in this province, over a period of 30

years now, we have been eliminating Level 1 and Level 2 care facilities and moving to Level 3 and Level 4. If the matters to which he is referring are part of them, that is the reason, and the New Democratic Party while in government carried forward the same policy.

Mr. Santos: I am just asking a factual question, and I cannot get an answer. If I cannot get an answer, I refuse to ask any more questions. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is the motion of the honourable government House leader that the Committee of Supply concur in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998, which have been adopted at this session by all sections of the Committee of Supply sitting separately and by the full committee.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 26, Nays 22.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion is accordingly carried.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Reports

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of Committees): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted a motion regarding concurrence in Supply, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that this House concur in the report of the Committee of Supply respecting concurrence in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable government House leader, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, that this House concur in the report of the Committee of Supply respecting concurrence in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1998. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: 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.

* (2220)

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Ashton, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Hickes, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Madam Deputy Clerk (Bev Bosiak): Yeas 27, Nays 22.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

Mr. Laurendeau: I regret to inform the House that I had the wrong motion. I ask leave to move the correct one.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for St. Norbert—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Does the honourable member for St. Norbert have leave? [agreed]

Mr. Laurendeau: Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted a motion regarding concurrence

and Supply, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee to consider of Ways and Means for raising of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS**Supply—Capital Supply**

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): The Committee of Ways and Means will come to order, please. We have before us for our consideration a resolution respecting Capital Supply. The resolution for Capital Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that towards making good certain sums of money for Capital purposes, the sum of \$303,267,000 be granted out of the Consolidated Fund.

Shall the resolution be passed?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed and so ordered. The resolution is accordingly passed.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION**Committee Report**

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of Committees): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means has passed a resolution regarding

Capital Supply, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 63—The Appropriation Act, 1997

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that leave be given to introduce Bill 63, The Appropriation Act, 1997 (Loi de 1997 portant affectation de crédits), and that the same be now received, read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 63—The Appropriation Act, 1997

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), that Bill 63, The Appropriation Act, 1997 (Loi de 1997 portant affectation de crédits), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion agreed to.

* (2230)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 62—The Loan Act, 1997

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae), that leave be given to introduce Bill 62, The Loan Act, 1997 (Loi d'emprunt de 1997), and that the same be now received, read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 62—The Loan Act, 1997

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that Bill 62, The Loan Act, 1997 (Loi d'emprunt de 1997), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole to consider and report of Bill 62, The Loan Act, 1997 (Loi d'emprunt de 1997), and Bill 63, The Appropriation Act, 1997 (Loi de 1997 portant affectation de crédits), for third reading.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): The Committee of the Whole will come to order to consider Bill 62, The Loan Act, 1997 (Loi d'emprunt de 1997), and Bill 63, The Appropriation Act, 1997 (Loi de 1997 portant affectation de crédits).

Bill 62—The Loan Act, 1997

Mr. Chairperson: We shall proceed to consider Bill 62 clause by clause. Shall I do groups of clauses? [agreed]

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; Clauses 3(1) through to 4(2) inclusive—pass; Clauses 4(3) to 8 all inclusive—pass; Schedule A—pass; Schedule B—pass; preamble—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 63—The Appropriation Act, 1997

Mr. Chairperson: We will move on to Bill 63 (The Appropriation Act, 1997; Loi de 1997 portant affectation de crédits). The preamble and the title will be laid over until the bill is concluded.

Clauses 1 and 2 inclusive—pass; Clauses 3, 4 and 5—pass; schedule—pass; preamble—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of Committees): Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 62, The Loan Act, 1997, and Bill 63, The Appropriation Act, 1997, and has directed me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), that the report of the Committee of the Whole be received.

Motion agreed to.

REPORT STAGE

Bill 62—The Loan Act, 1997

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, by leave, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae), that Bill 62, The Loan Act, 1997 (Loi d'emprunt 1997), reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 62—The Loan Act, 1997

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I moved, seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that Bill 62, The Loan Act, 1997 (Loi d'emprunt 1997), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

REPORT STAGE

Bill 63—The Appropriation Act, 1997

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, by leave, seconded by the Minister of

Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that Bill 63, The Appropriation Act, 1997 (Loi de 1997 portant affectation de crédits), reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 63—The Appropriation Act, 1997

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that Bill 63, The Appropriation Act, 1997 (Loi de 1997 portant affectation de crédits), be now read a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable government House leader, seconded by the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, that Bill 63, The Appropriation Act, 1997 (Loi de 1997 portant affectation de crédits), be now read a third time and passed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: No?

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, 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.

* (2240)

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Ashton, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Hickes, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Madam Deputy Clerk (Bev Bosiak): Yeas 27, Nays 22.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bills 50 and 51.

Bill 51—The Personal Health Information Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that Bill 51, The Personal Health Information Act (Loi sur les renseignements médicaux personnels), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I would like to use the occasion of third reading debate to again try to implore on the government to perhaps change its mind and at least do what the public presenters asked the government to do, to, in fact, do what the people on the government's own advisory

committee to them recommended they do, and that is to delay the implementation of this bill firstly, and secondly, to reconsider your decision not to have a privacy information commissioner.

What is driving the government agenda on this bill? There is one thing and one thing alone that is driving the government agenda. The government is throwing \$100 million into the SmartHealth-EDS hopper, and they want to get this bill on the line so they can argue that they have privacy legislation in place before they begin putting in place their superhighway program of technology. It is being driven by SmartHealth, not by smart public policy, not by in-depth public policy or analysis. It is being driven by SmartHealth and the government's commitment to commit \$100 million to their Cadillac scheme of technological development.

Madam Speaker, the government is embarking on this project because they are committed to their SmartHealth operation. You know, what is SmartHealth all about? No one disagrees with the technological utilization of information. Other provinces are doing it, other jurisdictions are doing it, but this government is doing the most elaborate, the most intrusive, the most developed system, untested, untried anywhere probably in the world, certainly in Canada and probably in North America. In fact, it is so untested and untried that the government partner, the Royal Bank, had to sell 51 percent of its shares to EDS to try to get the program off the ground. They had to do that, and that is sad.

The problem with that is the last time I saw the government do a project like this—and I know the government hates when I bring it up—I dare say was the Connie Curran experiment, but you all remember that. You know, the government was going to spend \$4 million plus \$800,000 in expenses, tax free, U.S., and what are they going to do with that? They were going to save \$65 million, but now the ante is up. They are going to spend \$100 million, and they are going to save \$200 million. That is what the project is. But it is further than that, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the people who conceived this idea, the Department of Health, want to do the same thing with SmartHealth that they wanted to do with Connie Curran. They want to take this technology and they

want to sell it to the world, just like they were going to take Connie Curran's expertise and Connie Curran's technology and they were going to sell it to the world and make oodles of money for Manitobans.

That is the problem, I think. The conception of this, the same thinkers who came up with the Connie Curran experiment are driving the same concept and the same experiment in SmartHealth.

You know, Madam Speaker, the bill does have some very positive sections. We have brought before this Chamber privacy legislation as a private member's bill now for the past five or six years, and it does contain protection and the allowance to allow individuals to have access to their records. We approve of that. You know, if the government were to implement that part of the bill, we would be very supportive. So it is not that there are not bad parts of the bill, it is not that there are not good parts of the bill, it is just that the parts that are not being done are so bad that it makes it difficult to support, and this was borne out by public hearings.

What did the public hearings say? The public hearings said you should and must have a privacy commissioner; otherwise this bill is flawed and ought not to be supported. You should and ought to delay implementation of this bill and allow public hearings, or otherwise this bill is flawed. Thirdly, you should have a locked-box provision or some other provision. I know the minister is defensive on this, and he showed it at committee, and he is showing it again today. The government just cannot take criticism.

When the MMA came to committee and criticized the bill, the minister attacked the MMA. What did the government do? Instead of listening to the message, the minister attacked the MMA and said, oh, do you have the unanimity of your members? You did not poll your members, you do not support your members. Well, did he do that to Mauro, who does not support the provisions? Did he do that to the Consumers' Association, who do not support the bill? Did he do it to MARN, who do not support that aspect of the bill? Did he do it to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, who do not support that aspect of the bill? Did he do it to the Consumers' Association? No, he did not. So the problem is that they do not listen, and when they hear criticism, they blame the messenger, or they said to the

MMA, oh, do you represent your members? You do not represent your members. Did you poll your members?

Well, Madam Speaker, either you listen to those groups who are on your committee who said delay the bill and put in a privacy commissioner or you do not listen to them and you delay the bill and you go back to the public and restructure the bill. You cannot have it both ways; you cannot not listen to them or if they do criticize you say, you are not representing your members. Either they represent the membership from which they were put on the committee or they do not. So that is the problem.

Madam Speaker, the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) had some criticism of the bill, and I understand his criticism. The member for the Maples indicated he would support the bill, and I understand the reason he wants to support the bill, because he indicated in his comments that there is no system that could protect technology. We cannot even develop such a system, and I concur with those comments. There is not doubt in my mind that that is probably true but, from our perspective, this bill is so flawed, and there is no urgency on this bill other than the government's desire to put through its \$100-million deal with the Royal Bank, so that we have no choice but not to support this bill.

You know, I think the government ought to listen and pay attention carefully to what the MMA representation was with respect to this bill. There were serious concerns raised by the MMA about the physician-patient relationship, and the concern that that trust and that bond and that confidence between the physician and the patient could be compromised by virtue of information going on line.

* (2250)

Now, I know the minister had a personal difficulty with listening to criticism from the MMA and other organizations, but there is a very valid, legitimate concern from the citizens of Manitoba about what putting personal information on-line could have on the relationship between physicians and their patients, Madam Speaker, or any caregiver and their patients. To that end, I believe the government ought to take

more time, and we believe the government ought to take more time, to negotiate with those individuals who were involved in order to determine the best course to proceed in this area.

I agree, we will probably never develop a fail-safe system, but I also predict, Madam Speaker, that we will have breaches of security, and we will have serious problems as a result of this system. What will be the fallback of the government in this regard? They will have none, because they will not have a privacy commissioner that will be available to advise them and aid them. Indeed, the privacy commissioner is there for the benefit of the government as much as it is for the protection and the benefit of those people who are participating through no choice. They have no choice but to participate in the system, but there will be problems. There will be problems.

Madam Speaker, we were moved in the committee presentations by virtue of the fact that the people who designed the system, supposedly with the government, who made recommendations, all recommended that there ought to be a privacy commissioner, and you know, the government categorically rejected that in the bill. I did note that, as we moved along, we have now heard comments from the minister to the effect that the privacy commissioner might be looked at at some future date. All presenters said it was a flaw, and we were promised state-of-the-art, cutting-edge technology, the best privacy bill in the country. Well, every single jurisdiction that recently has privacy legislation has gone with a privacy commissioner, and when you consider the fact that Manitoba is intending to go further than any other jurisdiction with respect to the information it is putting on-line, it becomes a necessity, an absolute necessity for any legislation to have the function and a functioning role of a privacy commissioner.

We were promised cutting-edge legislation. We did not get cutting-edge legislation. We do not have locked-box provision that is present in other legislation. It was recommended by some of the presenters. We do not have a privacy commissioner that was recommended by all the presenters.

Madam Speaker, perhaps the basic flaw, and the most significant flaw, is this bill does not represent the viewpoints of all Manitobans. Manitobans have not

had an opportunity to have input into this bill. What is wrong with a six-month hoist? What is wrong with taking this bill—if the bill is as good and as effective as the government suggests it is, then take the bill to the public, put in a white paper, make presentations, come back to this Legislature. If the public is convinced this bill is so fine, if you are so convinced you are on the right course, then that ought to be no problem.

But, Madam Speaker, the problem with the bill is that the government is not listening, and that is the case with almost all pieces of legislation. You know, again, it is not just that there is the usual groups that are protesting the government's legislation; it is their own advisors, their own citizens who are on the group. I was most struck by the Consumers' Association who said, we are with the government, we approve of this process. We attended the meetings, but we cannot support this bill because it does not have a privacy commissioner. You know, I do not know why they are not going down the road of a privacy commissioner. The minister said at one point in the hearing to the Taxpayers Association that he did not want a privacy commissioner because he did not want extra funding and he did not want another body. He thought that might sway the Taxpayers Association. In fact, despite that, the Taxpayers Association said it was a wrong decision; the bill was flawed. Now, that was the freedom of information bill, but the same arguments apply.

Madam Speaker, this bill is being generated by the government's desire to proceed on SmartHealth. There is no doubt, that is the need for this bill. If the government looks at its own experience with the PHIN program, its Personal Health Information Network, they will see that they were years behind in the development, and they also spent millions of dollars more than they initially budgeted, but that aside, all of this technological development, because it is so new, is going to take time and it is going to take additional funding. So if that is the case, why rush the bill through the Legislature? Why force it on Manitobans, who do not even know? I mean, they owe a duty to Manitobans to let Manitobans know what information is going on line. You owe a duty to Manitobans to tell them the kind of information, the type of information that is on line.

Last year, you spent \$800,000, or whatever the sum was, to hire Barb Biggar to go out and publicize what

you are doing in regional health. Why do you not send out something to Manitobans telling them what you intend to do with SmartHealth and allow them some feedback? Do you know why you will not do it? I suspect you are afraid what the response will be. I suspect that Manitobans will be concerned, and I suspect they will say, go slow. That is why I believe the government is turning a deaf ear. I believe whenever any organization should come up and make criticism about the bill, that is why the government seems to turn a deaf ear to that.

Madam Speaker, no one is saying that technological development should not happen. No one is saying we should not have a personal health information act. What we are saying is, this act is premature, this act has major flaws. This act is salvageable with a few fundamental and not even so difficult changes, the first being a privacy commissioner; the second being some provision of a locked-box provision that would allow individuals to say certain information will not go on line. That is totally understandable and that deals somewhat with the concern of the medical profession about the kind of information that goes on line.

There may be conversations, there may be information between an individual and their health care provider that they do not want to go on line, but they do not have any say. Alberta, and I do not often cite Alberta as an example, has such a provision in their legislation. You can say, this information will not go on line, but we do not have it in Manitoba. Alberta, who I often do not cite as an example, has a privacy commissioner. Alberta, who I do not cite as an example, put out a white paper and circulated it before they came back with this legislation.

I simply do not understand the reluctance on the part of the government to do that, except, and it is only one conclusion, and I do not even want to say that they do not listen, they do not want to listen. I think the conclusion is, they have to get this on line so they can argue, they can push their \$100-million SmartHealth project down the road and then get SmartHealth on the road, and that is the reason for it.

SmartHealth, it is already, who knows what it is costing us now? I mean, it is an interesting project. The government is giving \$100 million to Royal Bank

to save \$200 million. Royal Bank flips the company, gets \$61 million, flips it to EDS. Heaven knows what they are doing with it. Yesterday the government signed a deal of \$3.3 million on another form of technology that may or may not fit into SmartHealth, Madam Speaker.

What is going on here? Do they know what they are doing? I talked to people that were involved with SmartHealth. Do you know what they told me? These people do not know what they are doing. That is what my insiders told me. These people do not know what they are doing. Their former head of SmartHealth left. They were in a quandary. They had no head of SmartHealth. Who knows what happened? He has gone off to the private sector. Now Royal Bank has flipped SmartHealth and sold the controlling, majority interest to EDS. What is going on over there? What is so wrong with taking a step back? That is all the presenters asked for.

You know, Madam Speaker, presenter after presenter after presenter, and these were presenters who had participated from the beginning on the minister's so-called advisory, or whatever, confidentiality committee, had been involved, and they said over and over again, we are not against the legislation, but there are problems with this bill. You can fix this bill. You can do a better job for Manitobans. You can protect Manitobans far better if you were to listen to the suggestions of those members of the public who raised them.

* (2300)

That is all we are asking, and that is why we are forced to vote against this bill. We cannot in good conscience foist upon Manitobans a flawed bill that ignores the recommendations of your own advisory committees, that ignores the recommendations and the presentations that came forward, Madam Speaker. It is our duty to oppose this legislation, and when down the road there are major problems in this area and there are major difficulties, I suspect we will be revisiting this issue. We will be coming back and, undoubtedly, we will be putting in place some kind of a privacy commissioner, some kind of other lock-box provisions, and we will have to rejig this. I predict that will happen. We could do Manitobans a favour and

ourselves a great favour by delaying the bill and by doing it right.

So, Madam Speaker, much as we would like to stand in this Chamber and say we would support The Personal Health Information Act, because there is some good legislation in here, certainly, as it relates to the collection of information, we know the government is going to ram this through with its majority regardless, the government is going to ram it through, but we again suggest to the government, take a step back. If you had taken a step back with Connie Curran when we warned you, we would have saved—[interjection]

The member who has a great memory when it comes to Saudi Arabia seems to have a memory block when it comes to three years ago. I will just remind the member about Connie Curran. When the government hired Connie Curran at a cost of \$4 million, plus \$800,000 in expenses, tax-free U.S., to save \$65 million, we told you it would not work. It was a disaster. Now this same government is spending \$100 million to save \$200 million with the Royal Bank, which has already flipped 51 percent ownership in that company to EDS, we are saying you better go cautiously on this, you better know what you are doing. I am afraid I do not think you do know what you are doing.

In fact, when we were in Estimates reviewing SmartHealth, the projections of the former minister about what is happening and the new minister were like night and day. They were like night and day. So, go slow; heed. If you do not want to listen to the representation of members on this side of the House, then listen to the representations of those people who appeared before the committee. Reconsider a hoist on this bill for six months, and let Manitobans review it. Reconsider a privacy commissioner, and if you want me to go through the benefits of a privacy commissioner, I would certainly be prepared to do that.

Thirdly, include in there—and it is not a difficulty to include—a lock-box provision to ensure the primary caregiver-patient relationship. Heed the directives of those who appeared before the committee, the very people who are on your own committee who say this bill would be okay if you would put in place those provisions, but they cannot support the bill with those

deficiencies, and we certainly cannot support the bill with those deficiencies. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I wanted to put a few words on the record with respect to this particular bill. It is one of those bills which we do not have any problem with in terms of supporting it in the sense that it is a first step. It does fall short, considerably short, in terms of what it is that ultimately we would have liked to have seen in the bill. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) makes reference to the privacy commissioner.

That is something which we, too, have been arguing that the government should have included in it. We recognize the importance of technology, the role it can play in terms of health care reform and as a whole want to see the government move more towards taking advantage of that technology, with the primary concern being that of privacy and ensuring that there is safety, as much done as possible to ensure that those records are, in fact, going to be safe and confidential and do not fall in the wrong hands.

The member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) had spoken on this—I had, in second reading—and expressed some of the concerns. I know that I have spoken on it in second reading in a little bit more depth as to why it is necessary to have a privacy commissioner. The primary reason why I would stand today is because of what I had listened to, at least in part from the committee meeting, is that in the interim what we would like to see this government take some sort of very tangible concrete action on is increasing the resources to the Ombudsman's office, the provincial Ombudsman's office, and ensuring that there is going to be a special emphasis put on privacy.

Madam Speaker, there is very little doubt in my mind, before the next provincial election we will see some sort of an amendment to the legislation that will take into consideration issues such as the privacy commissioner. It would have been nice to have had it in this one. It is very unfortunate that it was not included, but, though it was not included, we still support the principle of this particular bill. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 51.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

* * *

Some Honourable Members: 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.

* (2310)

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

The motion before the House is third reading, Bill 51.

Division

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

Yeas

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Filmon, Findlay, Gaudry, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Laurendeau, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Nays

Ashton, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Hickes, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 30, Nays 18.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of Committees): Madam Speaker, may I have leave to revert to the Committee of Ways and Means to consider the Ways and Means resolution respecting The Appropriation Act, which was previously omitted, with the understanding that the completion of this step will ensure that the bill has been correctly enacted?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for St. Norbert have leave? [agreed]

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): By leave, Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that Madam Speaker to now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of ways and means for raising of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS

Supply—Main Supply

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Order, please. The committee will come to order to consider the Ways and Means resolution, Main Supply.

RESOLVED that towards making good certain sums of money granted to Her Majesty for the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1998, the sum of \$4,841,653,000, be granted out of the Consolidated Fund.

Is it the will of the committee to adopt the resolution? [agreed]

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of Committees): Madam Speaker, the Committee of

Ways and Means has adopted a resolution regarding Main Supply, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 50—The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that Bill 50, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée et modifications corrélatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I was unable to speak on this bill at second reading, and I am very glad to have the opportunity at third reading to put some words on the record.

It is a bill which has aroused great concern not just in the committee rooms of this Legislature but also in the national press as well as in the local media and amongst a wide range of citizens groups. I think it is useful to speak on this at third reading, Madam Speaker, because I think it will stand as one of the monuments to the Tory party of today, not the Tory party which wants to associate itself with the progressive conservatism of Premier Duff Roblin, but a Tory party which has become narrow, secretive, rigid, autocratic, divisive and intolerant of criticism. Not only that, but it thinks it is infallible. It will not re-examine this bill for another five years, and it will stand as one of the tests and measures of this Tory government during the next election, and they will be measured by it.

Madam Speaker, since the 1970s there have been a number of bills across the country dealing with freedom of information. Many of them, with the best of intentions, have, in fact, made information more difficult and more expensive to obtain. The government had the opportunity to take the best of those bills. It had the opportunity to take its time over these bills. It had the chance to listen to the citizens of Manitoba, and it chose on every one of those instances to turn its back on those concerns. So the government could have done the right thing and it has not.

All citizens need to be concerned about this bill. This is an age when information is very easily collected, information about our daily lives. Whether we have credit cards, whether we have telephone bills, whether we have automated systems of a variety of kinds, information is easily and frequently collected on all of us every day. Because of the rapid change in technology, much of that information can be collated, layers of information which can be collected for one purpose and used for another. We have all heard of the proverbial telephone system which tracks our telephone calls at five o'clock in the evening and knows that we are likely to order a pizza at that time on Friday evening and then begins to adjust its marketing system that way. We all know of the health records in the United States which have been used by insurance agents or by funeral homes or of a variety of commercial interests. We know that it is of a daily concern to citizens that we have a good guard on our records and that we have citizens acquiescing and understanding the collection of that information and its distribution.

There are dangers for us in the collection and distribution of that information, and that is why it is important that the government should have got this bill right, and they chose not to.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, information is the key to an informed citizenry. It is the key also to commerce, to industry, to innovation, to research, and to public policy, and our goal should be easy, equal, cheap access to information, particularly in the areas of public policy. This applies both to researchers, to journalists, and to ordinary citizens, because a confidence in the information we are receiving, a confidence that we are receiving an entire record, and a confidence that we have a record which can be trusted and that we have an

equal access to records with every other citizen is something that is very vital, I think, to a democracy which takes itself seriously.

So the means to judge our own governance, the means to judge public policy is an area that is of very great concern to all citizens, and we should all have equality in that, but this government is making some people more equal than others. Those who are within government, those who hold the controls of information, are going to have a great deal more power than those outside, and that is what this bill is about. It is about the maintenance of power.

* (2320)

There are three major concerns with this bill, Madam Speaker, and many people at committee have said this much more eloquently and with a great deal more knowledge than I have of these issues, but they boil down, I think, to three areas. The first one, and perhaps the most important, is the absence of a privacy commissioner. We have examples in other provinces of privacy commissioners. We know that they work well, that they do achieve a much easier flow of information and that there is an impartial person who has access to staff and resources who can deal with the flood of applications that often accompanies the introduction of a new freedom of information bill.

Nowhere is it more important than at the beginning of a system like this that you have good staff in place with the resources, because any new piece of legislation like this is going to result in a wide range of test cases in a number of institutions, and this bill covers an enormous range of institutions which have a great wealth and depth of records and which are accumulating records at a very rapid rate.

I think particularly of universities, of colleges, of schools, of school divisions, of local government bodies. Many of them do not have the kind of retrieval system and archival records management that is going to be required to give the kind of access which appears to be promised in this bill. There are going to be a great many stumbles, I think, for anybody who has to deal with the appeals from this commission. So, to put the appeals and to put essentially the overall responsibility for the administration of this bill in the

hands of an Ombudsman who has so many other issues to deal with, it seems to me is tantamount to setting it up to failure.

If you have been, Madam Speaker, to the Ombudsman's office, as I have with a number of constituents, you will know that it is a very small office, that it has a limited number of staff, and that its ability to deal with the cases before it is already strained. You do not have to take my word for it, listen to the Ombudsman, but this is a government which does not listen, which is immune to criticism, which thinks it is infallible and does not even listen to its own Ombudsman.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, I think that the second area that has given rise to concern is that the 30-year rule of availability has been applied in this bill. This goes in the opposite direction to every other jurisdiction in Canada. People are lowering the age. They are widening accessibility. They are opening the doors to information, to the evaluation of public policy and to the evaluation of government records. This government, with no justification, wants to go in the other direction, to put the lid on, to clamp down and to limit access for 30 years.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, the process has been inadequate. The government did promise public hearings, and somewhere along the line they did offer a very brief white paper which talked about a number of principles but did not give very many specifics. This was not the draft bill, for example, that we saw with The Sustainable Development Act, although it has even broader or certainly as broad a significance. There was a brief white paper. There were a series of hurried hearings, and I do not believe there were more than 100 presentations at those hearings, if even that, and the government reneged on a promise to come forward with a draft of what it had heard at those hearings. The minister's response was that, well, we put them all in a binder in the Legislative Library, and, yes, they did. It was well organized and well filed, easy to find your way around, but how many people were able to refer to it? How many people really knew what was going on?

An Honourable Member: On a freedom of information bill.

Ms. Friesen: As my colleague from Kildonan says, and that on a freedom of information bill, where the widest distribution possible, the widest encouragement of citizen participation should have been the rule. We had the right to expect that from our government, and we did not. What we saw was secrecy, divisiveness, narrowness and rigidity from a government which really has no interest in expanding the freedom of information.

I have a number of concerns from a research perspective, Madam Speaker. I know that my colleagues will be speaking on this from other perspectives. There is a section in the bill, Section 47, which does deal with some principles for a working system to deal with research, and I think there are some useful suggestions in there. I think the suggestions for written agreements are important, but it does give a very wide latitude to the head of any body to determine, what it calls, bona fide research, and I think that there needs to be definitions of that. I think that is a very wide latitude for someone to take. Someone may decide, for example, that a particular request is not related to bona fide research, that it is merely personal curiosity. Where does personal curiosity and bona fide research stop? When this government says it does, because that is what is in the bill.

Secondly, I am concerned about the sections dealing with archival records, and those who have read this bill will know that the records acquired by the Provincial Archives of Manitoba from an entity other than a public body are exempted from the act. Now, Madam Speaker, we have an opportunity here to go beyond that. The Provincial Archives of Manitoba has in the past and, I hope, in the future, although I know it is constrained at the moment for a variety of reasons from not collecting personal papers or private papers, but in the past it has, and it does have, in fact, an internationally known body of private papers from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, three centuries of records. It is, in fact, the jewel of the Manitoba Archives. It brings scholars from all over the world on a regular basis. But it is to be exempted from the provisions of this act. I think we had the opportunity to expand upon that.

Material which comes from a private corporation, for example, Canadian National, now VIA Rail, now

privatized—when it was a corporation under the public purse, those were public records, and then acquired by the archives, they would have been subject to this act. Now it is a private corporation, and those public records have now become privatized, acquired by perhaps a body like the Provincial Archives of Manitoba or possibly the University of Manitoba Archives or the Brandon University Archives. Those may well be subject to a very different set of rules. We had the opportunity in this bill to put in place very broad rules of access. I think I would have personally felt much more comfortable with that.

The same situation will apply to private literary papers which are often acquired by smaller archives. They, too, are exempt from the provisions of this act. It seems to me that they are going to be left in a kind of limbo with no consistent working policy around them.

Equally important, I think, are the provisions made for government records. This is where many people have focused their attention, because the discretion which is given to the head of a body to withhold cabinet records is enormous and is much, much greater than in other jurisdictions—anything which may be reasonably expected to reveal the advice, opinions, proposals, consultations, positions or plans. Madam Speaker, that to me is very restrictive and subject to a wide variety of interpretations, not that somebody will read the document in the public body and say, yes, it does reveal and hence we cannot disclose it at this time, but that it may be reasonably expected to reveal. That to me is far too restrictive, and we need a much broader discussion of those particular areas, both for the cabinet and for government records.

There are quite extensive restrictions on records dealing with relationships between governments, between public bodies and even between departments within a government. For citizens who want to understand the making of public policy, whether from an historical or social science perspective, I think that is extremely restrictive. It is one of the areas, I think, where there could have been much greater discussion, and I think librarians and archivists could have found much more publicly acceptable versions of that.

Electronic records are also an area of concern. We have, I believe, in this bill a section which says that

electronic records may be denied, and I believe there has been an amendment here, but the bill will still read that access to electronic records will be denied if the head of that particular public body producing it believes it would not interfere unreasonably with the operations of the public body.

* (2330)

Well, Madam Speaker, again that gives enormous latitude to a particular government body and to a civil servant to deny access. This is at a time when records are increasingly being transformed into electronic data. This will apply not just to the records which are collected in electronic form, but it would also apply to those which remain in electronic form. What is increasingly happening in records management, for obvious reasons, is that the records are being transferred into electronic form and then the originals are being destroyed, or in the case of those that come from the 1920s and 1930s, the actual paper that they are written on is actually disintegrating. So there is a much greater body of material in electronic form than you would expect, and increasingly things are being transformed into that. So the access to records in electronic form is a very significant one and gives far too much latitude.

I also think that that area is one where equality becomes very important, because we are looking now at restricting access to electronic records at a time when the general world around us is becoming much more unequal because so much is being stored in electronic form.

What I am talking about now is the privatization of information in areas where there are many, many data banks which are growing throughout the country. The one that we might be most familiar with is INFOGLOBE, but essentially you cannot have access to the basic information that is stored in those unless you have money. Increasingly cash, money, wealth, privilege, and position is going to be the key to gaining information, and what we are seeing is a stratification in society based upon one's ability to have access to information. That is why the section on electronic records is so important, and what we have seen over the last generations, in fact, is a broadening of access to

information, a much greater equality in society of access to information.

My great-grandmother was illiterate, my grandparents were barely literate, but over a very short period of time in the history of humankind we have equalized opportunity for access to information, and what we are doing now in the modern, capitalist, progressive world that this government believes in is that we are going in the opposite direction. No longer equality of access standing in front of the stacks in the public library, but public libraries which increasingly are being privatized, increasingly charging fees, and infobanks and data and information stored in electronic ways through which you must have a computer terminal to get access to. Then even beyond that, the privatization of learning is actually adding to people's inability to have access to that kind of information because of the fees that must be charged for the use of software, for the use of various forms of what is widely called intellectual property.

I am also concerned about the cost that is being applied to freedom of information. I know that there are some institutions which can pay the kind of fees which the government is already asking for in information, but there are many who cannot. A recent example that I was told of was a student who wanted to have access to information for the 1940s, '50s, and '60s in Manitoba. She was looking, she was developing a study, the background to the situation that Manitoba faces today in aboriginal policy. That is the continuing conflict between federal and provincial governments over social assistance payments and the other range of social payments. She went to the provincial government, as I understand it, and was told that for that period of time, it would be \$20 an hour. She was not asking for anybody to do her research for her. She wanted to see the documents. She wanted to sort through them herself, and that is, in fact, part of the learning process. She should be doing that. The selection of that material and the collation of an argument out of that is an important part of what she should be learning, but it is \$20 an hour for someone to do that for her.

So, Madam Speaker, the cost of research I think is something that is clearly a limiting factor, and I had hoped that this bill would address that, but again it has

the opportunity to do that, but the government has chosen to take the easy way out, to use their majority and to ram this through.

At the committee, there were many concerns expressed from a wide range of interests and community people across the province, whether it was the Taxpayers Association or whether it was the librarians. They expressed many concerns, but few unfortunately were acted upon.

I think there are a number of reasons for voting against this bill: first of all, the absence of wide public hearings, the absence of a serious commitment to having Manitobans understand, discuss, and reflect upon this act; secondly, the refusal of a six-month hoist. We proposed that. We said, give it time, let us think about it; more people want to be involved in this. The government had the opportunity to do the right thing, and it said no, impervious to criticism, intolerant of the views of Manitobans.

The government also had the opportunity to pass a number of amendments and brought in one or two of its own. It took one or two wording changes from the people at the committee, but it rejected a wide number of amendments that my colleague the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) introduced, and those would have, I believe, made the bill much better.

Finally, Madam Speaker, the government refused to review this bill in three years, but this bill will last for five years. Again, a sense of imperviousness to criticism and a sense of invulnerability, and I think in both cases this will be the downfall of this government.

So, for all of the above reasons, Madam Speaker, I think government had an opportunity to improve on this bill to the benefit of Manitobans, and it chose not to do so. Those are my reasons for joining my colleagues in voting against this bill.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) for speaking as a researcher and as an historian. I think her contribution is a very valuable one, and I appreciate her having made that contribution.

Unlike the member for Wolseley, I had the opportunity to speak on this bill at second reading. I have had the opportunity to speak in the committee, and I have had the opportunity to ask several questions. So, Madam Speaker, my remarks will be relatively brief. Perhaps there is nothing particularly new for me to say, but I note that some things are worth saying again and again, especially when it comes to a bill of this scope, a bill that will affect the rights and lives of all Manitobans. So I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak once again on this bill this evening.

Madam Speaker, last night, I had the honour to attend the Knowles 90th anniversary and heard Stephen Lewis speak. His speech was stellar and moving. I think everybody there in the audience was better for having heard him speak. Stephen Lewis spoke last night on the rights of children. As you probably know, he is a great crusader for children's rights, but he is also a great humanitarian and a great crusader for human rights. He is also a former parliamentarian. When I thought of this legislation and I thought of Stephen Lewis, I know what he would think of this legislation that is designed to protect government secrecy, and he would vote against it.

The night before, Madam Speaker, I had the honour to have as my guest at the Churchill graduation ceremony, the school in my constituency, Dr. Sybil Shack, another humanitarian, another person who has devoted a great deal of her life to the struggle for human rights. Dr. Shack is what we might think of as the Stanley Knowles of education. She combines intellect with passion and combines both of those with integrity. She is the president of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. She is the honorary president for life of the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, and I know what Dr. Shack would do with this bill, she would vote against anything like this.

The third name that I want to bring up tonight, Madam Speaker, is Stanley Knowles. A few weeks ago many of us had the honour to attend his funeral and celebrate his life and acknowledge his work in human rights and his work in Parliament, and Stanley Knowles would have voted against this bill.

So, Madam Speaker, when I think of these three people, Stephen Lewis, Dr. Sybil Shack, and Stanley

Knowles, and know they would have voted against this bill, I know we did the right thing at second reading, and we are going to do the right thing for Manitobans tonight and vote against this bill.

* (2340)

Madam Speaker, my colleague from Wolseley has mentioned some of the history of the old Freedom of Information Act, the one that this new act will replace. This old Freedom of Information Act, as the members opposite never tire of telling us, was one which they proclaimed. Well, they may have proclaimed it, but they certainly did not respect that Freedom of Information Act. People who have attempted to access information under The Freedom of Information Act have met with incredible, incredible frustrations. All we have to do is listen to the Ombudsman to know the frustrations of dealing with that Freedom of Information Act.

Madam Speaker, there was the legislative review. The government was to review that old Freedom of Information Act in three years, which would have been 1991. Nothing happened in 1991. In 1992 there were some, the beginnings I believe of some review. I believe the review carried on into 1993 and that a report was written. A report was written by the minister's staff, but the report has never seen the light of day, and when the Manitoba Library Association tried to obtain that report under The Freedom of Information Act, trying to get information about freedom of information under The Freedom of Information Act, they were denied this report. Shame, indeed. Why are Manitobans not entitled to information on freedom of information?

So this government may have honoured the theory, that is The Freedom of Information Act, but in practice what they wanted to do was to protect secrecy, was to control information, and it seems to me that it is positively Orwellian.

Here is an example I want to give you of the Orwellian nature of this government's attitude towards freedom of information. Earlier this year, Madam Speaker, the Manitoba Library Association requested 28 documents which government departments and agencies had submitted to assist in drafting this new

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Bill 50, the one under discussion. All the submissions, all other submissions on freedom of information and privacy protection were available.

The Manitoba Library Association attempted to get the 28 government documents, and they were denied access under the Freedom of Information—the Library Association. What could be more innocent than the Library Association? Is it not incredibly ironic that Manitobans interested in The Freedom of Information Act were denied access to submissions on freedom of information under The Freedom of Information Act? The ironies compound themselves. No wonder I am using the word “Orwellian.” Madam Speaker, if members opposite do not understand the word “Orwellian,” I recommend they read George Orwell's “1984.” It is about the control of information. That is what it is about. It is about the erosion of democracy, and members opposite should read that book.

Madam Speaker, let me continue for one minute.

Point of Order

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to clarify from the member when she speaks about something denied that, in fact, it was denied under the act that the NDP brought in.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship did not have a point of order.

* * *

Ms. McGifford: You know, Madam Speaker, the NDP are very proud of The Freedom of Information Act that we drafted. It was the application of the act. It was that government having no spirit for the act, and those members opposite are responsible. Now, I see the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) wagging his finger. Yes, I am wagging my finger because I am very angry about this bill.

Madam Speaker, back to the denial of these 28 submissions, why was the Manitoba Library Association denied these 28 government submissions?

Well, the only thing I can think of is because presumably these 28 submissions probably laid the ground plans on how to protect government vulnerabilities and promote secrecy even more. Consequently, they were not wanted in the public domain.

So there are a few remarks on the history of this government in responding to Freedom of Information, and I could go on, but it has been a long day. So I want to move on and make a few remarks. The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) has done this, but I want to make a few remarks on process—[interjection] Perhaps the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) wants to speak on this, and perhaps she could wait till I am finished. I know the Minister of Education can hardly stand not to talk, but perhaps she could be quiet for a few minutes.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about process, and, as I said, the member for Wolseley has talked about process. I think it is really clear that the process here is extraordinarily flawed. This legislation was conceived in secrecy right from the beginning. It has been surrounded by mystery, and it is no wonder that it is viewed with suspicion in the community. In fact, it is the suspicion behind this bill that gave rise to the birth of a coalition of citizens who met to protest this particular legislation. I think, and I think the minister would agree, that one of the points that presenters made when she finally had a private meeting in her office with these citizens was the flawed process. The Canadian Association of Journalists did not even know about this legislation until one of them stumbled on a publication in the library and thought, h'm, what is this; took a look, and quickly made a submission. This is the kind of secrecy that shrouded the whole process, and that is why—[interjection] Well, yes, if they had gone to—unlike probably, I am sure that most Tory supporters did know, most people who make donations to the Tory party.

I know that one of the major points that this coalition of citizens made when they visited the minister was the need for public consultation, and, you know, Madam Speaker, I think this is incredibly ironic and I think everybody should listen to this because it is utterly shameful. This Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey) said that the reason that

there was not more time for the public to peruse and study the bill was because there was not going to be a fall session of the Legislature, and the reason there would not be a fall session of the Legislature was because the NDP had behaved so badly the year before. Now can you beat that?

* (2350)

Somebody wants me to repeat it. This minister told the coalition of citizens that met in her office that the reason they could not have time to study the legislation at leisure and have the summer was because we would not have a fall session of the Legislature, and the reason we would not was because the NDP had behaved so badly the last time. I assured the citizens that we would love a fall session of the Legislature, that it is the government—

An Honourable Member: Let us adjourn right now and come back.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, well, that is another possibility. Anyway, Madam Speaker, we offered the minister a way out of the dilemma vis-a-vis citizen consultations. We moved a six-month hoist in the Legislature which would provide six months for citizens to study the bill. The bill could be a draft, a white paper for citizens to study—turned down. They voted down, thumbs down on that one.

The Minister of Culture (Mrs. Vodrey) said the reason they had to vote against our hoist was because Manitobans so desperately needed privacy legislation, needed it right now. So then we said, well, great, go ahead; proclaim the privacy legislation. We will support the proclamation of the privacy parts of the bill and then give the citizens six months, a year, whatever, to study other aspects of the bill. Well, of course, that was turned down once again. There is a little irony here too, because the minister who is so, so intent on protecting the privacy of Manitobans does not seem to want to protect freedom of information and privacy in private schools in Manitoba. That does not seem to be a concern.

Madam Speaker, I will just move on quickly. It is true that the minister modified some of her amendments. Pardon me, it is true that the minister

moved some amendments, and I think that she made some wise decisions in her amendments, and I salute her for that. I think it is very important that we respect the minister's willingness to make those decisions. The problem was they did not go far enough, as the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) has already pointed out. I think it is also fair to say that this minister inherited the sins of the old minister, and it is unfortunate for her that she had to inherit this incredibly flawed process.

Leaving that aside, some of the amendments that we suggested, I think, would have been very, very essential to producing a kind of legislation that really did protect Manitobans. For example, we wanted to amend the time limit on cabinet records from 30 years to 15 years. It is 30 years. In B.C., it is 15; in Alberta, it is 20; in Ontario, it is 20; federally, it is 20. I think it is even 10 in one province in Canada, the name which alludes me for the minute. Why not amend it to 20 years or 15 years? Why 30 years? Why do we have to be so much more secret than every jurisdiction in Canada? What is the reason for it? In 30 years, a lot of these people are not going to be around, for heaven's sake. Anyway, turned down.

Another amendment that was turned down was our amendment on the Privacy Assessment Review Committee. We thought that the Privacy Assessment Review Committee could well be selected by a committee of the Legislature and therefore could include a strong combination of experts and citizens' groups, and this was refused. Now, I know the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) is allowing citizens to sit on the health committee that parallels this one, so I do not know why the Minister of Culture is so adamant in refusing to do as her colleague is doing. Nonetheless, she is.

The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) has already mentioned the review period. We suggested an amendment which would reduce the review period from five years to three years, as was the case in the old legislation—that drafted by the NDP. Once again, it was turned down. Of course, part of me wonders why I even bother, because this government has no respect for legislated review periods anyway. The other one, the one with the first Freedom of Information Act, was never carried on. So why would we think this one would be anyway?

Of course, Madam Speaker, the really important amendment that we moved had to do with the Ombudsman. At this point I want to say, and I think we have always been unequivocal and quite clear about the fact that we have the utmost respect for the Ombudsman. We have the utmost respect for his work, and I think we showed this in participating in the all-party hiring committee. We certainly respected his gumption and courage in his 1994 and 1995 Ombudsman's reports, but the problem, and we have said this over and over again, the problem is that we recognize the limits on the powers that the Ombudsman has and we recognize the limits on his resources.

Currently, as everybody in Manitoba knows because it has been front and centre, there is a nine-month waiting period in his office, and we know that the Ombudsman can comment and recommend but that he cannot issue binding orders, and in a piece of legislation of this scope, it needs to be enforced by a privacy and information commissioner who can issue binding orders. We need the same kinds of protections in Manitoba as are enjoyed in our sister provinces, B.C., Alberta, Ontario, Quebec. Quebec has absolutely superb legislation. It covers both the public and the private sector, which is something perhaps this government could have looked at and maybe had some legislation that would cover private schools.

Madam Speaker, we understand the kinds of things that a privacy and information commissioner could do that would allow him the powers to protect Manitobans with this legislation. The privacy and information commissioner would be an officer of the Legislature. He or she would be appointed by an all-party committee for a fixed period of time, an annual report to the Legislature. The privacy commissioner would have his or her own staff and offices and, most importantly, the powers to adjudicate, educate, inspect, and audit.

Madam Speaker, I moved an amendment describing the selection process and the terms of reference for the commissioner. It was defeated. All amendments that I moved having anything to do with the commissioner were ruled out of scope. So very, very unfortunately, we will not have a privacy and information commissioner.

Now, at this point I could, but I will not because of the time, I could read into the record—

An Honourable Member: Oh, read it.

Ms. McGifford: No, I am not going to. I could read into the record from nine presenters out of 11 to the committee on this legislation their strong, strong support for the creation of a privacy and information commissioner, and the two presenters who did not support it—in fact, let me retract, it was not that they did not support it. One presentation did not even entertain the question. A second presentation was by a presenter who said, this legislation was so unsophisticated, so unpolished that he could not even begin to consider whether the legislation should be adjudicated by a privacy commissioner or whether an Ombudsman should have powers over this legislation.

So, Madam Speaker, there is overwhelming support on the part of the public for a privacy and information commissioner. Let me just give you one example. The Provincial Council of Women support a privacy and information officer, and they speak for 75,000 women in the province of Manitoba. That is a large number, and all of the presenters spoke for many, many Manitoba citizens.

* (2400)

Madam Speaker, it seems to our side of the House that quite clearly this government has grown arrogant. It is rank with secrecy; it does not listen to the public. The process behind this legislation was flawed. The practice was shocking, uneven, irregular, the practice in enforcing the old FOI. The theory, as I think I have just pointed out, as enshrined in this bill is centrist and manipulative. Process, practice and theory all point to the same thing: Secrecy, secrecy, secrecy; control, control, control; manipulation, manipulation, manipulation.

Madam Speaker, the NDP is proud to oppose another attempt on behalf of this Premier (Mr. Filmon) to hamstring democratic processes and principles in the province of Manitoba. So we want to go on the record now as opposing the worst freedom of information and privacy protection legislation in North America. We

decry this legislation. We are against this legislation, and we will soon vote against it. Thank you.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): You know, this is unbelievable, speaking on Bill 50. The kind of contempt we find in this House for orderly debate is quite remarkable, and members opposite are smiling and relishing the fact that this has been called by independent people analyzing this bill—

An Honourable Member: Which you are not.

Mr. Doer: That is right, I am not. I am very biased. But independent people have called and described this as being the worst bill in North America for public access to public records all over North America. I say, shame on you. You have soiled the name of Manitoba, and you have no right to have done so, and what a distance you have come from some nine years ago when you did, in fact, proclaim a bill that we had passed three years previous.

I know, Madam Speaker, that there was a considerable amount of work involved after the first freedom of information bill was passed. I know that the former Minister of Cultural Affairs, Judy Wasylycia-Leis, and I was a new member of cabinet in '86, but the bill had been passed in '85, and we had the massive task of gathering forward all the records for the—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: I just finished saying, you know, the members opposite—[interjection] I do not know if the Speaker has got any control of this House. Perhaps she should get some.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This bill was proclaimed in Manitoba, as it should have been, and records were available to the public, as they should have been, and Manitoba was one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to have both passed the bill and made freedom of information a public right to have public access.

Madam Speaker, I know in the Department of Urban Affairs, Pat Moses was assigned as the information officer. I know she carried on when the Tories proclaimed the bill, and I think we said at the time, during the minority government period, that we were happy that the government had proclaimed the bill, because it was, in fact, a bill that was a work in progress, and it was worthy of giving the new government credit at the time for proclaiming a bill that we had passed and worked on in terms of the public good.

The public good is the key part to this bill. Why are we passing Freedom of Information? Are we passing freedom of information bills for the purposes of controlling and keeping secret information on behalf of the power of a government, or are we passing Freedom of Information to allow the public of our province access to their information through their public services and their public records? When you examine this legislation on the simple criteria of whether this legislation meets the test of power to the people for information or power being grabbed to the government to keep information secret, this bill fails, and that is why it has been described as the worst legislation in North America.

Now, this government talks about going into the 21st Century, and it likes to kind of suggest that they are moving in a futuristic way. Well, this bill not only symbolizes, as the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) and the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) stated, not only symbolizes the kind of rot that has set in and the arrogance that has set into this government, it also is a step in backward time. We are going backwards in Manitoba rather than being the leader.

Yes, the 1985 legislation was not perfect. Lots of other jurisdictions have moved beyond '85. That is what we were supposed to do with this review process. We were not supposed to go backwards with freedom of information. We were supposed to take a look at the first 10 years and say: What worked, what did not work, and how do we improve it for the future? How do we make this a 21st Century document for freedom of information? Quite frankly, this government failed. They criticized the former government, which is their right, but they did not improve the legislation, which is

their responsibility. They failed. They went backwards, and the people of Manitoba will know that.

It is another symbol of a government that started off nine years ago, as all governments do, with energy. They started off with energy, albeit in a minority government. We kept them on their toes. It has become over the 1990s a government that is arrogant, out of touch, and now becoming more and more secretive about information that is vital for the public interest. This will go down with VLT machines and other developments that this government brought in as the legacy of the Filmon team, secrecy and arrogance, and I think that is very regrettable. The members opposite, as they vote on this bill, should think about their place in history, because this decision today is a step backwards. It is a step away from the freedom principles of this democracy.

Why is this government doing this? Why are they using their majority, their brute majority, to grab more power and secrecy to themselves? Oh, they talk about Roland Penner's speech and they talk about '85. I concede that in '85 our bill, which was one of the first in North America, obviously 10 years later needs improvement. All members of the public said the '85 bill needed improvement. I agree with that. There are lots of places we tried to use The Freedom of Information Act, and we say the bill needs improvement, because we saw time and time again cabinet and Premiers crawling underneath some of the sections of the act and hiding from the light of openness in terms of what should be available to the public.

So even our experience in opposition told us that our act, with their proclamation, needed to be improved, but you have gone in the opposite, completely opposite direction in terms of this bill, and we say, shame on you.

* (0010)

Now, look at some of the examples of what we have had to deal with in this Legislature since the early 1990s, since the minority government changed to a majority government. In 1991, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) signed an operating loss agreement on the Winnipeg Jets. He went to a press conference with all the sports media and told the sports media that this

agreement would cost the taxpayers a maximum of \$5 million to be shared equally between the city and the Province of Manitoba. That is what the Premier said and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) said. You know, if that was an educated guess at the time, we could say, well, perhaps he was using the information he had at his disposal and he was making an accurate prediction based on false assumptions and he could not anticipate the salary increases in the NHL, the increased costs.

Four years later and only through the Auditor did we find out that cabinet had a document that said before government made the decision in October of 1991 that the losses would be \$43.5 million. The government kept that document secret. When the Premier went to the press conference, he had a document that said, it is going to cost us \$43 million. He hid that and said, deceitfully, in my opinion, it would only cost us \$5 million.

Of course, ever since that episode, we have the head of the Treasury Board saying, I do not write things down. I did not write anything down. I did not write anything down, and, of course, the Ombudsman had to find boxes of documents at the Manitoba Securities Commission dealing with all the things he did write down. The senior civil servant in this government, working directly for the Premier, said, I only had two memos on the Jets. Of course, when he got found out, that probably led to the members opposite starting to develop the most secretive bill in North America.

When we look at other issues, Madam Speaker, and we do not have all night, but I just want to go through some of the other issues. Look at the Manitoba Telephone System. When we asked the question in October of 1995 in committee, will you privatize the Manitoba Telephone System, the minister responsible for the telephone system said to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the only person thinking about privatizing the telephone system is the member for Thompson. We in the Conservative Party and the Conservative government will not privatize Manitoba Telephone System. That is what they said. Of course, we know now from the brokers in their tombstone article that in June of 1995 and in July of 1995, in August of 1995, in September of '95, the Premier and

the Minister of Finance and the head of Telephones were conspiring to sell the Manitoba Telephone System in secrecy.

We cannot get that information under the old Freedom of Information Act and we certainly will not get it under the new Freedom of Information Act, which begs the question: Did the Minister of Telephones mislead the committee when he was asked the question or was the Premier so secret and deceitful that he did not even tell his Minister of Telephones when the Minister of Telephones testified at the committee?

I believe the Minister of Telephones did not know about the privatization, and only the secret little junta of the Premier's Office and the Premier's presidium kept that secret from the people of Manitoba and only dealt with the brokers for four months instead of dealing with the province, the people of Manitoba and the minister responsible. I actually believe the Minister of Telephones was telling the truth at the committee, and he was not even told about that secret by the Premier.

So when we listen to the Minister responsible for Hydro, when the Minister responsible for Hydro sits at committee and says, oh, we will never privatize Hydro and we in the senior management of Hydro will never privatize the corporation, he does not know what kind of secret wheeling and dealing is going on in the Premier's Office with the head of Treasury Board and the head of Finance. We just thought when we closed our eyes we heard the Minister of Telephones speaking, we will not privatize. We do not trust the secrecy of this government, the deceit of this government in terms of dealing with public assets, again another symbol of secrecy and arrogance of this government, not a public debate about the merits of something, but dealing in secrecy with brokers.

Look at the Lotteries Corporation. For months we tried to say that the Lotteries Corporation should break down the kind of money coming out of each community. What did the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) say and the former Minister of Lotteries say in this House? Oh, we cannot give you that information; we do not have that information; that information is not available.

Well, every single VLT machine is not only broken down in terms of community, it is broken down in terms of bars and it is broken down in terms of each machine. All that information has been on computer since 1992. It took us 11 months and a court order to get this government to make those documents public, and they only did so after the election campaign. What is the solution to this remedy by the Ombudsman and the court to release those documents? What is the remedy? To change the law so that will never happen again, to never allow the Ombudsman again to tell the people where their money is going. That is again the symbol of this government in terms of its secrecy in dealing with public documents.

The government probably does not like the existing Freedom of Information Act because some things that are embarrassing to them, and maybe even the other members in opposition, are made public in the public arena. Look at how they squealed when we released the information about the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources's living style, Hy's and Rae & Jerry's and all these other restaurants. You know, they do not want that information out again, do they? That is public information. You will release the teachers' information in Transcona, but they do not want the government minister's information being out there in the public arena, do they? They do not want the travel costs being out. They do not want the deputy minister's costs being out. They are going to make more and more of this information secret. They will make everybody else's information public, and they will make more and more of our information in this Legislature secret, and I say shame on you. Shame on you. Make it public, defend it, do not make it secret and do not have one rule for yourselves and another rule for every other public institution. Have one rule for all of us. That is the only way to proceed.

The other example stated by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) and member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) is the whole example of the Library Association, the 26 requests for information that were denied by this government, and we had the same experience. We have memos that went to Barb Biggar. Simple information went to the Premier's communication czar to decide whether the information would be released. How would you like us to release this information? How would you like us to handle this

information? Because, of course, the government message—information is everything for this government. The sizzle is much more important than the steak when it comes to this government and its dealings with the public.

Madam Speaker, we can talk a lot about the examples of this government. [interjection] Well, they think it is funny to keep everything secret. They think it is funny. The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) thinks it is funny to have the worst freedom of information laws in all of North America, and I think it is disgusting and I think it is shameful.

Madam Speaker, this act is wrong and we will vote against it. I want to say to the people of Manitoba and to the public that appeared before the committee at our legislative hearings that we will be voting against this legislation, but more than that, this government that is becoming more and more arrogant and more and more reminiscent of the Mulroney government will have a swan song all right, but it is going to be a swan song of the whole members opposite in the next election campaign.

I think it is important to say that we are going to bring in a Freedom of Information Act that will take us into the 21st Century, that we will amend this act and repeal the regressive sections of this act, and we will have a privacy commissioner available to the public at the first steps of public access. That is a commitment we will make.

We will amend this legislation and repeal the 30-year period. I thought it was rather ironic, when we were discussing issues dealing with the October crisis, that was in the 25-year period of the federal government, and looking at other provinces that are now dealing with items at 15 and 10 years, we will repeal the 30-year provision and introduce in new legislation with a new government the provisions put forward by the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), a 15-year provision at minimum in terms of the protection of cabinet documents.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, we will absolutely eliminate the sections of the document that provide for this withholding of government documents, this massive power of the Premier's Office and the cabinet's

office. We will eliminate many of the restrictions that you have put in. You know, here is a government that says it is proud of representing rural and northern Manitoba.

Well, electronic records are going to be one of the easier ways for rural and northern Manitobans to access their records and their information. For a government that believes in rural and northern decentralization and access and public equity, I say shame on them. We will change those provisions on the electronic records, Madam Speaker.

I say to members opposite, we will vote against this bill, but we will bring in a new bill in 19—very shortly, and we will have legislation that is worthy of the former reputation of Manitoba of being an open, democratic, tolerant society. Thank you very much.

* (0020)

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 50, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and Consequential Amendments Act.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, 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.

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

The motion before the House is third reading, Bill 50, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and Consequential Amendments Act.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Ashton, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Hickes, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 27, Nays 21.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until a time fixed by Madam Speaker upon the request of the government.

Motion agreed to.

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Speaker: I have been advised that the Lieutenant Governor is available for Royal Assent.

All rise.

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Garry Clark): His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

His Honour Yvon Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed His Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

Madam Speaker: May it please Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly, at its present session, passed bills, which in the name of the Assembly, I present to Your Honour and to which bills I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Bill 2—The Arbitration and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur l'arbitrage et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 3—The North American Environmental and Labour Cooperation Agreements Implementation Act; Loi sur la mise en oeuvre des accords nord-américains de coopération dans les domaines de l'environnement et du travail.

Bill 4—The Steam and Pressure Plants Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les appareils sous pression et à vapeur.

Bill 5—The Mineral Exploration Incentive Program Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur le programme d'encouragement à l'exploration minière.

Bill 6—The Natural Gas Supply Repeal and Public Utilities Board Amendment Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur l'approvisionnement en gaz naturel et modifiant la Loi sur la Régie des services publics.

Bill 7—The Midwifery and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur les sages-femmes et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 8—The Real Property Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels.

Bill 9—The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Régie des services publics.

Bill 11—The Northern Affairs Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les Affaires du Nord.

* (0030)

Bill 12—The Manitoba Water Services Board Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Commission des services d'approvisionnement en eau du Manitoba.

Bill 13—The Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances.

Bill 14—The Pension Benefits Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les prestations de pension.

Bill 15—The Government Essential Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services gouvernementaux essentiels.

Bill 16—The Council on Post-Secondary Education Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil de l'enseignement postsecondaire.

Bill 17—The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jours fériés dans le commerce de détail.

Bill 18—The Emergency 911 Public Safety Answering Point Act; Loi sur les centres téléphoniques de sécurité publique - service d'urgence 911.

Bill 19—The Human Rights Code Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne.

Bill 20—The Summary Convictions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les poursuites sommaires.

Bill 21—The Jury Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jurés.

Bill 23—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba.

Bill 24—The Personal Property Security Amendment and Various Acts Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sûretés relatives aux biens personnels et d'autres dispositions législatives.

Bill 25—The Proceeds of Crime Registration Act; Loi sur les enregistrements relatifs aux produits de la criminalité.

Bill 26—The Corporations Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les corporations.

Bill 27—The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques.

Bill 28—The Emergency Measures Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 29—The Education Administration Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire.

Bill 30—The Farm Practices Protection Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection des pratiques agricoles.

Bill 31—The Livestock and Livestock Products and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur les animaux de ferme et leurs produits et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 32—The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail.

Bill 33—The Executions Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'exécution des jugements et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 34—The City of Winnipeg Amendment and Municipal Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Ville de Winnipeg et la Loi sur les municipalités.

Bill 35—The Condominium Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les condominiums et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 36—The Wildfires and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur les incendies échappés et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 37—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code de la route.

Bill 38—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant le Code de la route.

Bill 39—The Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act; Loi sur les corporations à capital de risque de travailleurs.

Bill 40—The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le Fonds de participation des travailleurs du Manitoba.

Bill 41—The Regional Health Authorities Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi concernant les offices régionaux de la santé et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 42—The Provincial Court Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour provinciale et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 43—The Law Society Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société du Barreau.

Bill 44—The Municipal Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités.

Bill 45—The Manitoba Evidence Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la preuve au Manitoba.

Bill 46—The Criminal Injuries Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'indemnisation des victimes d'actes criminels.

Bill 47—The Adoption and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur l'adoption et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 48—The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 49—The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1997; Loi de 1997 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité.

Bill 50—The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur

l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 51—The Personal Health Information Act; Loi sur les renseignements médicaux personnels.

Bill 52—The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1997; Loi de 1997 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives.

Bill 53—The Local Authorities Election Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'élection des autorités locales et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 54—The Animal Husbandry Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'élevage et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 55—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba.

Bill 56—The Family Maintenance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'obligation alimentaire.

Bill 57—The Highway Traffic Amendment, Summary Convictions Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les poursuites sommaires et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 58—The Law Reform Commission Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Commission de réforme du droit.

Bill 59—The Conservation Agreements Act; Loi sur les accords de conservation.

Bill 60—The Elderly and Infirm Persons' Housing Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le logement des infirmes et des personnes âgées.

Bill 61—The Sustainable Development and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur le développement durable et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 300—The TD Trust Company and Central Guaranty Trust Company Act; Loi concernant la Société de fiducie TD et la Compagnie Trust Central Guaranty.

Bill 301—The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company, Montreal Trust Company of Canada and Montreal Trust Company Act; Loi concernant la Société de fiducie Banque de Nouvelle-Écosse, la Compagnie Montréal Trust du Canada et la Compagnie Montréal Trust.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

* (0040)

Madam Speaker: May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and faithful subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in session assembled, approach Your Honour with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to Her Majesty's person and government and beg from Your Honour the acceptance of these bills:

Bill 62—The Loan Act, 1997; Loi d'emprunt de 1997.

Bill 63—The Appropriation Act, 1997; Loi de 1997 portant affectation de crédits.

Mr. Clerk: His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth thank Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, accepts their benevolence and assents to these bills in Her Majesty's name.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

God Save the Queen was sung.

O Canada! was sung.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until a time set by the government and by call of the Speaker.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, June 27, 1997

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W. Yvon Dumont
Lieutenant Governor

CANADA
PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

ELIZABETH THE SECOND, by the grace of God of The United Kingdom, Canada and Her other Realms and Territories, QUEEN, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

PROCLAMATION

To our beloved and faithful the Members elected to serve in the Legislative Assembly of our Province of Manitoba, and to each and every of you - GREETING.

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba now stands adjourned;

AND WHEREAS it is deemed appropriate to request His Honour the Lieutenant Governor by a Royal Proclamation effective on the twenty-sixth day of November, 1997, to prorogue the Third Session of the Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba and to summon the said Legislature for the dispatch of business on the twenty-seventh day of November, 1997;

NOW KNOW YE THAT, for divers causes and consideration, and taking into consideration the ease and convenience of our loving subjects, we have thought fit, by and with the advice and consent of our Executive Council of our Province of Manitoba, to hereby prorogue the Third Session of the Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba effective on Wednesday, the twenty-sixth day of November, 1997, and to convene the Fourth Session of the Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba on Thursday, the twenty-seventh day of November, 1997, at the hour of 1:30 o'clock in the afternoon for the dispatch of business in our Legislative Assembly of our Province of Manitoba, in our City of Winnipeg, there to take into consideration the state and welfare of our said Province of Manitoba and therein to do as may seem necessary.

HEREIN FAIL NOT.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF We have caused these Our Letters to be made Patent, and the Great Seal of Our Province of Manitoba to be hereunto affixed;

WITNESS, His Honour W. Yvon Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of the Government of the Province of Manitoba;

AT OUR GOVERNMENT HOUSE, at Our City of Winnipeg, in the Province of Manitoba, this fifth day of November, in the year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred and ninety-seven, and in the forty-sixth year of Our Reign.

BY COMMAND,

V. TOEWS,
Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

W. Yvon Dumont
Lieutenant-gouverneur

CANADA
PROVINCE DU MANITOBA

ELIZABETH II, par la grâce de Dieu, REINE du Royaume-Uni, du Canada et de ses autres royaumes et territoires, Chef du Commonwealth, Défenseur de la Foi.

PROCLAMATION

À nos bien-aimés et fidèles députés élus à l'Assemblée législative de Notre province du Manitoba, et à chacun d'entre vous, SALUT.

ATTENDU QUE l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba est actuellement ajournée;

ATTENDU QU'il est jugé opportun de demander au lieutenant-gouverneur de lancer une proclamation fixant au vingt-six novembre 1997 la date de clôture de la troisième session de la trente-sixième législature de la province du Manitoba et convoquant l'Assemblée législative pour la reprise des travaux le vingt-sept novembre 1997;

SACHEZ DONC MAINTENANT QUE, pour divers motifs et de l'intérêt de Nos aimés sujets, Nous avons jugé à-propos, sur l'avis et avec le consentement de Notre Conseil exécutif pour la province du Manitoba, par les présentes de clore la troisième session de la trente-sixième législature de la province du Manitoba le mercredi vingt-six novembre 1997 et de vous convoquer à l'ouverture de la quatrième session de la trente-sixième législature de la province du Manitoba le jeudi vingt-sept novembre 1997, à 13 h 30, en Notre Assemblée législative pour la province du Manitoba, en Notre Ville de Winnipeg, pour la reprise des travaux, ce afin de porter votre attention sur l'état et le bien-être de la province du Manitoba et de poser les actes appropriés.

CE À QUOI VOUS NE DEVEZ FAILLIR.

EN FOI DE QUOI Nous avons fait délivrer les présentes Lettres patentes et à icelles avons fait apposer le Grand Sceau de Notre province du Manitoba.

TÉMOIN: W. Yvon Dumont, lieutenant-gouverneur de Notre province du Manitoba.

EN NOTRE PALAIS DU GOUVERNEMENT, en Notre Ville de Winnipeg, dans la province du Manitoba, ce cinquième jour de novembre de l'an de grâce mil neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-sept, dans la quarante-sixième année de Notre Règne.

PAR ORDRE.

Le ministre de la Justice et procureur général,
V. TOEWS.