



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
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DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
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ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
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McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
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McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
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PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
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RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
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STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 2, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mining Reserve Fund

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Y. McCann, K. McCann and T. McCann praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman) to consider transferring the account of the Mining Reserve Fund to a banking service in Lynn Lake, should such a facility meet provincial standards.

The Brandon Area Foundation Incorporation Act

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of the Brandon Area Foundation praying for the passing of an act to amend the Brandon Area Foundation Incorporation Act.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Rail Line Abandonment

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS affordable transportation is a critical component of grain production; and

WHEREAS under the Crow rate benefit, Manitoba was the cheapest place on the Prairies from which to ship grain but became the most expensive following the abolishment of the Crow rate; and

WHEREAS the Canada Transportation Act proclaimed on July 1, 1996, gave railways the ability to discontinue and scrap branch lines without public input; and

WHEREAS several lines were targeted immediately by CN for abandonment; and

WHEREAS CN gave notice on May 6, 1998, that the Erwood Subdivision will be discontinued in 1998; and

WHEREAS the loss of this line would severely impact upon the communities of Bowsman and Birch River as well as surrounding communities; and

WHEREAS in 1997, western grain farmers lost millions of dollars due to backlogs and delays by the major railways; and

WHEREAS as a result the federal government set up the Estey Grain Transportation Review which is scheduled to release a report later this year.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the provincial government go on record requesting CN and CPR to not proceed with any discontinuance of lines until that report has been tabled.

Mining Reserve Fund

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS mining is an annual billion-dollar industry in Manitoba concentrated almost entirely in northern Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba mining industry directly employs more than 4,300 people pumping more than \$240 million in wages alone into the provincial economy; and

WHEREAS part of the mining taxes on operating mines goes into the Mining Reserve Fund; and

WHEREAS the Mining Reserve Fund was set up for the welfare and employment of persons residing in a mining community which may be adversely affected by the total or partial suspension, or the closing down, of mining operations attributable to the depletion of ore deposits; and

WHEREAS the Mining Reserve Fund had more than \$15 million on account as of April 1998, despite withdrawals by the provincial government of more than \$6 million which was put into revenue; and

WHEREAS many mining communities having contributed millions of dollars to the provincial economy for many years are now nearing the end of their known ore resources and as such this fund is extremely important to the future of these communities in northern Manitoba; and

WHEREAS in order for a new banking service to establish a branch at Lynn Lake it has been suggested that they would need a minimum of \$12 million on account.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Energy and Mines to consider transferring the account of the Mining Reserve Fund to a banking service in Lynn Lake should such a facility meet provincial standards.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain

resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

French Language Services

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for French Language Services): Madam Speaker, I have a statement for the House. I am rising in my capacity as Minister responsible for French Language Services.

Madam Speaker, I am not sure if the official opposition has received a copy of the statement, but there were three copies provided in my tabling.

It is my pleasure today to table in this House the review of the provincial judge, Richard Chartier, on the operation of the province's French language services policy. In addition to the formal tabling, I believe we have a copy for every member that has been provided on their desks. Judge Chartier's report is aptly titled Above All, Common Sense. It focuses on making bilingual services more readily accessible in designated areas of the province. We believe the report contains a reasonable set of measures to enhance the implementation of the French language services policy of our province.

The report comprehensively covers the areas that Judge Chartier was asked to examine, and it would be useful to summarize them. First, he was asked to review the government's statement of French language services policy that was tabled in this House on the 6th of November, 1989. He was asked to comment on the text and recommend on updating it, making it more relevant to today's context and clarifying and/or strengthening it, all with a view to ensuring more consistent and effective implementation of services in French.

* (1335)

Like all policies, the FLS policy should be reviewed from time to time to assess vital matters such as its effectiveness and the changes in circumstances and needs. We also asked him to review structures and systems supporting the implementation of the FLS policy and comment on their effectiveness in light of the results of the assessment of the active offer and delivery of services in French. Judge Chartier was asked to make recommendations respecting the existing and/or desirable ways to actively and effectively offer services in French.

The third aspect of the review was to examine the areas where Manitoba's French language population is concentrated to ensure that services are made available to those who wish to use them. In the course of his review, Judge Chartier consulted with members of the French-speaking community and with government staff who were instrumental in administering the FLS policy. This government agrees with Judge Chartier that we can better meet the objectives of our FLS policy by making sure that our services in French are actively offered in those regions where our Francophone population is concentrated. In addition, his recommendation that community service centres be established to serve as outlets for government services in designated Francophone areas is an idea that clearly merits serious consideration.

Madam Speaker, we are moving at once into the implementation stage respecting this report. We have set up an implementation strategy team, composed of the Clerk of the Executive Council and several deputy ministers and supported by the government's senior adviser on French language services and have asked them to report to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and myself as Minister responsible for French Language Services on practical methods of acting on the recommendations.

We have also written to the heads of a number of provincial Franco-Manitoban organizations to invite them to submit opinions and comments on the report.

We hope and expect to receive the implementation strategy and to begin implementation this fall. We will act as quickly as possible on Judge Chartier's recommendations.

Madame la présidente, j'aimerais souligner certains points dans la conclusion du rapport de Juge Chartier.

Il écrit qu'il est: "important de chercher à trouver des solutions pratiques, immédiatement applicables et surtout des solutions qui mettent en valeur le bon sens." Comme lui, je suis convaincu que toutes les parties en cause veulent une amélioration de la prestation des services en français, d'une part, pour mettre en valeur le Manitoba, et d'autre part, pour assurer la vitalité et le développement d'une communauté qui a beaucoup donné et qui donnera beaucoup au Manitoba.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, I would like to emphasize some points in the conclusion of Judge Chartier's report. He writes that it is "important to try to find practical solutions that could be applied immediately, above all, solutions that make use of common sense." Like him, I am convinced that all the parties involved want to improve the delivery of French language services, on the one hand, to enhance Manitoba and, on the other, to ensure the vitality and development of a community that has contributed much to Manitoba in the past and will continue to do in future.

[English]

Mr. Praznik: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Merci, Madame la présidente. Je voudrais remercier le ministre pour ce rapport aujourd'hui. Je voudrais dire que nous avons reçu ce rapport il y a 10 minutes et nous voulons avoir l'opportunité d'examiner, d'étudier ce rapport.

Je voudrais dire quelque chose d'abord. Premièrement, je suis heureux que nous avons un processus pour déterminer, pour examiner les systèmes à adopter pour l'amélioration des services en langue française au Manitoba. Je voudrais demander au gouvernement d'adopter un processus avec des dates pour déterminer quand nous allons adopter ces recommandations. Je voudrais, pour le Nouveau parti démocratique, que nous ayons l'opportunité comme tous les gens et toutes les organisations au Manitoba d'étudier et d'évaluer toutes les recommandations dans le rapport.

Je suis heureux que le ministre a dit que le Premier ministre sera responsable de déterminer le processus. Je pense que c'est quelque chose de très important, que

le Premier ministre du Manitoba détermine le futur de la langue française ici au Manitoba.

Je voudrais dire quelque chose d'intéressant aussi, Madame la présidente. Nous avons déterminé que ce rapport a été donné au gouvernement en mai 1998. Le ministre de la Justice a dit que le Juge Chartier n'est pas en situation pour siéger comme juge, mais il a donné son rapport il y a un mois. Il serait intéressant de déterminer quand il a fini son rapport et quand le gouvernement a obtenu son rapport.

Nous aurons l'opportunité d'examiner les recommandations et de déterminer le futur de la langue française au Manitoba, mais pour la plupart, nous allons adopter la position de tous les Manitobains qui veulent améliorer la situation et déterminer un bon futur pour tout le monde au Manitoba qui parle français. Merci, Madame la présidente.

[Translation]

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for this report today. I would like to say that we received this report 10 minutes ago, and we want to have the opportunity to examine it.

I would like to say firstly that I am pleased that we have a process to determine and examine the systems to be adopted for the improvement of French language services in Manitoba. I would like to ask the government to adopt a process with dates to determine when we will adopt these recommendations. For the New Democratic Party, we want to have the opportunity, like all other people and organizations in Manitoba, to examine and assess all the recommendations in the report.

I am pleased that the minister has stated that the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) will be responsible for determining the process. I think that it is very important that the First Minister of Manitoba determine the future of the French language here in Manitoba.

I would like to note something interesting also, Madam Speaker. We have determined that this report was given to the government in May 1998. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) has stated that Judge Chartier is not in a position to sit as a judge, but he

provided his report a month ago. It would be interesting to know when he finished his report and when the government obtained it.

We will have the opportunity to examine the recommendations and determine the future of the French language in Manitoba, but in general, we will adopt the position of all Manitobans who want to improve the situation and to ensure a positive future for all persons in Manitoba who speak French. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1340)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon eighteen Grade 5 students from F.W. Gilbert School under the direction of Ms. Jamie Davison. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik).

We also have fifteen Grades 1 to 9 students from the Ministic School under the direction of Ms. Sherri Perih and Miss Amber Kehler. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson).

Also, we have twelve Grade 9 students from Walter Whyte School under the direction of Mrs. Joan Cooney. This school is also located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Foster Care Hotel Use

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, in 1993 the Premier (Mr. Filmon) stated that, quote, foster parents can be replaced. He was responding to the cuts his government was making to the foster home rates here in Manitoba. His minister then stated that we want to have less children in care. Regrettably, we have more children in care on a per capita basis in Manitoba than anywhere else in Canada, and regrettably, 71,000 child-nights were spent in

hotels and shelters last year at a cost of \$124 a day, eight times greater than the cost of foster homes.

I would like to ask the Premier: have his policies for children failed in that we have had more costs going to hotels and short-term shelters and less resources going into long-term care and foster homes for our kids in Manitoba?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I thank my honourable friend for that question because it does allow me to indicate that we have been working very closely with the Winnipeg agency over the last year. The numbers of children that were in hotel rooms last year were unacceptable. We have been working on a day-to-day basis with the Winnipeg agency to ensure that those numbers are down. I know that today we have less children in hotels, although the number does fluctuate from one day to the next, but there has been a concentrated effort to ensure that children are in alternate placements other than hotels. Madam Speaker, there has been a significant improvement as a result of that initiative.

Caseloads

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Child and Family Services management has said this is not an ideal way to operate. The children need a family environment. Front-line workers have said it has never been this bad. It is chronic. It is a scandal what is happening with aboriginal children in terms of the cuts that were made by this government and by this Premier (Mr. Filmon) on extended families.

They go on to say that the caseloads are twice as high as the expected standards across North America. How can this minister talk about prevention when their workers are so overworked with children in care that they have no time left in Manitoba to do preventative care in our communities, as they should also do in Child and Family Services?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): It is true that we have asked our Child and Family Services system to be all things to all children in the past. Madam Speaker, I am more interested in ensuring that we put the dollars up front so that children will not need the child welfare system in the

future in the significant ways that they have in the past, because I agree that the number of children in care in Manitoba per capita is unacceptable. I am more interested in putting the money up front and ensuring that the community, through community partnerships, is looking to the early intervention programs that will not have need for the child welfare system in the future.

Mr. Doer: This is a heartless government that cut, for 80 percent of the children on welfare, Madam Speaker, their food benefits by 19 to 24 percent. We do not need lectures from the heartless Tories across the way on dealing with children at the earliest stages.

* (1345)

Child Poverty Rate Reduction Strategy

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, their own report goes on to say that the main causes of driving children into care are child poverty and lone parents. The report goes on to say that lone parents have gone up 11 percent under this government in the last three years. It goes on to say that we have the highest child poverty rate in Canada. It goes on to say that there is nothing that this government is doing in terms of the socioeconomic conditions for kids that will change the situation for five years. How can this minister feign interest for kids and this Premier (Mr. Filmon) feign interest for kids in dealing with prevention when their own report says it is five years that will continue in terms of the desperate economic and social conditions leading kids into care?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): The document that my honourable friend is quoting from is part of surveys and studies that were funded by our government, because in fact we believe that we needed to look in a very significant way to how we change the child welfare system and how we deliver services to families and children in a significant way. We have listened to all the research, the Fraser Mustards, and all of those people that have indicated to us that a dollar spent in early intervention and prevention saves us \$7 down the road in taxpayers' expenditures. That is exactly why we have put \$20 million into early intervention to try to prevent adolescent pregnancy, to try to prevent children that are

growing up in dysfunctional families, by ensuring that the supports are there so they will not need the child welfare system.

Winnipeg Child and Family Services Caseloads

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, Winnipeg Child and Family Services says that the average caseload per worker is 38, but Mr. Rob Oberlin, testifying at the inquest into the death of baby Schmidt, had a caseload of 48 deaths. Since this minister will not have a review—[interjection] Forty-eight children on the caseload. Will this minister, since she will not have a review of the workload, investigate and see if there is a correlation between an excessively high number of cases per social worker and child deaths, which seems to be the case that we are finding out at this inquest?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): The same document that honourable friends in the opposition have been quoting from and the document that Prairie Research did, the operational review, are one and the same document. I want to quote a part of that document, Madam Speaker, that says: the result is that measures such as 40 cases per worker have no meaning and cannot be used to justify the need for more resources. It is true that some staff are very burdened; equally others are probably not. The survey of staff revealed that many respondents, over 40 percent of the staff respondents, believe that workloads are unfairly shared.

Madam Speaker, that is exactly the issue that Winnipeg Child and Family Services is trying to address through their strategic planning process.

Mr. Martindale: Will the Minister of Family Services, who must have read the story in the Free Press about the testimony at the inquest wherein the special prosecutor asked Mr. Humniski if he had any recommendations to improve the Child and Family Services procedures and prevent a tragedy—he said something had to be done about the workloads workers face; he said the number of files each worker has prevents them from doing the work they should be doing. Will the minister take this testimony seriously,

and will she do something about it in order to prevent future tragedies?

* (1350)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think the issue that my honourable friend just raised is the same issue that workers raised when the operational review was done, and that is that staff said that some staff are very burdened and equally others probably are not. The survey revealed that staff believe that the workloads are unfairly shared, Madam Speaker, and that is exactly what the Winnipeg agency is trying to get at with its strategic planning process on how to deliver services in a better way to the children and families in Winnipeg.

Children's Services Government Strategy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Can the Minister of Family Services, who says that the system is not working, tell us why? Since she has been the minister of this department for four years, the system that she is responsible for is not working. What is she going to do to ensure that children are protected and that improvements are made and no more cutbacks will happen that will adversely affect children? What is she going to do to accept her own responsibility?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I thank my honourable friend for that question, because again I want to be able to say to Manitobans that the issues today in Child and Family Services are significantly different and much more complex than they were in the past. The statistics that come from the Winnipeg agency indicate that over 60 percent of the children are of aboriginal descent. We need the aboriginal community involved in the solutions. That is exactly why, in our early intervention programs, we have partnered with the aboriginal community, aboriginal youth in a very significant way to try to help find the solutions. I know it is one of the issues that the Winnipeg agency is grappling with. We will make every effort to try to ensure that the solutions that are found for the aboriginal children that are in care have participation from those leaders in the

aboriginal community that can help us find the solutions.

Child and Family Services Rural Manitoba Cutbacks

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, Morden resource centre was eliminated, and a co-ordinator has become a protection worker. A community development position in Portage has been eliminated, and the position has become a protection worker. They are only a couple of examples of eliminated services in rural Manitoba.

Given that the minister was told in the 1993-94 annual report of Central Manitoba Family Services, and I quote: secondary prevention services funded through our operational grants have virtually been eliminated. A reasonable conclusion would be that, unless one funds prevention services, workloads in child protection will continue to increase.

Given that statement, I would like to ask the minister how she can say her government is not responsible for the rising caseloads in rural Manitoba.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I guess when we look right throughout the whole province, we recognize and realize that the issues affecting children and families are much more complex today than they ever have been in the past.

I think that the solutions involve not only government solutions but solutions involving the whole community. That is why we are looking at the early intervention programs and partnering with people and organizations within the community to help to find the solutions. Government does not have all of the answers, and no one expects them to. They expect that kind of partnership and the community working together with government to find the solutions and to find the solutions before children need the services of child welfare. That is exactly what we are doing with early intervention and the \$20 million that we are putting in up front.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, given that today the Manitoba rate of protection workers to population is 1 to 6,000, double that of what it is in the city, caseload

workers are as high as 1 to 40, and given that rural workers have to travel to see their clients, what step is the minister prepared to take to correct this situation within the agencies of rural Manitoba?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The whole process for new initiatives within my department and within government as a whole, through the Children and Youth Secretariat, are initiatives that involve community and involve community in solutions with government to try to ensure that families get off to a healthier start to life, that there is more money put into prevention up front. One dollar in prevention up front saves \$7 later on in services that taxpayers need to pay.

We recognize and realize that all the research—

* (1355)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Family Services, to complete her response.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are looking at wellness of families, rather than having to deal with families after the fact.

I know that my honourable friends across the way would rather see us pour money in after the fact. We choose and we have chosen in this year's budget to put the money up front and prevent the kinds of crises that families are experiencing as a result of not having that support in the initial years of life.

Ms. Wowchuk: Given that, because of cuts to prevention programs, her own report says that workers are closing files sooner in rural Manitoba because they do not have the resources to help and workers are afraid someone is going to get hurt, what is this minister prepared to do to reinstate preventative services in agencies in rural Manitoba?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Again, I repeat, I know my honourable friends across the way want to see us pour more money into Child and Family Services agencies, rather than putting money into the regional—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Rather than seeing the money go through regional health authorities to more public health nurses and more services in people's homes, rather than seeing money go into our child care centres and into people who will work right in the home with children and families, so they will not need the child protection services from the child welfare system.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson is attempting to be recognized.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yes, Madam Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 417 is very clear: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." What the minister has essentially been doing is repeating the same nonanswer five or six or seven times. The specific question was about services to rural Manitobans who are being impacted by the cuts that this government has put in place to children.

I would like to ask you to call the minister to order to answer the very serious question we are asking about kids in rural Manitoba.

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

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the subject under question here today is a very serious matter. The Minister of Family Services is the only one in this House treating it that way. She is attempting to deal with the issues raised by honourable members, and as she does so in a very serious and, might I say, caring way, honourable members opposite continue to heckle from their seats in a very rude manner.

The honourable member is not raising a point of order with respect to the honourable minister's answers. She is dealing with the issues being raised.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, to be

absolutely certain, I will take the matter under advisement to research Hansard and determine the exact context of the question asked.

* (1400)

Minister of Family Services Action Request

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, this Minister of Family Services has really abandoned her ministry, clear in a 62 percent increase in children in care, the highest poverty rates in Canada, cuts to preventative services for expectant parents. Clearly, this minister's practices show that she is the minister not of Family Services but of a few pilot projects.

So I would like to call on this minister today to take charge and responsibility, to become the full Minister of Family Services and not to continue as a pilot projects minister, take a look at the whole and not address a few of the parts.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I would tend to make the observation, as a result of the questions that are being asked, that my honourable friends across the way are taking a very narrow view of providing services after the fact through the child welfare system, where we have taken the position that money up front is going to prevent the need for those child welfare services down the road. There is not any issue in the child welfare system that is not a serious issue, when families are living with dysfunction and children need to be protected and apprehended.

But I believe it is an issue beyond the services that the child welfare system can provide. We need public health involved; we need members of the justice system involved; we need members from the education community involved. What we are trying to do is take an holistic approach, unlike the quick-fix solutions that the opposition might talk about.

Ms. McGifford: Ten years is a long, long time.

Consultation

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I want to ask this minister, who knows that pilot projects are narrow

experimentations which involve a few, when she will relieve the horrific caseloads, reconsider child welfare and consult with her colleagues in Saskatchewan who actually know how to create a child welfare system that works.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I honestly wish that we had a model of a child welfare system across this country that worked, that we could all follow and that we could all learn from, but it is not a reality. We always know-[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, I wish we did not have to have a child welfare system, because I wish that every family was happy and healthy right across the province of Manitoba. But the reality is that we need legislation to protect children. We need services available to those children, but we want to make the attempt-

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Family Services, to complete her response.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. We are making the attempt to try to ensure that families are healthier up front with the significant investment that we are placing in children and families today. God knows, the system has not worked in the past, and we have to make every attempt to try new ways of doing things and try to ensure that the resources that we are putting in place are the resources that are going to help families and children.

Future Policies

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, given a child welfare system that does not work, 10 lost years in child welfare and the snip, snip, snip, cut, cut, cut Tory mentality, I would like to ask this minister how she plans to restore the faith of Manitobans in her ministry.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, \$63 million, an increase of

over 50 percent over the last five years, is not a cut to Winnipeg Child and Family-[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, \$20 million in early intervention up front is not a cut; that is an increase. We will continue to put the resources in where they are needed to try to keep families together and families happy and healthy. I make absolutely no apologies for that.

Relocation of VLT Machines Government Position

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Family Services concluded: by keeping families together and keeping families happy. The thoughts that go through my mind are the government's gambling policy and the negative social consequence of that particular policy.

My question is for the Minister responsible for Lotteries, and that is: does the government have any intentions of dealing with the whole issue of reallocation of VLTs into more fair areas so that we do not have VLTs in every community scattered throughout the province?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, we had a Lottery Policy Review Committee back in 1996, chaired by Mr. Larry Desjardins, that made a series of recommendations of which we accepted the majority of them. In fact, we went beyond those recommendations, and in the case of VLTs in Manitoba, we reduced them by some 10 percent. At the same time, we indicated that the issue of VLTs would be reviewed every two years in Manitoba, and that review process is currently going to be underway in 1998 by the independent Gaming Commission here in Manitoba.

Slot Machines–VLT Machines

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, following from one of the responses the minister just finished giving, the minister indicated 10 percent reduction in VLTs.

My question to the minister is: does he factor in also slot machines as VLT machines, or are those something completely different, because my understanding is that the slot machine numbers have actually gone up?

* (1410)

**VON Services
Government Action**

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, the 10 percent figure, I believe, relates to all machines, which are both VLT and slot machines, but they were taken totally out of the VLT stream which are the ones that are in facilities like lounges, licensed lounges and so on. But, again, I do not believe the member is correct when he refers to a current increase in slot machines. I believe the levels of slot machines are the same as they have been for many years, the same as they were at the time of the study done by the independent Lottery Policy Review Committee chaired by Mr. Desjardins.

**Relocation of VLT Machines
Government Position**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I will have to confirm that. My follow-up supplementary question to the minister is—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please put his question now.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes. Will the Minister responsible for Lotteries make a commitment as to what this government's position is with respect to the whole issue of reallocation of VLTs, not with the Gaming Commission? Does this government support the recommendation or the belief that we need to start reallocating, relocating VLT machines in the province?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, first of all, the issue of reviewing the VLT issue every two years was something that was announced on the heels of receipt of the Larry Desjardins Lottery Policy Review Committee. So we did indicate then that that review would take place every two years in Manitoba. I believe it is a responsible thing to do.

If the member is referring to moving VLTs within the current maximum allocation, there currently is no plan to do that that I am aware of, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, if anything was learned from the Holiday Haven tragedy, it was that the Department of Health ought to take investigations of concerns, when raised, seriously and in some cases not accept the view of management in terms of the problems that are occurring. I continue to get complaints by patients and others about problems with the VON nursing service, not with the staff but with missed calls, with double calls and with serious problems being experienced by clients out there.

I am asking the Minister of Health if he is prepared to send in a team from the Department of Health to examine the management and operations of VON.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, first of all, the issue that the member has raised with me, from all reports that I have we are certainly aware of that difficulty, and he brings information that I have confirmed from other sources.

As the delivery of home care is within the jurisdiction now of the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority, we have indicated very clearly to the CEO of that authority that they should be doing what they need to do to ensure that patients receive the care that is required, and if that involves sending in a team to work with the VON, if that involves gearing up their own staff to take more of the role that the VON is playing today, then so be it. They have the authority to do that to ensure patient care is properly delivered.

Long Term Care Authority

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, the minister has indicated that he has given the authority to the Long Term Care Authority to carry out some activities. Can the minister indicate whether or not, as the issue is of a serious nature, this authority that he has given to the Long Term Care Authority, in fact, will be taken out and a team will be sent in to VON, not just to examine patient care, but I might add that VON for the past two months has not paid, until Friday, the Blue Cross of all their employees, and many employees

actually tried to claim the benefits and were not able to because of the chaos at VON management. Is he now authorizing his staff to move in there?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the Victorian Order of Nurses is a private organization. I do not have the legal authority to move in to take over their operation. If they, in fact—well, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) looks somewhat perplexed by that comment, but that is in fact true. I do have the legal authority, where a personal care home or a hospital is at risk, to be able to make that move, but that is not the case with a home care provider. So their board of directors would have to allow that to happen. If they do not, then, quite frankly, and if they are not able to deliver service, they are not living up to their contractual obligations, and the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority is certainly then free to find alternative ways of delivering that service.

The member's assessment of the problem, I think, has been fairly accurate. I think as he, I would hope, would appreciate, we do not just have the legal authority to take over that organization unless it is a voluntary secession of management authority.

Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): In addition, Madam Speaker, is the minister prepared today to write to MARN, the professional body of the nurses, either jointly or singly by the minister asking them to move in, to look at the nursing situation in order to protect the situation of nurses who find themselves in some cases in an untenable situation?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): The concern, particularly with respect to missed appointments, has been the key concern of the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority. Certainly, if there are professional standards issues involved, MARN has a role to play. Again, it is a private organization with a private board of directors, but I think very clearly from the question the member asked me a few days ago, I think the signal we have sent through this Legislature and through the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority is we expect organizations like the VON, who have a contract to provide services, to deliver those services. If they are unable to do so at an adequate level, then the

authority responsible has to make other arrangements. That is the power that the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority has and I expect will carry out.

Linnet Graphics Forgiven Loan

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, we have learned in the last two days from spokespeople in the industry that Linnet Graphics was indeed sold for a song, in their view.

Madam Speaker, given that Linnet had a loan of \$200,000 from this government which was apparently forgiven, it had never paid interest on the loan, it did not meet any of the job creation targets—and I will table the job creation targets that the company had proposed. Of some 360 jobs it was proposing, it had 60 at the end of its ownership in the public sector, and that is fewer jobs than it had two years ago.

Madam Speaker, why was this company forgiven a \$200,000 loan? Was that part of the deal with the Finance minister's brother-in-law?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to put clearly on the record that the negotiations that started with Linnet Graphics started far prior to this government getting into office. It was the previous administration that had started negotiations. The New Democratic administration, prior to our being elected in 1988, was when the initial agreement started to be developed.

To deal specifically with the question as it relates to the company and the jobs, today there are some 60-plus people working in the province of Manitoba that were not working prior to the arrangements that were made and the establishment of this company in the province of Manitoba. It has been sold. It has been sold for a profit for the people of Manitoba, of which the \$200,000 was taken, or when you calculate it, we still made \$234,000 for the people of Manitoba after the loan was in fact deducted from the amount that was received.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the minister, who knows that the agreement was signed in 1989, that the

draft agreement had only been entered into a year before and not years before, will he tell the House why he has forgiven a loan to this company when the company did not meet the job creation targets, did not ever pay any interest on its loan? Now we have forgiven a loan and reduced our stake in the company to far below the market value. Why did we forgive this loan? It did not meet the targets. Is that the way you do business?

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, just to correct the record, discussions had started prior to 1988 with Linnet Graphics as it related to making a deal to make sure the company was in fact carrying out business in the province of Manitoba.

The former New Democratic Party had in fact started discussions with the company before this government was in fact elected in 1988. The decision was made that the company is providing 60-plus jobs in the province of Manitoba. It is creating activities here that would not have been in the province of Manitoba. They have to maintain their office here for five years, and we believe that the deal that was negotiated is a good one on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, the minister has not answered the question. The question is: why did the minister forgive a loan, the conditions of which were never met by the company, the job creation targets were never even approached by the company, no interest was paid, and yet at the end of the day, we forgive a \$200,000 loan, and according to industry sources, sell the company for a song? He has not answered why the government did this.

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, the member is well aware of the fact that the province had certain programs where in fact there were forgivable loans for providing certain benefits to the province of Manitoba. The decision was made by the government that the benefits that the province received by having a company here with some 60-plus employees-[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, if the member wants to keep talking, it is difficult to answer the questions.

We got far more benefit out of Linnet Graphics than we did out of ManOil, that lost \$16 million from the people of Manitoba, and MTX, that lost \$29 million in Saudi Arabia. I will put our deal against theirs any time.

**Airports—Northern Manitoba
City of Thompson**

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

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Actually, Madam Speaker, I have a question. But if you want, I could raise a point of order on the last answer. I just thought it spoke for itself.

Madam Speaker: I apologize. I just assumed the honourable member for Thompson was up on a point of order.

* (1420)

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, airport access is critical in northern communities, and nowhere is that more true than in Thompson. Right now we are in a position where negotiations have broken off between the City of Thompson and the federal government related to the future of the airport, and the mayor of Thompson has made it very clear that essentially the federal government is refusing to negotiate and is trying to force the City of Thompson to take over the airport in a very untenable situation. The City of Thompson is asking the provincial government to get involved. I would like to join that call, and I would like to ask the Minister of Highways and Transportation: will he get directly involved in putting pressure on the federal government to be reasonable and come up with an agreement which will not result in the closure of the Thompson airport as soon as the year 2000?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, the federal government made decisions without consultation with the provinces or affected communities to institute the national airports policy which in Manitoba involved, I believe it was seven different airports that they wanted to devolve to local communities. They have actually achieved that with every airport except Thompson, and

there are some ongoing issues under discussion. Hopefully, discussions can be maintained between Thompson and the federal government to reach a conclusion that is good for the Thompson airport and the region of Thompson.

Mr. Ashton: Well, Madam Speaker, will the minister take action now, given the fact that negotiations have broken off and the City of Thompson has made it very clear there are no real negotiations going on, only ultimatums being forwarded to the city? Will the minister speak out by speaking directly to the federal government and urging them to be reasonable and come out with an agreement that suits the needs of the city of Thompson?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, as with all airports involved in this devolution process, we will assist where and when possible, but we will not accept, as a province, federal responsibilities. Clearly, there is an issue with regard to ongoing capital maintenance of an airstrip that is federal responsibility which they should not be allowed out of, and we will support that particular principle.

Airports—Northern Manitoba City of Thompson

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My final question is to the Premier, who has been saying do something. I am doing something; I am raising it. I would like to ask the Premier: will he do something? I realize he has not been close to Thompson for the last little while, certainly close to the airport, but will he raise the issue with the federal government? I am raising this, not criticizing the provincial government. I am pointing the finger where it belongs at the federal government, but I am asking the Premier and the provincial government to get involved and support the city of Thompson.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Obviously the minister has explained carefully, I think, to the member for Thompson where the jurisdiction lies. The jurisdiction lies with the federal government who has unilaterally decided to offload the responsibility to the local municipal jurisdiction, and he is pointing out that, as the member for Thompson, the member for Thompson

should be appealing directly to the federal Minister of Transport. That is where the jurisdiction lies. We would just like him to understand that so he can better serve the needs of his people by understanding where the jurisdiction lies.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

On May 7, 1998, during Question Period I took under advisement, in order to peruse Hansard, a point of order raised by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

In his point of order, the honourable member asked that I review Hansard as to exactly what words the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) had used. Hansard shows that the member for St. Johns said: "When was he"—referencing the Minister of Justice—"telling the truth, Madam Speaker? To the reporter yesterday or in the House now or are they both lies, are they both ruses, I ask the minister."

At the time I asked the honourable member for St. Johns to withdraw the word "lies." The member for Transcona argued that the word "lies" was used in reference to statements and was not used in reference to any member of this Legislative Assembly.

The honourable member for Transcona did not have a point of order. The honourable member for St. Johns clearly referenced the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) as not telling the truth and described comments made by the minister as "lies."

To return to the original matter, on May 7, I asked the honourable member for St. Johns to withdraw the word "lies," and I am now requesting that he do so.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Well, I notice the minister never answered the question, but I withdraw.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable member for St. Johns.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba Telecom Services

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, members opposite continue to live in the past with outdated policies and unworkable concepts. The latest to come from across the way is a plan to bring Manitoba Telecom Services back under public ownership. The most noticeable thing missing from this idea is where the \$1.7 billion and the estimated \$500 million for systems upgrading would come from.

While not a party shy on creating new taxes and raising existing taxes, as they did from '82 to '87, most Manitobans shudder at the idea of another NDP term in office. Let none of us forget that during the period between April of 1986 to March of 1988, the five Crown corporations under the NDP lost a grand total of \$317 million. As well, in just six years, the NDP government tripled the debt accumulated by all governments over the preceding 102 years.

The new global economy has changed the business landscape throughout Canada. There is no going back, as the NDP would have us do. One needs only to review the Thompson Citizen to get a good idea of what Manitobans think of NDP policies. The Citizen wrote: the NDP seem to be stuck in the policy area where they were 20 years ago.

The nationalization of MTS, along with their proposed 32-hour workweek, only confirms that the NDP—according to the Winnipeg Free Press—believes government's sole purpose is to spend more on everything and stick someone else with the bill. That someone else, Madam Speaker, unfortunately, was the people of Manitoba. Thank you.

Child and Family Services Policies

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, the crisis in care of children at risk created by policies of the provincial government has been well documented. In the past six years, the cost of keeping these children in hotels and shelters has increased by more than \$10 million. Last year, the province paid for children to stay in hotels and shelters for more than 71,000 child nights. This is an extremely expensive

and unproductive way to deal with these children, but it has become a major policy decision of this government.

The province eliminated funding for the Foster Parents' Association more than five years ago. It cut funding of foster parents and then wonders why there is a shortage of foster parents. Over the past seven years, the number of permanent wards of Child and Family Services has risen by nearly 50 percent to more than 1,100. Aboriginal children are the main victims of this government's policies. As much as 60 percent of the children in Child and Family Services care are aboriginal, more than twice the percentage than when this government took office.

The services and standards of care are suffering, thanks to a government that simply does not care and is quite prepared to ignore the problems it creates. Instead of any commitment to deal with the huge increase in caseloads, shortages of foster parents, the lack of supervision or accountability, the government is content to announce a series of small pilot programs. After 10 years, it is time for more than temporary pilot programs and to listen to the children who are at risk who are calling on this government to please do something. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1430)

Fred James Ross

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, this past weekend, Stonewall resident, Fred Ross, received the prestigious Governor General's Caring Canadian Award for his long-standing service to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The award was presented Saturday evening at the RCMP Veterans' Association annual meeting, attended by several hundred retired and active RCMP officers from across Canada.

Fred Ross has a long history with the RCMP, and he is a deserving recipient of the award. The honour, which ranks just below the Order of Canada, is given to people and groups whose volunteer efforts provide extraordinary help or care to the community.

Throughout the years, Mr. Ross had demonstrated considerable dedication to the RCMP members and their families. His efforts have included helping

members who are ill and providing help to families of deceased RCMP veterans. He has also worked extensively with RCMP members on pension and insurance matters. As well, Ross has long been an organizer of a golf tournament used to raise money for the Slain Peace Officers Fund. His colleagues say the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award is long overdue and well deserved.

Once again, I would like to congratulate retired RCMP officer Fred Ross for his outstanding devotion to his fellow officers. All have been well served by his efforts. Thank you.

Philippine Independence—100 Year Anniversary

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, this coming June 12 will mark the 100th year of the proclamation of Philippine independence from being a colony of the Spanish empire. To everything, it is said, there is a season. There was a season for slavery and oppression which lasted for 300 years. Now it is the season for freedom and independence which now marks this hundredth year. Therefore, it is proper that this Friday, June 5, 1998, starting at 6 p.m. there will be a cultural presentation at the Sisler High School at 1360 Redwood Avenue to start this commemoration. On Sunday, June 7, 1998, at 8:30 in the morning, at the City Hall quadrangle at 510 Main Street, there will be an opening flag ceremony attended by many different organizational groups. At approximately 11:30 a.m. there will be a picnic at Kildonan Park lasting until early evening.

On Tuesday, June 9 at 6 p.m., again at Sisler High School, there will be a trivia contest for high school students sponsored by the Manitoba Filipino Writers' Guild. On Thursday, June 11, starting at 6 p.m. again, there will be an oratorical contest on Rizalism: The Foundation of the Filipino Spirit at the Prairie Exchange Theatre, on the third floor of Portage Place Complex. On Saturday, June 13, 1998, 6 p.m., there will be a Philippine independence ball at the Winnipeg Convention Centre at 375 York Avenue. On Sunday, June 14, 9 a.m., there will be a picnic and games at Assiniboine Park. On Thursday and Friday, June 18-19 from 3 p.m. to midnight, there will be a Philippine village festival at the Red River Exhibition at 3975 Portage Avenue.

Finally, on Saturday, June 20, there will be the birthday celebration at Casa Bueno restaurant at 340 Henry Avenue. Everybody is invited. Thank you.

The Maples Youth Justice Association

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I rise to mention an event that is going to happen in The Maples tonight. It is our sixth annual general meeting of The Maples Youth Justice Association. I am looking forward to this event. Tonight is the first time that our justice committee has held such an event. Usually we have a very informal barbecue, but we are having dinner tonight at Garden City Inn.

I know the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) is coming, along with a number of officials from Community and Youth Corrections to celebrate the work that the 18 members of the youth justice committee have been doing over the past year. The work that these people have been doing, the countless hours they do, has to be celebrated and commended. The theme of the night tonight—I do not have the exact words, but the idea that I got from an invitation that I got from the YWCA—that a hundred years from now no one will remember what kind of car I drove, no one will remember the size of my bank account, but if I make the difference in one child's life, it will make a difference a hundred years from now. I think, for the 18 people in our youth justice committee, they are trying to make a difference to at least one child's life.

I think the other part that our committee has learned in the past year—a number of us have been victims of crimes ourselves and we take into a lot more consideration than we ever have that as justice committees we are not only responsible to the youth we are working with but the victims too. I am looking forward to tonight, and I hope all members will support the justice committees in their areas. Thank you.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Crisis in Child Welfare

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), that under Rule 31, the ordinary business

of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the record numbers of children in care, the huge workloads for social workers and the overall crisis in child welfare in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Before recognizing the honourable member for Burrows, I would remind all members that under our subrule 31(2) the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other party in the House is allowed not more than five minutes to explain the urgency of debating this matter immediately.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, I believe that my motion is in order because we have been finished the Estimates for Family Services for some time now; I have already used my grievance; we have new information that was just obtained very recently, and although I could write a resolution on this topic, it would not get debated during this session.

I believe that we need an emergency debate because there is a crisis. There is a crisis when children are in hotels and four-bed units. We know from Winnipeg Child and Family Services that this continues to be a serious problem, and these are the most expensive placements at \$124 per day. In the strategic planning document, Winnipeg Child and Family Services says that in 1997-98 there was a huge jump in the use of short-term placements. I believe there is a crisis when the workload for social workers is supposed to be 15 families per worker, according to the American child welfare organization, but the average for Winnipeg Child and Family Services social workers is 38 families per worker. I believe there is a crisis when a worker testifies at the inquest into the death of a baby that he knew the workload was too high because a baby died. I believe there is a crisis when the worker in this case testified that he had 48 cases. Well, who is saying that it is a crisis?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Could I please request those members having private meetings to do so outside the Chamber? I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the honourable member's comments relative to the urgency of the debate.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Who is saying that there is a crisis? Is it just the official

opposition in the Manitoba Legislature? No. Is it just the Children's Advocate who in one of his annual reports said that there is a crisis in child welfare in Manitoba? No. Who else believes there is a crisis? Well, I believe the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) believes there is a crisis because yesterday in Question Period she said, and I quote, "the way that we have been doing business for years and years and years in the area of the child and family services system is not working, despite the fact that we are pouring more money into the system year after year."

So, not only do I believe that there is a crisis in the child welfare system, not only does the Children's Advocate believe there is a crisis in the child welfare system and people testifying at an inquest into the death of a baby, but this Minister of Family Services also believes there is a crisis in the child welfare system because she says that it is not working, and what is she doing about it?

Well, this is an opportunity today for the Speaker to recognize the need for an emergency debate, so that all members in this Chamber and all three parties represented here can articulate their ideas for making improvements to the child welfare system so that children are afforded protection, so that children do not die in the care of child welfare and so that this crisis can be solved, that we can find some practical solutions to these problems. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I think you should allow for an emergency debate to go ahead.

Now the spending by Winnipeg Child and Family Services is estimated in '97-98 to be \$67 million, and the minister responsible for this spending, who approves their total budget, says that the system is not working. Well, what is the government doing about it? Well, this minister, the minister of pilot projects announced tiny little dribbles of money to try and solve this problem, but her pilot projects are not going to solve the crisis in child welfare.

So I would urge you to allow this emergency debate to go ahead so that we can debate it in full this afternoon in the Manitoba Legislature and give the government some good advice, because that is what they desperately need. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, as was pointed out during Question Period, the matter which is the subject of the honourable member's motion this afternoon is an extremely important matter. Honourable members opposite use the word "crisis" to describe virtually every matter they bring before the House. I think they sometimes forget that the real crisis is in the family, where Family Services are required to deal with children in those families. I think honourable members opposite forget that is where the crisis really is. The crisis is not in this Chamber but in those family circumstances.

With that in mind, Madam Speaker, our Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) is extremely dedicated to her work. She is extremely mindful of the responsibilities of herself and her department, and the problem raised by the honourable member is something already acknowledged by the honourable Minister of Family Services. In 1998, we see the incidence of children being lodged in hotel rooms reduced from that which was existing in 1997. The minister would be the first to say that that is still not satisfactory and that there are still issues to be resolved. That is why we have a Department of Family Services. That is why we have a Winnipeg child agency. It is to deal with the crises that occur, unfortunately, in families from time to time, and they need to be there and running.

The challenge has been, the challenge discussed today between the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and the Minister of Family Services with regard to opportunities for debate—we have had the opportunity of the review of the Estimates of the Department of Family Services. We also have the opportunity of concurrence which is coming up. But that aside, honourable members opposite need to be reminded from time to time that every single matter they bring in here they refer to as a crisis, and after a while honourable members opposite themselves will confuse members of the public about what a real crisis is. I remind them again, the real crisis is in the family when these circumstances arise. The honourable Minister of Family Services is working hard with the department and Winnipeg Child and Family Services to address the matters.

The honourable member for Burrows seems to suggest that there is some kind of quick-fix solution to this kind of problem, and, by having a debate this afternoon, the honourable member for Burrows, all by himself and a few of his colleagues, can give the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) the advice she needs to make this crisis pass.

Madam Speaker, the honourable members are clearly wrong. They display a total lack of understanding about what Family Services is all about. I am reminded very much of their own pitiable record when they were in government, and there has been significant improvement in the support from the government of Manitoba to these matters in the days and years since. But by the definition of what amounts to a requirement for an emergency debate, I regret to suggest that the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) has not made his case. He has made his case, as the minister has done, that the matters are extremely important and, indeed, of crisis proportions for individual families.

The honourable member also needs to understand and be reminded that the Minister of Family Services, in any event, would not be able to discuss the matters related to individual files. That would be an inappropriate thing for the minister to do, and I suggest other members, too, but other members do not seem to care about that, but our minister has to care about that and be responsible, unlike what we see sometimes from honourable members opposite.

So, with due respect, the honourable member has raised his point, Madam Speaker, but I believe he fails on the points of where he needs to succeed.

Point of Order

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The government House leader says that I do not care about matters of individual cases and confidentiality, and nothing can be further from the truth. We do not want to talk about individual cases or anything that is confidential. We want to talk about what the minister said, that the system is not working. That is the issue today.

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

Mr. McCrae: On the same point of order, I accept what the honourable member says, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: However, the honourable member for Burrows did not have a point of order. It was clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable government House leader has approximately 30 seconds to complete his remarks.

Mr. McCrae: Just to wrap up, I do respect the honourable member for Burrows and his wish not to break the rules. I wish I could say the same thing about all of his colleagues, but unfortunately I cannot always do that.

Madam Speaker, this is indeed a serious matter. The Minister of Family Services is treating it that way. But the matter, as raised by the honourable member, does not fall within the ambit of the rules, and therefore his motion should not be allowed.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I thank all honourable members for their advice on whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Burrows should be debated today.

The notice required under Rule 31.(1) was indeed provided. According to Rule 31 and Beauchesne Citations 389 and 390, there are two tests for a matter of urgent public importance to proceed; one, is the subject matter so pressing that the ordinary opportunities for debate will not allow it to be brought out early enough, and two, has it been shown that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention.

With respect to whether there are other opportunities to debate this matter, I note that the Estimates of the Department of Family Services are concluded. The honourable member for Burrows could, however, use the vehicle of an Opposition Day motion. Further, I am not convinced that the public will suffer if the matter is

not debated this day. Therefore, I am ruling the matter does not meet the criteria set by our rules and practices.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): A point of order, Madam Speaker.

We cannot challenge, according to the rules, your decision. But I would just like to point out that Opposition Day motions require notice. We do not have control over when they are called. That is done between the government House leader and the opposition House leader, and we certainly cannot table an Opposition Day motion and have it dealt with on the same day.

The reason we moved the emergency debate was we felt it should be dealt with today, and I do have some concerns if that particular opportunity is seen as taking away the ability of members to raise emergency debates. If we filed an Opposition Day motion today, we might not see it until next week. So I am not challenging your ruling; we cannot do that, but I do have some concerns about that aspect of the ruling, Madam Speaker.

* (1450)

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

Mr. McCrae: On the same point or order, Madam Speaker. You cannot call a matter a crisis in the same breath that you call it chronic, and that is what the honourable members seem to want—to have it both ways. I do not take issue with what the honourable member for Thompson says. The rules for an Opposition Day are laid out in the rules.

On the other hand, you are right, Madam Speaker, and I do not feel very comfortable reflecting on what you have already said, except that you are right that Opposition Days are available, grievances are still available to honourable members in the New Democratic Party, unless they have all used them.

The honourable members opposite understand the rules that grievances are to be used once. I cannot

recall what the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) grieved about before, but you know, you need to—honourable members understand the rules of this House, and they make sure that they are provided with ample opportunity to discuss the matters that they want to discuss. I did also, in my comments, refer to the fact that concurrence is still available, and that is not too far off.

If other opportunities need to be made available, honourable members maybe can talk with me. But I do not want to discuss in the House my private discussions with the honourable member for Thompson because we, I think, work very co-operatively in getting a lot of the business of the work of the House done and, on matters before us, bringing them to us.

But I do not think the point of order is an appropriate way to deal with a ruling of the House of the Speaker. In the past, those rulings could be challenged and often were, but the rules now say the ruling of the Chair shall not be subject to appeal. I suggest a point of order on the same point falls short of an outright appeal but perhaps ought not to be entertained in view of all of the other opportunities honourable members have.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I appreciate his advice; however, he did not have a point of order

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you be so kind as to call the bills listed for third reading on page 2 of today's Order Paper?

THIRD READINGS

Bill 3—The Elections Finances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): On behalf of the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon), I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Bill 3, The Elections Finances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des campagnes électorales et modifications corrélatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 5—The Agricultural Credit Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, (on behalf of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns)), I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Bill 5, The Agricultural Credit Corporation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société du crédit agricole), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 6—The Animal Liability and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, (on behalf of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns)), I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), that Bill 6, The Animal Liability and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur la responsabilité à l'égard des animaux et modifications corrélatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 7—The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, (on behalf of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe)), seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), that Bill 7, The Public Utilities Board Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Régie des services publics), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 9—The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, (on behalf of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman)),

seconded by the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), that Bill 9, The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines et les minéraux), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 15—The Dutch Elm Disease Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I move, (on behalf of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings)), seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Bill 15, The Dutch Elm Disease Act (Loi sur la graphiose), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, just very briefly, Madam Speaker. We do understand that with Bill 15, The Dutch Elm Disease Act, has been in place for a number of years now and is a major legislative tool in terms of protecting Manitoba's urban ecosystems. These changes, from what we understand, are fairly consistent with The Sustainable Development Act and are fairly supportive of that.

* (1500)

We understand that they address tree purging techniques and wood disposal options and the need to better define tree enforcement procedures, and that responsibility for things such as the certification of things like tree pruning has moved from one department over to another department. There is always a great deal of concern with trees in our urban centres. It seems every year there is a great deal of discussion about Dutch elm disease. They are beautiful trees, and where government can assist in protecting our trees, I think, is a positive thing. Therefore, this particular bill is quite supportive of it. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading of Bill 15, The Dutch Elm Disease Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 17—The Legislative Assembly 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 17, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Again, very briefly, we understand effectively this bill does allow for things such as the Deputy Chairperson of Committee of the Whole. This will also allow the three sittings during the Estimates process. Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that there have been a number of changes that somewhat speed up the Estimates process. There still are some changes that are, in fact, necessary, and I am hopeful that we will see some of those changes. I think of LAMC and our rules, the idea of putting into part of our process, or part of our procedures, the time lines. I was a big fan, for example, of the need to have second readings prior to summer, third readings in the fall time. This way it allowed opportunities for more public consultation which I think would have been a positive thing. I hope it will not be too far in the distant future when we will see positive changes that have been excluded from previous discussions, whether it is provisional rules or a legislative amendment act, because it is definitely going to continue to be somewhat of an issue over the years, I am sure. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading of Bill 17. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Bills 25, 21, 4, 12, 14, 16, 36.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 25—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on second readings, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), Bill 25, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (*Loi modifiant le Code de la route*), standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): I would like to put a few words on the record, Madam Speaker, regarding Bill 25, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

As the minister has pointed out on April 15 last, as he introduced the bill, the amendments contained within the bill are largely of a housekeeping nature. There are four issues with which the bill deals, four basic issues. The first issue is reciprocal exchange of licences.

All other Canadian jurisdictions have either bilateral or unilateral agreements with foreign countries regarding the use of their drivers' licences in Canada or the use of our drivers' licences in other countries. At present, reciprocal arrangements are limited to within Canada and the United States, and I believe there are some limited arrangements with NATO personnel as well. Therefore this amendment which authorizes the minister to enter into agreements with foreign jurisdictions regarding licence exchange is indeed timely. It is timely because at the brink of the 21st Century, we can expect to see many more tourists, many more business people coming to Canada, and vice versa. A lot of our people will be going overseas or into other foreign countries. Although it is true that we can drive in many countries with an international driver's licence, this still requires time and money, and there has to be a way of streamlining this. I believe that this is indeed a way of updating and modernizing, so we are very supportive of this.

As well, I am happy to see that the amendment builds in certain safeguards, namely licence reciprocity will only be considered where there is sufficient proof that the foreign countries licence qualifications are as stringent or more stringent than our own. I know that

Class 5 and 6 licences, the requirements for them vary considerably from country to country.

I happen to know a bit about this, Madam Speaker, because some of my relatives in the Netherlands run driver-training centres or driving schools, and they inevitably talk about how hard it is to get a licence in the Netherlands and how easy it is in Belgium. Now, I do not know if that is true or not. So there are great variations, and we want to make sure for safety's sake that those people granted the right to drive in our country have licences whose requirements exceed our own or are as stringent as our own.

The second amendment, Madam Speaker, deals with repealing the need for fidelity bonds in the trucking industry. Since the trucking industry is now largely deregulated, whether we like it or not, there is little or no need for higher motor carriers to hold fidelity bonds for COD shipments. Other jurisdictions, for example Alberta and Saskatchewan, have also done away with these fidelity bonds. Since truckers from out of the province are not required to carry the bonds, it would place Manitoba truckers at a severe economic disadvantage should they be virtually the only ones forced to carry fidelity bonds. We have also checked with the industry, and they are very supportive of this direction.

Fidelity bonds, therefore, have become redundant. If there is a dispute between the carrier and the shipper, these disputes are normally resolved internally or they could also be resolved by litigation, as has been done in the past. As the minister has pointed out, there have been only three cases in the past 15 years where fidelity bonds were actually used.

The third amendment, Madam Speaker, involves altering the release-of-information provision regarding medical information. It is an attempt to make The Highway Traffic Act congruent with the new Personal Health Information Act. Only under limited circumstances can an individual be denied access to his or her personal health information. Prior to this, that is prior to this bill becoming law, a person could only access his or her medical records if the physician who supplied the report gave consent.

With this bill, The Highway Traffic Act fits in with The Personal Health Information Act, and access to medical information can only be denied if it endangers a person or identifies a third party who supplied the information in a context where confidentiality can reasonably be expected.

The last amendment, Madam Speaker, is a repeal of some unproclaimed amendments relating to a revised definition of commercial vehicle and requirements regarding the registration of leased public vehicles. These unproclaimed amendments are redundant because of the vehicle registration rewrite of 1994 as part of the MPIC Autopac 2000 project.

So we are pleased to support this bill, and we look forward to moving it on into committee stage. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 25, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route). Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): On a matter of House Business before we proceed, there will be a number of bills. I understand there is a potential that a number of bills could get passed, and it would be our intention, just so everybody knows, to set a committee for Thursday evening of this week, 7 p.m. [interjection]

Morning? I will come back to you later with this, Madam Speaker. Sorry for the interruption.

Bill 21—The Communities Economic Development Fund Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines, Bill 21, The Communities Economic Development Fund Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la

Loi sur le Fonds de développement économique local), standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: No? Leave has been denied.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I would just like to make a few final comments. We are going to be passing this bill through the committee. It is a relatively minor bill. It gives additional power to the board of the CEDF in terms of its own affairs. I do want to put on the record, this is another example of the kind of vision that the Ed Schreyer government, the NDP government in the 1970s had. Here in 1998, we are still seeing the activity of CEDF putting in place that vision. The vision is of the ability of northern communities to be able to develop economically on a basis of community economic development.

I want to suggest to the government that into the next millennium, what we need is to build on that vision, the NDP vision of the 1970s, and adopt community economic development not only as something that is supplied in the case of the CEDF, not only as something that is supplied in the case of a few programs in rural development but as a keystone, a cornerstone, if you like, of our economic policy in this province.

I would like to point to our neighbours to the west in Saskatchewan. When they brought in their budget, they put community economic development first and foremost on their economic strategy. In fact, their budget document goes to some length talking about the community economic development strategies in that province, and they have had a very great deal of success by working with communities and regional development authorities. I point to what has happened in Saskatoon, for example, which is a world leader in using the agricultural community and the expertise of the university and applying it to world leading products. I put that on the record because I say we should be doing the same kind of thing in this province.

What we need as well is to recognize the role in terms of community economic development of both local governments, which is important, but also in terms of the co-op movement and also many of the community development corporations that we have in place, other organizations such as CUSO, women's organizations. I point to what happened in Ontario where women's organizations were fundamentally involved with the Rae government in terms of community economic development.

* (1510)

I am glad that the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) is listening because I say to the Minister of Rural Development, he should be arguing more within cabinet to get his department and community economic development higher up on the agenda. I want to see the next budget, if they care to bring in another budget before an election, include the same kind of profile for community economic development that we saw in Saskatchewan.

I say to the minister, learn from Saskatchewan, because the NDP in Saskatchewan has built co-operation with the co-op movement, and it has a strong strategy. I say to the Minister of Rural Development, he should save his breath for his cabinet colleagues, because they are not giving enough focus to community economic development in this province. I want to see the next budget document spend as much time in a high profile way as did the Saskatchewan document. I say that in a constructive way, because I can reference numerous things that can be done in this province.

I look at northern Manitoba. For example, there is a lot more that we can be doing in the area of marketing our products. I will give the minister a quick example, and I have raised this with CEDF. We have many aboriginal communities where people produce handicrafts, a major ability to do that, and I say to the minister, what we need to have in place is more assistance to communities on the marketing end and to development of co-ops.

I point to the minister, and I do not blame the minister for this, but this government, one of the first things they did was to get rid of the initiative brought in by Jay Cowan, the Minister of Co-op Development, a

very significant initiative in the Co-op Development department. They basically have ignored co-op development, and there is a great opportunity in northern aboriginal communities on the co-op side, I say to the minister, because he is aware of this. There have been many criticisms of things such as the REDI program, which has had very limited success in northern Manitoba. It has done far better in southern Manitoba.

But, you know, there is a tale of two provinces. You could cut a line from Highway 1, you may go a little bit higher in some areas, but in northern areas of this province, including the Parklands and the Interlake, you still have persistently high rates of unemployment. You still have many communities which are very much looking for diversification. My own community of Thompson, for example, is going through tough times because of the economic circumstances, the mining industry and other areas.

But, you know, in northern Manitoba we have more than 20 percent unemployment right now officially, and that does not include a lot of people in aboriginal communities. I say to the minister, northern Manitoba in particular has been left out, left out, well, economically it has been left out of the kind of circumstances, and I look at what is happening, say, in Morden-Winkler and some of the areas around there, many of the communities in southern Manitoba.

I will go by the words of members opposite. There may be even labour shortages in some parts of the province. I know that is the case, and it is not the same as in southern Manitoba. We do not have a labour shortage in northern Manitoba. When I say we are being left out, I am saying economically.

There is a real problem, and you have a tale of two economies in this province, outside of the city of Winnipeg. You have basically south of Highway 1, there have been some difficulties in the flood areas, and I acknowledge that, but if you look at what has been going on in Morden-Winkler, there are labour shortages in many cases. In northern Manitoba we have an excess of people looking for work. We do not have the kind of megaprojects we have had, such as Limestone, in place. Mining is downsizing in Thompson. We have

had the first direct layoffs really in Thompson history, direct layoffs, oh, and it is related to the price.

You see, I am saying to the minister, I am not blaming the government for the price of nickel. What I am saying is that northern communities are that much more anxious right now about diversification, and, well, the minister says they are helping northern communities. I am saying to the minister, you have got to help more. You have got to do more, and I give you specific examples.

I always believe, by the way, in not just criticizing, and there is enough to criticize with this government. I mean, I could spend my entire time in this speech criticizing the government but, at the beginning, and I think the minister may have missed this, I said that CEDF is a good example. It started with a vision in the 1970s with Ed Schreyer. It has been continued by various governments. The current Minister of Industry, Trade and technology nearly destroyed it in 1989, but, you know, it survived that. It is doing well. It has got a good board, and I say that, you know, the board, they are obviously appointed by the government. I know their politics, but I say it on an individual basis, and I have said that, that they are a good group of people and the boards of CEDF have done well under various different governments.

I have a lot of respect for people who have been involved in the past, the NDP, Nestor Dolinsky, by the way, who is just recovering from a health difficulty, but he was involved in the 1980s on the board from Flin Flon. There are a lot of people who have been involved over the years. The current board, I give them a lot of credit.

I say that because, you know, my belief is that as northerners, one thing where we have an advantage, we fight during elections but we sure can work together in between elections. That is what the CEDF is based on. [interjection] The minister is talking about the one-stop shop, which is not quite a one-stop shop anymore actually. The Women's Enterprise Centre has moved out of the building, but I say to the minister, it was a positive move. It was a positive move with CEDF when it was moved to Thompson. That was about the one real advantage of decentralization in 1990, the movement of the CEDF office to Thompson.

I appreciate the minister does not often get the opportunity to sit in on CEDF hearings, but I have said this in the past. One time I actually put out a press release praising the CEDF for having a good year, but it was not published by the local paper, because they felt it looked too much like a positive PR thing for the government. I believe when things work, you give credit where credit is due. CEDF works. CEDF, if anything, can be expanded in the future. That is what I am giving this speech on the basis of.

You know, I think sometimes members opposite—I still remember a few years ago when the Minister of Education wanted to vote against something because I proposed an amendment in committee, and the Minister of Labour accepted it. It was the sort of thing that if I proposed it, she had to be against it. It was kind of a knee-jerk reaction.

I say to the ministers opposite, we have difficult economic circumstances, but all I am suggesting is that the model that could be followed is CEDF; the kind of model of economic development that could be followed is community economic development. There is a lot more that could be done. I can make specific suggestions anytime, anywhere to the minister, to anyone in this government about economic development.

It is something I have a great deal of personal involvement with. My background is in economics. I have taught community economic development for the University of Manitoba through IUN. I have been involved in the community. I have been pushing this for many years now. I believe in fact that the Department of Co-op Development should be in fact reinstated in the form of a community economic development department. I believe there should be some restructuring to bring in the programs and put them in the appropriate forum.

I can give the minister lots of suggestions, because the end result is that we cannot ignore the economic circumstances of the northern areas and many remote rural areas in this province. I say anywhere you go, the further north you get from Highway 1, the more you run into economic difficulties, higher rates of unemployment. Even, for example, in the Parkland Region, I know that the member will point to the need for greater

economic diversity in the community of Dauphin and surrounding communities.

It is clear, that is part of the challenge. The same thing in Swan River. The same thing at Interlake. I would suggest very much in, well, Churchill, you know, we have difficult circumstances in Churchill with the rocket range not proceeding right now.

The bottom line, and I want to put this on the record because I believe that community economic development is very much the way for the future role of northern Manitoba, I mean on the kind of level we see in the province of Saskatchewan. I do not take away from anything that has been done by the government. I have said this in the past, I will give credit where credit is due on specific programs. When it comes to programs like REDI, which have not been applicable in northern Manitoba to the extent they should, the minister knows this is an ongoing concern of northern municipal leaders. I will give him suggestions on that too.

The reality is that we have to understand that in southern Manitoba, you have small manufacturing that is doing quite well. In northern Manitoba, we have not had the experience with that. We have difficulty in access to markets. For example, the member for Portage (Mr. Faurschou) represents the fourth largest city, community in the province. I represent the third, a very similar population, very different economies. There are a lot of things that could be done in Portage that you just cannot do in Thompson. So we have to look for different ways of supporting communities and working with them.

I believe, by the way, that you can make a difference, particularly in providing expertise. I want to suggest on the record too, more can be done in terms of tourism, particularly in terms of ecotourism in northern Manitoba. We are not even doing what the province of Quebec is doing.

I can tell you, I came down from Thompson on Monday. There were people from Germany who have come all the way from Germany to see our ecosystems, whether it be in Churchill, which is the major draw, but there are more and more people understanding that there is opportunity to not only go to Churchill but to

access tourism opportunities through Thompson, through Flin Flon, which has a long-developed tourist potential. I say that has got to be built into our system.

We have a government at times that tends to forget that in terms of forestry policies, for example, in regards to Tolko. Concerns have been expressed there. I think they should be directly involved in making sure that there is proper harvesting of our forest resources. It does not hurt the environment and does not hurt other tourist potential, ecotourism being a classic example.

* (1520)

I raised this concern with Tolko recently, for example, on the bay line to Thompson. Local residents complain that logging is taking place right up to the rail line itself. While that may be within the cutting rights of the company, I am suggesting, and I have suggested to them in writing, that I think it would be advantageous to keep the kind of wilderness people want to see when they come on the trains, when they come up for reasons of tourism, to keep it visible and not to have logging, clear cutting of any sort take place up to a rail line, any more than you would on a road. You do not have that happen in roads. There are buffer zones that are built in. There are supposed to be buffer zones that occur as well. I say that those are positive examples.

We have got to start building that into our economic strategies. Tourism is one of the growth industries in the world. I say we are falling behind particularly in marketing ecotourism, aboriginal tourism as well. There is a lot of opportunity to take people on the trap lines. There are a lot of people who could get a lot of value added from that. We are missing the boat I think in terms of aboriginal handicrafts. We are not working as a government, providing marketing expertise.

I can tell you, the funding is often there. There are three or four lending agencies now, loan circles. The bottom line in a lot of cases: we do not have the kind of marketing and professional expertise in place to assist communities to chart their own course. I believe, Madam Speaker, there is no excuse that we have continuing high rates of unemployment in northern Manitoba. I believe that we can plot a strategy now. It will take a long time. But I look at it this way, and I

want to put this on the record: I want to suggest that we adopt a policy in this province and we call it the aboriginal advantage. We have an economy which is increasingly faced with a challenge and that is a significant number of seniors, the growing age of our population, and the relative increase of our senior population as relative to our working population.

But, if you look at demographics, the growth population in this province, particularly if you look at the age, is aboriginal people. I believe if we worked in partnership with First Nations communities and Northern Affairs communities, if we put in place the kind of innovative education and training initiatives that were put in place in the 1970s by the Schreyer NDP government, the 1980s by the Pawley NDP government, I believe if we can train and educate that workforce and develop more opportunities in the community through community economic development, through economic development such as ecotourism, through other initiatives such as marketing the traditional handicrafts and traditional customs of aboriginal people, I believe we can be in a position of having a great advantage from that.

I believe aboriginal young people in many cases should be treated by this government, in their declining years here as a government, over their short period of time that they have left, as an advantage for this province. I talk to a lot of aboriginal people and my message as a northern MLA, who is proud to work with First Nations people, is it is time for governments to stop seeing aboriginal issues strictly in terms of problems. Yes, there are social problems; there are issues related to such matters as residential schools and other issues that have to be dealt with. But I say we should be dealing with aboriginal young people as the hope for the future of this province. If we can provide training and we can provide job opportunities for the aboriginal youth of this province, particularly in northern Manitoba, I say the sky is the limit in terms of economic development, and we going into the next millennium, I believe, become leaders in this country using our diverse population. I think also the fact we are relatively a small province.

I talked with representatives of the third largest city. We are still only 15,000 in terms of population. We can work together. Community economic development

applies much more here than it would say in a large province such as Ontario, because we do know our communities. We are all neighbours in this province. We can work together. I say that, because at times I think the government has a shotgun approach to economic development. They do not understand that basis. They certainly do not understand it in the North. They have not worked co-operatively with northern communities. The Cross Lake situation most recently was a good example of that. We have a Premier (Mr. Filmon) that is very rarely seen in northern Manitoba. When I mentioned the Thompson airport in Question Period earlier, I know that he has on occasion been to Thompson. He certainly has not driven, but I do not expect that. He has not even been to that airport recently, so I understand why he is not all that concerned about the situation at the airport. I think that if there was no airport anywhere in northern Manitoba, this Premier would not notice the difference. But, if they closed it in Davos, Switzerland, he might have a real problem then. Or Geneva.

I must say I feel better, I sleep better at nights knowing that the Minister responsible for I, T and T (Mr. Downey) is off for another trip for one week in Geneva defending our interests. I am sure he defended our interests really well in Geneva, Madam Speaker, but I am only saying this because we—if there is a bit of a cynical edge here, it is because northerners, well, after 10 years of this government we are getting more than a little bit cynical.

But, you know, I do not want to dwell on the fact that northern Manitoba has very little faith in this government right now, because even so long as they are in government for one more day, I want them to be doing something for northern Manitoba. I look forward to the day—and I say this in all truthfulness. I believe there is a very good possibility in the next period of time that the government will finally have the courage to call an election. I tell you, the people of northern Manitoba and many people throughout rural Manitoba and many areas that this government has taken for granted for a long, long time cannot wait for the opportunity to get a change in government.

I loved the member's statement earlier, Madam Speaker. We were talking about rural policy. The member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) talked about

MTS, when he voted against 78 percent of his constituents. You know, I look forward to the NDP candidate in La Verendrye in the next election asking that member where the heck he was in 1996, which way he voted when his constituents said not to sell MTS.

This government has taken rural and northern Manitoba for granted now for a decade. I say to them enjoy it while it lasts. Count every day you have left in government as a blessing, because as soon as the people get the opportunity in an election, you better watch out and you better never, ever take for granted places in rural Manitoba where you have ruled, the so-called yellow dog country. There are a lot of voters in constituencies who have always supported the Conservatives who are now saying the Conservatives have not supported us. You better watch out, because there will not be anywhere near the kind of safe seats that you have taken for granted in the past. You better watch out because the people of rural and northern Manitoba are waiting for the opportunity. Call that election and you will find out.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 21 before it goes to committee. I recognize that it, in essence, assists in facilitating the Communities Economic Development Fund. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who is obviously fairly knowledgeable about this particular fund, spoke quite well in terms of the benefits of economic development. Government does have a role to play. Given that these are not necessarily what I would classify as controversial amendments—they are quite supportive—we would not have any problem in terms of seeing it go to committee.

But before I sit down, I just wanted to add a little bit to what the member for Thompson said. I can recall—and I am not too sure if it was through REDI or one of the rural economic development groups—when I was going through, I believe it was, an annual report, and in the annual report it made reference to lobsters in the province of Manitoba, where in Manitoba we would be raising lobsters for the local market. There are, no

doubt, many different ideas that are out there, and government does have a role to facilitate where it can in many different ways, whether it is the rural Grow Bonds or HydroBonds or the Communities Economic Development Fund, capital type projects, that these types of things are necessary because it does assist in facilitating and diversifying, if you like, the local communities.

One of the reasons why I would ultimately argue that Manitoba and particularly the city of Winnipeg does relatively well during the highs and lows of a business cycle is because, relatively speaking, for our population, we are fairly well diversified. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) talked about nickel prices and the benefits of having a diversified economy, that if, in fact, you have fluctuations in the prices of nickel, you are going to have individuals being hired sometimes in the business cycle; other times, they are going to be laid off.

* (1530)

It is nice to be able to have other sectors in which there is employment so there is more of a sense of security, so people can weather the storm, if you like, when it comes time for some form of layoff in one area.

Madam Speaker, we see that in many rural communities, in particular up North where there might be a mine closure or something of that nature, the impact is most dramatic. That is why when we look at initiatives such as the Communities Economic Development Fund that has been around for many years now, we have to recognize not only the short-term benefits but the long-term benefits. With those few words, we would like to see it go to committee. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading Bill 21, The Communities Economic Development Fund Amendment Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed. Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 4—The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), Bill 4, 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), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona? [agreed] And also standing in the name of the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) who has 21 minutes remaining.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): I am not going to use all of the 21 minutes. I just want to say that children are the most helpless element in our society, and therefore the helpless ones needs the concern and love of those who are strong enough to support them.

Of course, we expect parents to be the first ones to come to the aid of their own children. Without the parents, children will have to go through this world without any guide or help. It is only that we should realize that if we neglect our children, we are creating not only problems in our own family but also problems for the entire society as a whole. Therefore I would like to speak about the virtues of a good mother.

A good mother is one who can give comfort and stability and confidence and trust to their own children. To a child, a good mother means food. It means their bed, their warmth, their shelter. Children want to be near the mother whenever they can. If we take away children from their own natural parents, the child will be helpless and they will feel a lack of confidence and a lack of self-esteem and self-respect for themselves. There is no substitute for the care and love and concern of a mother. She is the ever-enveloping, nourishing, protecting element in the life of a young child.

Of course, when mothers are working because of necessity, economic necessity, they have to hire babysitters who are practically strangers to the child, and the child will have to be more or less dependent on

these strangers. There are substitutes for parents but the substitute will never be as good as the mother herself.

In terms of Bill 4, we created the Office of the Children's Advocate to become an officer of the Legislature. This is good in the sense that it gives autonomy to the occupant of the Office of the Children's Advocate. It means the Children's Advocate can exercise independent discretion and relative independence.

According to the report of the subcommittee, it is this kind of relationship, direct reporting to the Legislative Assembly, that will ensure greater openness and greater accountability on the part of the occupant of the Office of the Children's Advocate. Moreover, it gives that person the opportunity to give constructive critical feedback on how the child welfare system and agencies are operating within the system with a view to improving the system.

We should remember that children are the future citizens of our country. They need all our love, our concern, our care. Just throwing dollars and money on the system cannot make up for the impaired psychological and social ingredients in the psyche when they are growing up when they feel that they are very insecure and there is no love and concern surrounding their environment. Whenever the infants are dying in their cribs, in their beds, whenever the children are hungry and crying, whenever the children cannot adjust and adapt to their environment, we are creating problems not only for ourselves but for the rest of our community. The neglect of children means the increase in delinquency, increase in crimes and violent behaviour among teenagers. Of course, it affects even our justice system. All of these are interconnected, and the more we pay more attention to the care and welfare of our children, putting that as the virtue in the highest order in our system, the less we will have problems in our society. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I have a few comments that I would like to make with respect to Bill 4, The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act, and I will be fairly brief to give other members the opportunity to comment on this bill as well.

This is an important bill, I believe, in that it does make some changes with respect to the Child's Advocate. I can remember discussions that took place in this Chamber and in public with respect to the government's previous legislation for the enactment of the Child's Advocate, and I remember at that time, my colleague our critic for Child and Family Services pointing out very clearly that it was, in our viewpoint, very improper to have the bill at that time and the government indicating that they wanted to have the Child's Advocate report directly to the minister responsible for Child and Family Services instead of to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. We felt that it was important that the Child's Advocate have the opportunity and some latitude or freedom to speak out clearly on the needs of children that were in care and that Advocate could point out, without any fear of interference in any way, the needs of the system, the needs of the children of our province.

By the government bringing forward their earlier legislation forcing the Child's Advocate to report directly to the Minister of Child and Family Services and, indeed, to the government, which was the appointer of the Advocate, it put the Advocate under some difficult circumstances in having to, or being caught in a position where they would have to be answerable directly to their political masters for the individual who was holding the Child's Advocate job.

But this Bill 4 does make some changes to the role that the Child's Advocate does play within our province and allows the Child's Advocate now to report to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, which, we think, is a positive move. It will give us as legislators and as representatives, 57 representatives of our communities throughout the province, the opportunity to hear at first hand the comments of the Child's Advocate and, I hope, will give us the opportunity in future, too, to be able to ask questions of the Child's Advocate should those questions come to mind or we have issues that would be brought forward to us as representatives from our particular constituencies. So we think that would be a positive step.

I listened to the debate that is taking place in this Chamber now for the better part of a week with respect to problems within the Child and Family Services department. In fact, there is a crisis that is occurring

within the department, I believe, from the information that I am seeing and hearing that leads me to conclude that there seems to be a portion of the minister's department at least or the minister herself that may be adrift in dealing with this problem. One only needs to look at the number of children that are in care and are being housed in hotel rooms in our province.

* (1540)

Like many of us in this Assembly, we have workers of the Child and Family Services agencies living within our communities, and we see them at different public functions and events. We have the opportunity no doubt on many occasions to ask them about their jobs, as we should all be interested in what is happening with the Child and Family Services agency itself. I have had the opportunity to talk with workers not only in my community but in other communities about their role and their job and the difficulties and any positive things that they see within their job.

One of the things that has come to my attention over and over is the caseload that these workers have to deal with. It is quite clear that they are quite stressed out as individuals, and that it makes it very difficult for these people themselves as caseworkers to deal with anything other than the fires or the crises that come to their attention on a daily basis.

I know I have had opportunity to call the local Child and Family Services office in the community of Transcona and to talk with the staff there with respect to complaints that I would get from time to time coming to me from my constituents. Of course, I have to respond to those complaints and then find out what we can do to resolve the issue. I always call upon the Child and Family Services workers who are very diligent in responding to my calls and to providing me with the necessary information and support where and when they can, based on restrictions that they have with respect to confidentiality.

They have often indicated to me that they cannot deal with all of the cases immediately, that quite often they get families who are in crisis that they have to deal with immediately, of course, which takes the caseworkers away from doing the visits to the homes where you may have families who are in moderate or high-risk situations, that the caseworkers should be going to

those homes to visit those particular families. It does create problems when the caseworkers themselves have to spend a great deal of their time—and, in fact, I believe even the directors of those particular centres have to spend a great deal of their time—dealing with the crises in their day-to-day operations.

If you look at the number of bed nights that the ministry has to pay for out of their budget, because it does come out of the Child and Family Services budget, I believe the number is some 71,000 bed nights that the department has for children who are in custody, or in apprehended situations that Child and Family Services are responsible for, up to prices as high as \$124 a night for those rooms. I mean, that is an extensive amount of money that you have. In fact, if you extrapolate those numbers out over the basis of the year, that would be nearly a 200-bed hotel filled full time every night of the year.

So you have made an extensive commitment to the hotel industry of our city and our province here by the number of hotel rooms that you have utilized for the care of children. I do not know what rationale you have to have children housed in those situations. I look at the amount of money that is involved in situations like this, and I have to ask myself: are we as our society and our children who are apprehended because of high-risk situations—are they not better served to have those children where and when, hopefully as early as possible, placed into foster home situations to allow them to live in a more normal family setting?

I know they come from difficult situations; otherwise, they would not have been apprehended in the first place. But, one has to think that those children are taken from their school settings—first from their family, and then from their schools settings—and taken back to a hotel room and locked up in a hotel room every evening of the week. Now, I do not know what happens to these children on weekends or if you have holidays, but no doubt these children are in care in those hotel rooms at the same time. So they do not have a semblance of a normal family life that one might expect or would want for those children, considering they already come from distressful situations.

So I would think from my viewpoint and from the viewpoint of my constituents that it would be better to

take those monies that you are now spending on supporting the hotel industry by housing those children in those hotel rooms, and converting that money into the foster care, into foster families, to encourage more foster families to come on stream.

I know in talking with foster families in my constituency—and I can think very clearly of one particular case. The foster family had foster children for a number of years, and they had encountered a number of serious situations, children who came to them from fetal alcohol situations, from physical, mental and sexual abuse in their own families for those children, and then coming into the foster home situation. Those foster families had to deal with the baggage that came with those children, and it was very distressful on the foster family and the foster family's children.

There were problems within the structure in that the children who were apprehended were acting out in many, many ways, and it created much distress. So I take my hat off to those people in our province who are foster parents and foster families because I think they do a great service to the children of this province who have been apprehended by Child and Family Services.

I would think, having talked to this one particular family, that they had to get out of being a foster family. They could no longer cover their cost of operation, and they were taking money out of their own pocket to have children come into their home as a foster home. I would think that the amount of money that the ministry is now spending on housing these children in hotels—it would make more sense to reimburse the families, the foster families, and to encourage more people to become foster families for the children who are in care.

Madam Speaker, with respect to Bill 4, it was my understanding that there was an all-party committee that toured the province and consulted with Manitobans and that this was a process that had not been used for a great period of time other than dealing with the Constitution of our country. We think that this was a positive step and that there was some response by way of Bill 4 now that would allow for hopefully other all-party committees to travel the province, consulting with Manitobans on changes that we should be making to

not only our child welfare system but also, perhaps, to other areas of jurisdiction of government.

Madam Speaker, we have listened to the comments that have been made as a result of the inquest that recently is being held here in the city of Winnipeg with respect to I think it was baby Sophia and the shaken baby syndrome that has occurred, and we are seeing more and more cases of this. If you look at the caseload and the comments that are coming from that particular inquest, I do not know how anyone could conclude anything other than the caseworkers finding themselves at a point where they cannot deal adequately with the crisis situations that they find themselves in and are spending a great deal of their time just putting out the fires or handling the crisis versus visiting the families that are moderate to high risk, as I have indicated earlier.

I have a great deal of sympathy and support for the caseworkers by having talked to them. I know that those caseworkers are very, very dedicated to their particular profession. They want to do what is best for the children and the families, and they would very much like to be able to do that job efficiently in the sense of being able to visit all of the families for which they hold the case files. I know that those caseworkers get calls on evenings and weekends and sometimes on their holidays having to do with crisis situations, and they have to respond. Yes, perhaps they may be compensated in some way, but it does interfere with their personal lives, and I do respect them for a taking a very professional role in dealing with these cases and wanting to be part of the solution.

Madam Speaker, there are problems within the Child and Family Services agency that we have raised here, my colleagues have raised, with respect to the role of the Child and Family Services agency, but we think that if the minister would consent to having some type of a review, an independent review on the problems that are happening within her department with respect to caseloads and the climbing number of child deaths related to shaken baby syndrome, I think that we could come up with some constructive solutions to that particular problem. I know that the caseworkers themselves and the directors of those agencies would like to have the opportunity to have some input into that process as well.

So, Madam Speaker, Bill 4 is somewhat of a positive step in that it does allow the Child Advocate to now report to the Legislative Assembly versus to the minister and government. We think that that is a positive improvement, but there are other steps that can be taken within the Department of Child and Family Services to improve the overall operations of the department. We hope the minister will heed the words of those members of this Assembly and members of her own department working on the front lines on a day-to-day basis because the longer we go, the more at risk we put the children and families by not dealing with that situation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 4, The Child and Family Services 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.

* (1550)

Bill 12—The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), Bill 12, The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation manitobaine de lutte contre les dépendances), standing in the name of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak on The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act. This is a rather short bill that might appear to be minor. However it is my understanding that this gives the government more

power, and that is something that always concerns us. I think the public would be concerned if they knew that this bill was giving the government more power.

The reason is that quite often with increased power goes less accountability. I think that is our main concern, because it is my understanding that this bill allows the government to make grants and not have to be accountable to the public through Orders-in-Council. Quite often, we in the opposition and the media, the only way we find out what the government is doing is through Orders-in-Council.

It is a rather interesting process, because when the Orders-in-Council do not contain anything significant or controversial, we tend to get them right away. When there is something that the government wants to hide, they tend to delay giving us copies of Orders-in-Council. Without this kind of printed information that we would normally get, it could take months or years or the necessity of a Freedom of Information request or perhaps waiting until Estimates to get the kind of information that we as the opposition or any party in opposition needs in order to keep the government accountable.

We know that there are a number of bills on the Order Paper in this session, which do the same thing that allow ministers to change regulations without going through Orders-in-Council, and we are opposed to that in principle. I think, if this government was in opposition, they would probably be opposed as well, but, of course, they are in government, and they do not think about being in opposition. They do not think about accountability. They do not think what the public would think of them having more power and less accountability. However, after the next election, all of this is going to change, and then, of course, the government having been defeated will repent of their ways, and they will be back harping about government accountability.

So I would like to use this opportunity to talk briefly about some of my concerns about gambling, since the bill—[interjection] The government members would like to dredge up some ancient history, but I would remind them that there is a difference between being in solidarity with someone and being opposed to a certain kind of activity.

I would like to use an example. I know that a few years ago, some of the members, I think, particularly a women's group at Charleswood United Church, were raising money to donate to POWER, Prostitutes and Other Women for Equal Rights. Now they certainly did not support the activity, but they supported the organization that provides assistance to people in that trade, the kind of assistance being to get them out of that activity. So, I think, it is possible to express one's support for people in an organization without necessarily supporting the kind of activity that is going on.

I know what the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) is referring to. I think that is a very good analogy. Maybe he would not understand it, but that is my analogy. I guess the minister does not agree with it. In doing research to speak on this bill, I came across a brief that was sent to the Manitoba Lottery Policy Review Committee in June 1995 by the Winnipeg Presbytery United Church, of which I am a member, and they talk about a Christian perspective on gambling. They point out that gambling is basically based on greed.

Certainly that would be one of my major objections as well to gambling. They point out that there follow harmful social consequences related to the breakdown and destruction of individuals, families, and communities. Certainly I have seen that in my constituency of Burrows where many people are low income, but, nonetheless, some of them use opportunities to gamble.

I remember a few years ago talking to the former owner of a restaurant, Grandpa's restaurant, and he was telling me that he had children hanging around in his restaurant at suppertime. They did not have any money to buy anything off the menu, and he would ask them if their mothers were home, and why were they not at home? They would say, no, their mothers were not home. Where were they? Well, they were at McPhillips Street Station, which is quite close nearby. He would ask them: did they have any food at home? They would say, no, they had no food at home. So he would give them french fries, which has zero nutritional quality, zero nutrition in french fries, but it filled their stomachs. He felt sorry for these kids, so he would feed them.

Now I think it is deplorable when governments encourage gambling and advertise gambling in a massive way to get more people to spend more money in spite of the harmful consequences to individuals and families. This brief points out a study which indicated that people in the lower economic sector of our community spend the greatest amount of money on gambling. So I think it is unfair for any lotteries corporation, regardless of what province it is in, to encourage people, especially people who cannot afford it, encourage by way of advertising to do more gambling.

Governments, of course, like this kind of revenue because it is an alternative to taxation which is compulsory. You could describe gambling as a voluntary tax. The United Church brief says, and I quote: it is not surprising that those with the least material possessions are the most susceptible to the hope of winning the jackpot. These people thus pour into the provincial treasury a far greater percentage of their incomes than anyone else. Use of gambling as a revenue-raising device means that these least able to pay often pay for projects and budget expenses enjoyed by wealthier segments of our society. As government policy, this constitutes a regressive tax. We are opposed to a regressive taxation system.

I would have to agree with this. In fact, as a matter of conscience and as a member of the United Church, I agree with the concerns raised by the United Church and submitted to the Manitoba Lottery Policy Review Committee.

I have the government's press release that came out after the executive summary and working group document were published. I think people will remember it because it was chaired by a former member of the Legislature. It also had some language that was quite memorable; VLTs were called the crack cocaine of gambling.

We have seen that in other provinces attempts are being made to lessen the effects of VLTs by slowing down the machines. Now, it will be really interesting to see if that actually slows down the revenue to government or not or whether it was just a sop to critics of gambling.

But I notice in the minister's press release that it says that a further review by the Gaming Commission of the concept of municipal plebiscites will be undertaken. Well, it will be interesting to know if that review has happened since June 1996, and if so, what the results are. Certainly the Gaming Commission has not announced what their policy is, so we are sort of going to drift past the municipal elections this fall without any plebiscites in spite of the fact that a great many people, especially in rural Manitoba, are concerned or are in favour of plebiscites.

We have been lobbied on this issue. In fact, we have collected signatures on petitions on municipal plebiscites, and we have met with people who have been greatly affected by addiction to gambling. The Globe and Mail, in a long article called Governments and Gambling, talked about some of the individuals in Manitoba who have had very serious consequences for gambling. They say that on November 8, 1997, furniture refinisher Dennis Wynant locked himself in his garage, started his car and ended his life. The 56-year-old man from Winnipeg Beach, Manitoba, left a series of suicide notes, including one he sent to the media that blamed video lottery terminals for his desperate act. It says, and I quote: "I lost in two years over \$125,000 because of them. They cost my life."

* (1600)

A bank statement showed that he made page upon page of debit card withdrawals at two local hotels in which the lottery terminals were installed. Although he was apparently \$40,000 in debt, he played the machines for several hours on his last day. His son, 29-year-old Glen, says that he, too, is a compulsive gambler. I have met with Dennis Wynant's widow and with the son and with some of his siblings, and it is very sad to hear their story about how their father was addicted to gambling and committed suicide as a result.

So this family had been very zealous in collecting signatures on petitions and in trying to institute plebiscites so that people could be, I guess, protected from themselves—that would be the best way to describe it.

This Globe and Mail article points out that Canadians spend an estimated \$20 billion a year on gambling, and

I would like to conclude on this note, Madam Speaker, because it is a rather dramatic finding that in 1995 Manitobans handed over more money to government-run gambling ventures than they spent on food as measured by Statistics Canada's basic grocery hamper.

So I think we have a serious problem in our society when people are spending more on gambling in Manitoba than they are on food. It shows the great extent to which gambling has grown in our province, aided and abetted by governments of all parties and encouraged by governments because of the easy way that this revenue comes in and encouraged through advertising. I believe it is preying especially on the weak and the vulnerable and redistributing income, not in a fair and progressive way from high-income people to low-income people. Many studies suggest and support that income is being redistributed from low-income people to higher income people in our society.

With those few remarks, I will conclude.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): We understand that the bill aims to reduce the amount of paperwork and administrative costs associated with government. In fact, Madam Speaker, once again we have another bill that is before us that does away with the need for Orders-in-Council, and I think that the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) brings up some good points with respect to that and which I would concur with most.

The idea of Orders-in-Council is one of the tools or mechanisms which are quite often used to hold government more accountable for its actions, and we see something else being taken away from Orders-in-Council. I am not necessarily convinced that that is, in fact, the best thing to do because then once again government is assisted in its abilities to be able to say that it is not us, it is them, and point the finger to other groups.

Again, the member for Burrows makes reference to the whole gambling issue, which is an excellent example. Given that it is on the Addictions Foundation, I think there were appropriate examples that were being provided, Madam Speaker, where

actions are taken and the roles of oppositions are marginalized to a certain degree because of government's decision to pass the buck, if you like.

Looking at the bill, as I say, it comes across as wanting to streamline the process, and no one would necessarily knock streamlining, but I am very concerned about the overall appearance of this government wanting to do less through Orders-in-Council when, in fact, Orders-in-Council can provide a higher sense of accountability, not only for opposition parties, I must add, but also for fellow cabinet members or government backbenchers and so forth. With those few words, Madam Speaker, I would like to see it go to committee.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading Bill 12, The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 14—The Executions Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), Bill 14, The Executions Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'exécution des jugements), standing in the name of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: No? Leave has been denied.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, we understand the purpose of this bill is to allow for the seizure of cash under a writ of seizure and sale. Certainly we support that purpose and will support the bill on second reading. It has been a gray area to now as to whether or not there can be a seizure in civil law

of cash or cash equivalent. I know from personal experience that there have been seizures of cash, if my memory serves me correct. But if there is any doubt as to the legality of that seizure, then there certainly should be clarification in law. We were wondering whether there has been a decision in the court or a challenge to a seizure of cash that has led to this bill. So because the law is clarified, it will provide additional tools to a creditor to obtain justice.

What goes along with this bill are some thoughts about the government's recent move to privatize the functions of the Sheriff's Office as it relates to the seizure and sale of property. We raised the issue I believe it was two sessions ago, when the government introduced the privatization legislation that the government had not demonstrated the need to privatize the services. It had provided no cost-benefit analysis whatsoever, and indeed in other provinces such as Saskatchewan, they found that there was no cost benefit to privatizing, and indeed in British Columbia, after privatizing, they discovered a lot of problems. We are looking at, again, using the Sheriff's Office to seize and sell the debtor's property.

Even a study done within the Department of Justice in Manitoba showed that there were serious misgivings about privatization. That study recommended renovation rather than privatization. But what is more important in the context of the privatization ideology of this government and what it has done through legislation is left unprotected trust accounts under a privatized scheme. There was no protection in law in the legislation for trust accounts, and there was no requirement for a liability protection or coverage, no requirement for bonding in the law. This raises the spectre here of a lack of checks on what becomes of seized cash once it is taken from the debtor. We would have liked to have seen those kinds of checks put into the legislation. It is important that cash that is seized is safeguarded, given that it is such a liquid asset. We asked the government why it did not put in place, for example, some kind of a receipt system, or some kind of a recording system, to help ensure that seized cash is protected, particularly in view of the ideology of this government to blindly move to privatization.

Now we understand that the privatization plans of the government have not gone well. We understand that the services are still being performed by the Sheriff's Office which, I think, speaks the support of our concern about the government's ideological move a session or two ago. So with those thoughts, Madam Speaker, we are prepared to see the legislation proceed to committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I did not actually read through this particular bill, but I was provided some input on it, Madam Speaker, and, in essence, the amendments allow for civil enforcement officers to seize cash or cash equivalents when exercising a writ of sale or seizure, so I have been informed.

It also allows for the Department of Labour to use these seizures to recover lost wages to pay back creditors. I think that is a very positive and fairly straightforward amendment, and I would like to see it go to committee.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 14, The Executions Amendment Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 16—The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement hydraulique, standing in the name of the honourable member for Dauphin.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a few minutes to address The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act. I am very much looking forward to hearing presentations at the public hearing stage on Bill 16, because I am afraid that many people affected by the flood of 1997 have not been

listened to by this provincial government. So I am very much waiting to hear some submissions on this particular bill brought forth by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings).

Just a bit of a chronology here. On April 24 of last year, we on this side of the House asked about contingency plans for southern Manitoba if the levels in the floodway would exceed the predictions of 59,000 cubic feet per second. The answer that we got from the Premier was that the water would have consequences upstream and then said that it would be a human judgment decision.

On May 5, the NDP raised concerns about the flooding of Grande Pointe and the inaccuracy of predictions leading up to it. The Premier replied that flow patterns were difficult to predict. On May 6, we on this side of the House asked that the government waive the deductible on the compensation package. On that same day, the Premier responded by saying that the residents in the Red River Valley should accept some responsibility for, in his words, consciously building on a flood plain.

Two days later, on May 8, we on this side of the House asked the government to waive depreciation on essential items. We had to wait until October before the government, under mounting pressure, decided to move on the depreciation of these items. One week later, on May 15, we on this side of the House asked for assurance that there would be public participation in the Water Commission hearings following the flood. What we got in return, though, was that the government allowed public presentations to the Water Commission but held meetings with government officials in secret, which was contrary to the act, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Not only that, but what was worse was that the government then went on and held its own press conference disputing the submissions that the flood victims themselves made. At that time, there was no interim report to be released to the public.

On three separate occasions, May 21, June 19 and December 11, we, on this side of the House, asked for assurances for funding for Water Resources staff and technology. On May 21, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) responded that funding cutbacks did not affect forecasting ability. No new

money for Water Resources staff is allocated, I might add, in the 1998 budget.

On July 30, our side of the House called on the government to speed up claims due to the extreme financial hardship of victims. What we find is that over 100 people remain out of their homes a year after the flood.

On November 26, the NDP called on the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to apologize for the hardhearted comments that he made about citizens living in a flood plain, and again on November 26, the Premier repeated his comment that flood victims have to accept some responsibility for living in the same flood plain as the rest of us in the province.

Since the flood, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government has had many opportunities to atone for the confusion and for the hardheartedness that they showed the victims of this flood. A Natural Resources' submission to the Water Commission itself declared that the protocol for the floodway was not followed during the flood crisis. The City of Winnipeg's submission to the Water Commission pointed to the need for increased staff and technology, despite what the minister has said, through water resources and better communication from the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the International Joint Commission interim report has pointed out the need for sufficient experienced flood forecasting staff at all times. It went on to point out the need for improved communication. It also indicated a need for a review of the current emergency plans and the need for better flood forecasting models that include overland flooding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ernst & Young post-flood report indicated a lack of information sharing and communication. The report, on page 28, went on to say that some felt there were political barriers to open information sharing. It also reported a lack of worst-case scenario emergency plans. Ernst & Young also pointed to a lack of information technology and overworked provincial staff. Ernst & Young also indicated a lack of trained resources to administer compensation programs and the need for earlier implementation and better co-ordinated programs. It

went on to say that people endured unnecessary anxiety waiting for compensation programs, and that was on page 52 of the Ernst & Young flood report.

I just want to wrap up my comments by quoting again from Ernst & Young in which they pointed out a need for proactive and better-defined compensation programs. On page 54, they say, and I quote: the human element of the emergency was not given enough consideration. Many problems encountered with DFA programs were compounded by the trauma of impacted residents.

Given those comments, I look very much toward the public hearings when people who are affected by this flood can come and tell this government once again some ideas on how they can better serve the people who were caught by the worst flood in this century. With those few words, I pass this on to the public hearing stage. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is, in fact, a very interesting bill, given we had the flood of the century just last year. I am sure each and every one, I do not even need to say you, I know how involved you and others that were directly impacted in terms of the water inside the constituency, individuals such as you, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) and other MLAs from the Chamber, that put in an inordinate amount of time to make sure that they could do whatever is possible in order to save as many valuables as possible.

But having said that, I do believe, as the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) points out, that there is a high level of interest with respect to future floodproofing. There was a great emotional toll that was taken on the collective society or the province, if you like. For many, it is still not over. We are still trying to deal with some of those problems today from last year. At this time last year, just the sheer numbers of individuals that had their lives turned upside down as a result of that particular flood is just overwhelming.

I look at Bill 16 and understand the purpose of Bill 16 is to ensure that we marginalize to the greatest degree the potential impact of another flood in the Red River area, and I think that that is a very strong positive. From what I understand, really what is

happening over time, we have now seen at one point where the requirements for floodproofing or that flood plain, if you like, was at the 1979 plus 2 feet flood level to today, where it is actually at the 1997 flood level plus 2 feet.

* (1620)

What is important in recognizing this particular piece of legislation is that we are seeing the provincial government playing a stronger role in ensuring that individuals that are building in the flood plains, in the traditional flood plains, are now being requested in a very formal fashion to ensure that they are going to be above the 1997 plus 2 feet into the future for all future construction.

I think, in short, that that is a positive step. The government will have the opportunity to actually say no to someone that wants to be able to construct and wants to be able to do it in a certain location in that location or it is not being built up to the point in which it would address that flood plain concern, that the government has the ability now, if and when this bill passes, to disallow that. I understand that the department will be playing a fairly significant role in the whole issuance of permits because, in some areas, the infrastructure might not necessarily allow for it at the local level. So the government is attempting to fill in the gap. I think, again, that can be a very positive thing.

Given that the bill could be going into committee in the next couple of days, I am not sure how many people will be showing up to express concerns. This is one of those bills I am sure that if there was an advertisement that was put into the newspapers regarding Bill 16 that what we would see, no doubt, would be a lot of people wanting to participate in the committee hearings because of so many experiences that occurred last year. I think that could be a positive thing.

I would suggest to the government House leader (Mr. McCrae) that he might even want to reconsider having Bill 16 coming to committee this Thursday and schedule it at a later time so that Manitobans have a better opportunity to know that this bill is going before committee so that they, again, will have the opportunity to come forward and express their concerns.

Well, with those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are prepared to see this particular bill go to committee. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading, Bill 16, The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 36—The City of Winnipeg Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer), Bill 36, The City of Winnipeg Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Ville de Winnipeg et modifications corrélatives, standing in the name of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). Is there leave that this matter remain standing?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Leave has been granted—and also standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington who has unlimited time.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to speak today about the actual elements or the principles of Bill 36, and I would like to start with a few comments about the process.

I spoke quite substantially last time about the process that Mr. Cuff followed in his preparation and delivery of his report to City Council and how the list of who he spoke to, and the timing was very inimical to an open democratic process, certainly, in connection and in comparison with the large number of public hearings and public input and time frame that was part of the process in the other major changes to The City of Winnipeg Act that have preceded the Cuff report and Bill 36.

I think probably one of the reasons why there has not been a whole lot of consultation under Cuff, and certainly in Bill 36, is that the minister on November 27

stated in the Free Press that he did not see any of the recommendations being particularly contentious, although he expects to hear from various lobbies that could be affected by some of the decisions. I circled the word "lobbies," because I think the people that have expressed concerns and will continue to express concerns about the elements of Bill 36 do not constitute what we normally think of as a lobby. They are individuals who have experience with City Council. They are city councillors themselves. There are groups that have paid close attention to the local processes and the local situation with City Hall over the years. They are not lobbies the way we consider the word "lobby" to be used, and I think it is rather offensive of the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) to say that only people who have special interests are going to make presentations who are concerned about these recommendations.

His saying they are not particularly contentious just flies in the face of everything that he had heard about even before his comments in the newspaper last November. So the minister has not taken this process very seriously, and, consequently, the citizens of Winnipeg and Manitoba have lost out on that.

John Kubi, who is the chair of the East Kildonan-Transcona Residents Advisory Group, has written on many occasions to the minister talking about the issues in Bill 36 and the Cuff report before that. One of the things that he has raised is that we need to submit the council recommendations and Bill 36 to a comprehensive public consultation process which would include public hearings at times and places convenient to the public, unlike the Cuff report process which went through in three weeks at City Hall with one morning of public hearings where only four people were able to make presentations.

Mr. Kubi and others, including the official opposition and a private member's resolution that we have before the House, have stated that it is essential that we have public hearings on Bill 36 prior to the committee process after second reading. The reason we need that on Bill 36 is because we did not have that. The people of the city of Winnipeg and other interested parties did not have that opportunity when dealing with the Cuff report, and it is incumbent upon the provincial government to provide that public hearing process.

Well, those requests fell on deaf ears, as we know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we are going through with Bill 36 without the ability of the citizenry to be able to make their views known. The Council of Women of Winnipeg wrote in November last year to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), pointing out a number of concerns, one of which was that they suggested that because this bill is coming forward during an election year, like six months before an election, that it might be appropriate to wait until after the election to see if the next City Council still has the same concerns and wants the same processes to go through.

We are at the very end of the current mayor's term of office. She has stated that she is not prepared to stand for a third term. This Cuff report reflects her ideology. It reflects the current City Council's ideology or some of them, and the next City Council will have to live with that ideology. Had it been at the very beginning of a City Council term, there would have been less concern, but we agree with the Council of Women of Winnipeg that the timing has been very poorly thought out, or, perhaps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not poorly thought out, because I am convinced that the provincial government has been working hand in glove with the mayor in shoving these radical changes through with the minimum required public input and public process. So I think probably they are very happy with this process.

Some of the elements of Bill 36 that are very concerning to people, not only to us on this side of the House but to other citizens, I will discuss in a little more detail. One of them is the change from a three-year term to a four-year term. Now, the minister says that this will provide for long-term planning, that three years is just not long enough for long-term planning. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can plan if you have the will to plan. City Councils have been in existence in this province for decades, in some cases for almost a hundred years, and the vast majority of them over that time have as their limit three years.

* (1630)

There is a good reason for a three-year term. That is because, particularly in the City of Winnipeg, given the structure of the City of Winnipeg's council, it is essential that the city councillors have their

accountability kept at a high level, and if you put the City Council elections every four years and now The Municipal Act is going to make that happen throughout the province, what you are doing is you are making City Council less accountable. In the absence of a representative form of government like we have at the provincial and the federal level with oppositions and party politics, you do not have the checks and balances at the municipal level that you do at the other levels of government, therefore you need to have a shorter term, so that city councillors can be held more accountable.

Most particularly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the context of the other provisions of Bill 36 which are anti-democratic, which do not provide for accountability or transparency or citizen participation, the change from a three-year term to a four-year term is not seen as a positive thing.

I did a little survey about the situation throughout the provinces of Canada. I have not heard from P.E.I. and Newfoundland yet, but of the other provinces in Canada, only the Province of Quebec and the City of Halifax have four-year terms. Every other province with the exception of not knowing about P.E.I. and Newfoundland, all of the others have three-year terms, so we are flying in the face of what is happening throughout the country of Canada, and I think that this is a very bad situation.

Another element that is very concerning to us and to others is the fact that the legislation in Bill 36 allows for a much broader definition of what can go in camera. Now, you want, if you have a democratic process, to have as small an amount of your business of a legislature or a city hall, city council, municipal council, parliament, to be in camera as possible, because in order to have a democratic system, you have to be able to see what is going on. The decisions have to be public, the debate has to be public, the vote has to be public wherever possible, so you want to have as small amount of in camera items as possible.

Currently, a matter can go in camera for a standing committee or the Executive Policy Committee if they follow the by-law governing in camera activities, standing committee or Executive Policy Committee. Currently, council discussions, with the exception of personnel issues, those debates are all public. Now, in

Bill 36, the council, as well as the Executive Policy Committee, a committee of council or a subcommittee of council, can all have their meetings in camera. There is a by-law that is going to allow, is going to determine, what items can go in camera, but that by-law is a by-law passed by a majority of City Council. When we get to the fact of the powers of the mayor and the antidemocratic elements there, this again is a very, very disturbing situation.

Also, the votes that are taken in camera do not need to be recorded. So decisions that are made in camera by a subcommittee of Executive Policy Committee, by a subcommittee of council, by the Executive Policy Committee, by a standing committee, by the council as a whole, any of those groups can now hold things in camera, and those votes are not made public. So we, as citizens, have no way of knowing who has voted on what side of what issue. Again, it is a diminution of the accountability of city councillors, and this is not something that we, as citizens, should be prepared to countenance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Councillor Glen Murray has said in the newspaper, and we agree with him, the public has a right to know what is being done and who supports it or not. That is absolutely basic. You cannot have democracy and you cannot have accountability if that is not happening. Councillor Lazarenko has said have your debate in camera if you want, but the decisions should come to council for a vote so that everyone knows exactly what every councillor's position is on every single issue. This does not happen in Bill 36.

One of the largest groups of changes that are taking place in Bill 36 is the elimination of the requirement for there to be community committees and for the elimination of any mention of the residents advisory groups. Now the minister says this is okay, because council will now have the ability to decide what form public consultation will take. It provides for—and this is a wonderful word used by this government in many ways—flexibility. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not flexibility that is happening here. It is a reduction in democracy, it is a reduction in citizen input, it is a reduction in accountability, and along with the other changes, this is a very negative one.

Mr. Brian McLeod who lives in the Charleswood constituency has written several letters outlining the positive things that have happened as a result of community committees. He says as one example there was a recommendation that there be an arena built next to a community centre. There was a great deal of support for that proposal and there was a great deal of opposition to that proposal. Because they had a community committee process, both proponents and opponents came to the community committee. The discussion was held in public, the city councillors heard the concerns, and they made a good decision.

Community committees had a concrete street installed in the vicinity of a 7-Eleven which cleared up an unsightly area and improved safety for children to and from school. They had a garbage bin removed from a public street because of safety concerns, and school children were unable to use the sidewalks because of potholes and mudholes, and this was changed as a result of the community committees. If there had not been community committees, none of this would have happened. If you do not have citizen input in community committees, then you have a situation where the lines of communications are stultified. They are not allowed to work in the way where they are supposed to.

The council has recently sent to the Executive Policy Committee a recommendation to come up with alternatives for community committees, but, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Executive Policy Committee, under Bill 36, is not going to reflect the consensus of the council as a whole. Because of the processes under Bill 36, we could have a situation where the Executive Policy Committee could very easily recommend that there be no statutory requirements for citizen participation; that each city councillor decides how he or she wants to communicate with their residents, their citizens. In many cases, they could decide they do not need to, that it is not a big issue, that there is not a problem. This is not the way we want to go.

The minister says this will give the city more latitude to hold public hearings on a broad range of issues. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the city can now hold hearings on a broad range of issues. It has control over what it wants to do, but it now has the requirement to pass these elements through community committees so

that the citizens have a delegated statutory opportunity to make their views known to the councillors of their area. That is not going to happen. It is not going to be required under Bill 36.

* (1640)

I quote from—well, no, I am not quoting. I am just also talking about community committees. They now offer the citizens of Winnipeg a chance to discuss local concerns with their local elected representatives. The meetings are held in the evening in the community so they are accessible. Issues can range from traffic issues, safety concerns, planning and development matters, and capital budget reviews. Community committee is the only regular meeting held in the evening, when most residents are able to attend, and this is not going to be required under Bill 36.

John Kubi states: this move and the elimination of RAGs is not a move to a more to a more democratic and representative city government. On the contrary, it totally ignores the fact that citizen participation in matters which affect the quality of life within their communities and neighbourhoods is necessary not only during an electoral process, but also through other formal ongoing political means. Occasional selective consultation, as proposed by some councillors and the consultant, Mr. Cuff, is not the way to strengthen participatory democracy in local government and is certainly not a blueprint for the 21st Century. An important statutory vehicle, ensuring a basic and universal access for citizens to their local government, will be removed if these recommendations are adopted, end quote. I could not have said it better myself.

Another major area in which basically several things are going to happen is that the mayor has an enormously enhanced role, and the minister agrees to this. The mayor can now cast a tie-breaking vote in addition to the original vote, so the mayor will now have two votes in the case of a tie. There is not a single mayor in the country that has the kinds of powers that George Cuff and the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) are going to give this mayor, whichever mayor it is. The mayor will now appoint all members of the Executive Policy Committee, as well as chairs and members of standing and all other committees, and the mayor can suspend the chief administrative officer,

who has replaced the board of commissioners, for up to three days—can suspend the CAO for up to three days on his or her own recognizance—no requirement for any kind of Executive Policy Committee or council input.

Greater flexibility and latitude to council is what the minister says is going to happen. What the greater flexibility and latitude to council does is that it eliminates the requirements for community committees, it eliminates the residents advisory groups and allows the council to hold in camera hearings. How is this providing greater flexibility and latitude? It eliminates democracy from the City Council of Winnipeg.

The legislation also provides for greater scope for the Executive Policy Committee, again the minister. The Executive Policy Committee can establish subcommittees and the mayor appoints all the members of that subcommittee. The Executive Policy Committee can now have final authority on issues given to it by by-law or by resolution, and a resolution does not require the public hearing process that a by-law does, so Executive Policy Committee has an enormous amount of power.

What happens, what the impact of these changes is that there are huge increases in the power of the mayor and, by extension, the Executive Policy Committee. Let me go through it for you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I hate to interrupt the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), but I have a couple of members that are on fishing expeditions at this time. If I could ask them to keep it down, I would appreciate the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) to have the floor.

The honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), to continue.

Ms. Barrett: Let us go through the powers that the mayor has and see how it plays itself out. The mayor now appoints the six members of the EPC, and they—the mayor and six members, so seven members recommend to council the names for the speaker and the deputy speaker. Therefore, the mayor has directly and indirectly the power of an influence over a majority of City Council, because those EPC members, the speaker

and the deputy speaker all have not only highly visible powers, but they get more money.

So the mayor has a huge amount of power. The mayor and his or her cabinet, because basically this is what it is, control virtually every element of council business. They decide what decisions should go to subcommittees, they decide what subcommittees are going to be established. Council decides what standing committees are going to be in place. Council decides what in camera elements are going to be in place. The mayor and his or her cabinet have complete control over what happens at City Council.

What it means, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that half of City Council now could have virtually no power or influence at all. Currently each councillor must be on at least one standing committee, that is gone. Currently most of the decisions have to go to council, that is gone. Currently the mayor does not have the right to appoint all the subcommittees and the members of the subcommittee, that is gone. So not only do you put an enormous amount of power in the hands of the mayor and the cabinet, but you potentially disenfranchise half of the residents of the city of Winnipeg.

When you add to that the huge decrease and the influence of the electorate, we have got a real problem on our hands. There is no requirement, as I said, that each city councillor sits on at least one standing committee, so half of the city councillors, each of whom represents 40,000 people, remember, population more than any other municipality other than the City of Brandon, which has 10 city councillors, huge amounts of residents, half of those, eight of those city councillors could have virtually no avenues for input into City Council decisions.

The election every four years, as I have stated, reduces the accountability in the electorate. The elimination of the RAGs and the community committees means that the citizens have even less regulatory statutory input into decisions. So if you are a councillor who is on the outs with the current mayor—and remember the next mayor will not be the current mayor—we could very likely see the election of Councillor Murray as mayor and that would be exactly—[interjection] You have to take a look at the implications here.

Councillor Murray, by the way, is on record as saying he does not appreciate nor approve of the changes that are being suggested in Bill 36 and does not need them as mayor—[interjection] Oh, oh, the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) says that as a man of honour, if Mr. Glen Murray is elected mayor, he would not use these changes, which to me says by a logical extension that she does not believe they are good changes either, if, as a man of honour, he would not use them.

All of the elements in Bill 36, when you put them together, reduce accountability at City Hall. They reduce democracy at City Hall. They reduce the openness of City Hall. They reduce the citizen participation at City Hall. They are unnecessary. They are not only unnecessary, but, if I can use this word without being called to order, I would suggest that the potential implications of Bill 36 are evil, in the sense that they give the possibility of an oligarchy or even, as one person has said, a dictatorship.

* (1650)

I mean, we are talking logical extensions here. When you have a mayor who has the kind of power that the mayor will have under Bill 36, the ability to have under his or her sphere of influence a majority of City Council, when they have the right to have a break-in-tie vote, in addition to the right to vote as a member of City Council, then the mayor will have a second vote in the case of a tie. When you have the reduction in the ability of citizens to have input into City Council, you have—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I hate to interrupt the honourable member again. Could I ask the honourable minister if she could refrain from shouting across the room. The honourable member for Wellington has the floor at this time.

Ms. Barrett: I do not see how any person who pays attention to these things could deny what I am saying. It is there in black and white. You just have to take it to its logical conclusion and you have a real threat to democracy. We have had a threat to democracy throughout this whole process, starting from the beginning of the Cuff report all the way through to the

elements in Bill 36. There is a very clear thread that moves throughout this process, and it is a thread that I have spoken of in my earlier comments.

I would like to talk a bit about, and quote a bit from, an article written by Peter Diamant who is an ex-deputy minister of Urban Affairs and an ex-city councillor—[interjection] And writes in the Winnipeg Sun about urban issues. Very knowledgeable, both from a theoretical and a practical perspective. He says, in his May 5 column, the powers of the mayor, already the most powerful of any mayor in Canada, are to be further strengthened. The few avenues citizens have to access the political decision-making process, community committees, and RAGs are given their death knell. Accountability in City Hall is already in question. Closed-door meetings and four-year terms will further reduce the responsibility and accountability of city councillors.

And he makes a very interesting point. The citizens as a whole are not asking for these changes. Nobody came out of the woodwork and said, oh my goodness, we need an oligarchy here at City Hall. We need an even stronger mayor. Nobody did that except the mayor. The mayor is the one who initiated this whole process, and the dead hand of the mayor is going to be felt if this bill goes through, long after she has left the mayor's chair. Well, not for long after, because I am going to be on record right here today in the presence of my Leader and say that many of the changes, if they go through without amendment, many of the changes in The City of Winnipeg Act that are in Bill 36 will be reversed under an NDP government, because we believe in democracy. We believe in accountability. We believe in transparency. We believe in citizen participation, and Bill 36 eliminates or severely curtails all of those fundamental things that we as social democrats believe in and that, frankly, I am surprised the members opposite do not believe in, which is clear.

It is clear that they do not believe in democracy and accountability and transparency, or they would not be supporting Bill 36. But, no, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are following along with what the current mayor wants to have done. I do not know what rationale they are using, and I would hope that some of them actually put some comments on the record before the end of this debate.

Peter Diamant's column says that Cuff's proposals, and I quote: "are perilously close to an elected dictatorship." As I have said in this House before, all of the elements are there, every single one of them. He says, and I quote: "What this legislation does is decrease the size of council to eight powerful members, and eight after-thoughts. Eight members controlled by the mayor, behind closed doors, will make all the decisions."

It is very clear to us on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Bill 36 is a piece of legislation that cannot be allowed to go forward in its present form. I am not sure exactly what would make it—I would actually be most happy if the government would come to their senses, see the light of day and remove the bill from consideration. We on this side of the House would be very grateful for that to happen. The residents of the city of Winnipeg would be very grateful for that to happen, and the government, itself, would be doing a very positive thing if it pulled Bill 36 from the legislative agenda.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not expect that to happen. This bill reflects the thinking of not only the current mayor but of the Premier (Mr. Filmon). This Premier does not run an open government. The changes to many of the bills this session which take away the responsibility or the requirement for Order-in-Council decisions which is an element that allows for some public understanding of what has gone on and public accountability—many of the pieces of legislation in this session remove that requirement and give the minister power to make regulations and to do things that before he or she could only do under Order-in-Council.

Again, this is in the guise of, quote, flexibility and streamlining. This government has used words that we all agree with. We all think that there should be flexibility in our legislative processes. We all believe in streamlining so that efficiency and effectiveness can be the order of the day, but we do not believe that the changes that are in Bill 36 or in other pieces of legislation during this session do that at all. They eliminate democracy from the city of Winnipeg. They provide for cabinet-style government without an opposition, without any checks and balances on this very small group of people.

Here are eight people in a city of over 600,000, moving toward 700,000. Eight people will potentially control everything that happens, all of the decisions that are made by City Council. This is not democracy. It is not open government. It is not accountability. It is not transparency. What it is, as I have said before and I will continue to say and others of my caucus colleagues will continue to say, is a travesty, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It provides for a corporate vision. It provides for a board of directors who are accountable to their, quote, stockholders, and those stockholders will be the residents in the wards who are lucky enough to have city councillors who are part of the inner circle, who are part of the cabinet.

I would suggest to members opposite that they take a very close look, because if this bill passes and if the likelihood actually happens that we elect Glen Murray as the next mayor of the city of Winnipeg, many of the residents represented provincially by these members in the government benches from the City of Winnipeg are likely to be outside that position of authority.

An Honourable Member: That is not right.

Ms. Barrett: And we do not believe that is right either, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

We think it is important that every representative in the City Council has an opportunity to reflect and respond to the needs of their citizens. Bill 36, in its current configuration, does not allow for that. It allows for the probability of an oligarchy and the possibility of an elected dictatorship. That is not what we on this side of the House want. That should not be what the members opposite want, and it most certainly is not what the citizens of the city of Winnipeg want. Again, Madam Speaker, I will say that come the next provincial election, Bill 36 will come back to haunt this government, as well it should. It is a dreadful piece of legislation, and it should never have seen the light of day.

With those few words, I will conclude my comments on Bill 36.

* (1700)

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 301—An Act to Amend an Act to Incorporate the Dauphin General Hospital Foundation

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), standing in the name of the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

Some Honourable Members: Stand.

Madam Speaker: Leave? Leave has been granted.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 201—The Crime Victims' Bill of Rights and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), that Bill 201, The Crime Victims' Bill of Rights and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur la déclaration des droits des victimes d'actes criminels et modifications corrélatives, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, the overall purpose of this bill is to provide to Manitobans and victims of crime in particular some comprehensive rights recognized in law. The second purpose is to ensure that these comprehensive rights are enforceable by way of a mechanism for redress.

The legislation that is before the House is a result of extensive consultations and research not only in North

America but elsewhere and not only by reviewing the authorities but by listening and hearing the concerns of victims in Manitoba. The legislation that is proposed here is arguably the strongest not only in North America but perhaps in the modern world.

We think it is time that the needs of victims not be recognized in small steps. The system owes something to victims, Madam Speaker, and we think it is time for a revolution of victims' rights and not simply an incremental change.

The background of this legislation is important to an understanding as to where we come from in this important area for Manitobans. New Democratic governments in this province have an extensive record of action on behalf of crime victims, Madam Speaker. We note, for example, that New Democratic governments in Manitoba introduced one of the first victim compensation schemes in Canada. It introduced one of Canada's first child abuse victim support programs.

New Democrats introduced the first provincial protocol for zero tolerance of spousal violence. New Democrats introduced: Canada's first surcharge on criminals to fund victim services; Canada's first legislated Victims' Assistance Committee, and Canada's first specialized victims assistance, that being the Women's Advocacy Program.

Manitoba was also the first in Canada under the NDP to enact victims' rights principles. That same New Democrat government was one of Canada's first pioneers of victim impact statements and was involved in a project that was very important for the development of victim impact statements in this province.

Now, Madam Speaker, it was at the 1996 convention of New Democrats in Manitoba that a resolution was unanimously endorsed by delegates to direct our caucus to bring into this legislature legislation to protect victims' rights and provide enforcement.

In September of 1997 during the Portage la Prairie by-election then, our leader announced that our caucus would be introducing victims' rights legislation into this Assembly. Interestingly, it was only after that announcement that the government became interested in talking about legislated rights for victims. Until then

the government had apparently rejected any notion that there should be legislation brought in to address the needs of victims in this province.

A number of months ago we outlined the concerns of Manitoba victims as we have heard those concerns and set out a discussion document which contained in there draft legislation for Victims' Bill of Rights. I just want to table that in the House.

What was important to the drafting of the legislation was the consultations that we had and the horror stories that were brought to our attention by victims of crime in Manitoba. This party has long advocated for those who do not have power and privilege and have long sought a rightful role for healing those harmed by serious wrongdoings.

It is in the context of that purpose of the New Democratic Party that we now seek to provide a real voice for victims of crime. Victims of crime are virtually powerless in the criminal justice system. As I have said time and again, the victim is the most affected by a crime and yet is the party most left out of the process. That has to change. We certainly know of the extensive recognition and entrenchment of rights for offenders. What we seek is a balance to ensure that the needs of victims and their rights are now given a rightful place in the justice system.

We believe that cases will be stronger when the victim is afforded respect and involvement in the case that affects them. We think it is also important that victims not be victimized a second time by a system that does not take into consideration their needs and really discounts their role.

I have heard it said that victims currently in the system are treated no differently than a bloody shirt or some other piece of physical evidence. The victims are only paid attention to when they are needed as witnesses in their criminal prosecution.

Madam Speaker, the lack of respect for victims under the current government is also a driving force behind this legislation. This government week after week has been found to have turned its back on victims of crime and whether that is as a result of failing to inform them of the progress of a case, failing to institute a victim

impact statement program in Manitoba like almost every other jurisdiction in Canada has, whether it is because of plea bargaining, generous plea bargaining that even the Court of Appeal has said has been wrongly done lately without involving the victim, whether it is because of a lack of attention to the ability to ensure restitution for a victim, this government has a sorry record. This legislation, therefore, seeks to address that serious shortcoming.

* (1710)

Before the Legislature, Madam Speaker, is legislation now introduced by this government to deal with victims. We had hoped that the government would have paid attention to our proposals and would have adopted many of the rights that we set out in this bill and would have ensured the kind of enforcement mechanisms that we put in our bill. It has failed to do that. Their legislation is a great disappointment and does not meet the needs of victims in Manitoba. I, therefore, with even greater conviction now, urge this Assembly to consider the legislation that we are now presenting and urge the government to amend this legislation to incorporate the features that are contained in our bill.

It is important, Madam Speaker, that victims not only be able to be notified of the case that involves them but also to participate in the prosecution of that case. It is further important that a victim be given the right to greater protection from harm and, of course, as I said earlier, have the right to the enforcement of their rights.

In this legislation, we recognize that the most important right of a victim is to be informed of the rights available at law. That is the threshold right. Rights do not mean anything if one does not know what they are, so unlike the government bill, Madam Speaker, it is mandatory in our legislation that victims of crime be advised of their rights under the bill. It is also mandatory that victims be advised of assistance programs, compensation and protection orders. On request, victims are given a right under this legislation to know of the dates, locations and outcomes of all court proceedings, of any proposed plea bargains and the details of an offender's release, whereabouts and conditions. That, however, is mandatory when there is a release on bail.

The right to participate in the prosecution is an important aspect of this legislation, and we looked elsewhere, particularly around North America, and we incorporated some of the strongest features of legislation that enables a voice for the victim in prosecutions. It is important that the victim be able to describe to the court, orally or in writing, the impact of the crime, have input into bail and conditions and diversion, have input into the staying of charges, into proposed plea bargains, to seek restitution from the court, to comment on pre-sentence reports, to bring a support person to the trial and to have input into an offender's release from custody and, as well, to provide access for the disabled, to provide interpreters and culturally sensitive services in the justice system. These are so important that they are contained as enforceable rights within this bill.

It is also important that the need to be protected from harm be ensured to victims, and this bill provides on request for the confidentiality of the address, telephone number and place of employment of a victim. It provides notification if the accused is released on bail, plus the conditions of bail, to secure a waiting area during court proceedings, not to be disciplined by an employer for participating in a proceeding, to be interviewed by a person of the same gender in a sexual offence, and to copies of court documents relevant to safety.

Very important, Madam Speaker, is the right to the enforcement of rights by a complaint process to a new crime victim investigator by civil court action outside of the criminal court system, by requiring compliance in the job descriptions of Justice officials with the rights set out in the act, and by the Attorney General implementing incentives and sanctions for compliance.

Madam Speaker, I hope the government will have second thoughts about its legislation, which is not up to the standard, and, therefore, I urge consideration of this bill by this House.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, just on a matter of House Business, with the leave of the House, I would like to announce that the Law Amendments committee will meet on Thursday morning of this week at 10 a.m. to consider bills passed in this Chamber: Bills 4, 12, 14, 16, 18, 21, 25, 27 and 42.

It is our intention, Madam Speaker, that on Thursday morning there be two private members' hours in this Chamber, and, while that is happening, the Law Amendments committee would be sitting, with the leave of the House.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the Standing Committee on Law Amendments to sit on Thursday morning concurrent with the House sitting in the Chamber? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted. The Standing Committee on Law Amendments will, therefore, meet on Thursday morning, June 4, at 10 a.m. to consider the following: Bills 4, 12, 14, 16, 18, 21, 25, 27 and 42.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS**Res. 36—Immigration Head Tax**

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos),

“WHEREAS immigration has a net economic and social benefit for our society by providing labour and investment, purchasing power for goods and services, attendance at universities and stimulation for job creation; and

“WHEREAS in the 1993 election, the Federal Liberal Party promised to maintain a fair immigration policy; and

“WHEREAS the Federal Liberal Government has imposed a \$975 right-of-landing fee combined with a

\$500 application fee for permanent residence, while reducing opportunities to sponsor relatives for family reunification; and

“WHEREAS in addition, there is a wide range of other fees affecting immigrants such as \$200 to take out Canadian citizenship and \$75 for a proof of citizenship card; and

“WHEREAS these fees prove to be prohibitive for many potential new immigrants; and

“WHEREAS stemming immigration hurts Manitoba's economy and stifles attempts to revitalize our province.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Federal Government to keep its promises on fair immigration policies, especially as they apply to family reunification; and

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Federal Government to abolish the discriminatory 'head tax' on new immigrants.”

Motion presented.

* (1720)

Mr. Hickes: I am pleased to rise today and bring forward this resolution because I think it is crucial to our great province of Manitoba. When we look at the make-up of Manitoba and especially the make-up of Canada, we only look at the First Nations communities. Then we look out of the First Nations communities and the individuals that make up that population through their family tree or through their ancestry, at one time or another, had to immigrate to Canada. We are fortunate that these individuals chose Manitoba as their new homes.

If you reflect back and you look at a lot of our very prominent citizens of our great province, through our fair immigration policies, a lot of the individuals have really benefited our province as a whole and made great contributions to Canada as a country. If we had to follow the proposed immigration changes, which I am sure every member in this House would disagree with

and hopefully encourage the federal government to have a serious look and maybe make those changes. If those policies had to be followed in the years that our population of Manitoba grew through immigration, a lot of them would not have had the opportunity to make Canada their new home.

A lot of individuals in this Chamber are products of that fair immigration policy. We only have to look in the mirror and just look at the great contributions that each member of this Chamber is making to our great province.

There is not a member in this Chamber who has not sought to be elected unless they really believed in helping their constituents and helping our province to, hopefully, produce quality services and make a contribution to the betterment of our citizens. But if you look at the changes that have reflected over the years, you only have to look at the right-of-landing fee of \$975, which in some countries is more than a yearly salary for one individual.

If you look at the immigration to our province and to our country, a lot of the individuals that immigrate from other countries immigrate as families. So we are not here only talking about \$975; you are talking of doubling that, and also the \$500 processing fee. So just that tax alone, you are looking at \$1,950 for a couple. You know in some countries that would be a rich fortune, so a lot of the individuals we want in our province to make their home here would not be able to immigrate to Manitoba just because of dollars and cents.

Yet we need those individuals to choose Manitoba as their new homes. If you look back in history, and you look at our own grandparents and, in a lot of cases, our own parents, it was normal to have large families. It was very normal for families to be five, six, seven children in the family, and in cases 12, 13 children in the family, but that is not happening today. A lot of families are having only two or three children, so our population is declining. So, if we let our population decline, that means we are losing the economic spin-off for our province through purchasing power for our businesses and through the opportunity of employment opportunities, even through our tax system.

We need people to continue buying our goods, buying houses, buying cars, buying televisions, and manufacturing those products. Sure I agree that we need to look at the business side of immigration. Yes, we need people with wealth to come to Canada, but we cannot only rely and only have people of wealth to immigrate to Canada, because I know that we have always been a very friendly country. Our arms have been open to new Canadians. We are very fortunate to have them choose our country as their new home.

If we only leave it to the individuals that have wealth, I do not know what would happen to our country because we need hardworking individuals that will provide our shrinking labour force. For one thing we need the painters. We need the plumbers. We need the electricians and on and on and on. So, when a person chooses, we should not put barriers in front of individuals.

The other cost that a new Canadian or a potential immigrant to Canada is \$200 to take out Canadian citizenship, and \$75 for proof of a citizenship card. So, if you tally those costs up, I am afraid we are heading in the wrong direction. We are making immigration to Canada out of reach of a lot of individuals.

If you just look at the makeup of our province, you have individuals from the Philippines, from China, from Asian countries, from European countries. If you look at and talk to those families, it is very difficult for a lot of individuals to put those kinds of dollars together to come to Canada. I do not want to see where we as a province and as a country are sort of leaning towards only European immigration versus Asian countries, because it is a lot easier for individuals to immigrate to Canada from Europe because of their wage structure alone. Their wage structure is very comparable to ours, so \$975 for one individual has a lot different meaning to someone from an Asian country versus someone from a European country. It would be easier for individuals, say, from England or France or Germany, where the wages are very comparable, to afford the opportunity to come to Canada.

The other thing that I stress and I hope, and I am sure all members of the Legislature will support, is the whole family reunification sponsorship, because we talk as families in this Chamber, we talk of families and

the importance of families. When we welcome people into our country and our province, we should also welcome the families. Because if you only look at grandparents as an example, the grandparents in most families are the educators of the families. They are the ones that look after the children. They teach the children the language. They teach the culture, because I knew, when I was growing up, one of the main reasons why I retained my first tongue is because I spent a lot of time with my grandparents. They are the ones that built the foundation for my values that I have today. They are the ones that instilled the importance of hunting and fishing and sharing, and pertaining to who I am, and to be proud of who I am, no matter what anybody else says.

So, with those few words, I hope, I encourage all members of this Chamber to support this, because it is a very friendly resolution. We are encouraging the federal government to take a second look and, hopefully, will open the doors for more immigration into our great province. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I get to talk on an issue in which I feel very close to in the sense that there is likely no other issue that comes up more as a constituency issue for me in areas of immigration, and I am talking about specific cases. If I was to rank them, immigration would probably be the first one right at the top as I try to deal with constituents, even if it does not necessarily fall within my jurisdiction, because I recognize the importance of that particular issue.

In reading through the resolution I know the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) is hoping to get all-party support for it. I do not necessarily believe, as the resolution reads, that it is something in which I could in fact support. I think that there are a number of concerns that I have. I think that there is a more constructive way. The essence of the resolution in opposition of the landing fee I support wholeheartedly. I do not have any problem with that. Madam Speaker, I think the landing fee is something in which is, or it has the potential to have an impact. Whether or not it has an impact is really secondary for me. What I believe is important is that Canada retain an open-door policy towards immigration, as it has generally speaking. In the past, there have been exceptions. I do

not necessarily believe the \$975 landing fee is a positive thing, and I would like to see the government of Canada withdraw that.

* (1730)

It is nothing new with respect to that particular position. The provincial Liberal Party has adopted that position. In fact, when the landing fee initially came out, I had made a trip to Toronto with our then-leader, Paul Edwards, to meet with the Minister of Immigration, and share the concerns that I had with respect to the landing fee. The Minister of Immigration at the time had indicated one of the choices that he was given was that he had to look at either coming up with some resources or cutting back at other ends. What was being suggested was the immigration settlement type of package, so that when immigrants come to Canada there might have to be some cuts.

He chose to favour the landing fee. Well, Madam Speaker, even though I do not agree with my federal counterparts in Ottawa with respect to the landing fee, and as I expressed to the minister first-hand and I have expressed to other members of Parliament of the same political party that I belong to, the fee still stands. There was a great deal of concern that we raised with respect to if you are going to have this fee, that when you are collecting the fee is also very important, and I think that there has been some movement in that area. I think that the government has at the very least provided the opportunity for individuals to pay back in the future, so that, in fact, individuals who are in a country where they might not necessarily have the financial resources to immigrate to Canada, at least it is being addressed.

Again, Madam Speaker, by talking about that, it does not necessarily mean that I support it. I did not support the landing fee when it first came out, and I do not support it today. I think that is the essence of the resolution which the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) is trying to get across, and if, in fact, that essence was reflected in more, I would suggest, appropriate wording—it can still be strong—I would be more inclined to support it.

It definitely has other implications within the resolution. It takes very strong lines or at least implies

in part in the third WHEREAS, for example, that the federal Liberal government has imposed a \$975 right-of-landing fee which no one questions, combined with the \$500 application fee. Well, the Liberals did not impose the full \$500 application fee.

Now, I raise it because in the last provincial election, it was an issue which my opponent had used, and it is an issue which I addressed head on. There was a lot of misinformation that was being provided, misinformation that it was going to cost you over \$1,400 to come to Canada as an immigrant, so if you were a family of four people, let us say from the Philippines, you were going to be looking at somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$6,000.

Well, Madam Speaker, that is just not accurate, but that is the type of misinformation that was being intentionally sent out in order, I would argue, to get individuals who might have been inclined to support me as a Liberal offended enough to the degree where they would not support me, even though it was not within provincial jurisdiction. I had argued with many of those individuals who brought it up that there are so many things within health care, within education, that were taking place, that that is what we should be basing our vote on, that you should not be looking at the federal counterparts, and if you disagree with what they are doing, do not automatically assume that it is something which I support or the provincial Liberal Party supports. So, when I read that particular WHEREAS, I am wondering to what extent that could be potentially used against me in the future.

Madam Speaker, the most positive WHEREAS in there is the very first one where it talks about the benefits of immigrants. I would suggest to you that Manitoba has been robbed of our share of immigrants over the years, that, in fact, we should have received thousands more immigrants to our province over the last decade, that we have been at the short end of the stick for far too long.

One of the positive things that Ottawa has done is they have entered into for a first time a bilateral immigration agreement with the province. So the province actually has more opportunity to bring in more immigrants, and I think that is a positive. We can emphasize the need for family reunification because

Manitoba is unique. Manitoba's most successful immigrants have been under family reunification, and I think that is an area which we need to be promoting.

But one of the things that has always been a very important issue to me has been the government's approach at trying to deal with the so-called fair share of immigrants to our province. Well, Madam Speaker, what the government and the official opposition have argued in the past is that we would like to see somewhere in the neighbourhood of that 3.5 percent, 3.8 percent of the total immigration that comes to Canada coming to the province of Manitoba.

Well, the government is wrong, I believe, in arguing that point. What the government should be doing is looking at the type of immigrants that would best serve the province of Manitoba under family reunification in particular and set our own target.

So, if Ottawa says, well, we want 200,000 immigrants, nothing prevents us from saying, well, in Manitoba we believe that we can sustain, quite easily a 1 percent, or, if you like, somewhere in the neighbourhood of, let us say, 10,000 immigrants depending on the classifications that are coming from abroad. That is how many we could absorb in the province of Manitoba. That is, in fact, what we should be arguing for. We should not be articulating that we want to have 3.6 or 3.7 or whatever our percentage of the overall population of Canada is and then take that percentage and argue for the same percentage with the number of immigrants that happen to be coming in in any given year.

I would have liked to have seen that particular issue addressed in this particular resolution. If the opposition or the government wanted to see a resolution in which you would receive all-party support inside this Chamber, I would think one of the first things you would want to do would be to sit down with all three representatives of the political party and come up with some sort of a consensus.

* (1740)

It was a couple of hours ago the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) indicated to me that the government was thinking of amending this particular

resolution. I have not seen anything--well, I should not say anything--20 minutes, or 10, 15 minutes ago is the first time I actually caught wind of that, in fact, that the Chamber was looking at some form of passing of this particular resolution.

Well, if you want to be able to put individuals in a position of having to give unanimous support, I would think that you should provide them the courtesy of at least allowing them to have proper input into the resolution. I do not believe that that has necessarily happened, at least from my point of view. I think that is something that is worthy of making note of because you need to have a high sense of co-operation, I would argue, if in fact you want to be able to pass resolutions in the Chamber.

I know I have spoken on many resolutions inside this Chamber, and we have seen a few of those resolutions actually pass. Generally speaking, I think it is important to see parties getting together to be able to support good ideas. This particular resolution, as it currently stands, I know I would have liked the opportunity to have consulted with other members from within the Liberal Party. Whether we have very prominent community leaders, like whether it is a Fred De Villa or it is a Mohindar Singh Fannu or any other individual that this Chamber was looking at trying to accomplish an all-party agreement or, then I could have at least solicited some sort of feedback from what other people would have to say.

Because this, in general, the essence of the resolution is something which can be supported. It can be supported because the essence of the \$975 landing fee, Madam Speaker, that is what we are talking about. That is something in which I can tell you that the party and the provincial party does not support. We have more in terms of percentage of immigrants that are coming to the province compared to other provinces, and I think there is a lot more that we could be getting.

Madam Speaker, what I would have really liked to have seen is sitting down with the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) and possibly others that would have been interested, because there are some other concerns that maybe we could have had a more all-encompassing resolution. [interjection] Well, there are a number of different issues that are facing immigration

which an all-party resolution could have sent a very strong, positive message. Hopefully I will get another opportunity to conclude my remarks.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) for bringing this matter to the House today. I understand there have been discussions between the honourable member and the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), and with a minor amendment we might end up with something acceptable to this House today, despite the comments of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). I simply cannot understand anybody who would not want to be supportive, any Manitoban, of what the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) and the minister have been able to agree to.

Madam Speaker, unless we are aboriginal Canadians, we are all immigrants or the descendants of immigrants in this country and in this province. That makes us the richest country in the world in my opinion. I have long believed that.

I remember Sharon Carstairs so well who loved to talk about how poor we are as a province and how much of a have-not province we are. I know that we get into debates about some of our problems and that is what we should do, but why would anyone want to harp away about how we are a have-not province? How does that instill hope and strength in the younger generation, or indeed in ourselves to look forward to the future with confidence and to build and to work hard, to make our lives better and to make us something other than a have-not province?

Now, I did not mean to turn this discussion into something negative because I believe it is a very positive point we are trying to make here. Manitoba has grown and has prospered with the contribution of immigrants and recognizes the social, cultural and economic benefits that newcomers bring to our province.

In recent years, federal immigration policies have tended to have an inequitable impact on family class and refugee immigration. Manitoba appreciates the difficulties that immigrants face in raising funds to pay

the \$975 right-of-landing fee and the \$500 immigration application processing fee for each adult. We know the difficulties associated with that. I have numbers that indicate that something is having the effect of curtailing the growth in immigration at a time when we need strong immigration policies to help not only enrich the cultural diversity of our province, but also, and very, very importantly too, the economic health of our province.

We need customers for our shops. We need consumers of our goods. We need people to produce those goods, and we need people to serve those customers. So it is a full circle. I agree with the honourable sentiments which bring the honourable member's resolution before us today. Without a lot of debate because I think we are going to do something special here, we are going to pass something and have a meeting of the minds.

Madam Speaker, I think that the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) can surely look into the depths of his soul and find his way clear to supporting what it is that is being proposed here today. The wording in my amendment is simply something worked out by the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) and the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey). It is acceptable, I understand, to both of them and makes the resolution acceptable to everyone in this House in my respectful opinion.

So, Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), who shares with me these sentiments about the value of immigration to our province, that the final paragraph in the resolution be deleted and the following substituted therefor: "Be it further resolved that the Members of this Assembly urge the Federal Government to review the fees it charges immigrants in the interest of greater fairness and equity."

* (1750)

Madam Speaker: The amendment is in order. However, it has been the practice of this Speaker to take all amendments under advisement, but if there is willingness of the House to deal with the amendment, I will therefore do so. [agreed]

There is an agreement, okay.

Motion presented.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I just stand to speak on two points and very quickly. The allegation that immigrants take away jobs from mainstream Canadians, this is a myth because in a study in 1986 by John Samuel, it concluded that on balance immigrants create more jobs than they take.

Because this study was in 1986, the Economic Council of Canada made another study in 1991. It corroborated and confirmed this finding that immigrants contributed to the economic development of this country more than they take anything from mainstream Canadians. If they take anything at all, it is the job that the mainstream Canadians do not like, like being a seamstress in the garment factory.

Another point I would like to make is that immigrants are costing the federal government too much money in terms of social benefits. This is not so, because by charging \$975 head tax just for applying and right-of-landing fee, and another \$500 for processing the fee, again imposing some kind of a \$10,000 bond to ensure that immigrants will not use the social safety network, that will be assurance that they are no longer a burden, nor do they take anything from the social programs of Canadians.

In fact, I know that seniors from foreign countries have to wait for 10 years before they even qualify for any kind of program by the federal government, such as the program that gives them a little bit of money because they cannot contribute to the pension plan anymore.

This point I would like to emphasize. On the whole, immigration in our country is for the benefit of Canada and this province. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster, speaking to the amendment?

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think that the government House leader's amendment—and I would not mind to just get a copy of it—from what I have heard, I think it is a positive change. I have had

opportunity to have some discussions with the members for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) and St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) as they are trying to address a couple of other changes. I think if those changes were given, that we could, in fact, have that unanimous support.

But, having said that, Madam Speaker, I think that along with the resolution, members' comments should also be provided. When we talk about reducing—like, the \$975, in one of the WHEREASes—and I do not have it right in front of me so I am just going strictly by memory here. It talks about reducing reunification of families. Well, I know that the government has done things that have assisted in reunification. This, no doubt, the \$975, will have an impact, but there are other areas in which the government has made positive steps toward immigration. I think we would be remiss in not acknowledging that.

So I wanted to make it very clear on the record that even though the \$975 has the unanimous support, I believe, of members of this Chamber, there is also recognition that there have been initiatives, such as the bilateral immigration agreement, which I think in the long term can have a very positive impact for the province of Manitoba.

What I look forward to seeing is a much more active role in this area but recognize at all times that it is the national government that plays the leading role. I was led to believe that there were a number of provinces that were actually quite supportive of the actions that the federal government has taken. I think what that means is that in a national situation you cannot please everyone all of the time. I would have liked to have seen Manitoba as concerned with respect to that \$975 fee and not only listened to but also acted upon.

I know that the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) is getting very close to seeking some of the changes that would at least address the concerns that I have expressed. I know that if, in fact, they are addressed, there would in all likelihood even be leave inside the House not to see the clock in order that the member for St. Norbert can get those amendments brought forward.

So if by chance six o'clock comes a little quicker than the member for St. Norbert might be prepared, I am

sure that there would be leave of the Chamber to accommodate the member for St. Norbert to facilitate those two amendments. Having said that, I did want to again emphasize the important role, as the government House leader—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, because I understand with a little honest brokering going on with the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), we may still have something we can all agree on here, and if it is necessary not to see the clock for a couple of minutes after six o'clock, that would be okay with honourable members on this side of the House.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House for the Speaker not to see the clock at six o'clock? [agreed]

* * *

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I believe that with a friendly amendment we might have willingness of the House to pass this forward on a vote.

I move, seconded by the honourable government House leader (Mr. McCrae), that the third WHEREAS clause be amended by adding "an already existing" preceding "a \$500 application fee," and that the fourth WHEREAS clause be deleted.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Regrettably, procedurally, the honourable member for St. Norbert cannot move a further amendment.

Is the House ready for the amendment? The amendment moved by the honourable government House leader (Mr. McCrae), seconded by the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), that the final paragraph be deleted and the following substituted.

Is the House ready for the question? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to adopt the amendment? The resolution is accordingly amended as proposed.

Mr. Laurendeau: Madam Speaker, we have come to a friendly agreement. With leave of the House, I would like to move a further amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable government House leader (Mr. McCrae), that the third WHEREAS clause be amended by adding “an already existing” preceding “a \$500 application fee,” and that the fourth WHEREAS clause be deleted.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for St. Norbert, seconded by the honourable government House leader, that the third WHEREAS clause be amended by adding “an already existing” “a \$500 application fee.” The words “already

existing” to precede the “\$500 application fee,” and that the fourth WHEREAS, which reads WHEREAS in addition, there is a wide range of other fees affecting immigrants such as \$200 to take out Canadian citizenship and \$75 for a proof of citizenship card be deleted. Agreed?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the proposed resolution as amended? Agreed?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed. Agreed and so ordered.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 2, 1998

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